

The Institutions of the CHRISTIAN Home

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That he might seek a godly seed..."

(Malachi 2:15)



Moses Ayomikun Oladipupo

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By

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Scripture quotations are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, KING JAMES
BIBLE

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INTRODUCTORY HYMN

Heaven at Home

*How fragrant, like sweet heaven, that home where Christ is Lord,
Where fathers love His Gospel and sons feed on His Word,
Where mothers pour His mercy on daughters of His love,
Where waves of His compassion bring joy where'er they move.*

*How beautiful their union; how God-like, how serene;
How like that Triune Oneness who reigns in Heav'n, unseen.
How like that God Incarnate—Of God and Man the Son,
How wondrous this affection: the many live as one.*

*One flesh, one heart, one spirit, one bone, one blood, one soul;
One covenantal promise to keep while ages roll;
One blended life that gives life to children clothed with prayer,
One mighty rock, one shelter from every storm and care.*

*Come, feast of Heaven's table; come taste of rich delight!
Come revel and come ravish with pleasures passing sight!
Come radiant, holy Splendor, knit all our hearts in one:
Come mirror here Your glories, Great Father, Spirit, Son!*

---By Neil Barham (2009)

INTRODUCTION

To the glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I present my book, "**THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN HOME**." I am overjoyed to have completed this book I've been writing a long while now. I'm so grateful to God for the completion and it could only have been by his grace alone.

The journey to the writing and completion of this book started when Meghan and Harry got married. Before their marriage I noticed that every time I visited a news website, almost every website was broadcasting an impending wedding of the two of them. Having seen these for a number weeks, I decided to find out what these guys were all about. I discovered that one was a prince and the other an actress. However, any spiced up story naturally irritates me so it was natural for me to feel irritated by the over spiced up story being cooked about their marriage. They tried to make it an incredible story by forcing the name of Meghan (who was already a popular celebrity) into obscurity so that it'll sound like a spectacular story of how a nobody met a prince and became a duchess. WOW! But a day or so before the wedding I understood that Meghan was a divorcee whose former husband was still living, and the prince was a man with his own past too.

Seeing that they were wedded by the "church" (their church) contrary to Biblical beliefs, I saw this marriage as a clear attack on the institutions of Christian marriage. It seemed to me to be an orchestration of the Devil to stage this unchristian union to cast a filthy shadow over the truths of scriptures concerning Christian marriage. The result was obvious. After the marriage, people everywhere started posting lessons they learned from the marriage and one of them was that there's nothing wrong with divorce and even remarriage while one's spouse is still alive. Their wedding affected the perception of people regarding marriage in a very negative way. And

seeing they were wedded in the church, it had a devastating effect on the view of people concerning the Christian doctrine of marriage. I saw this as a huge and well aimed blow to the face of the doctrine of Christian marriage. The sermon preached on the wedding day, which was rightly called "Gospel According to Hollywood" by some, was also pointing to the fact that the Bible was quite undermined in the whole process. The marriage was applauded and the scripture mocked. It was a tragedy to behold.

I felt obliged to write on this topic as I saw more than ever before that the perception of the Christian home, ranging from pre-marriage, to marriage, and to children up bringing, have been corrupted over the years. I started first by publishing an article on my blog on what constitutes a Christian marriage. When I started pondering on the matter, I realised that an article would not suffice so it would be better to write a book about it. In the course of writing the book I realised it won't be best to write a book on marriage in isolation without talking about the home which is founded on marriage. So I changed the subject from Christian marriage to Christian home. This enabled me to talk on a range of things that affects the home. That is how this book came about.

Before I go on I'd like to explain the title of this book so that the content of it may be quite understood in advance before it be read. All the words in the title are plain and require no explanations except for the word "institutions." This is not so much because it is a complex word as it is because it is a word of more than one usage. Note that the word is in a plural form, so I'm not talking about an institution as in an organisation, though a home could be rightly seen as such. Rather, the sense in which I use the word is as it refers to an established law, practice, or custom. Bernard S. Jackson explained this word this way, "The modern philosophical tradition (developing a usage from Roman law, particularly Gaius) sees it as a collection of rules which tell us how an institution is created ('constitutive' or 'institutive' rules), operates ('regulatory' rules) and comes to an end ('terminative' rules)." It is in this sense I use the word

and seek to present to us the established laws, practices, rules, and customs pertaining to the Christian home. In the Bible we do find all three aspects of such rules. The constitutive and institutive rules which pertain to marriage. The regulatory rules which pertain to how people are to relate with each other both as couples, parents and/or children. Terminative rules which is mostly till death do them part, for the home remains one until dissolved in death. All these rules or established laws we find comprehensibly and comprehensively written in scriptures.

These are established laws, not because I wrote them, but because HE the Lord of all wrote them. Not that what is written in my book form these established laws, but I merely spoke on the established laws in this book. What constitutes the institutions of the Christian home are those things written in the Bible pertaining to the home. And since it is written, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." (Psalm 119:89). Whatsoever is written in them regarding the Christian home is therefore more established than the word (established) can express. It is therefore not subject to change and remains constant in every age, era, or clime. Seeing it is these established laws, practices, and customs that is being challenged by the wedding of these people, it is important to remind ourselves of all that is established in the word of God, lest we become transgressors in contravening these established laws, rules, practices, and customs handed down to us by God.

Apart from this, when we consider the words of the title of this book one word stands out in qualifying the type of home I'm writing about in this book. That word is "Christian." So I am not going to be talking about just any home. Homes that are not Christian homes can live by their whims and let their feelings drive them on to whatever destruction they so choose. But as Christians, we ought to lead our families according to the golden rules provided in scriptures. It is these golden rules I wish to present to us that we may experience the joys of God in our homes.

I write this book for those who choose to marry and those who are married.

I write not to intending celibates. It is good to be a celibate as we shall see in one of the chapters of this book, but this book is not written for them. Apart from reminding us about the established laws that we are fast losing sight of, this book is also meant for those who choose to marry and wish to succeed in their marriages. It could be seen as my feeble helping hand I put forward to hopefully assist us have successful, healthy and happy Christian homes.

I don't want this book to be mistaken for a book of love tips and relationship punch line quotes. It is a book that presents us with the word of God and the Biblical stance on issues of the Christian home. In many cases I seek to show us things that seem to have been forgotten and present to us the adverse effects it is already having on us. Presenting these things I shall seek to show us the good and right path and benefit of walking in them.

It is divided into 7 sections which are

1. The foundation of the Christian home, where I talked about love and marriage.
2. Knowing the roles, where I talked about the roles of each party of a home.
3. Conjugal commitment, where I talked on things bordering about chastity.
4. Children upbringing, where I talked about parenting and parental responsibilities.
5. Challenges facing the home, where I talked about some challenges that we encounter in trying to build a good Christian home.
6. Sundry issues, where I talked about various other issues in respect to the Christian home
7. Conclusion, in which I brought the book to a conclusion.

As I proceeded in the course of writing this book, the thought came to my head as to whether a were the right person to be writing it. I am not married so what do I know about marriage? I once posted on my Facebook

timeline these words, "tragedy is when ignorance tries to teach." So I thought to myself if I were that ignorance trying to teach? However, on careful consideration of the matter I thought it not just okay but as a matter of fact quite good to proceed with the writing of the book. First, a large chunk of what is written about marriage in the New Testament were written by singles, Jesus our blessed Saviour and Paul, and married people have found them to be absolutely true for over two thousand years now. My eagerness to continue and bring this book to a completion was spurred on as I realised that writing the book could be used as a part of a bigger study project. It is good to have my thoughts now while unmarried well articulated in a book, and when I've been married for a considerable period (if Christ tarries) I could revisit the book, revise it, and see if there are any difference between how I see marriage now and how I shall see it then. This shall then give us a good reference to consider how singles understand marriage and having a home, and how married people understand it. I doubt there shall be a noticeable difference, but time shall tell. So it is for this reasons I happily continued writing the book, and by the grace of God, bring it to a conclusion.

I have tried to stick strictly to scriptures as much as possible in talking on this very important topic, for truths are purer and surer when they don't reflect mere opinions of men but the truth of God's word alone. However, sometimes I share my opinions on certain things. But, I do not just write according to what I merely observe in homes or opinions cooked up by my imaginations, rather I had put each issue discussed here under the careful scrutiny of scriptures and by this means drawn the conclusions I have put together in this book. If there be any personal opinion presented here, they are opinions founded on scriptures too. In cases where they may differ from the opinions of the reader it would still have the benefit of at least being a food for thought and help them draw up their own conclusions on each matter of which I share my opinions.

I think it is good to briefly point out also that in cases where I make mention of an article I wrote and you'd wish to read it, you could easily

find it by just visiting my blog (blog.ayomikun.com.ng) and, using the search bar, search for the topic you wish to read.

It is my heart's desire that these things bless you and that we shall see in years to come, if the Lord tarries, that our homes are godlier, healthier, happier, and more successful in every sense of the word. Thank you and God bless you.

Ayomikun

SECTION 1

THE FOUNDATION OF A CHRISTIAN HOME

LOVE

“And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her...”

(Genesis 24:67)

What is the most important place on the planet? Jerusalem? No. Jesus' tomb? Wrong. Golgotha? Still wrong. But where? That's right, your home. And it is this home we shall be talking about in this book. The world would be a little hell should this most important place on the planet not be a good one. For this reason we need to pay good attention to what it takes to have a good home. I therefore enjoin us to pay careful heed to the things written in this book. And because we are Christians I shall be dwelling upon the Christian home. But when talking about a good home, where do we start? I wonder.

I needn't wonder too long though. A casual observation of love could lead us aright on where to start. The right foundation of the family is love and it ought to be the foundation of all things that constitutes a family. In the ways God ordained the world to be, we can see the prominent place love has in all things that pertains to a good and healthy human existence. As a matter of fact, love precedes and sustains all that is good and must precede and sustain all that shall be good. A good home is no different.

The world is made of continents. The continents made of nations. The nations made of societies. The societies made of families. And a family starts when a man loves a woman. So the chief foundation of the world is love. Take away love and we have no foundation. We shall be drifting about in the wind until we finally hit the rock of complete destruction. For this reason in talking about a good home we must start at love.

Love is the origin and sustaining factor of a good home. We must ensure that our homes are founded on love and actively labour to ensure that love is maintained. Maintaining love is not as easy or natural as it seems. It requires sensitivity and careful examinations of ones' ways. First, of ones' actions before they are done. That is to ensure that they are done in love. Second, of ones' actions after they are done. That is to examine if the effect of those actions achieved the loving purpose it was meant to achieve, for the case of next time. There is a story of hymn, "Bury Thy Sorrow," by Mary A. Bachelor, that goes:

"The author of the hymn was the daughter of a minister. When she wrote these lines she was living with her brother, whom she greatly loved. He also was a minister, and had the usual cares and burdens to carry that are incident to a pastor's life. To him she confided all her joys and sorrows. One day, after having disclosed to him some peculiar trial which she was enduring, she was reproached by her conscience for having needlessly added to his already numerous cares. She stood by the open window, and saw the long, heavy shadows cast by the tall poplar trees across the lawn, and the thought came to her:

"That is just what I have done to my brother! Why did I do it? Why did I not rather bury my own sorrow, and allow only words of cheer and brightness to reach his ears?"

"With such thoughts in her mind, and with tears of regret filling her eyes, she retired to her little attic bedroom, and there wrote the hymn that has been so blessed."

To her, before she told her brother of her trial she just thought she should tell him not being sensitive to the effect it could have in him. But after she realised that what she had done was not in his best interest. Loving him she felt remorse for her action and she in her hymn teaches us a very important lesson in life. But on our part we must not make bad actions before we realise it and start feeling bad, rather let us be very careful and weigh our

actions carefully, considering what effect they'd have on others, and only proceed to carry them out when we are convinced that they are in the best interests of others. That is love. It is something to be studied and it is something to be learned.

In love, we need to be sensitive to one another. For example, parents need to be sensitive to the needs of children. One of the posts attributed to late Robert Mugabe (1924-2019) says, African parents don't know when their kids are depressed, but they are quick to know when she is pregnant. That is too bad. This must be a mistake for parents do love their children by default, however we must consciously let our love drive us to become sensitive to needs of others and to show concern and seek to comfort them. Joseph was sensitive to the need of others under him and it his sensitiveness that resulted in his deliverance from prison. The Bible says, "And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad. And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to day?" (Genesis 40:6 - 7). It was this show of concern that led them to tell him their dreams and it was this that later caused him to be free from prison and become a prince. People who have suffered a lot, especially unfairly like Joseph, tend to be more concerned and sensitive to the needs of others. However, whether we suffer or not, we must exercise ourselves to be sensitive to the needs of others.

The psalmist wrote, "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none..." (Psalm 69:20). This, among other things, the righteous man said broke his heart. To deny sympathy to those who look for it is not best. I know that there are people who live on sympathy the way others live on food and just relish being pitied for no good reason. They always like to paint little things to seem horribly bad just to garner some sympathy. I'm not talking about those. To show pity to those looking for it, probably for some misfortune that happened to them, is to show them that you care and share in their sorrow. This is love. To deny them is to deny them love. This knowledge has made me grow in love in recent years. We may not be

perfect in love, but we must daily grow in it and be open to make changes when we discover something we aren't doing well enough in love.

It was Bernard of Clairveux (c. 996 - c. 1081) who said, "True charity cannot be left destitute even though she is unselfish and seeketh not her own. Love is an affection of the soul, not a contract." To this agrees Luther who said, "Love serves freely and for nothing." By these statements we understand that love is not a trade. It is not giving for what one would get in return, but it is the affection of the soul. That good affection makes the lover to serve and seek the good and best interest of the loved at all times.

For this reason that a true lover doesn't pursue his own interest in the ways he expresses his love. Loving the church of Corinth dearly, Paul said to them, "... I seek not your's but you..." (2 Corinthians 12:14). Seeking this nature of love Bernard of Clairveux goes on to say, "True love does not demand a reward, but it deserves one." This is true and not only does it deserves one, it always reaps abundance of rewards. The joys of a healthy family for example can only come by love. For a family cannot be healthy without love. The list of the rewards of love are more than can be enumerated.

Now charity and love are not the same thing as many people suppose it is. Why I say this is because we mostly see the word charity in the King James Bible only. It uses the word "charity" throughout Romans chapter 13 while other translations say it is love. We must note that the King James uses the word "love" 281 times elsewhere, then why does it use charity here? The commentators on this passage say that the King James is just using an archaic or less appropriate word for love, but how true is that?

Love as we all know is an intense feeling of deep affection, but charity is kindness, tolerance, leniency in judgment, and benevolent goodwill toward others. The King James says it is charity that is kind, while the other translations say it is love, but how kind is love?

The Bible makes us to know that love isn't always kind. In Proverbs 13:24 it says "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." How kind is that? If love was kindness then for one to inflict pain on his son for whatever reason is not love. But here we are told that it is love to chasten and to do otherwise is hate.

God who is love personified chastens and scourge those whom he loves as it says in Hebrews 12:6 "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." So this is a part of God's love to punish those whom he loves when they act contrary to his will.

Jealousy (not envy) is also a feeling closely associated with love. But how kind is jealousy? Since our modern translations and scholars want us to believe that love is kind. Here is what the Bible says concerning jealousy, "jealousy is cruel as the grave." (Song of Solomon 8:6). Now that is very kind, thank you! God who is love also says, "I the LORD thy God am a jealous God." (Deuteronomy 5:9). It is in jealousy that he says, "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them..." (Hosea 2:6 - 7). How kind is it to hedge up someone's way with thorns? But such is the demonstration of a jealous love.

However in God's charitable act in Matthew 5:45 where it says, "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Here it is strictly kindness and no punishment or chastening. This is charity.

Charity is love qualified by kindness, forbearance, tolerance and leniency in judgment. Not every expression of love is charity. Just as chastening and scourging are both expressions of love, charity is another.

So we know by this that the King James did not refuse to use love which it

used 281 times (that is excluding derivatives of the word) elsewhere for no reason. Thus, the King James is right and all translations that are on the contrary are wrong and thus false. At the most they are just good, wonderful, interesting yet faulty commentaries but don't have authority as The Word of God. Only the King James Version has 100% correctness. All other translations just keep making blunder about the Christian doctrine at one point or the other. Little these errors may seem, but these have led many astray and have given many wavering feet. There are many to point out, but here I am speaking of love being different from charity.

It is this charity that Paul admonishes to be amidst us as brethren in Romans 13. Among brethren it should be love expressing itself through charity. Though collectively we are to cast out evil profane persons from our midst, but no brother individually should chastise his brother or teach him a lesson. We should be lenient in our judgment of one another. We shouldn't be too quick to criticise one another. We should be benevolent in our good deeds and overlook faults. This is what Paul admonishes. Not chastening or scourging.

So we can see that love is multifaceted. There is the kind and unkind aspect of it. All this must be expressed in the home for the home to be healthy. We must see charity prevalent above other demonstrations of love. But we must also use the unkind side of love in chastening and disciplining children. Without this a home cannot be healthy. The unkind side of jealousy is a gift from God to guard our marriages. A writer calls jealousy a fence to a matrimonial union that is designed to keep intruders away. So while we would never have to hedge anyone's way with thorns, yet the home cannot be healthy without the feeling of jealousy. We shall see why when I talk about chastity. We shall see more on how these expressions of love come to play in building a healthy Christian home.

All the aspects of love we talked about here must not be for the love of gain or the fear of loss. Some parents don't wish to chastise their young for fear of displeasing them. They want something in return and they are afraid

of losing it so they fail to do that which is right. But true love must express itself in pursuing the good of others whether we lose or we gain. The good of others should be our object in all cases.

As I progress through this book, I'd like to remind us that what I write about a Christian home is a home as God ordained it to be. In our fallen world there are perversions of all that God has made and ordained. So our focus shall be mainly on how God ordained the home to be. And it is only when life is lived the way God ordained it that we shall be able to live well. As seen above, God ordained our world to be principally founded on love.

Now and always may God grant us the grace to live in love in all its forms, shapes, and expressions, and fill our homes with the joys that follow.

***Prayer:** Dear Lord and Father, we see that love is foundation of all that is good, yea and is the chief foundation of the world itself. Teach us to imbibe this wondrous virtue of love and daily grow in it. As we you grant us this our heart's desire, may our homes be holier, healthier, happier, and successful in every way. Thank you dear Father. Amen.*

WHAT CONSTITUTES CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

"And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?"

(Matthew 19:4 - 5)

What constitutes Christian marriage was the first and major reason I undertook the assignment to write on the institution of Christian marriage to remind the church of God's standard for marriage. Not only do we see such undermining of scriptures in Meghan and Harry, we see it wide spread. It is only that their wedding brought it more to bare. I don't have a problem with Meghan and Harry. They could do whatever they want. Even now, they could divorce and remarry again if they wish, but not in the church for the church must not be reduced to a mere ceremonial institution. We must live by the word.

There are many forms of marriages in the world. These days some live together with a person of the opposite sex, bear children, expect commitment and faithfulness from one another, and everything else you'd expect from married people, but they are not married. They don't call themselves husbands or wives. They rather call the person they cohabit girlfriend, partner, and other casual names. There are places where people do marriages that are only meant to be for a particular period after which the marriage is dissolved. Say for example a man marries a woman for six months and that is what is stated in their contract. So there are many forms of marriage and none of them is my business. Anyone who have no regard for scriptures can opt for any of these. But what I shall be talking about

here is the Christian marriage. The church ought to conduct only Christian marriages and no other type of marriage. So let us look at what constitutes our marriage as Christians.

The Mystery Of Marriage

*"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."
(Ephesians 5:32)*

*"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."
(2 Corinthians 11:2 - 3)*

Now, before we see what exactly constitutes a Christian marriage, it is good to look at how marriage is a truly mysterious thing. Marriage is not a slight or casual union between a man and a woman. There is more to marriage than the human mind can understand. While talking about marriage in the fifth chapter of Ephesians, apostle Paul wrote, "This is a great mystery..." (Ephesians 5:32). It is not a common mystery, but a great one. Being a great mystery it means we cannot fully understand it by any means. Now, seeing it is a great mystery, all we do concerning marriage must therefore be in simplistic obedience to the injunctions of him who knows all things. If I knew all the controls of a car then I can choose to move it about and not suffer harm, but if the controls were a mystery, it is only wisdom to do according to what an instructor who knows everything about it tells me to do. For the singular reason that the Bible calls it a great mystery we must understand it as a mystery and treat it accordingly. We must therefore not dabble into it without the leading of God who knows all

things. That is why it is good to study scriptures carefully to see what the Bible says about it as we intend to here. Let us look at some of the mysterious things about marriage as we can see in scriptures.

Marriage is a representation of the relation between God and his people. In the Old Testament it was expressed as his relationship between him and Israel, and in the New Testament it is expressed as a relationship between Jesus and the church. That is why Paul wrote, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Ephesians 5:32). Therefore, the union between Christ and his church, as well as the relationship between God and the people of Israel, is a great mystery and marriage is as mysterious as that.

Jesus says, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh." (Mark 10:7 - 8). So marriage is not just a matter of feeling attracted and living together, it is becoming one. How can two be one and one be two? You call them Mr. & Mrs., but they are one and not two. Is that the same thing that makes the Holy Trinity a deep deep mystery? Three being one and one being three. So also how two people become one is a great mystery.

It amazed me also when someone pointed out to me that God said to Satan concerning Job, "Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life." (Job 2:6). Though Satan destroyed all he had and killed all his children, he did not harm his wife. It means her life was as good as his.

Marriage is dreadful thing to get involved in. The reason why few people realise the dread of marriage is that the truth about it is scarcely preached. If the truth about marriage was indeed taught, it would have been a dreaded thing and people would only proceed into it with the utmost care. When Jesus who is the truth spoke the truth about marriage, it caused dread so much that his disciples responded, "If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry." (Matthew 19:10). However because of the

false truths presented about marriage, people are scarcely afraid of it and many go into it with almost no caution at all.

The fear about marriage expressed by the disciples brought an issue of whether it were better to marry or not. It's good to talk briefly on it before going on. The answer of our Lord was quite clear that it is better not to marry as other parts of scriptures also inform us. Jesus says, "But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." (Matthew 19:11 - 12). The word eunuch should be understood as celibate. Jesus here encourages those who can live as celibates saying, "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." So I believe that people should first of all carefully and honestly consider the possibility of being celibate before they even give marriage a consideration. Being celibate is far more profitable for the kingdom of God than marriage. Those who live as celibates always leave astounding legacies that will outlive them for generations and generations. They may not have children that will outlive them and carry on their names, but their accomplishments and legacies are far better than children. Do we talk of Paul? Look at all he accomplished for the kingdom of God and all the golden epistles he wrote. Look at St. Francis of Assisi, and see the legacy of his labour. The English reformation that over time produced our most loved King James Bible could be traced back to him and the legacy he bequeathed the friars that were his followers.

So being celibate is a sacrifice that is very profitable to our service to God. Such sacrifice always comes with much reward. Jesus says, "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." (Luke 18:29 - 18:30). Note that in that list is written, "wife, or children." The sacrifice of leaving wife and children is the sacrifice of

celibacy. Of such people Paul writes, "But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:32). And concerning the married he writes, "But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you." (1 Corinthians 7:28). Seeing the immense benefit of being a celibate, people should only choose to marry when they have well considered the possibility of being celibate and are convinced that they are not able to live as celibates.

Seeing these things we understand that marriage is a dreadful thing and should be avoided by any who can. However it is better to marry than to burn (1Corinthians 7:9). So let everyone, male and female alike, think careful of the possibility of being a celibate before they conclude on whether or not they would rather marry.

Now it does not mean we should despise marriage for any reason. Being married is rightly referred to as a blessed state and must be understood and treated as such. But let all choose what manner of blessedness they wish to be in while in this life. Whether the blessed state of marriage or the blessed state of celibacy. Let all be done as unto the Lord.

Marriage In The Perspective of God and Man

"Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly."

(John 4:16 - 18)

The things I'm going to be saying here would be quite hard for many to accept but it is not because it is hard, but because of the amount of compromise and moral failures prevalent today. We have to understand marriage in the sight of God and marriage in the sight of man. And what makes a marriage truly Christian is that it is acceptable both in the sight of God and man. For a marriage to be acceptable in the sight of God is the more important, but to be acceptable in the sight of man is also very important and must not be undermined.

First I'll look at marriage in the sight of God. From the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, we can understand a lot about how God sees marriage. Jesus said to an unmarried woman, "Go, call thy husband..." Why? Because it is not the ceremony that makes marriage in the sight of God. This woman probably had never married in a ceremonious way, but was probably involved in illicit sexual activities with various men. So she denied it that she had no husband. But Jesus went on to say, "thou hast had five husbands." So from here, we see that it is sexual intercourse that makes people married in the sight of God.

It is also in the same light that Paul says, "What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh." (1 Corinthians 6:16). But it was concerning marriage that the statement "the two shall be one flesh," was made and not prostitution. So, though having affairs with an harlot is not meant to be a union in marriage, and though there was no ceremony involved as we call marriage, yet in the act of it they become one flesh. Meaning, before God they are married. This was why Jesus said to the Samaritan woman that she has had five husbands. Sadly, just like the Samaritan woman, there are too many young people with many husbands and wives who are not aware that they are married already. This understanding is very key to a number of other issues I'll talk about in this book.

Now, marriage in the sight of men is the ceremony. Ceremony by which two people with the knowledge of their parents show that they are agreed to be wedded and start a home. While sexual intercourse is what institute marriage in the sight of God, ceremony is what institutes marriage before men.

Our actions as Christians ought to be void of offence before God and man, for this reason, we can't neglect any of these two perspective in our definition of marriage. We can't see marriage as just a ceremony and ignore the sexual intercourse (with or without ceremony), and people can't just go ahead to live together without a ceremony acceptable before men. To engage in matrimonial affairs without the ceremony openly letting the world know that you have made the decision to be married makes it fornication, of which we know that fornication is a sin and no fornicator shall enter the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9).

***Prayer:** O Lord God Almighty, Institutor of marriage, we beseech you this and every day to guide us into a proper understanding about this institution of marriage. It very easily can get confusing and jumbled up. Please guide the steps of our young ones away from the confusion of in chastity and keep our older ones from the hurts of infidelity. May we live holily and pleasantly in love. This I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.*

SUGGESTED MARRIAGE PROCEDURES

“Let all things be done decently and in order.”

(1 Corinthians 14:40)

What I shall be writing here won't be commands from scriptures on procedures but my suggestions on appropriate ways to go about marriage. This is because the Bible does not have laws on procedures for marriage. Even the Old Testament where one would have expected to find commandments concerning marriage procedures does not have any whatsoever. For this reason, it is easy to realise that there are no rigid laws on marriage procedures. I think it would also be unwise and unscriptural to develop rigid laws where the Bible made none. But wisdom should guide in these matters.

Richard Baxter (1615-1691) wrote in one of his books, “Too many particular laws about little matters breed contention.” This is also true concerning marriage procedures. And the matters of marriage are too dynamic to be caged in rigid laws. All that is essential therefore is that piety, purity, morality, propriety, decency, chastity and other Christian values be not violated in the process. It is good the Bible had little or no laws for these things giving room for us to use our reason and judgment in each peculiar case.

First, we ought to talk on the moral marriage procedures. I think what constitutes a marriage as discoursed in the previous chapter should inform us on what should guide the wisdom following a right marriage procedure. Marriage before God is the sexual intercourse while marriage in the sight of man is the wedding ceremony. One may then think that sexual

intercourse should precede the ceremony. Why? God first! But common sense should teach us otherwise. Many things that people say quoting "God first" are not scriptural. For example in talking about tithes pastors would often use the phrase, "God first." However the truth about tithing is "God last." Why? The command to tithe says the tithe is "the tenth" not "one tenth." So if you have only nine you don't have a tithe yet. We see the same thing about God coming last where Jesus says, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." (Matthew 5:23 - 24). So God is very much interested in our relationship with one another and wants us to be at peace first with others before we bring our offering to him. We should therefore ensure we do that which constitutes marriage before man before we do that which constitutes marriage before God.

It is common sense that wedding ceremony should precede the sexual intercourse and living together. Failure to follow this procedure is immoral. This as said before is fornication. This is a sin before God and an offence to a moral society. Not even when the intending couples are fully engaged, are agreed and are sure that they shall be married, should they engage in sexual intercourse, coming unnecessarily close to each other, living together, etc.

These things are important because for our Christian co-existence we are in the view of many people, from infants to full grown people. The young could see people acting unduly fond of each others without the ceremony and think there's nothing wrong with frivolous relationships with the opposite sex. In a case where intending couples don't get engaged in sexual intercourse but are seen together in suspicious ways and times of the day, or living together, the more elderly may think that they are already having sexual intercourse. This my brothers and sisters is offensive to a righteous and moral mind. This is immoral. This is an appearance of evil and it is written, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

However, when the wedding ceremony is observed before acting like husbands and wives, it sends a good and sound message to the young, that without such ceremony it is not appropriate to draw unduly close to the opposite sex. Apart from that it is beauty to behold two people coming together in holy matrimony. This is pleasing both in the sight of God and of the righteous man.

Choosing A Spouse

"*... a prudent wife is from the LORD.*"
(Proverbs 19:14)

Now to a very important matter. I can say choosing a spouse is the most important matter in the present life of anyone who has chosen to get married and not to be celibate. The most important as far as this present world is concerned. Christian people ought to take this very seriously and be cautious. Save yourself the headache. The world can choose to divorce and remarry as often as they can but not you. Married is sacred to you but not to them.

To get married to the right person is like heaven on earth, but to get married to the wrong person is like hell on earth. To have a right life partner is an awesome blessing. Bishop Aurelius Augustine (354 - 430) wrote, "though he is not necessarily blessed who enjoys that which he loves (for many are miserable by loving that which ought not to be loved, and still more miserable when they enjoy it), nevertheless no one is blessed who does not enjoy that which he loves." So when a person marries someone who he/she must love, because he's/she's married to him/her, but can't enjoy him/her, because he's/she's a terrible person, abusive, inconsiderate, and unpleasant to live with, according to Augustine, such a person cannot be called blessed. To live a blessed marital life, take the

issue of choosing a right spouse very seriously. It is for this purpose I have written the things I wish to share here. I hope it helps someone choose a right spouse.

One of the annoying things of today is that using the social media means you just see latest posts of some people saying things that are so annoying. You have no choice but to see such things. One of them is love and relationship tips. You'd see people forming theories about what cannot apply all the time. You'd see things like, "five things to do to have a healthy family." "Three things to watch out for in choosing a right spouse." "Fifteen traits to know if she is the one for you." Then they tell you things like if you are the angry type watch out for a gentle sister. She is the right one. But what if that gentle sister have only learnt the art of suppressing her feelings and is not only hot tempered but also violent? People busy themselves sharing or reading all manner of relationship tips. Some are outrightly stupid and directed at ruining relationships by stirring the ego, while others at best are just sophisticated words to express common sense which everybody with a brain should know. Choosing a right spouse does not happen by reading relationship tips.

Apart from not being helpful in choosing a spouse, reading relationship tips hardly works in making and sustaining a happy home because what applies to one person may not apply to you. For example you read that couples who fart in the presence of each other are likely to live happier. That may be true, but you didn't know they didn't refer to your own type of fart. A fart that causes bitterness and deep sorrow. How could you be happier with that? But following that relationship tip, you went on a farting spree only to end up in a bitter rancorous quarrel and ruined the day. I believe therefore that people should just keep away from all these relationship tips altogether, and have nothing to do with it. Get your tips from the pages of the Bible instead.

In writing this I have tried to stick with scriptures in everything, and in this case also I'd like to direct us back to scriptures to see what we can learn

about choosing a spouse. When I look at the most successful marriages in scriptures, I don't think they came about as a result of those involved reading relationship tips, books on marriage, etc. I believe about the most successful marriages we could see are the marriages of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But I shall like to focus on the family of Isaac. How he got his wife has a lot of lessons for us in this age.

I don't know why, but Isaac didn't seem to be interested in marriage. It was Abraham who had to initiate the process. Now that shouldn't be a rule for us just as the Polygamous marriage of Abraham and Jacob shouldn't. But when he wanted to initiate the process, we can't see anything to suggest that he started encouraging Isaac to go reading relationship tips. It was not that he didn't want his son to have a good marriage. He indeed desired it earnestly. However his precaution to ensure that his son had a good wife can be found where it is written, "And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac." (Genesis 24:2-4). He was not bothered about whether the person talks so much, whether she is fair in complexion, whether she is fat or slim, whether she is hot tempered or lazy. The only thing he cared about was where she was from. I don't mean by this that we should become tribalistic in our choices, but I am trying to arrive at a point, so just follow me.

Esau did not follow such rule when he got married. The result can be seen where it is written, "And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah." (Genesis 26:34-35). Such as these who Esau took without following the precautions of his grandfather Abraham ended being a grief to his parents. I wonder what manner of grief they should have been to Esau himself. However, the precaution Abraham took was also taken when it was time

for Jacob to get married. Rebekah initiated it this time when she said to Isaac, “I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?” (Genesis 27:46). She spoke to an understanding husband which is a good example for godly men to follow. She didn’t need to speak further before he acted and did that which was right. The very next verses read, “And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people.” (Genesis 28:1-3). And so, apart from the complications introduced into his home by Laban, his uncle, who tricked him into marrying both his daughters, his marriage was a perfect one too.

Now the lesson is not about being tribalistic, but the marriages that were successful were marriages that prioritised the upbringing of the women. All that mattered to Abraham in initiating the marriage process for his son was the upbringing of the places where he sought for a wife for his son from. The same it was for Isaac and Rebekah towards Jacob. So the most important thing to consider in choosing a spouse is their upbringing. In the days of Abraham where the people of the world existed in isolation by their tribes, you could know their upbringing by where they came from. Today however if we want to see successful marriages, we need to still prioritise upbringing. The mode of knowing people's upbringing today is way different and a bit tricky, but if people would be more careful to know the upbringing of those they wish to marry, it would be easy to have successful marriages if choices are made based on upbringing.

So if we, as a society, want to make sure that marriages work, we must spend more of our mental energy on right children upbringing rather than on inventing love tips. For Abraham and Isaac, they were focused on getting spouses for their children from places of good upbringing. Today it

can't be about tribes, but it must be the aim of the church and the Christian home to raise up kids with good upbringing so much that, as a Christian, you can't marry a person from a Christian home or a Christian church and not be able to live comfortably, happily, and in the fear of God with them. As a matter of fact, one could be blindfolded and point anyone and he/she, so far he/she is from a Christian church, should be a good spouse, that is if we give more priority to the good upbringing of children. I shall talk more on Christian upbringing in a latter chapter of this book.

Sadly, the people of today are in most cases brought up badly. We can't blame parents for it, but the rapidity in which things changed suddenly in most of the world after the World Wars can be blamed. These include the rapid evolution in technology especially the TV and the Internet. These had their roles in making it very difficult to raise children properly and in spreading bad values. Another issue was globalisation and migration. When people migrate, they go with their values, and good values are easily eroded by bad ones. Many parents had the mind of bringing up children with good morals and right values, but the television, internet, and other forms of media kept challenging these values. The rapidity of these things saw many Christian parents quite unprepared and unequipped for these challenges. It became really tricky so much that to maintain good moral standards and right values made people see such parents and children as outdated people, people sticking to the past for no profit, and people refusing to be enlightened. During these times, standards were shaken, principles were challenged, and it became very difficult to be able to have any moral stand point at all. Sadly, many who are brought up in such circumstances are people who have come out of this great shaking and so are generally poorly brought up.

We must therefore pick up the ruins and rebuild that which this great shaking has destroyed. We must then work, prayerfully, laboriously, studiously, with many dialogues and debates, form right standards by which to raise the future generations. This must be a priority of all well meaning people at this time in the history of human existence. I shall speak

more deeply about children upbringing in a latter section of this book.

So, the method of choosing a spouse according to their upbringing at such a time in our history is awfully hard. They who have withstood the pressures of the times of these shaking are few and far between. So, it can't be as easy as the time of Abraham where it was just a matter of going to a particular people because their children are well brought up. You must therefore be awfully lucky to have that which is awfully hard to find. Naturally speaking.

Should we succeed however, the church, like the good tribes of old, can be that place to go to and find good spouse. It is so to a good extent even today. I know many people go about their lives without any regard for the church. They have little or no business to do with the church, but as soon as it is time to get married they start associating themselves to a church and start sounding brotherly, for they know that the church is the best place to get themselves good wives. So that is much to the credit and praise of the church, but more needs to be done to ensure that people are well brought up.

We must be also wary that we must marry one who is a Christian in truth. Some have said that it doesn't matter which religion your spouse practices as long as you love each other. They claim that if this were not so, why do Paul write to people who were Christians and were married to unbelievers (1 Corinthians 7:12-16). Paul wrote such to people who were married before conversion. Such people were bound to be much because the gospel was just getting to those regions for the first time. But later in the same 1 Corinthians 7, he wrote, "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:39). Note the words, "only in the Lord." So as Christians, it is not God's will for us to marry unbelievers.

The benefits of marrying a Christian as a Christian is glaring and can't be

overemphasised. A friend of mine on Facebook posted something about her future husband and she pointed out salient requirements for him. Not only was he to be a Christian, but must be devoted. She explained that the mutual love she and such a husband have for Christ would keep them going even when the natural love for one another wanes. That is one very good benefit. Other benefits shall become glaring as we proceed through this book. It is impossible by thinking that to adequately fulfil the purpose of a Christian home if one of the spouses is not a Christian.

A.W. Tozer (1897 - 1963) said, the thing that comes to mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you. Now such a thing is defined by your religion and convictions. How shall we, in thinking of whom to marry, consider other things about them (probably such as education, language, character, past life, etc.) and not consider the most important thing about them which is defined by their religion and convictions. There is no better formula to having a failure bound marriage than not being concerned about this most important aspect of religion and convictions. If the most important thing about you is that you're a Christian, then the most important thing of concern to you about the spouse you choose should also be that he/she is a Christian.

Is it therefore good that when an unbeliever loves a believer the unbeliever should get converted so they could get married? I don't know, but I think marriage is not an ideal reason for conversion. I became born again because I dreaded hell and in the torment of my fears I went on my knees and asked Jesus to come into my life. I've read of others who had a vision of hell and turned to Christ. I've heard of others who met a good Christian whose life made a good impression on them and they turned to Christ. To get converted on account of wishing to get married may not be genuine, though it may. To get married to someone who is not genuinely converted is also a great risk. That person may as well be a wolf in sheep clothing. So I'm not of the opinion that this should be. But God may will it so. If such be the case, I'd advice that the convert should be taken through the teachings of the tenets of the Christian faith. Make sure they understand. If

they believe it, then they should get baptised upon professing their conviction. And after baptism they should get married. This is my advice.

Before I go on, I would also like to share what an elderly woman told me regarding marriage which I think is very useful seeing the times we live in. She said, I should just be careful to marry someone who is teachable. This is very important and worth mentioning as this would allow you to be able to make up for the lapses in upbringing should there be any. If the person is teachable and you know what is right, then by your teaching shall the lapses in upbringing be corrected.

But let me introduce the most important thing to do in choosing a spouse; PRAYER. The Bible says clearly, "... in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Philippians 4:6). I know many people would wish to downplay this, but this is the best thing to do when choosing a spouse. I have heard some funny explanations why praying can't help in choosing a spouse, for example, someone said that in the beginning God brought a woman to Adam and in the end Adam ended blaming God for giving him a wife. In a way that implies that God's involvement is not a guarantee for choosing a right spouse. That is, even though he made Eve and brought her to him the result was still disastrous. But what they usually say is, because man blamed him, God made up his mind never to help man in choosing a wife again lest he blame him again. But the absurdity of these claims are quite obvious.

Abraham acted the role of a good father and by his precautions Isaac got a good wife. Isaac did the same for Jacob. We must know that as Abraham was a good father to Isaac, and Isaac to Jacob, so also God is our Father and we must allow him play that role of a heavenly Father. We really need to recognise his position as our Father. Let him choose for us. And there is no way to allow him choose for us than asking him to help us in prayer. We could have relied on fatherly precautions of our earthly father if we can be sure that all men are godly, righteous, and wise like Abraham and Isaac.

We could have also been able to rely on the precautions of our earthly fathers if our circumstances have not become incredibly complex to the point that human wisdom is bound to fail, unlike in the times of Abraham. Apart from these, it is written, “a prudent wife is from the LORD.” (Proverbs 19:14). So while getting just any wife can be easy, one must go to God in prayer to get a prudent wife. Parental advice is good and should not be neglected or despised, but there is no better option than to allow God choose a spouse for us.

We can't follow our own wisdom in choosing a spouse. Even when we see someone who is as good as an angel from God, and we have known this person for a long time and everyone speaks wonderful things about him/her, and these wonderful things be absolutely true. Still we must put our choice in the hands of him who knows all things and sees tomorrow. Why is this so? Henry Sampson, in his book on the history of advertising says, “Even teetotalism can be fervid, and an equable temper may become quickened, when matrimony stirs up the feelings.” By this we understand that one can change completely after marriage. It is not likely but it remains a possibility which only God knows if it will be or will not be. So put the choice of your spouse in the hands of your all knowing heavenly Father.

I don't believe that God has a specific way in letting you know who the right spouse is. He may reveal his will for us in a dream, in a trance, or just lead us by means of his divine providence and orchestrations. I could have put forward the example of Abraham's servant and how he chose Rebekah for Isaac (read Genesis 24) but I can't put that forward for some reasons. First is that he gave God conditions on how to reveal his will to him, but it is my conviction that it is an act of reverence to God to allow him choose the way he deals with us. Giving God conditions is not an example I want to put forward. Also, from the look of things, I can't be completely certain that Rebekah was God's perfect will. I really liked the story of Isaac and Rebekah, and it seemed to me the simplest yet best romantic story ever, but I later got to read the Book of Jasher and discovered that she was only

twelve when she got married to a forty year old Isaac, and when I confirmed from the Bible, I realised the Bible called her a damsel. When I saw this I was quick to change my mind. I also wondered why God had to hold her from given birth for so long until Isaac had to entreat the Lord on her behalf. Was he displeased with the union? We can only assume. I think giving God conditions didn't yield the best result also. But I wish that Christian singles should just pray to God for his choice for them pertaining marriage and leave the rest to him and give him the honour of allowing him choose how he shall lead us to the right person.

The summary is this, we must be concerned about the upbringing of people than anything else when choosing spouses. For this reason we must strive towards influencing our societies to give more focus to better upbringing of children. Doing our best to make sure that children are well brought up in a right understanding of life shall do them far more good than giving them love tips. The person must be a Christian (at least by confession and baptism). And lastly, "in everything by prayer..." Everything, including choosing a spouse.

Suggested Marriage Procedures

"Let all things be done decently and in order."

(1 Corinthians 14:40)

Now, when someone, by the grace of God has chosen his spouse, what next? Proceed to engagement then wedding if the time be right. I am not a fan of courtship, that is a time when people are supposed to fall in love. I don't know how people would agree to get married without first falling in love. I believe these things are even more harmful than they are helpful. If they have adequate finances, they should just proceed to marriage. I really do wonder how long Isaac courted Rebekah, for example. I wonder why all

the fuss about courtship as if going into ones matrimonial home is one and the same as going into a lion's den. So you must first be trained in how to fight a lion. These things are not only unnecessary, but also harmful. It is true that the truth about marriage causes one to dread it, but the right precaution to take is not after choosing a spouse but before choosing and even before one decides whether he or she wishes to get married. Furthermore, the things which Jesus spoke about that cause dread were things pertaining to sexual sins in marriage and not getting married. When we shall have gotten to the chapter that addresses sexual misconducts then we shall understand better why it is dreadful indeed. However, marriage in itself is not the dreadful thing. Once the decision to get married is made, there's no point making all the fuss about courtship.

The two people, after engagement, could choose to get acquainted with one another by visiting themselves in their parent's home and presence. I believe that before getting to this stage, they should have been able to know each other from afar pretty well. I'm confident that it is possible to know people pretty well from afar, especially in today's world of social media of which most people have a profile online. Cancelling wedding plans after engagement would speak bad about the two people involved. Most people would think there must have been something terrible discovered about their past life or character. Even if there's nothing wrong with their past life or character, most people would hardly believe there isn't something wrong with them in these areas. So this should be avoided at all cost. The getting acquainted to one another after engagement should not be about whether or not they wish to marry but to know other things, maybe ones expectations of a family life. When you consider the fact that at this level their mind should be already made up, it would inform us more about why the time between engagement and marriage ought to be really short, for their is little to know more. Too little to justify lengthy courtship.

With that out of the way, now to the wedding. It is important when talking about wedding to know that those making the decision are they who wish to get married. So I think their decision is the most important. The consent

of their parents next. The knowledge of their siblings and immediate family, and so on. I am not trying to underplay the roles of bishops, pastors, etc. in the marriage procedures, but I believe bishops and church leaders shouldn't get involved in the choosing of a spouse so much as to influence it with their opinions. They should only come in to ensure that all things are done decently, in order and honourably, according to scriptures. They are to ensure that the wedding meets moral and scriptural conditions and also ensure that all parties involved have given their due consent. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled..." (Hebrews 13:4). If marriage is honourable, then it must be done honourably and church leaders are to see to this. I don't think they should do beyond this. I'm sick of people being told in their church that they are not allowed to propose to someone they wish to marry except they take permission from their pastors, bishops, etc. The role of a bishop or pastor is honourable, but policing their members to know who's proposing to who is a bit to overstep their bounds. I shall speak more on the roles of Christian leaders in maintaining decency in a latter chapter.

I believe Christian wedding ceremonies should reflect Christian modesty. Both the procession and dressing should reflect this. There needn't be any show of flamboyance in Christian wedding. Remember the times are evil and the very marriage is merely permitted but not expedient.

On Dowry

"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."

(Song of Solomon 8:7)

Now, I'd like to talk briefly on dowry before closing this chapter. I may

sound like a poor man here and I shall not be surprised, for so I am. I may also not represent what many see dowry to be but I shall speak concerning the little I know about it. By dowry I mean the money a man brings to the parents of his fiancé before they give their consent to the marriage.

I'm not sure about how it is done in various places round the world, but here in Nigeria, people sometimes pay heavily for dowry. They bring a list of things that runs into millions of Naira for the poor man to bring. While there is nothing wrong with the practice, requesting for excessive money is detrimental to the finances of the family they are about to start. Marriage is not an end but a beginning. If a man gives the parents of the lady he wishes to marry all the money he ever saved, how shall they survive adequately after marriage? It would make things a bit difficult for the couples if they give beyond what they can conveniently give. Abraham sent gifts to the family of Rebekah not because they required it but because he chose to. I know the gifts were more than one could require for dowry, but it was still of his own free will all the same.

We see this practice in the old law, but nothing speaks of it in the New Testament. So it should not be so rigidly adhered to the detriment of the young family's finances. I believe dowry should be given according to what a person can conveniently give and should be treated as a light matter.

What is most important is the love. That is the true and worthy exchange. It is written, "if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." (Song of Solomon 8:7). Love is the only noble basis for two people to accept getting married and this love we see in this verse cannot be quantified by material things. If therefore what a woman is giving in marriage is her love, the only worthy exchange for a man to give back is his love. To put money or other material things forward in the whole process of exchange, or to accept the money or other material things as an exchange, is to cast contempt on that love. Indeed everything that can be offered is contemptible to the love that is being offered. So let love be the only basis of marriage. Let every material thing be given as

something apart from the whole marriage agreement. Rather they should be given as gifts and accepted as gifts, especially to worthy parents who have played their roles in a noble way in bringing up their child.

***Prayer:** Dear Lord and Father, I pray that you will teach us the procedures for our marriages that we may not for any reason violate your noble rules on piety, purity, morality, propriety, decency, chastity and other Christian values. Teach us to all things orderly, decently, and in the love and fear of you. This I ask in Jesus' name. Amen*

THE VICE OF POLYGAMY

"Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife..."
(1 Timothy 3:12)

Before I go on, let me speak very briefly on polygamy. Polygamy is a practice of marrying more than one wife or husband at the same time. I thought this was not an issue in the Christian fold, but while I wrote this book an argument was stirred on the social media as to whether or not it were right for Christians to practice polygamy.

The outright wrongness of trying to bring up the argument of whether or not it were right to have more than one spouse at the same time is glaring in the fact that marriage even to one spouse is merely permitted but not expedient. It would be something close to outright madness to suggest that polygamy is not wrong in the knowledge of this. If to marry one was strongly discouraged, but permitted simply because it is better to marry than to burn, what folly, indeed what madness, could cause one to think of considering, not to mention putting the argument of marrying more than one. That argument is not of the spirit of God but of the spirit of the Devil.

The thought to desire more than one spouse could come of nothing but sensuality, carnality, and zero spirituality. While polygamy may not be seen as adultery it is definitely a show of lasciviousness of which we are told that people who are this way shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).

Furthermore the following are written concerning Christian leadership:

1. "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to

- teach." (1 Timothy 3:2)
2. "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well." (1 Timothy 3:12)
 3. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly." (Titus 1:5 - 6)

These are the things we see written as the criteria for Christian leadership. They all have this that they are to be husbands of one wife. Does this then mean that only those who want to serve as leaders in the church should be restricted to having only one wife? Woe to that man who would seek to restrict his service to his Lord and Saviour to satisfy his lasciviousness. Woe to him.

If these things were written concerning Christian leaders it is because at those times new converts abound. People already practicing polygamy also would be among those converted. Now, such were not allowed to hold positions of leadership in the church. It is therefore not possible to have people brought up as Christians to be permitted to marry more than one.

Furthermore, Christian leaders are meant to be examples for others and meant to live emulatable lives. So whatever is commanded to them is commanded because it is good, noble, and right. Since they are to be emulated and these commands are good, noble, and right, it is by extension a command to all others.

So the summary are these:

1. The evilness of the time requires that it is better not to marry at all. How then shall it be deemed permissible to marry more than one if to marry one is only by permission.
2. Leaders in the church are clearly commanded not to have more than

one wife. To marry more than one then is to choose not to serve in a leadership position. This is placing restriction on ones service to his Lord and Saviour so as to afford himself the gratification of his lasciviousness.

3. If Christian leaders should be worthy of being emulated by all given the good and noble commands they are to live by, the command given to them is by extension given to all.

***Prayer:** Dear Father, teach us the to know the full extent of the unwisdom of polygamy and to follow after the wisdom of monogamy and celibacy. Let not the Devil trouble our tranquil with foolish questions but have us established in that which is wise, good, noble, and right. This I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.*

CHARACTERISTICS OF A CHRISTIAN HOME

“... as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

(Joshua 24:15)

It would be good before going deep into this book to give the summary of the characteristics of an ideal Christian home. An ideal Christian home is one that has the characteristics of our “home.” I mean our heavenly home. A Christian home is one that has the characteristics of heaven. I came to this conclusion when I was listening to a hymn titled, “The Holy of Holies” by Daniel S. Warner. As I listened I didn’t quite get all that was being sung, but I heard this words,

*“Oh, sweet and tranquil home,
Where only God is known!”*

I liked that description for a home here on earth I’d like to belong to. Taking a look at the wordings of the hymn, I realised he wasn’t talking about a home in this world but our eternal rest, the thought then came to me that if a true Christian home is one that has such words for its description and such words were rightly used to describe our eternal rest, then a true Christian home must be one that has the characteristics of heaven. A Christian home ought to be a sweet and tranquil home, where God alone is known.

But what are these characteristics? They are many, but They can all be seen as the subset of what we see in these words, “... righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” (Romans 14:17). I shall be looking however at these sub-characteristics; love, fear of God, selflessness, and acceptance.

These all are subsets of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Love Again

“Thou shalt love...”
(Deuteronomy 6:5)

We’ve mentioned love before and we have to look at it again. We have seen how that love is the principal foundation of the world, in terms of human correlation. Love is a key characteristic of a Christian home. Husband and wives must love themselves. Parents and children must love themselves also. And all must love God.

Now I am not talking about merely a feeling of love but a showing of love. Of course true love must flow from the true feeling of it, but must not be limited to the feeling of it. In a Christian home, love must characterise everything we do towards one another and towards God. This is good and well pleasing to God.

Showing love is not as simple and straight forward as it may seem. It requires a conscious effort at it. It may even require careful reading and studying to be able to know how to show love....

Fear of God

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud

voice, Fear God...”
(Revelation 14:6-7)

The fear of God is next. The love of God would naturally result in the fear of him. This is both the reverent fear as well as the fear of dread. Again, this should not be limited just the feeling of fear of God, but the showing of it. All members of the family ought to behave in a way that shows the fear of God.

The fear we have for God must be manifest in how we act towards him individually and collectively. It must be manifest in the importance we place on family devotion, study of scriptures, and our individual efforts that drives the family forward in the fear, love, and will of God.

Selflessness

“Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.”
(1 Corinthians 10:24)

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” (Philippians 2:3-4)

We ought to be selfless. We should not just think of our own interest but the interest of others and the general good of the home. If everyone thinks of himself alone, then there is no love, neither is there the fear of God in the heart of such people. Selfishness causes cracks that if not healed could cause extensive damage to the union of the home, in severe cases may break the home to pieces.

To take selfishness out of the human heart is hard for he, being in a fallen

world, is naturally selfish. But where there is love and the fear of God, we become naturally selfless. We may find the selfish traits springing up in us occasionally, we must therefore ensure that we consciously, regularly, and consistently battle it out of our hearts.

Selflessness requires that we take careful thought of the good of others and pursue their good. Being selfless is not something we become in one day, but we must daily exercise ourselves to grow in selflessness. Mary A. Bachelor, as we had seen before in the story of the hymn she wrote, was conscious of the burden she had placed on her brother. If she was not selfless should would never have known. That level of selflessness to be able to know the ill of ones' actions when it is so unlikely to be apparent is a great level of selflessness. We must strive to attain the highest possible height of selflessness.

Acceptance

“[Charity] Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

(1 Corinthians 13:7)

The Christian home ought to be a place where we find acceptance. We are to accept one another, not as angels, but as humans with shortcomings. We for this reason become compassionate and refuse to pay back wrong for wrong. We forgive and make provisions for offences that may come. We must learn to settle our differences amicably.

Where loving acceptance is, our imperfections adds to the beauty of the home. Husbands and wives should recognise their weaknesses and not use that as a tool of getting back at each other. Parents should also accept their children’s weaknesses and work on improving them. If parents find that

hard, they should look back at how they were when they were young themselves. If they weren't that bad, they should remember that not everyone is born the same.

Summary

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

(1 Corinthians 13:13)

If we can love one another and fear God, all other thing will follow naturally. It is obvious that the bulk of the responsibility in maintaining the bliss of the home lies in the hands of parents, especially the father. It was a father who said, “... as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (Joshua 24:15). When parents love one another, children would be able to emulate them and become loving too. When they fear God, children would emulate them and fear God too.

***Prayer:** Dear Father, help us to play our part in order to build our homes to be a sweet and tranquil home where you alone are known.*

This I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

THE PURPOSE OF THE HOME

"And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed..."

(Malachi 2:15)

I shall be closing this section by writing about the purpose of God for the home. If the purpose of a thing is not known abuse is inevitable. If we don't know the purpose of the home we cannot live to fulfil that for which God made it.

Malachi 2:15, which is the key verse for this book, is a perfect summary of God's purpose of a Christian home. So let us look at two aspects of God's purpose for the home. One is his purpose for the union of spouses, and the others his purpose for parents in bringing up their young.

For Spouses

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

(Genesis 2:18)

Companionship is the major reason for God making a woman for Adam. He made him an "help meet," meaning a suitable help. The wisdom of God can be seen in the nature of which he made the woman. Contrary to what people think that God made man an equal, God made him a help meet. If she were his equal, then he made him rival meet for rivalry. But God made him a help, in other words he made an enabler.

Apart from this he made her different from man. The difference between them is very important to the healthiness of their companionship. This is why the best friend a man can have is a woman and that woman ought to be his wife. I have seen in many cases that it is easy for a man to feel envy at the success of another man. This is because they are the same and comparable. But women rarely feel envy for the success of a man because they are not the same and can't be compared. Rather than feel envy she'd admire him for his success. But women feel envy for one another even over trifles. This is because they are the same and can be compared. But men rarely feel envy for a woman's merits, rather her merits would win his admirations. Similarity prompts comparison, comparison breeds rivalry, and rivalry breeds envy. God therefore made things this way between a man and his wife because he wants them to be companions with the healthiest and purest relationship. So, I think the most important reason why God made the woman for the man is for healthy companionship.

Apart from this he made them for procreation. So it is like he is killing two birds with one stone. While they are having their healthy companionship, they should multiply. This will bring us to our next point.

For Parenting

"And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed..."

(Malachi 2:15)

Back to Malachi where it tells us that God made a man one with his wife because he seeks a godly seed. This has to do with parenting. So it is the duty of parents to see that they raise godly seed. All that can be done in their power must be done to achieve this in Jesus' name and for Jesus' sake.

I shall be talking in detail about parenting in a latter section.

Conclusion

"... That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit..."

(Malachi 2:15)

If we don't know these things we are bound to fail in carrying out our responsibilities. If spouses know that God made them for a healthy companionship and see the profound wisdom in how he fashioned the two sexes they'd actively strive to maintain the health of that companionship. And if they know the reason God made them one and that it is so that they can raise a godly seed, they'd do that more consciously. I shall speak of these things in more depth as we proceed in this book. It is in the knowledge of these things that people can then take heed to their spirits in not going against God's purpose for the Christian matrimony and home. May God help us all. Amen.

***Prayer:** Dear Father God, instil in our hearts the conscious knowledge of your purpose for the home. And in the knowledge of this may we strive live according to that purpose in Jesus' name. Amen.*

SECTION 2

KNOWING THE ROLES

THE WOMAN

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”
(Ephesians 5:22)

In talking about the roles of spouses, I had wished to speak on the man first, but while it shouldn't be an issue in this book, as it doesn't matter who goes first as long as all the issues are well addressed, but the Bible always has a pattern in giving out instructions to married people. It is always the wives first, before the husbands. Whether it be Peter speaking, or Paul speaking, whether they are addressing individuals or a church, the pattern is always the same. So I thought it wise not to contravene that pattern in my book. There is a good reason why the instruction always go to the wives first before the man as I shall seek to explain in a latter chapter. But let us stick to the Biblical order of things.

Being Subject

"Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."
(Ephesians 5:24)

All verses concerning the role of a wife are mostly the same. One would have been sufficient, but we have several verses saying the same thing. That is that women should both submit and be subject to their husbands. I chose the verse above because it gave us an example. In my article, "THE IMPORTANCE OF EXAMPLES TO LEARNING," I wrote on the

importance of having examples when talking about anything. I also pointed how Jesus made use of examples in everything he taught. He even presented his very self as an example. Meanings given to words may change from age to age, but the meanings we can get from examples don't change. Examples also make explaining things easier. So when we look at the role of a Christian woman as a wife, it is best we go with the verse that comes with an example.

One of the examples we have in scriptures of the role of a Christian woman to her husband is how the church is subject to Christ. Now, many modern day translations, in these verses pertaining to how husbands and wives should correlate, only use the word submit which is wrong. NIV puts the verse above this way, "Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything." NLT puts it this way, "As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything." The Message Bible puts it this ridiculous way, "Wives, understand and support your husbands in ways that show your support for Christ." All these are wrong, and as I have always maintained, these new translations are the Devil's tools to weaken everything Christian. They were done to weaken the Christian faith, the Christian doctrine, the Christian identity, the Christian home, and in this case the bond between a woman and her husband. If we must have scriptural understanding of things, we must stick to the King James Bible.

Now what the Bible really says in that verse is not just that a woman should submit but that she should be subject to her husband. They may seem similar, but being subject is stronger than to submit. To submit merely has to do with letting go of the will to accept that of another, but being subject goes beyond that to mean being under and accepting the dominion and authority of a husband. Now, there are verses where the Bible did use the word "submit" in place of subject, but in such verses it uses it this way, "submit yourselves," which the other translations fail to say. It is not a mere submission of will, but a submission of the self. This submission of the self is synonymous to being subject to. Therefore these

verses are not contradictory in any way but are in absolute agreement. So this is the right understanding of how a woman ought to be subject to her husband.

The second example we have on the role of women is Sarah and other holy women of old. It is written, "For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." (1 Peter 3:5 - 6). Sarah was pointed out as one of the holy women. She called her husband lord because she placed herself under his authority and accepted his dominion. I know many people would say the things written in this book are not suitable for the women of today. They would claim that this way of a woman relating to her husband is obsolete. But let me assure you that as many women who think that their lack of the will to be subject to their husbands is because they are living in ways suitable for modern times, that it is not being modern to be this way, rather it is unholy. Yes, you may see the ways of the holy women as obsolete, but there were unholy women in their times too who lived just like those people we would like to term modern women. Such women the disciples saw as unfit to be presented as examples of godliness. One of the things that differentiated the holy women of old time from the unholy women of their time was not in the time they lived in but in their wilful submission of the self to their husbands. So being subject to one's husband is not a matter of being obsolete or modern, rather it is a matter of being holy and unholy. Let as many women as wish to live a holy life and pleasing to God be subject to their husbands.

1 Peter 3:5 presented such submission of the self as an adornment and not a reproach. Is it any wonder why all the holy women were beautiful, whether Sarah, Rebekah, or Rachael? Dear women, holiness makes beautiful. Many modern day women would wish to present such wilful subjection as a reproach to their being as females. It is no wonder that feminists deceive themselves that they have improved the status of womankind. This

deception is because they don't know what adornment means. But the holy women of old time knew, and their examples must holy women of today learn to follow.

Now I must be quick to point out that the Bible did not say, "let the wives be subjected to their own husbands..." rather it says, "let the wives be subject to their own husbands..." These are two very different things. It is one thing to be subject and it is another thing entirely to be subjected. That is where Christianity differs from most other religions that teach that women should be under the authority of their husbands. The Christian woman is commanded to be subject while others teach that their wives should be subjected. To be subject means to wilfully accept the authority of a husband without coercion. To be subjected on the other hand means to be coerced to accept the authority of a husband, even contrary to the will.

Therefore a Christian woman ought to willingly put herself under her husband and accept his authority. This submission is not reliant on whether he is intelligent, rich, well behaved, handsome, or whatever. This submission is simply reliant on the fact that she said, "I do." So there's no reason whatsoever for a Christian woman to choose to despise the authority of her husband after saying "I do."

Love And Soberness

"That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children."

(Titus 2:4)

While most of the command to love goes to the man, we do find that the woman should see it as her duty to love her husbands and children too. Loving isn't as simple as it seems. If it were so simple, I don't think the

Bible would ask the older women to TEACH the younger women. So if love is something that has to be taught and be learnt, it means it is not something that we can do well naturally.

Love should be seen in everything between a man and his wife. They must in love seek the best for their spouses and avoid anything that may hurt them in any way. It is on account of this love that they are to pursue thoroughly chaste lives. I shall speak more on this in more depth in a series of chapter in another section of this book.

Soberness is also a trait of a good Christian wife. Soberness does not mean having a lack of sense of humour. Soberness means being sensible, serious, and solemn. It is sad that when you read the writings of people who throw jibes at women who believe they ought to be subject to their husbands, they always liken such belief to lack of being intelligent, or being dumb. But Christian women need to ensure that they sensible, serious, and solemn. It may take a while, but living this way is sure to silence such mockery over time.

Reverence

"... [let] the wife see that she reverence her husband."

(Ephesians 5:33)

Many today try to make the Bible out to say, "women, respect your husbands." But what is respect in the first place? Don't you respect even strangers? Even when going by the road and someone passes by, do you not give them some form of greetings, even if it is just a simple nod of the head? That simple nod of the head is an act of respect. Is this what the Bible meant that women should accord to their husbands?

It is worthy of note that many marriage counsellors would often tell women to respect their husbands, while that is good, what the Bible says is, "... [let] the wife see that she reverence her husband." (Ephesians 5:33). Reverence is not mere respect but deep respect. Many so called Christian counsellors just talk about the need for women to show mere respect to their husbands but not reverence. Rather than point out that women ought to reverence their husbands they even talk disparagingly of the virtue of having a deep respect for their husbands. They also ask men not to expect reverence from their wives calling that old fashion and that they should shun it themselves for this reason. They also claim that this should be done on account of humility. While men should not go about seeking it as I'd point out further in the next chapter, it is wrong to downplay its importance. However, let counsellors say what they will, God does not expect women to merely respect their husbands, but to reverence them. This reverence should be seen in all her actions towards her husband.

We have a good example of reverence in the lives of the holy women of old. We have seen how Sarah showed reverence calling her husband lord. But I want to point something out about how Rebecca showed reverence when she spoke about him about who Jacob should marry. This is what the passage reads, "And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?" (Genesis 27:46). She didn't give him instructions on what to do even though she would have been right. I get surprised when women get praised for being bossy in their homes and posing as people who must be obeyed else there'd be no peace. I also know that some modern day ladies in Rebecca's shoes would have confronted their husbands saying something like, "look at you, you opened wide your eyes and allowed Esau to marry these crazy women, I am not going to allow my favourite boy, Jacob, to fall victim to your carelessness. He must marry from my people. If you stand in my way hell would be let loosed in this home. If you think I'm bluffing just watch and see." But Rebecca, in her reverence for Isaac, didn't even seem to see it fit for her to be telling her husband what decision

to take. She didn't even present it as an advice. She only told him of how those women made her life unbearable and left him to make a decision best to him. That was reverence at its best and a good example of godliness.

Should A Woman Disobey Her Husband For Any Reason?

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives."

(1 Peter 3:1)

Now I wish to talk about an aspect of marriage that has the potential to be controversial. That is whether or not a woman should disobey her husband when he asks her to do something "against God's will." Now, I don't think this should be the case in a Christian home, because a home that is Christian must be such an one that everything is guided by the holy precepts of God. A Christian man can't give un-Christian instructions to his wife. What we may see, though still rarely in a Christian home, is a case where a woman feels that her husbands instructions are posing as a barrier to her devotion or service to God. And in more severe cases is when perchance something went terribly wrong and the husband lost his faith and starts giving un-Christian instructions. So we shall look at the Bible and try to see what it says about these.

I don't see any verse of the Bible that commands a woman or gives her leave to disobey her husband in any occasion. When the Bible says she be subject to her husband as the church is subject to Christ, I don't see that there is an exception to that. Children have more justifiable reasons to disobey their parents when it comes to sin than wives do their husbands.

Why I said this is because the Bible says to children, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." (Ephesians 6:1). By saying "in the Lord," it means they are to obey their parents provided it does not contravene God's laws. For example, children should not consent to murder, steal, cheat, or tell lies, even when commanded by their parents. Yet wisdom demands that should the need arise, they should refuse respectfully and not arrogantly. But we can find no such command to women regarding how they should be subject to their husbands. All we see is that they are to be subject "in all things."

I read an article in which the author tried to explain why there are circumstances when it becomes scripturally okay for a woman to disobey her husband. This person put forward a seemingly valid argument in making reference to Ananias and Sapphira, saying Sapphira died because she obeyed her husband. But this is not true. The judgment Peter pronounced on her under the leading of the Holy Ghost goes thus, "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out." (Acts 5:9). It was not a matter of obedience to her husband but a matter of agreeing together. Whatever it was that led her husband to do this evil was the very same thing that led her to lie. If it was the vain desire of applause that made Ananias to tell lies, she too desired the applause and for that reason told the lie. There is no reason for us to believe that she was commanded to lie and she did not want to lie herself. But when Peter confronted her, she lied vainly desiring that applause, not because she obeyed her husband. She died for her own sin and not for obedience. So the account of Ananias and Sapphira is inadequate to say that a woman ought to disobey her husband when he makes a sinful demand of her.

Even in the Law, in which God says that when others entice us to follow after other Gods, it does not mention that even in such a case a woman should disobey her husband. For example it is written, "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us

go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers... Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him..." (Deuteronomy 13:6, 8). Though we see the following words, "the wife of thy bosom" we see nothing about husbands.

That is the Old Testament I hear someone say. But the New Testament contains similar commands, but being a Testament for a more radical cause than the Old, we find it this way, "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." (Matthew 19:29). Here again you see no mention of husband, though we see father and mother which we didn't see in the Old Testament. There are other verses which show that people ought not to follow their fathers in the ways that displease the Lord, for example Ezekiel 20:18, but we can see none whatsoever giving women leave to disobey their husbands.

What God requires of Christian women is total obedience to their husbands. This also applies when a husband's will comes in between a woman and her devotion or service to God. I was once at a church meeting where there was an election of people to different posts in the church. I am particularly against using election in selecting leaders or practicing democracy in the church, but I shall treat that topic in another book. So in this election a woman was elected to be an assistant coordinator of one of the church's departments. After the election the husband of the man said he doesn't want his wife to serve in that post. I thought the pastor should listen to the man, but he turned on the man and questioned why he didn't speak up before the election took place. I don't know why, but maybe he didn't want her to serve in that position but not wanting this to be known in the church remained silent probably hoping she would not win. Now that she won he had no choice than to speak out. We could only assume. But the pastor talked him down. His wife too said if the Lord wanted her to serve, that is taken her victory as a show of God's will, she could not oppose God. So she held to the position contrary to the will of her husband.

Let church leaders do what they will. This is what the Bible says, "If a woman also vow a vow unto the LORD, and bind herself by a bond, being in her father's house in her youth... And if she had at all an husband, when she vowed, or uttered ought out of her lips, wherewith she bound her soul; And her husband heard it, and held his peace at her in the day that he heard it: then her vows shall stand, and her bonds wherewith she bound her soul shall stand. But if her husband disallowed her on the day that he heard it; then he shall make her vow which she vowed, and that which she uttered with her lips, wherewith she bound her soul, of none effect: and the LORD shall forgive her." (Numbers 30:3, 6-8). The husband has the power to disallow even her vow to God. So, not even service or devotion to God should make a woman disobey her husband. A woman may desire to go for church programs which she attach strong spiritual importance to, but if her husband should disallow her, then she ought not to go and God shall not hold that against her. So when it comes to serving God, Christian women should serve God only within the confines set by their husbands. Even if they don't go to any church program at all, to mention the worst case, they could still maintain a personal life of devoted prayer and intercession.

I also believe that is for the reason that a Christian woman is under the authority of her husband that we see that the Bible says little about the service of women. For example, in the verse above, in which Jesus Christ speaks about sacrifice and all out service to him, where he said, "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." (Matthew 19:29), it didn't mention husband. I believe this is because she is supposed to only serve God within the confines allowed by her husband.

I noticed that God does not come between a man and his wife because he is not the author of confusion. When Sarah, Abraham's wife, wanted him to send Hagar away, he didn't wish to do it, but she was right. God did not on the account of her being right go to her and ask her to send Hagar away

without the consent of her husband. Rather because it is right that he do so, God approached Abraham and said to him, "Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called." (Genesis 21:12). As far as God was concerned, the consent of Abraham was important, though he could have asked Sarah to send the woman away because she was right, ignoring Abraham.

Now we can see that the bond of marriage is stronger than most people make it out to be. My advice to Christian ladies therefore is to be very careful before saying "I do." You must know the gravity of the decision you're making when you take a marriage vow. The world wouldn't want to see it this way, but this is God's way. So choose your husband wisely, and most importantly prayerfully. Don't go into marriage thinking well if he says things that are not according to God's will I will refuse to obey him. To refuse to obey him is against God's will. So be careful and prayerful.

What if a woman chooses her husband wrongly and he makes demands that are not sinful but outrageously inconvenient? Now that this is not sinful, what shall she do? Shall she act the hypocrite to make sinful that which is not sinful merely to justify her intended disobedience? That is assuming it were right to disobey one's husband when his instructions are against God's will. She can't do that. So women ought to proceed into marriage with the intent and resolve to submit completely and be wilfully subject to their husbands. They must be careful to know if he is such a person they are going to be able to obey completely. They must therefore approach God on the matter of the choice of a husband in earnest prayer presenting their fears to God and asking for guidance. And so must she proceed each day in earnest prayer to God for her husband that he lead her not astray. Absolute submission of the self is the role of a Christian woman.

It won't be good for women to be forward to disobey God on account of their husband's bad instructions, rather, should this happen, their actions should have an influence on him for a right actions. For example someone

likes to steal but knows it is a sin, but when her husband says she should steal from her office she happily goes ahead to do it because he has instructed her so. That is wrong. She must, in earnestness, pray that God would restrain him from giving her bad instructions and must herself always seek to dissuade him from making such demands. For example in the case of stealing, she could present the dangers of the decision. She could find out what makes him make such a demand. If it be fear she could seek to ease his fears by encouraging him to remain positive and use the opportunity to offer him some godly advice.

So let it not be that a bad husband say, "honey I need you to falsify some accounts at your working place," and she says in her heart, "Yay! Stealing time! If he says so I'm to obey him outrightly." As I have quoted before, it is written "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear." (1 Peter 3:1 - 2). Even if they don't believe God, your actions and words should have the effect of winning them over and not give a happy consent to sinful demands.

Before I conclude this issue of absolute obedience, I'd like to tell a true life story of a woman which my mom told me. A woman married a man who was a Christian but she could not conceive. Her mother-in-law who believed in fetish powers became agitated and started putting pressure on her son to consult a wizard in their village so that his wife could conceive. He rejected for a while but later yielded to her constant pressure and asked his wife to follow him to the village to see the wizard. She couldn't believe he could ask her to do such. She prayed about it but the man was adamant that they must go. She consulted her pastor, who told this story, and knowing the gravity of what he was about to say couldn't look at her face while he said it. He told her to do as her husband demanded of her. She couldn't believe what the pastor said and she cried home with her hands on her head. After long persistence she (after much prayer) consented to go with her husband. When they got to the village her mother-in-law was

delighted to see them. However when they went to the place of the wizard they found that he had been dead a short while before they arrived. This led to the conversion of many of the women who believed in fetish powers to Christ, and the lady herself conceived and gave birth. Such conversion couldn't have happened had she disobeyed her husband.

Now this is a spectacular occurrence and one I find hard to accept that Christian women should consent to. It doesn't however mean still that women should be forward to obey in evil matters expecting the spectacular to happen. So the summary of it all is that people should be careful before making this brief statement, "I do." To disobey one's husband for any reason whatsoever after making that statement is against God's will. So women (and men also) should be very prayerful before saying, "I do," and they must remain prayerful concerning their marriage till death do them part.

Meekness And Decorum

"But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

(1 Peter 3:4)

Women ought to cultivate a meek and quiet spirit. They ought to maintain silence as much as possible, everywhere but most especially in church. The voice of a Christian woman should scarcely be heard in public, except maybe in a private conversation. They should speak only when necessary.

Today the virtue of having a quiet spirit is being daily trodden under foot. Having a quiet spirit does not mean one is ignorant or stupid. It does not have any ignoble connotation. Rather it means she has a high level of self

respect. It also means she is no commoner. The voice of respectable people of understanding are rarely heard.

It is funny though sad to see that woman seek respect by cheap means and rather than by hard earned means. Sometimes you see women try to accord respect to themselves by saying they laboured for nine months to give birth to their children. For this reason, say they, they should be respected. But let me start with themselves. Do women know that animals too go through labour also? And it's so painful too. But how many women accord respect to animals on account of bearing children in their wombs for whatever amount of period? So if child labour is the reason for respect they should first show us an example of how we ought to accord respect to them by the way they show respect for mother goats, dogs, rats, and what have you. Do forgive me for using animals for an example to present my point, but my advice to the Christian woman is this, get your respect from where the Bible says you should get it from. Not by cheap means that just every female in all creation goes through, but by that which is stated in scriptures, "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (1 Peter 3:4). There are many other ways women seek cheap respect but you can look around you, in the Newspaper, tele, etc. to see them. But let this advice guide at all times and let Christian women shun this reproachable means of seeking respect.

To be sure about this, what does the Bible tell us about what keeping quiet means? It is written, "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding." (Proverbs 17:28). This verse does not mean that it takes a fool to hold his peace, or that a fool can hold his peace in order to look wise. Mark the starting word, "even." This verse is only emphasising the amount of respect holding one's peace attracts. If a fool is considered wise just because he holds his peace, how much more shall the wise be considered wise when he holds his peace. And it goes on to tell us that the person who shutteth his mouth is esteemed a man of understanding. But what does it say about

loud people? Proverbs 9:13 says, "A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing." They who know nothing are usually the loudest. Sometimes they may sound intelligent initially but later on their foolishness shall be laid plain before all. So these commands to women about being silent and having a quiet spirit is not to suppress them but that they may command respect. The respect they command is very useful to the adornment of the gospel.

Women are the pride of any people including the people of God, and the respect they command determines the esteem that shall be placed on such a people. The respect of women must therefore not be gambled with. They must retain that respect by all means including by being of a quiet spirit.

The Bible therefore does not have these several verses commanding a woman to be silent in order to deprive her but it is in order to protect her. It is he who speaks that is at risk of disapproval, whether fair or unfair. It is he who speaks that is at risk of criticism, constructive or destructive. It is he who speaks that is exposed to the risk of being ridiculed by fools. So let the women be silent as much as possible and let the men do the talking.

It is written "a man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed." (Ecclesiastes 8:1). There is a glory that wisdom causes to radiate on the faces of the wise. There is this confidence and boldness (not haughtiness) that characterises the face of the wise. That is what the Bible is pointing out to us. Intelligence can be seen more written on people's faces and not in the volume of words they speak. The intelligence of a woman should be seen on the soberness of her face, her decorum, composure, and actions. Being of a quiet spirit and of a chaste disposition is the best way for women to command respect.

Conclusion

*"If ye love me, keep my commandments."
(John 14:15)*

The commands given to a Christian woman are all commands to be humble, and it is herein that a woman shall find her honour and not apart from it. As it is written, "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit." (Proverbs 29:23). Also, "Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off." (Psalms 138:6). Again, "Surely he [God] scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly." (Proverbs 3:34). The woman therefore shall find beauty in the submission of the self. She shall find honour in silence. She shall find respect in reverence. This is the way God ordains it to be.

***Prayer:** Dear Lord and Father, help us to be able to live by your ordained instructions for our homes. Help our women to live to find joy in doing according to your will. This we pray in Jesus' name.
Amen.*

THE MAN

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”
(Ephesians 5:25)

Now to the man with whom I wanted to start the discussion of roles. It may seem like the bulk of the sacrifice is on the woman from the things I discussed in the previous chapter, however just like we are presented with the example of Christ and his church, the same example applies here. And when we look at that example again, we can easily see who is to bear the bulk of the sacrifice. It says “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” (Ephesians 5:25). So we see that the bulk of the sacrifice and responsibility required to make and sustain a happy Christian home is still on the man. I shall explain how below.

Love

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”
(Ephesians 5:25)

Aren't we done talking about love yet? I guess not. A man is to love his wife the way Jesus loves his church and gave himself for her. It is this sacrificial love that should characterise all about how a man relates with his wife.

As said earlier, the bulk of the sacrifices is on the part of the man. All these sacrifices are on account of love. Not with a casual love but with the same love with which Christ loved his church. A simple question would give us the simple answer we require. Take a look at Christ and his church, who sacrificed more? Christ. Christ gave everything for the church, his honour, his tranquil, and his very life for the sake of his church. So if the example given to us in marriage is that of Christ and his church, then great is that sacrifice required of the man.

Another example of the love with which husbands ought to love their wives given to us in the Bible can be found in the passage where it is written, "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself..." (Ephesians 5:33). So men ought to love their wives as their own selves, for in loving their wives they love themselves. We have a proof of this in this same passage where it is written, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." (Ephesians 5:28 - 29). So in loving his wife a man in truth loves his own self.

Humility and Meekness

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

(Matthew 11:29)

Christ' testimony about himself is that he is meek and lowly in heart (Matthew 11:29). If a man has Christ for his example, then ought he to be meek and lowly in heart towards his wife. Men ought to be lowly in heart. It is on this account I would like to point out some things I consider very important, lest the things I've said in the previous chapter cause people to

behave badly. The husband needs to know that all these demands on the woman are made by God. Therefore she answers to God. Remember I mentioned that to be in subjection is completely different from to be subjected. It is a wilful subjection that should not be imposed. It would be wrong to demand these things not to mention demanding them persistently. It is enough for the woman to know her role, and knowing this, let her conscience guide her to the obedience of God's command. I think it would be very wrong and inappropriate for men to keep saying, "the Bible asks you to submit to me..." This is both ungodly and not in the best interest of good family coexistence. Imposing the will of one on another is definitely going to cause frictions and unhealthy feelings. Persistent demand for submission contrary to the will of the woman is as much a coercion as using violence. Such submission if gotten is un-Christian for it is contrary to her will. But when the woman knows her role and is godly enough to play it, good. Else, leave it all to God. For this reason, just as I said women need to be very careful and prayerful before choosing a husband, men need to be very careful and prayerful too. I think a man would live in a semi-hell if he spends his life with a woman who cares nothing about playing her role as a wife.

The superiority in the physical strength and other aspects of man to the woman is obvious. To deny these things or to downplay it is foolish. These things can easily cause a man to become proud and inconsiderate. But it behoves a godly man to sacrifice his pride and never use his strengths for self gratification. God gave man this strength for protection and not for tyranny. Paul said, "Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction." (2 Corinthians 13:10). He recognised the essence of the power the Lord hath given him, so must men ought to recognise the essence of the strengths given them by God, and learn to use it to serve the home. Paul recognised that the very power given to him to edification can be, if not careful, used for destruction. So let men know that these very strength that has been given them for the good and protection of the home can be used for its very destruction, if they aren't

careful.

A.W. Tozer, in his sermon titled, "From The Hands Of Esau," said, "The best protection your family can have is a humble father." He also quoted a counsellor who said to a man who had come to him for counselling concerning his marriage, but before the man could go on to start narrating his story the counsellor said, "If there's a problem in a home, almost always humility would take care of it..." How true. When men begin to allow their faculties to pump them up so as to become proud, impatient, and domineering, it so easily tears the home apart. But when he's humble, tolerant, and considerate, he becomes a firm pillar of the home of which there can be no shaking. We shall talk about feminism later and the damage it is causing to our homes and societies, but I believe that a thing as evil as feminism was not even birthed by women, but by proud and violent men.

When a man is humble, tolerant, and considerate, it becomes really easy for the wife to be subject to their husbands. While I do not present this as an excuse for women not to be subject to their husbands, that is on account of his lack of humility, behaving in ways that helps others to keep God's command is a good virtue. It is written, "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." (Romans 14:21). Seeing she is a fellow heir of the kingdom, one must not act in ways that would pose as a stumbling block to their spouse's heavenward journey. It is written, "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence." (Romans 14:19-20). These verses talk about food, but it also applies to a range of other things about how we should be considerate of others, this includes in marriage. So let us ensure that our actions don't pose as a stumbling block for others. If being meek would make it easier for one's spouse to keep God's commandment, then let meekness and condescension be done with joy. Let the wife therefore be helped by means of humility and meekness as a sister who ought not to miss heaven.

Honour And Understanding

“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”
(1 Peter 3:7)

So we see this verse above that husbands are to live with their wives according to knowledge and give them due honour. This verse points out what I said earlier that she ought to be helped as a sister who ought not to miss heaven when it used the following words, “heirs together of the grace of life.” Men must be fully conscious of this at all times.

Just as the wife is to reverence her husband, so must a Christian man give his wife due honour. Failure to honour her and give her the praise she deserves amounts to robbery. Looking at the things I wrote in the previous chapter, it is obvious that these demands are much and are contrary to the natural will of the fallen man, but a woman, being a Christian and wilfully in subjection to her husband, ought to be giving due honour. Let her be praised for it is written, “Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.” (Proverbs 31:30-31). Failure to give her of the fruit of her hands is disobedience to this noble command.

The man ought to also dwell with his wife with understanding. Now back to the example of Isaac and Rebecca concerning whom Jacob should marry (Genesis 27:46). We saw in the last chapter that Rebecca did not give instructions to her husband or even presented her concerns as an advice, but merely told him of how the wives of Esau had been a thorn in her flesh.

This I pointed out as an example of reverence for husbands. But we can see also that Isaac too was a man of understanding. He understood clearly what her need was and what she wanted for her son though she never mentioned it. In the next verse (which happens to be the first verse of the next chapter) it says, “And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.” (Genesis 28:1). He went on to say, “Arise, go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham. And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padanaram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.” (Genesis 28:2-5).

Isaac was a man of understanding and it is the same way that men ought to be understanding and be wary of the needs of the home even when they are not told. This understanding should be driven by love. He ought to have his ears to the ground and seek to understand the need of his home and address them adequately without being told. Like Rebekah, not many women are likely to tell their exactly husbands exactly what they need, for this reason a need may go un-catered for if the man is not understanding and sensitive.

Being a man of understanding also entails understanding the weaknesses of his spouse. If we handle the issues of the weaknesses of others properly in homes, it becomes a strength to the home rather than what it seems, a weakness. When well handled, weaknesses creates more grounds for more love. It is written, “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.” (Colossians 3:19). Christian men must never allow flaws and weaknesses on the part of their spouse to make them become bitter against them. They should also avoid setting hyper high standards for their home that would make everyone's weaknesses more pronounce. Rather, where they notice weakness, they should seek to work on it and correct it

lovingly. To act otherwise drives love away, “He that covereth a transgression seeketh love...” (Proverbs 17:9), therefore he that fails to cover transgression throws love away. If love is what sustains the home, then throwing it away is a very unwise thing to do.

Provision

“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

(1 Timothy 5:8)

It is the husband's sole responsibility to provide for his own house in all ways. We read in the verse above that if any man provide not for his own house, he has denied the faith and is not merely like an infidel but is worse. Now that is a grave statement. This shows what great importance God places on men playing their role as providers for the home. It may be true that this applies to male and female alike, but I think that we must not forget the gender pronoun he uses here. Mark the words, “his” and “his own.” I therefore think a woman is not an infidel, not to mention worse than an infidel, if she doesn't, whether by will or by inability, provide for her home. But the man surely is one if he allows his family to slip into lack. So men should be cautious not to allow their family fall into such a state.

Regarding provision for the home, it is very possible for a man to fail at times to provide the best for their comfort. At such times the home should be very considerate and not demand beyond what the man can provide. If the family in the next house has a nice jeep they go around with, a nice school for their kids, etc., and the man in this home can't afford those, they should not label him or treat him with reproach as one who is worse than an infidel. Neither should the man feel like one just because he can't

provide for his home as much as the other family enjoys. But let him and his home appreciate the little he is able to provide with gratitude to God for all things. Nevertheless men ought to go out of their way (of course not by doing evil) to give the best to their home. The best shelter, security, education, diet, etc. We shall talk more on these in a latter chapter on finances.

What men ought to provide for is not just money and what it can buy, but they ought to also provide direction for the home. This provision also entails rulership. It is written concerning a bishop that he ought to be “One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.” (1 Timothy 3:4). Why? “For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” (1 Timothy 3:5). I know the sophists of today have been skewing the meaning of being a ruler and applying to it the meaning of a tyrant. Ruler is just about the same thing as what a manager is in today’s business arena or one who governs (2 Samuel 20:26). But let them skew the meaning of words all they want, a man must learn to rule his home and provide leadership for his home and guide them in the ways and fear of God. This is his God given responsibility.

God was particularly proud of Abraham on account of his ability to provide leadership for his household for it is written, “And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.” (Genesis 18:17-19). This was a virtue exhibited by this great father of faith. Let godly men take him for a good example even in this too.

People talk a lot about the women who went to the grave of Christ on the morning of his ascension and heap praises on their heads as though they

did some super incredible stuff. The most incredible thing is that they woke up early. If that were not incredible, then there was not so much an incredible stuff there. There is a hymn of 14 verses about these women. The title is, "Rough Was The Way." We don't know the terrain of Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, yet someone wrote a hymn titled, "Rough Was The Way." How did he know it was rough? The hymn just narrates the women going to the tomb, but you'd think it was a story of three heroic damsels fearlessly going into a dungeon infested with fifty dragons. The hymn was not without its truths, but I found the exaggeration to be very annoying. Not that the actions of the women were contemptible, but such spicing up of simple story can't win much praise. This hymn is just one amongst a host of other writings about these women, how they prepared spices, how they woke early, how they cared so much, but very little is said concerning Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus. If this was deliberate, then it is a great evil orchestrated by the Devil aimed at hiding the leadership role of men. If it was by omission, then the attention that the sex often attract has cheated us greatly and drawn our eyes from seeing the needful. However what we read about these men before the women went to the tomb is, "Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus." (Mark 15:43). He says Joseph went in boldly. Our hymnodist ascribed so much "legendary boldness" to the women which the Bible says nothing about and omitted this boldness that was well stated in the Bible. The Gospel according to John gives more details about what was done with the body of Christ, "He [Joseph of Arimathaea] came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand." (John 19:38 - 42). It was there example that the women followed in everything that they did, for when

they had done all these to the body of Christ it is written, "And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Josés beheld where he was laid." (Mark 15:47). If these men had not done such noble acts to the body of Christ, maybe it won't have crossed their mind to do as they did.

If we wish to learn lessons from the stories of the Bible we should learn the proper lessons it presents us with and not make up lessons we dug up with our sentiments. The story of John of Arimathaea and Nicodemus is a perfect example of how men ought to set good examples. The more we hide the importance of men taking the leadership role the more they'd be unconscious of the obligation to provide leadership. When this happens they'll lack the leadership virtue they ought to have and that would be to the harm of the home. If women take up the leadership role of men they can't perform as well as when men who were designed for such responsibility. This will be like trying to put a square peg into a round hole. If this happens in the home, the home would therefore not have the best leadership. If it happens in the church, the church would not have no leadership. Let us therefore ensure that we don't hide the importance of men playing a leadership role and lead by good examples. Boys should therefore be brought up to have the mentality to enable provide a good leadership for their homes.

The Voice of The Home

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

(Joshua 24:15)

I mentioned in the last chapter that when people speak they expose themselves to the risk of criticism, both fair and unfair. Now the man has to be the one to brave this criticisms. He is to be the voice of the home.

It is a major crisis that the family in today's world is being broken into individuals rather than to be seen and treated as one entity. This is a crisis that must be dealt with as quickly as possible. The home ought to be one body. And the husband is the head of that body and so must be the mouthpiece of it.

Joshua as a man who knew his God given role spoke for his house in Joshua 24:15 above. This in a way has to do with rulership, but here I refer to declaring to the world the stance of the home. We are told that a woman must not ask questions in the church but that she should ask her husband at home (1 Corinthians 14:35). This allows that if it is beyond him to explain to his wife, he could ask in church. This way, if it be unfairly or fairly opposed, or if it be a stupid question without his realizing it, he bears the criticism too, not his spouse.

A home should not have so many voices. As in the example I gave in the previous chapter concerning a woman who wanted to serve in a position in church contrary to her husband's will. Concerning the matter the man said no, but the wife yes, and maybe if the children were asked they'd give yet other responses of their own. This is confusion. This is not the way God wants the home to be. They ought to be agreed in all things. The home can't be agreed if it has many voices.

Conclusion

“Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”

(Romans 12:9)

Let love guide in all things. Let both the wife and the husband know their God given role and play it as their conscience and love shall guide them. This I believe shall make for a happy home and blissful conjugal coexistence.

Prayer: Dear Lord and Father, help us to be able to live by your ordained instructions for our homes. Help our men to live to find joy in doing according to your will in loving their wives as themselves and the way you love your church. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

CHILDREN

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

(Colossians 3:20)

Children have many roles to play in the homes of their parents while under their roof before they start their own homes. But chief of all that is required of them is absolute obedience to parents, father and mother alike. This is well pleasing to God.

To what extent are children to obey their parents? To Christian parents is written “in all things,” but I shall add that “provided their instruction does not lead you against God.” Now I know it is possible to use this as an excuse to disobey. This I say not of my opinion but according to that which is written in scriptures. While the Bible says we must honour those in authority, we find the apostles asking the council of the high priest and captains, those regarded as authorities this question, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29). Provided it is God you are really obeying and not your waywardness. The apostles did not go against the instructions of the council because they wanted to evade tax or make dishonest gains, rather it was out of obedience and obedience to God alone. So children are to obey their parents provided their instruction does not lead them to disobey God.

But the grounds for disobedience must be for quite serious issues and not trivial ones. I have heard people try to say children should disobey their parents when they give them wrong instructions that does not affect the child himself, for example, they claim that if a man sends his son on an errand to buy liquor, the child is to refuse to buy it. I don’t know what part of scriptures they have as a backing for such an argument. But while a

good Christian child should seek to convince his parents to stop their habit and express their unwillingness to have to buy such a thing, if parents insists then they ought to obey their parents.

But how about when the parents of a child ask them to do what is evil. For example if a man asks his daughter to go into prostitution. What shall she do? Or if a man asks his son to go rob someone or an institution. What shall he do? In such a case they have to choose between God and parent. It may be hard but a child has to stick to God's word. The grounds for rejecting their instruction must also be evident to the parent. That is they should well aware that it is because of their instruction is against God's will. This may cause the parent to have a rethink. If they insist, then respectfully reject and gladly bear the consequences. Very often than not, the consequences are not always as grievous as one would think. You are their child and that natural love is still there. Just don't be rude. For a more in dept information on how to relate with unbelieving parents I strongly recommend the book titled "A Christian In A Non-Christian World." I recommend it to every Christian, especially to young ones.

I read a story of a boy who found it hard to accept that he, as a child, was to be subject to the authority of those above him. He was not particularly disobedient to his father, but he didn't like the idea of his father placing him under the authority of others. This caused him to sometimes disobey the instructions of his father, that is those he gave him through others. His father didn't want to make him accept his position as a child subject to authority by force but chose to deal with him according to how the little boy wished. He however gave the boy instructions but didn't force him nor enjoin him to live by it. He went against his father's instructions, decided to catch some foolish fun and got into a big trouble. He damaged the property of another. He hoped his father would pay for the damage but his father refused to pay saying he did not damage the property while doing what he asked him to do. The boy pleaded but he said he is not going to play his role as a father since he chose not to play the role of a son. The only alternative for the boy at those times (if he could not pay for the damages)

was to go to a jail for juveniles. He begged his father with tears who later accepted to pay for the damaged property provided he promises to be an obedient boy to which he eagerly agreed. Such a boy in his foolishness refused to accept his state as the child of his parents and only learned the hard way to accept his role. Children need to know that the authority parents have over them is for their own benefit and not for their harm. If only this boy had been obedient to his father he wouldn't have got into such a trouble. God has so made us in a way that parents naturally love their children and seek the best for them. It is also for their best that he placed them under such authority. It is under such authority that they shall be safest.

I know there are parents who are abusive and insult their own children. They correct from the point of irritation and not of love. Even when there is nothing to correct they just enjoy raining abuses on their children. Someone once told me that there's this man that in his home he'd ask, "where is that idiot?" And his son would come running saying, "here I am." Of such parents one may think that their authority is for the worse, but this authority that is being abused is far better than being under no authority at all. So Christian children must learn to obey their parents in all things, whether they are loving or abusive, tender or brutal, caring or indifferent, and what have you. Only let them not sin.

On this grounds, it is expected that in a Christian home a child should accord to his/her parents absolute obedience. This has tremendous benefits. A child who lives his life in obedience to the godly injunctions of godly parents is sure to live a blessed life. That is why it is written, "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." (Proverbs 6:20 - 23).

It is worthy of note that children should be forward to maintain and respect the legacies of their parents. They should respect their values and honour those values. The only time they should seek a change from these things is when it is clearly against God's will or clearly disadvantageous. I feel sad when I see children of very conservative parents living in a very liberal way with no constraints whatsoever. For example in a case where parents don't like party songs in the church but every time younger people do anything in the church it is often contrary to what their parents believe or like. In such circumstances which I've seen myself, some parents are forced to leave the church for the partying children while some others meet outside to talk. These children call themselves the leaders of tomorrow but know little about what leadership entails. They see themselves as leaders of tomorrow yet they don't seem to know how to respect the values of the elderly and honour their legacies. Partying in the church (even if the songs have lyrics with Christian terms) is clearly wrong in itself, but assuming it were even right, yet they ought not to do these things for the sake of their parents. And they should not be seeking to change the ways of their parents thinking they're modern and their parents old school. It is not fitting for a Christian child to behave this way. The only time they should live contrary to the legacies and values of their parents is when it is clearly against God's will.

Apart from obedience and keeping the legacies of parents, children should be content with whatever they receive from their parents. I, as a little child, wasn't always content with what my parents gave to me. That wasn't good of me at all. I do feel bad when I look back to those times. We should learn to be supportive and not murmur at what our parents give us. The dad in the other home may be giving his children a private jet each, and make his children spend each holiday in Paris, Las Vegas, Melbourne, and what have you. Let them do what they want. You be content with what your own parents give you.

Children ought also be supportive to their parents and gladly follow their leading. When it is time for family devotion, don't wait until they have

started getting pissed off before showing up. It is best families do their family devotion in a happy state of mind. When it is time to go to church or school, don't wake up late, drag your feet, rather ensure that you are ready on time. When in church or at other places behave properly and obediently. Also give good attention to your academics and skill development. I know as kids your understanding is limited and it is naturally expected that you would make mistakes from time to time. But strive to be at your best behaviour at all times. This is one of your best contribution to the home while still under your parent's roof.

I read a poem titled, "The Captain's Daughter" by James T. Field. In it there was a captain whose ship was caught in a storm. They were all frightened by the fearful storm and lost all hopes of escape from the storm. The hearts of all the men on board failed them. The very captain shouted "we are lost!" But his daughter comforted him with these words, "Isn't God upon the ocean, just the same as on the land?" Her father and other men were so much comforted by this statement and took courage. The poem ended with these words, "And we anchored safe in harbour when the morn was shining clear." Christian children ought to be a source of encouragement to their parents in distressful times.

Children would also do themselves a lot of good to see that they read the book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes systematically and regularly. It gives solid wisdom upon which a good life can be built. Its lessons are very much applicable today (as all of scriptures) as it was when it was written. Thus shall they live lives that shall make both their parents and their Creator proud.

Prayer: *Dear Father, help our children to live in absolute obedience to your will and to their parents. If there be any with unbelieving parents, give them wisdom on how to live wisely with their parents.*
This I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

THE HIERARCHY

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body."

(Ephesians 5:23)

We could have just gone without pointing this out, but it is important to talk on this topic. From what have been discussed so far we can easily see the order that is to exist in a Christian home. But it is good to state the stance of scriptures on the hierarchy of a Christian home for this hierarchy is being challenged in recent decades.

There is no efficient organisation that does not have some sort of a hierarchal structure or the other. The hierarchal structure in such an organisation is to ensure order and thus is very important. One can easily know his role and play it effectively without having friction with other colleagues. The hierarchal structure of an organisation is not a diagram showing who is more important than the other, or who is better than the other, though it can be abused and used by those in the higher echelon in intimidating those in the lower. But the purpose of hierarchy is to maintain order, efficiency, and smoothness in operations. It is for teamwork not tyranny or intimidation. The same way God has not left the Christian home founded by him without an hierarchy to maintain order, efficiency, and smoothness in operations. We are a team and God has provided for us his own hierarchal structure.

As I have said in an earlier chapter, God has goals he has set for the Christian home. In the beginning he made the man and made the woman for the purpose of companionship. He made Christian marriage that he may be able to seek a godly seed. And by these we could be a healthy foundation for a healthy society. If the entities that make the home don't

know their role, it shall not be long before the whole institution collapse and the goals be left unachieved. For this reason it is foolish to assume that a home can exist as it ought and fulfil its goals without its own hierarchy.

I once saw a post in which were three umbrellas arranged vertically. The umbrella at the top was the biggest with a distinct colour, let's say blue, and written was "Christ." The second umbrella below that was smaller, let's say red, and written on it was "husband." The third umbrella below that was the smallest of the three, let's say green, and written on it was "wife." And below that was just written children. This was supposed to show the hierarchy of the home. But a woman commented that in today's world the husband and wife are the same umbrella with a green and red colour. By this she meant that husbands and wives are equal today. This is just one of the foolish ways, that for the ego of feminists, the family hierarchy is being challenged.

She may be right and she may be wrong in saying this concerning the society of today, but she is very wrong in saying this if she referred to a Christian home. The Biblical order is that which the post I talked about above tried to describe. God first (in Trinity and in Unity), the husband, the wife, then the children. We can only say the husband and the wife are equal if we mean to say that Christ and his church are equal. For the example given us in the Bible is this, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." (Ephesians 5:23). So let the world do what they wish, this is the order of a Christian home.

I tried to read some views of feminists in the course of writing this book and it amazes me how they keep saying the woman is equal to the man. It is true that a woman has the capacity to reason, to feel, to judge, etc. She has a soul and everything that makes a man different from an animal, and on this account feminist foolishly assert that men and women are equal, as if to say a lion and a panther are the same for they possess everything in common and they both live in the wild. Let them say what they wish, but

he who made them never said he made them equal. I say these things at a risk of heavy criticism, but I shall say it all the same. It is absolute foolishness to look at a man and woman, observe their physical features and say they are the same and equal. It is far more foolish for someone to read his Bible and say the same. We must know the obvious difference in gender and consequent difference in roles. To dance to the tune of feminism shall prove to be foolish with an imminent disastrous effect sooner or later.

This is a fictional conversation between Max and Juliet his fiancé:

Juliet: *You know, when we get married we are going to live as equals. I hope you know we are equals, right?*

Max: *Does the Bible say you're my equal?*

Juliet: *Of course. It says there is no difference between Jew and Greek, male and female. I think that was written in Galatians 3:28 or so. So we are equals.*

Max (laughing): *I don't agree with you. You're misapplying that verse and I don't have the strength to argue with you on this issue. But does being equal to me in our marriage really matter to you? Is it so much of a big deal that you couldn't just do without?*

Juliet: *No, in this ultra modern age we women are now wiser. We can't take what women of the past took. We must live together as equals.*

Max: *Well, if being my equal matters so much to you that you can't let it go, why then do you wish to marry a man? Go marry a woman like yourself. That way you won't need these lopsided arguments that won't take you anywhere. That way you'd be marrying someone who's absolutely equal with you.*

Juliet: *What? Are you really saying that?*

Max: *That is my candid advice to you if marrying your equal is sacrosanct to you. It would also give you peace of mind because you won't have to rely on arguments and misapplication of scriptures to prove your point. It would be clear as crystal.*

Juliet: *Don't you know that is evil and is an abomination?*

Max: *Claiming to be my equal is as much a contravening of God's order as the evil abomination of same sex marriage you're talking about.*

Some so called Christians even take the false argument of a woman being equal to a man to another level. They try to start attributing feminine qualities to God despite that all the titles given to God are masculine, Father, King, Son of God, etc. I listened to some really ridiculous explanation one dumb woman tried to give in saying that God has feminine qualities. It made me laugh but I shall not dissect it here. Others try to say a woman is equal to a man on account of her having a spirit and a spirit, say they, is neither male nor female. Well, I don't know where they got their argument from and I won't join in their foolish speculations. It is the wisdom of wise men not to delve into things that cannot be ascertained. Bishop Hilary of Poitiers (c. 315 - c. 367) said the following words, "It is folly to intrude in the spirit of carping, when the matter into which we enquire is such that we cannot probe it to the bottom." So to go about the argument as to whether or not spirits have gender is not what I'd wish to engage in.

But these people like to argue foolishly about the nature of spirits when they have little or no Bible text to ponder upon before drawing conclusions on these things. They often try to put forward different Bible verses they think is suitable for their argument. However, when you listen to them you'd realise that they are only trying to bend the Bible to suit what they like. This is also contrary to one of the reasoning principles presented by

Bishop Hilary of Poitiers (c. 315 - c. 367) which goes, "For he is the best student who does not read his thoughts into the book, but lets it reveal its own; who draws from it its sense, and does not import his own into it, nor force upon its words a meaning which he had determined was the right one before he opened its pages." If this were true about anything else, it is most true about the Bible. Sadly our bad students of the Bible who want to make themselves teachers are ever forcing upon the words of scriptures meanings which they had determined was the right one before they opened its pages.

Apart from these, my simple question to them is which amongst them of all those putting forward this argument can talk to spirits, marry spirits, and have spirits put to bed a child for them? While in the flesh we must relate with each other and fulfil our God given roles as people in the flesh. We must not delve into realms of what we know nothing about whether there are neuter spirits, male spirits, female spirits, bearded spirits or breast feeding spirits. As far as we are in the flesh, what the Bible says is, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the WEAKER vessel..." (1 Peter 3:7). By vessel it means our body. As long as we only relate one with another in the flesh, the difference in genders must be acknowledged and each sex must play their God given role accordingly.

Furthermore, why is it that every time the Bible talks about how husbands and wives are to relate, it always start with the wives first? It is because it is the way of the Bible to speak first to those under authority before talking to those wielding authority. We see this also when the Bible addresses masters and servants in the verses that go, "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ... And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him." (Ephesians 6:5, 9). The command to servants are also very lengthy while that of masters are very concise. In fact this is the only passage I know that speaks to servants

and masters together while there are a number of others that speak to servants alone. So the Bible speaks first to those under authority before it speaks to those wielding authority. It also speaks more to those under authority than those wielding authority.

So, the Biblical order of the home is this, God, the husband, the wife, then the children. Christian couples must gladly accept it and live by it, for it is not instituted by men, but by God. I do maintain that these things are not to be practiced by coercion of any kind (physical, emotional, or psychological), but if it be a Christian home indeed, all parties shall wilfully and gladly uphold this order ordained by God.

***Prayer:** Dear Father, teach us to know our roles according to how you've ordained it and help us, in honour of your person, to obey in full and glad obedience. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.*

THE BENEFITS OF PLAYING ONE'S ROLE WELL

*"He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be servant to the wise of heart."
(Proverbs 11:29)*

Now what are the benefits of playing one's role in the home. The home is a tremendous blessing and people lose this tremendous blessing when they fail to play their roles. Humans are not meant to exist alone and loneliness is a torment. Someone once told me of prisoners who have been isolated for a long time, when they see even a spider they become overjoyed. Companionship brings us joy in ways we can't explain. That is why God has made the world in such a way that people are not alone. The moment a child is born he finds himself in many relationships. He is a son of a father and mother, a brother to his siblings, and so on. Such is the blessedness of the home. Anyone who fails to play his role well, thereby troubling his house, whether male, female, adult, or child, they all shall inherit the wind. Whether we are sad or happy we always need loved ones around us, but when there should be people around them to care in times of sorrows, and to share in their joys in times of happiness, they shall have nothing but the howling wind.

When a woman fails to play her role well as a God fearing woman, she drives her husband away. It may not result in divorce but he wouldn't be willing to spend his time in the company of his wife which he doesn't enjoy. There are people who deliberately stay late at work just because they don't have a good home to return to. They could just sit back in office doing almost nothing. Their aim is to go back home only to sleep and rush out of the house the next morning. This is because they've got a hot

tempered fighter at home as a spouse.

Dr. James Fordyce (1720–1 October 1796), a Scottish Presbyterian minister and poet wrote concerning women, “had you behaved to them [husbands] with more respectful observance, and a more equal tenderness; studying their humours, overlooking their mistakes, submitting to their opinion in matters indifferent, passing by little instances of unevenness, caprice, or passion, giving soft answers to hasty words, complaining as seldom as possible, and making it your daily care to relieve their anxieties and prevent their wishes, to enliven the hour of dulness, and call up the ideas of felicity: had you pursued this conduct, I doubt not but you would have maintained and even increased their esteem, so far as to have secured every degree of influence that could conduce to their virtue, or your mutual satisfaction; and your house might at this day have been the abode of domestic bliss.” He was right. But when women become fighters, clamorous, haughty, etc. neglecting the commandment to subject and to be of a quiet spirit, they rend their homes in pieces, and oh the grief that follows.

The same way men lose their spouses when they refuse to play their role. They lose the love, attention, and respect that should have been accorded to them. Not only this, God himself steps in and works against him. It is written, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." (1 Peter 3:7). A man's failure to play his role as a husband causes his prayers to go unanswered. So if a man wants his prayers to be answered, he must learn to play his God given role as a husband.

When parents refuse to play their roles as parents their may children forsake them when they would need them the most. While their livelihood depends on their parents children may have no choice to remain with parents who abuse them, maltreat them, or fail to show them love. But when they become independent, they may as well abandon their parents

and not delight in spending time with them. Even while they grow, they'd rather spend their time with some other people entirely.

Obedience to parents is the first command that comes with a blessing. Therefore failure to obey one's parents is to forfeit the blessings that come with obedience. Children who refuse to obey their parents could as well be disowned and when this happens they lose the benefit of having parents. Children must also play their roles well to live happy and enjoy the blessings of the home.

Now, before I bring this chapter to a close, I want to take you [the reader] through a little self personality test especially for spouses. Did you as a woman when reading about the role of a woman become eager to know what was written to men instead? Did you as a man pay more attention to know what was written to women than to men. If this was so, then you failed the self personality test. If you were more keen on knowing your own role, then you passed the test. If you were more concerned about the responsibility of the others, then it means you are more bothered in finding faults than in doing that which is right and ensuring you don't make mistakes that shall ruin your home. It shows you're bothered about what to demand from your spouse than you are to know what God demands of you. Knowing your own role and playing it should be your primary concern. It is in playing your own role properly that you shall find fulfilment. I too may have failed the test if I were not the one writing the book. Let us examine ourselves and ensure that we are more focused on our own roles, to know them and play them as people who shall give account to God. If we failed the test, then let us go to God in prayer for strength to improve our personality and character to be more concerned about our own duty than we are about knowing the duty of others.

So to play the role in the home well is to reap the countless blessings that come with having a sweet and tranquil home where God alone is known. It is he who knows his roles and plays them well that shall reap the blessings from God not he who finds faults with others. May God give us the grace

to play our roles well, and as we do so, may he pour on us countless blessings and give us the sweet and tranquil home where God alone is known. Amen.

Prayer: Dear God and Father, teach us to play our roles well so as to be able to reap the countless blessings that comes with it. Give us the grace and wisdom to be more focused on our own roles than to be busy finding faults in others. Thank you because I know you'd do this for us. In Jesus' name have I asked. Amen.

SECTION 3

CONJUGAL COMMITMENT

CHASTITY

*"For this cause shall a man... cleave to his wife."
(Mark 10:7)*

The statement Jesus made in Mark 10:7 was the one stated in Genesis 2:24. One word I wish to note in these statement is the word, "cleave." You hold something when you want it to be by you, you cleave to something when you're at danger of losing grasp of it and when losing grasp of it is of dire consequence. You could hold a post to keep you steady for example, but supposing you're in a storm and are at risk of being tossed into the sea and be lost forever, in such a case you'd cleave to whatever you hand can lay hold of in the ship you're in. You cleave to something when there are active and present forces that can separate you from that which you hold. So when Jesus says a man is to cleave to his wife, it means that there shall always be forces, both from within and without, that shall tend to separate a man from his wife. Forces within could be incontincy and insatiable fleshly cravings, lack of maturity to put up with the inadequacies of one's spouse, or even ego, lack of humility, and other character blemishes. Such things and the likes are ever present and threaten to separate spouses. There are also forces from without which could be inadequate finances, bad family, friends and company who give bad advice, etc. The list of forces that are ever present to separate couples goes on. But in all this a man is to cleave to his wife and not let these forces prevail.

This informs us that unity in marriage is not a natural thing as people think. By this I mean that it is not something that happens on its own. It must be made to happen. Cleaving to something is not a natural or involuntary action like blinking or breathing. It is something that must be consciously done. Not only must it be consciously done, it also requires strain to be done. So, couples must be consciously devoted to their union and resolved

to resist all forces that may come between them.

In agreement to this Aurelius Augustine wrote, “The sacramental bond... should be guarded by husband and wife with concord and chastity.” These two things pointed out here are very important to the success of the sacramental bond of matrimony. Concord is agreement and harmony between people, but what is chastity? Chastity, by dictionary definition, is a state of not engaging in unlawful sexual intercourse. It is not limited to sexual purity in reality though. It is a state of being faithful and committed to one's spouse. It has to do with everything from the inward feeling to the outward showing of commitment to the good of one's spouse. So it should not be seen as mere abstaining from unlawful sexual intercourse. In summary therefore, chastity is deep conjugal commitment.

Chastity does not start at marriage. It starts from the time one gains consciousness and understanding, to the time one gets married until death do them part. Some may think that marital faithfulness starts after marriage but people ought to be faithful to their spouses even before marriage. For this reason premarital sexual intercourse is an act of being unfaithful to one's spouse even before one knows who the person is. So young people need to feel the sense of commitment to their future spouse and remain faithful to them even while they haven't known to whom they'll be married.

To engage in unlawful sexual intercourse as a married person is referred to as adultery. That is the height of unchastity. An adultery is therefore a natural divorcement. In committing adultery one has declared the end to their marital union. People should not see it as a godly thing, probably thinking it is the forgiveness that God commands us, to continue in a marriage marred by adultery. However chastity is not only about keeping away from adultery. It is far more. It is all about being devotedly and passionately committed to one's spouse. Any action that shows that lack of commitment is what it means to be unchaste. I shall explain more in the next chapter.

I was going to write extensively about divorce in this book, but since I write about a Christian home, I don't think it would be necessary. I also chose not to write about it because it is an ugly thing to be writing about. So I only wrote on it as briefly as I could in the section on sundry issues. But let married couples and yet to married people know that God hates divorce and is therefore not an option for a Christian home.

It is the will of God that from birth till death, one maintains a life of absolute chastity. God delights in this. So in this section I shall be talking about this very important virtue of chastity.

Prayer: Dear Father, teach us to be chaste in all our ways. Help us to be committed to our spouses and seek their good as long as we have breath. Keep our young from the wrong of being unchaste. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

THE COVERING AND THE SEALS

"I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down."

(Proverbs 24:30 - 31)

As I said, chastity does not only have to do with sexual purity but that it has to do with everything that shows a sense of commitment to one's spouse. I shall now talk about a spouse as a seal and a covering.

Proverbs 24:30 - 31 tells us of a lazy man who is void of understanding. His vineyard was therefore covered with thorns, nettles, etc., and the stone wall was broken down. I liken this vineyard to a matrimonial home. The vineyard is a place of pleasantness and delight. It is a place to reap blessings from. The same way the home ought to be a place of pleasantness, delight and a place to reap blessings from. However to allow the vineyard to be grown over with thorns and nettles, and the walls broken down makes it impossible to find pleasantness, delight or blessings in it. The things I want to talk about I liken to as the stone wall meant to protect the vineyard. Without these things the matrimonial home would be trampled easily upon. It takes a person void of understanding to throw these things off and destroy their marriages. The covering and the seals I shall present here are a stonewall to matrimonial bliss.

The Covering Of The Eyes

"And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver: behold, he is to thee a covering of the eyes, unto all that are with thee, and with all other: thus she was reprov'd."

(Genesis 20:16)

First we shall look at marriage as a covering of the eyes. In the text above we find an admonition from one who we can say is not a believer, yet how right is that admonition which he gave. Abimelech had taken Sarah to himself thinking she was merely a sister to Abraham not knowing she was also his wife. God punished his household for his actions. He pleaded to God and God asked him to return Sarah to her husband. It was when he returned her that he gave her this admonition.

A spouse should be taken as a covering to the eye. Not that one should cover the eye because of their spouse but that the spouse should themselves be the covering with which one covers the eyes. What does this mean? The moment one says "I do" he or she should stop seeing other people so much as to notice their features, merits, qualities, etc. The only person that should be seen this way is their spouse. Like a covering, they shouldn't see beyond their spouse so as to notice the features, merits, qualities, etc. of others.

It is sad to see people who after marriage would still be seeing other people and be attracted to them. For example a married woman watching a television program in which a man is talking and saying, "wow, this man is handsome. He's well built. He's just unique." But why should this be? This happens especially to celebrities and famous people. I remember hearing of one very handsome president, in those years when there was no television, that whenever he's passing by a road, women would leave their homes and line up by the road just to look at the handsome president. I heard of another famous and handsome celebrity that women threw their wedding

rings at his feet saying [paraphrased] that they despise their marriage for his sake. Such women have no covering of the eyes. Such actions is a dishonour to their spouses. Once a person gets married, all other people should be seen as, "just another person."

Sometimes married men also go eyeing other women. These things ought not to be so. Sometimes, people attribute these things to be a natural cause of being familiar to one's spouse and for this reason one get's bored of his own spouse and looks for something new. Whatever the cause, desiring anything that should be sought for from one's spouse from another is an act of unchastity.

I have seen women who are always dull and moody when in the company of their husbands, but when this other guy, richer than their husband, taller than him, more handsome than him, having a sweeter ascent than him, comes around, she suddenly becomes lively, excited and begins to fly all around the place. They evidently delight more in another man than in their own spouses. It is bad enough to merely delight in another man, to delight in him more than one's own spouse is terrible. Such have no covering of the eyes.

All these things ought not to be. The admonition or "marriage counselling" of Abimelech holds true today as when he gave it to Sarah. Chastity requires that every married couple have their spouse as a covering of the eyes.

The Seal Of The Heart And Arms

"Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame."

(Song of Solomon 8:6)

Next I'd like to talk about setting the spouse as a seal upon the heart. Just like the covering of the eyes, setting one's spouse as a seal of the heart is also a mark of chastity, and all that was said about the covering of the eyes applies here too. But setting a spouse as a seal upon the heart is not just about the vision of the eye but goes beyond that to mean the feeling of affection in the heart. It is a mark of chastity not to allow anyone else get even a little of the affections of one's heart. It is also a mark of chastity of not allowing any of the affections one has for his spouse to diminish in any way. Having a seal on something is to prevent the coming into or the going out of anything from that which is sealed. For this reason the affection one has for his/her spouse should (by means of that seal) be prevented from leaking out thereby causing it to diminish. So also must affection for another should (by means of that seal) be prevented from leaking in. Failure to have one's spouse as a seal upon the heart must result in a leaking in both directions (in and out).

Now I shall talk about the seal to the arm. When the verse goes on to talk about setting the spouse as a seal to the arm it is referring to a physical aspect of chastity. The arm is that with which you embrace. To have one's spouse as a seal to the arm therefore means one should restrain himself from embracing people of the opposite sex not being his spouse. It is sad that many people have loose arms today. They can embrace anyone's wife in the name of friendliness and being social. I once saw a man come from behind a woman and threw his arm round her neck saying, "my friend." I was shocked and so was she. She seemed to have been bathed with cold water on the spot.

It is sadder to see people embracing other people's spouses as a form of formality. When you go to some occasion, you'd see people (probably the hosts or something) line up and the guests would go from person embracing and pecking. We also see instances when people go to a ball and a man would take another man's spouse in his arm and they'd dance

together. I believe such people don't have a seal on their arms. Their arms are loose. It is not being social, it is being unchaste.

I watched a funny video about Joe Bidden at the time when he declared his interest to run in the 2020 US presidential election in which Hilary Clinton met him coming from a plane or something. She opened her arms wide to embrace the man and as she did so he caught her. I say caught because what ensued was more than a greeting. He caught her and wouldn't let her go even when she evidently wished he'd let go. He held her fast smiling down at her. It was such a funny sight to behold but sad when you consider that she is someone else's wife. The embrace she went for was a formal greeting according to what many call western cultures but in the same culture what Bidden did was inappropriate and even disrespectful. But that is where I get confused. To them it is not the embracing that is wrong but the duration of embracing that is wrong. If it be wrong for a man to embrace a woman who is not his spouse for longer period of time, so why is it not wrong to embrace at all? I think there's something quite faulty with the reasoning by which such a conclusion is drawn.

It is not just in the West that such things happen. When people feel that they are attractive, they want people to see it. If your wife is attracted to you it doesn't mean you're attractive so taking photos embracing other women and having other women embrace makes them feel others would see them as attractive. I once saw a post by a prominent preacher here in Nigeria on Facebook in which he held a woman by the waist after an interview for a photo. The photo got some comments from people showing disapproval at the way he held the lady. He was married with kids but the lady was single. In his explanation he gave in trying to justify the photo he said the way he held the lady meant nothing and that there's nothing between them. To prove that there was nothing between them he said that the lady is even engaged and is preparing to get married. I was disappointed at such a bad way to justify what is clearly wrong and has attracted disapproving comments. I replied to his comment saying, "if I were her fiancé and I saw this photo it could mean the end of marriage

plans." He blocked me. I do not judge him, I don't know whether there was really anything between them and I'm almost convinced that there was nothing, but such embrace is unchaste. Christian men ought not to have such loose arms. Our arms ought to be sealed having our spouses as the seal.

People ought to keep their hands away from the opposite sex who are not their spouses. It is not for nought that the Bible clearly says, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." (1 Corinthians 7:1). That is not talking about sexual intercourse, neither is it about embracing, nor is it even referring to a handshake, but touch. It is good not even to touch not to talk of embracing. The next verse goes, "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." (1 Corinthians 7:2). In other words, let nobody touch anybody of the opposite sex except his own spouse. This is the true Christian rule. Cultures that teach otherwise are anti-Christian. Cultures that say it is social to live contrary to this rule have nothing in common with the Christian faith in this regard.

Now, it says "it is good not to touch..." doesn't mean it is bad lest we think that if a man touch a woman accidentally he has sinned. Neither does it mean then that men, for example, should not baptise women and that women should be baptised by women. Rather since it is good not to touch a woman, we must avoid it as much as possible. Should it ever happen it should be because it is expedient and for a noble reason. It shouldn't be on grounds of saying hi, formality, etc.

Let the world do what they like, Christian couples ought to set their spouses as a seal to their arms. It is not jus anybody you embrace. Christian couples ought not to embrace anyone of the opposite sex except their own spouse and children. Chastity demands that you keep your arms to yourself. As an act of conjugal commitment, let not our hearts and arms be loose. Let them be sealed with our spouses.

Avoiding The Provocation of Jealousy

"*... love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave...*"
(Song of Solomon 8:6)

Now I wish to talk on the outward demonstrations of what these covering and seals are supposed to avoid; jealousy. We shall continue from the verse we've dwelt upon above (Song of Solomon 8:6). Why did the speaker say that his/her spouse should set himself/herself as a seal to the heart and arm? It explains "[because] jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." (Song of Solomon 8:6). All these acts of conjugal commitment portrayed as a covering and a seal are for the purpose of keeping people from stirring the jealousy of their spouses. Chastity demands that we are committed to never steering the jealousy of him/her whom our souls loveth.

I don't know how true this is, but I heard that some people enjoy making their spouse jealous. They claim that when they act certain ways that could stir jealousy and it results in their spouse ranting and tearing down the house, it means their spouse loves them and by this they could determine just how much they're loved. Others take pleasure in seeing others feel jealous about them. Both these are dangerous things to do and are an evil view to hold. Jealousy is cruel and cannot be used as a means to know just how much you're loved. It is good enough to know that someone loves you enough to say to you alone (among all the people in this wide world), "I do." That should suffice. If that is not enough to tell you how much you're loved then nothing will. Inflicting something as cruel as jealousy on a spouse for any reason is evil.

There was something I read in the Bible that suggested to me the evil of jealousy. In the part of the Law known as "laws of jealousies," which can

be found in Numbers 5:11-31, we can see a very detailed judgment which we shall consider here. I should have quoted the full text but it is 21 verses long so I shall just summarise it here. However it is good for people to read it carefully on their own.

First thing to point out is that the law states when it is to be applied with these words, "And the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled: or if the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled." (Numbers 5:14). The condition is if the spirit of jealousy come upon a man. Whether his wife be guilty of actual adultery or not. So far he feels jealous concerning his wife the law is to be applied.

So what does the law says? When the man is jealous he is to take his wife to the priest who is to make her stand before the Lord, he is to uncover her hair (which is a reproachful thing), and make her drink a bitter water into which he has put the dust of the ground. He shall also pronounce a curse, write it in a book, blot it out with the bitter water and cause her to drink it both before and after he offers the sacrifice of jealousy. If the woman be then guilty of adultery, she shall be affected by the curse. If she is not guilty of adultery she shall be free from the curse.

This is quite an ordeal to go through just for making one's spouse feel jealous. Something that may have not even been deliberate. I had thought that if she was not guilty of adultery and the man made her pass through this then he ought to be punished for making his wife go through such an ordeal for no reason. But while I wondered I read the following words, "This is the law of jealousies, when a wife goeth aside to another instead of her husband, and is defiled; Or when the spirit of jealousy cometh upon him, and he be jealous over his wife, and shall set the woman before the LORD, and the priest shall execute upon her all this law. Then shall the man be guiltless from iniquity, and this woman shall bear her iniquity." (Numbers 5:29 - 31). My main interest is in these words, "Then shall the man be guiltless from iniquity, and this woman shall bear her iniquity."

Whether or not she is guilty of adultery the man shall be guiltless from iniquity, but the woman shall bear her iniquity whether or not she be guilty of actual adultery. This was very contrary to what I had expected, but I realised something new about jealousy from those words.

I am not saying we should be pursuing the punishment of those who make us feel jealous, should this happen, but this teaches us that, according to the Law, it is a woman's responsibility to conduct herself in a way that should not in any way stir up jealousy in her husband. Failure to keep him from being jealous is iniquity only with a less punishment. Now the ordeal she goes through required of the Law and the curse are two category of punishments. The ordeal alone was a punishment for provoking the jealousy of a husband or not being cautious enough to avoid provoking it, while the ordeal and the curse are for those who are actually guilty. This teaches us that women ought to be careful how they conduct themselves and be circumspect.

As for men, they ought also to be careful how they conduct themselves. We ought to treat others the way we want them to treat us. If we don't want to be inflicted with the cruel infliction of jealousy, so must we avoid it by all means. Love demands that we seek the best of him/her whom we love. Stirring jealousy is cruel and a great a evil second only to actual adultery. For this reason we must avoid stirring jealousy by all means.

We should note that in these verses that present us with the coverings (Genesis 20:16) and the seals (Song of Solomon 8:6) it is the spouses themselves that are to be the coverings and the seals. Not that one should go look for something with which to cover their eyes or something else with which to seal the heart and arms. But their very spouses should be this covering and seal. In Genesis 20:16 Abimelech told Sarah, "HE is to thee a covering of the eyes," not "cover your eyes with something for his sake." Song of Solomon 8:6 says, "Set ME as a seal," not, "for my sake go get a seal." So the very spouse is to be a seal. What does this inform us about? As a covering and as a seal you are to bear him/her to whom you're

married upon your heart and upon your arm everywhere you go. You are to be ever conscious of them even in their absence. You are to conduct yourself as though they were there with you thinking, "if he/she were here could my actions or intended actions provoke his/her jealousy?" Give that question a honest answer and act accordingly. Be ever conscious of your spouse and be committed to conducting yourself in ways that is to their best interest and wellbeing. Both emotionally, psychologically, health wise, and other wise.

Should one's spouse show feelings of jealousy, either by word or body language, the other ought to make amends to his or her ways. One should not be so concerned about giving reasons why the other ought not to feel jealous as they should be concerned about amending their ways. For example, if a job keeps someone in consistent close relation with a person of the opposite sex, say working on certain things together or going on official duties together, upon the realisation that his or her spouse is becoming jealous and uncomfortable, he or she should not go about saying things like, "nah, she's just a colleague, there's nothing to it... She's in fact engaged and is preparing to get married." Rather that he or she should seek a change in the nature of his assignments or in fact seek a change of job. This is where our commitment to should lead us to not in presenting reasons why the other should not feel jealous.

Avoiding the provocation of jealousy requires outward demonstrations of the inward chaste feelings. Both the covering and seals are inward feelings that one's spouse may not see. A person can be chaste, but what good does it do to merely feel it and not show it? Indeed, it is written, "Open rebuke is better than secret love." (Proverbs 27:5). This tells us that secret love is of little or no benefit. So we must show outward cautions to reflect the inward feelings of chastity. It is by such outward expressions of covering to our eyes and setting seals to our hearts and arms that we could avoid stirring jealousies in our spouses.

These are the stone walls to our vineyard. By vineyard I mean matrimonial

bliss. Showing lack of commitment to these things is laziness and lack of understanding. Such is sure to ruin our matrimonial bliss. May God help us all to be passionately committed to our spouses and be a people of understanding in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer: Dear Father and Lord, help us your children not to take the issue of chastity as a light matter like the world about us. Help us to be committed to our spouses. Teach us to have our spouses as a covering to our eyes and a seal to our hearts and arms. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

RELATING WITH THE OPPOSITE SEX

*"And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with
the woman..."*
(John 4:27)

Very many people, as a matter of fact most people, desire to live but not many are taught how to live. For this reason, they live badly. The media has such a loud voice that if you're not pointing the right way to people especially young ones, they'd naturally start taking orders from the ever willing corrupt media. But for Christians, Jesus remains our perfect example and we should take our orders from the examples he laid down.

Seeing the way young ones relate with people of the opposite sex is quite disturbing as it seems quite glaring that the pattern they live by is from the world and not from Christ. Some married people too act in ways not appropriate to people of the opposite sex, both married and unmarried. I therefore wish to present what we can learn from Christ for the consideration and correction of the willing.

First, a Christian ought to look at how far he could go from what could tempt him to sin and not how close he could go to what could tempt him to sin without falling into it. The object of casual friendship is to keep company, talk about things, share experiences, etc. I believe all these things can be done even better with people of the same sex. So if you leave the host of people of the same sex around you to go keep friendship with a person of the opposite sex, then there is probably something you're looking for in that friendship that a person of the same sex can't give. If they could, you would have stuck to people of the same sex.

I very well understand the prevalent way of thinking of today that there is nothing wrong with drawing close to people of the opposite sex for casual friendship. But this is not true. It is wrong to draw close to people of the opposite sex for whatever reason except for the purpose of marriage. So if you have people of the opposite sex as classmates, let them remain classmates. If you have them as colleagues, let them remain colleagues. There's no point furthering that relationship unless there's something you're looking for.

Now to what we can learn from Christ, read John 4:27. The apostles were shocked to find Jesus talking with the Samaritan woman. There are two lessons we could learn from that. 1st, Jesus was not such a person that draws close unnecessarily to women, else his disciples would not have been shocked. Secondly in that it says, "no man said, What seekest thou? or Why talkest thou with her?" it confirms that if you draw close to a person of the opposite sex, there should be something you are looking for.

So let us be careful lest we live in ways that would displease God or even cause others to stumble. I advise therefore that we keep our distance from the opposite sex as much as possible. It is good to have a strict moral principle that'll guide us to avoid mistakes in life. It is a thing of honour that even before you get married you honour the one you'd marry by your conduct now in keeping to yourself even while you haven't known who he/she is. We ought not to let the moral standards of the world guide us. They tell you that things that can't kill you doesn't matter. The moral standards of even the church is lamentably low. In times such as this, we need to fix a steady gaze on Jesus and how he lived.

The world today is ignorant in morals but smart in technology. It is hard to learn this way of life from the world and even the church. We can learn it from no other than Jesus himself in the verse I shared above. You must read the Bible continuously and examine yourself from time to time and make improvements where necessary. Above all study the life of Jesus.

There are many things about him that seem hidden, but when you study his life carefully, you would see an excellent pattern for yours.

A very prominent and intellectual Christian apologist, Ravi Zacharias, who I'm convinced has good moral principles, got into a case he never wished he'd get into. He did nothing wrong, but he made the mistake of not staying far enough from a person of the opposite sex. Funny that the good man related with the woman and her husband which is even very safe and appropriate, but, just because of some conversation by email he had with the lady, the end isn't what he wished for. Listen to what he had to say after his ordeal and the lesson he shares with each and every one of us:

"I have learned a difficult and painful lesson through this ordeal. As a husband, father, grandfather, and leader of a Christian ministry I should not have engaged in ongoing communication with a woman other than my wife. I failed to exercise wise caution and to protect myself from even the appearance of impropriety, and for that I am profoundly sorry. I have acknowledged this to my Lord, my wife, my children, our ministry board, and my colleagues.

"Let me state categorically that I never met this woman alone, publicly or privately. The question is not whether I solicited or sent any illicit photos or messages to another woman—I did not, and there is no evidence to the contrary—but rather, whether I should have been a willing participant in any extended communication with a woman not my wife. The answer, I can unequivocally say, is no, and I fully accept responsibility. In all my correspondence with thousands of people in 45 years of ministry, I have never been confronted with a situation such as this, and God and my family and close friends know how grieved I have been.

"In my 45 years of marriage to Margie, I have never engaged in any inappropriate behavior of any kind. I love my wife with all my heart and have been absolutely faithful to her these more than 16,000 days of marriage, and have exercised extreme caution in my daily life and travels,

as everyone who knows me is aware. I have long made it my practice not to be alone with a woman other than Margie and our daughters—not in a car, a restaurant, or anywhere else. Upon reflection, I now realize that the physical safeguards I have long practiced to protect my integrity should have extended to include digital communications safeguards. I believe—and indeed would counsel others—that the standards of personal conduct are necessarily higher for Christian leaders..."

Read the full text here: <http://rzim.org/global-blog/ravi-zacharias-statement-on-my-federal-lawsuit/>

Mike Pence, the Vice President of The United States of America, a born again Christian, has a rule to his name. It's called the Mike Pence Rule. It states that, "he does not dine alone with any woman." This is also in line with the rule of late Billy Graham, the prominent evangelist who died recently. His rule mandates that men should not "eat, travel or meet alone with any women who [aren't] their wives." Pence, Billy Graham, and Ravi Zacharias, just to name three, didn't learn this way of living from the world, they learned it from Christ. All these have a testimony of being born again. These rules wasn't given their names because they formulated it, but this was the life of Christ and his indwelling spirit must move men to behave accordingly. So I think it'll be better to call this chivalristic way of living "THE CHRIST RULE."

May God teach us and grant us the grace to live in wisdom with the opposite sex in Jesus' name. Amen.

***Prayer:** Our Father and our God, we thank you for the boundless examples we have as a rule to live by in the person of your most holy Son. Thank you for we see in him that chaste practice of living with wisdom with the opposite sex. Grant us help that we may live by this his example and every other to the glory of your name. Amen.*

DEALING WITH SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

*"And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife."
(Exodus 22:16)*

Now I'll talk about Pre-ceremonial marriages. By this I refer to sexual intercourse without wedding ceremony. To understand how to handle this case, we must put in mind that sexual intercourse is what joins people together in the sight of God as I've explained in an earlier chapter. So when such happens, it must be treated as a marriage. The church has a major role in ensuring that we don't have issues of sexual misconducts in our midsts. Church leaders have a lot to do in this regard. I had said much earlier that church leaders shouldn't influence who marries who by their opinions, but it is in such matters that they have a lot of responsibilities to handle.

Now, what point am I making? If a man being a youth sleeps with a girl, he should not put her away. They must get married. That is what we can see in Exodus 22:16. We may say this is the Old Testament, but seeing that such people are married already in the sight of God as we can understand in Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman (which we've discussed about in an earlier chapter), it would be adultery to put her away and marry another (whether ceremonially or not). The church should never endorse such a marriage and should never wed such people. If they feel sorry for their deed, they should show their remorse by the good work of repentance of cleaving to each other. If they are not financially buoyant to start a home, the church should assist them financially and with counsels on how to maintain the home they've started in an awkward way. The church should not deny such people assistance seeing they're repentant, but should

treat them as their poor and render them assistance in any possible way.

For this reason, any body that marries a woman not a virgin commits adultery. I am quite aware of stories about how a man who loves a woman who had been promiscuous would choose to marry her ignoring her past on account of the "love" he has for her. I know the sentiments people attach to such crappy stories, but let me make something clear, such a promiscuous person may have been separated from their past partners, but to marry such is one and the same thing with marrying another man's wife. That is adultery. As said above, if anybody finds himself or herself overtaken by such moral failures and are repentant, they should return to their partner and work things out and get married ceremonially. If they refuse to marry so must they leave our fellowship. It is clearly written, "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators... if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat... Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." (1 Corinthians 5:9 - 13). Adulterers (especially unrepentant ones) have no place in our fellowship.

We as Christians are also a royal priesthood, and I believe that many of the rules that pertains to priests in the law applies to us to. When God was giving commandments about how priests should marry (in Leviticus 21 for example) he says they must not marry people who are divorced, who are harlots, profane, etc. but they must marry a wife in her virginity of his own people. In our case it is a virgin of our own royal priesthood. But he that must marry a wife in her virginity must himself be a virgin. If he is not a virgin then must he marry the person with whom he lost his virginity. So, let no one deceive you that sexual purity is not important to God. It is God's will for his children to maintain their virginity till they get married and maintain chastity all their life.

What is the worst sexual sin possible? I assume it is rape. We find a story of rape in the family of David where Amnon raped his sister. The girl, a person of good understanding, said to Amnon when he wanted to put her

away where it is written, "And she said unto him, There is no cause: this evil in sending me away is greater than the other that thou didst unto me. But he would not hearken unto her." (2 Samuel 13:16). How right she was. When you take the issue of rape, it is rightly judged as a grave evil, but Tamar understood well enough to know that the evil of putting her away (refusing to marry her) was a greater evil than even the rape. For this reason, whether a sexual misconduct was done by mutual consent or the woman was forced, refusing to marry her after it is more evil than the sexual sin itself.

When someone is defiled in such way, especially the women, do you know what manner of difficulty they've been placed into? Do you know how hard it is, yea indeed near impossible, for them to get married in a honourable way? It is sheer wickedness to put a woman in such a state just to gratify the cravings of the flesh. It is foolishness for someone to allow such evil to be done to them by their own consent. It is written concerning the same event, "So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house." (2 Samuel 13:20). For Tamar, the refusal to marry her meant that she had to live as a desolate woman. Very sad.

It seems like a hard judgment, but parents have the responsibility to ensure that they raise their kids to live lives void of fornication to avoid this confusion and hardness. It is not a hard judgment to hold if people lived and behaved properly according to God's ways. If a society has stringent laws against thieves, it is only the thieves or people that desire to steal that'll complain that such laws are hard. So also, if this judgment is put forward as a standard, it is only fornicators and people that desire to fornicate that'll complain. So the church must choose. Do we listen to Christ and his word, or do we override his word by the desires of fornicators?

When I was young, we read a book called "Global Tales" in school. It had many interesting stories but not the adventure and suspense type. It just had stories of interesting happenings round the world. One of the stories

had in it an incident that occurred in a church long time ago. There were these people who were supposed to present a drama, and in the drama a guy was supposed to kiss a girl, so when it got to the part where he was to kiss the girl, he went ahead and kissed her. Having done that the church leaders looking into it forced him to marry the girl. They said he kissed her longer than what was justifiable for a drama and that there was passion in the kiss. I found that to be so funny. The guy came to present a drama not knowing he'd be going home with a wife he never bargained for.

At one point I saw the whole thing as a setup and the verdict of the church to be a bit crazy, but when I looked at it in the light of scriptures, I realised that, while I'm not able to conclude on whether it was a setup, their judgment was sound. If people of the opposite sex start to make unnecessary advancements towards each other in the name of being friends they should as well get married, this is not to mention if they have a sexual intercourse. We can't afford to allow loose behaviour in our midsts as Christians.

I heard a lady once saying that she doesn't know why a particular preacher known to her is always preaching against fornication and sexual sins. Anytime he mounts the pulpit that is all he talks about. Then she asked if the only sin in the world is sexual sin. It is true that it is not only sexual sin that exists in the world, for this reason to be focused on it as if other sins are not sins is not right. Even doing that which is permissible without faith is sin. It is this subtle sins that preachers need to warn others about the most, not the grave and glaring ones. Most fornicators know very well that they are sinning, so why do you need to preach against it so often when they know very well that they're sinning? People need to be warned about the gravity of sexual sins but what needs warning against the most are those subtle ones that can easily go unnoticed. However, what the Bible says is that there is a divide between sexual sins and all other sins, thus the gravity of sexual sins is great. The Bible says, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." (1 Corinthians 6:18). For this reason, we must

carefully guard against sexual sins.

This is my take on dealing with sexual misconduct. We must do all it takes that encourages people to live in chastity and holy matrimony for this is God's will. We must also do all we can by justifiable means to discourage infidelity of any kind. May God give us grace and wisdom to pursue his will in this matter and in everything else in Jesus' name. Amen.

***Prayer:** Dear Lord Jesus, it is your will for us to live in absolute chastity. We have a role to play to ensure that chastity is maintained in our midst as brethren. Give us wisdom and the heart to live according to your will in Jesus' name. Amen.*

SECTION 4

PARENTING

OVERVIEW

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

(Proverbs 22:6)

Now I wish to talk on the duty of Christian couples as parents in the bringing up of their children. This is the principal responsibility of all parents. Provision of sustenance, shelter, security, education, and what have you, are all duties of parents, bringing up children is the most important. Circumstances may cause parents not to be able to provide the best in other areas, and in such case they may be excused, but in no case should parents fail in properly bringing up their children. This is a failure with no excuse because it does not require wealth, good fortune, nor is it reliant on any special circumstance to be well done. It just takes time which every human have an equal share each day. It also requires commitment which love and the fear of God ought to drive us to have naturally.

It is sad that many parents work so hard to buy their children a good future not knowing that a good future can't be bought but must be built. For this reason raising godly children should be prioritised far above making money. From my perspective it is evil to bring a child into the world without being dedicated to doing our best in building them a good future. We must therefore strive to make the world into which we wish to bring children a better place. We must strive to play our part and when we bring them into the world we must make sure we do our best to building a bright future for them. If we won't do this then why should we give birth to children. Is the very birth not evil? So is my thinking. Let us therefore take the issue of the upbringing of children very seriously. It is this all important duty of parents I wish to write about in this section.

Life Is Evil - Why Give Birth?

"Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive. Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun."

(Ecclesiastes 4:2 - 3)

A glance through the book of Ecclesiastes would reveal the evil realities of this present life in its fullness. Take a look at the verse above, Solomon says that he praise the dead more than the living. He then says he praise more than both those who have not been born. That is how evil life is. There are three categories Solomon presents to us, the dead, the living, and the unborn. The worst is the living. The dead is worse than unborn on account of the fact that he had lived (tasted of the evilness of life). The best category is that of those who have not seen the evil work done under the sun.

I know many reading these would wish to put forward a positive view and say life is not that bad. Let them think what they will, but even Jesus did not deny that life is evil, for he says, "... Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew 6:34). Seeing the graveness of the the evilness of life, what moral wickedness shall we then ascribe to those through whom souls are introduced into the world? It is morally evil to be introducing people into an evil world bringing them from the best state in Solomon's categories to the worst. It is an evil that I believe God shall judge.

Furthermore, as women wept for Jesus as he headed for Calvary, he told them, "For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which

never gave suck." (Luke 23:29). While it is not in every age that things get this bad, there is always a risk of things getting this bad. So giving birth to children is bringing them into a world with such frightening possibilities.

However, what Solomon spoke about was life under the sun. This, as explained by late Dr. Selwyn Hughes (1928-2006), means Solomon referred to life without God. This he explained that, throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, everytime Solomon focused on life under the sun he always presented pessimistic views of life. But when he shifts his focus above the sun, where God is, his view of life becomes positive. Nevertheless, it does not change the fact that we live in an evil world.

Therefore, the only life that is good is that lived with God and guided by God. For this reason, the only justifiable reason and moral grounds for giving birth is that parents do all within their power to make the life of their young good. This has to do with catering properly for them and loving them. But that is just a little bit of it. One may provide sufficiently for children but that child ends up living a bad life. What is more important than provision is proper upbringing. What good does it do a child to be well fended for but because he lacks proper upbringing ends up as a criminal and faces the firing squad? Then what is most important than them all is that we recognise that this life is a transitory one. If this life is good without the eternal life being good, that person is of all people most miserable. What good shall it do to be well fended for, brought up well so that he does not face a firing squad, he lives a good life and respected of all, but faces the Devil and the hosts of hell for all eternity? For this reason, parents most importantly need to bring their children to Jesus the Saviour of their souls. They also must teach them to hold right values and maintain a virtuous life. And they must also provide adequately for the need of that child (financially, emotionally, psychologically, etc.). Parents need to be prepared and be resolved to show deep commitment to these things before giving birth else they are doing that which is wicked and morally bad and God shall judge them for this evil.

In an unpredictable world, keeping the children that one gives birth to from the evils of life is often beyond what men can do or guarantee. However, they must be resolved to do and do all that is in their power to do the best for their children. It is one thing to fail due to unforeseen events while one is trying his best, it is another thing entirely not to try or to, as insensible and irresponsible people, give birth as fishes do.

All the blessedness of parenthood and baring of children is reliant on their proper upbringing. Christian parents must therefore see the all important responsibility on their shoulders and not trifle with it. Richard Baxter, in his deeply devotional book titled, "The Saint's Everlasting Rest," wrote, "From you they received the defilement and misery of their natures; and therefore you owe them all possible help for their recovery." It is true that children receive the defilement and misery of their natures from their parents. Some suffer from sickle cell, others albinism, etc. When a child is born, it is so prone to all manner of sicknesses. But parents do so much to protect them from these sicknesses, should they not also protect them from the sicknesses of the character, and most especially from the "sickness" of eternal damnation?

So Christian parents need to ask themselves if in giving birth they shall be doing that which is wicked and morally bad. After thinking carefully, they can give this question an answer that goes something like, "Life is evil yet shall I give birth to children for I shall raise him unto the Lord to see the goodness of God in the land of the living, and do my part dutifully if perchance he shall be granted eternal rest with God."

The things written in this section are meant to help the reader in carrying out this all important duty of parenting. It should therefore be taken very seriously.

The Value Of Children

"Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate."

(Psalm 127:3 - 5)

We would be more devoted in the ways we bring children up if only we knew their value. The Bible says children are an heritage. I get confused when I consider this. Are children not supposed to inherit things from their parents? If children are then an heritage (a property that is inherited), it seems to flip everything I knew previously about inheritance upside down. This, I believe, is a mystery. But it shows us the incredible value of children.

It also says that the fruit of the womb (children) is the reward of God. What is God really rewarding? I believe it is the union between a man and woman. If God therefore rewards the union between a man and a woman, then that union must be a really blessed thing (though it is an abomination when it is out of wedlock).

Then it goes on to say they are as arrows in the hands of a mighty man, though not all parents can be likened to mighty men. Some parents are not mighty in their thoughts of bringing up their children. Every parent think they've got lofty goals for their children, but not many seek to know God's method for raising children in a mighty way. But why does it describe children as arrows? We know that in ancient warfares there are melee weapons such as sword, spear, pike, etc. There are also ranged weapons such as bow and arrow, javelin, sling, etc. That which has the longest range is the arrow. The arrow is also the most efficient in long range attacks. The

major weapons of combat are melee weapons, but ranged weapons, especially the arrow, are vital for attacking targets beyond one's reach, either because of obstacles or high risk of approaching them.

So I believe that it describes children as arrows because parents could achieve much through them in times beyond their lifetime. Death is the obstacle here, but much is still to be done after one's death. I'm not saying that parents should live their children's lives for them. Some achieve great things with their children by giving them a proper upbringing like arrows in the hands of the mighty indeed, others achieve nothing with their children by poor and destructive upbringing they give their children, like the arrows in the hands of one fat slobbish fella who only itches his back with his arrows when it itches.

When I read the stories in the Bible (especially Genesis) it gives me a good overview of how life is. You'd often read of people living such and such amount of years, giving birth, and dying. I read of Abraham and all he did. He travelled from place to place, did many things, and was even galant in his fight against an alliance of kings when he rescued Lot. When reading those accounts you can almost imagine the gallantry of Abraham, the clash of steel, Abraham yelling instructions like a commander in the field, and hear the legendary epic soundtracks while he fought with those kings. But a day came when that gallant man lay stiff and could not move a muscle for he was dead. No longer could he leap from place to place in fight as he once did. And this is the fate of us all. When we are gone from this world, it is our children that live on. If we be mighty men, we shall use them as arrows to shoot into the unreachable future which we can't reach because of the brevity of our life.

Now for an example of how children are arrows in hands of the mighty I shall present to us the story of Alexander, the Bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius, and Arius the heretic. Alexander was a prominent and very worthy bishop. One day he spotted some children acting a play in the place of worship. Now this was considered a very bad thing to be doing, that is

to use the very place of worship for such a play... Arius was a student of Alexander but he later began to promote some heretical claim. His heresy came as a shock and the church didn't seem prepared for such an attack on her faith. Arius therefore was gaining much grounds with his heresies. Alexander confronted him vigorously but Arius was too crafty to be handled by him. Not that he was anything intelligent, but he was crafty, dubious, and dodgy in his reasoning on scriptures. However, at this time of dire need, the young man, Athanasius, was one of the bishops who were so instrumental to silencing the heresy of Arius. Athanasius has over the years grown mightily in knowledge and conviction that at the ecumenical council of Nicaea he greatly defeated the purpose and craftiness of Arius by his superior knowledge.

Now, the next thing I'd wish to point out from that verse is this statement, "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them [children]." Many use this verse to teach that people should have very many children. Well that could probably be true, but what is more true in that verse is that people should not have children beyond what they can cater properly for. It is for this reason that it says "hath his quiver full of them." It is the quiver that it says should be full of them and not the ground littered with them.

The verse concludes with these words, "they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." This tells us the reward of bringing up his children well and having the quiver full of them (not the floor littered with them). It says such shall not be ashamed and they shall speak with the enemies in the gate. Why enemies? Well you see, I was reading a book titled, "A Woman's War." In it there was a family which wasn't doing so well. The man of the home was a doctor who was hot tempered and impatient. These were very bad temperaments for a doctor to have, for this reason he wasn't doing well. But just near them was another family with a doctor too. He was very patient and gentle with his patients. For this reason he was doing very well compared to the first doctor. This started causing his family to be envied of the wife of the first doctor. One day, the first doctor was talking to his wife about the other doctor's home

and she said to him, "don't you realise they are our enemies." When I read this I was amused. The good doctor was just going about his duties the best he knew how, and for being the good, gentle and caring doctor that he is he attracted enemies to himself.

It is not good to be envious of others or to be involved in rivalry, but do the best you can to avoid such life as you can, you would probably have enemies. You'd probably have people who would delight in your fall or reproach. He who brings up his children properly would no doubt be able to answer such enemies of his with whatever reproach they may try to bring his way.

Have you seen parents whose children are caught doing something disgraceful? They get so ashamed that they even start hiding. Or have you seen someone whose son is such a failure and performs woefully in his academics. When other parents are talking about their children, they'd just keep silent and put on a fake smile as long as the conversation lasts. When other parents are putting their children forward for job opportunities, they pretend their child doesn't need a job. That is because they did not bring their children up adequately. But people who have children doing great things and performing well in all things, others don't need to mention their kids nor does the occasion need to warrant it before they start talking about their children.

Now the cheap pride one can have in his children is academics and other worldly achievements. But parents should train their children to live their lives in ways that is of great value before God and not merely to be achievers of worldly accolades. This requires building of character and virtue according to the wisdom and knowledge of God.

Training children with sound doctrine and in the ways of God is arming them for tearing the kingdom of darkness asunder. Just like Samson tied fire to the foxes and let them loose into the field of the Philistines. They were only trying to get free from each other and while at it they set the

field of Philistines on fire. When children are well brought up early all they live for would be setting the kingdom of darkness on fire. Their conversation, their dressing, the things they shun, the things they encourage, and everything they do would have a crushing effect on the kingdom of darkness everywhere they encounter them through their lives. Being trained to be a shining light they shall be a blazing torch in the society over which darkness cannot prevail.

Who Born Dog?

"They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city."

(Psalm 59:6)

Another story we read in the book called Global Tales was about an African man who served a white man as a servant. I can't remember the story vividly so I shall be retelling it. He and the white man related so well and he loved the white man and the white man loved him, and he was adequately paid for his service. The African man however did not take good care of his home properly and stuffed his children up with cheap food. But he didn't care much for those things. One day, however, his master informed him that his wife was coming to join him in Africa. He was not quite sure of what to expect. When she came however, she came with a little pet dog. On her arrival he was required to start taking care of the dog, bathing it, feeding it, etc. This almost made him go mad. Dogs were contemptible animals of the society, how should he then be bathing and feeding the dog as if it were a child? Apart from this, the dogs food were so expensive. Way more expensive than what he fed his children with. He kept fuming in his mind and he hated the dog so much he felt like he could kill the dog. When on his own and in his thoughts he used to ask himself, "who born dog?" One day his master informed him that he was

traveling out of the country with his wife and that he was to take good care of the dog in their absence. They bought food for the dog that would be enough for the time they intended to stay away. He was happy because this would give him an opportunity to vent his anger on the dog for all the hatred he had for the dog. As soon as his master travelled, not caring to lose his job for the anger that burned in him, he shut the dog up in the house and allowed it to starve to death. He took all the dog food home to his children and fed them with the dog's food. Then the cat turned into a mouse and the eagle into a lizard. And that is the end of my story.

Now, in that one action of giving the dog's food to his children, though he wasn't conscious of that fact, he answered his own question (who born dog?) very well. People can sometimes be better defined by how we treat them than what they actually are. This man could have treated his children well but he didn't care much about those things, yet here were other people who treated their dogs better than another treated his children. It would be wise that parents should take good care of their young ones and treat them and bring them up like what they ought to be. Let us be careful lest we too (without being conscious of it) treat our children as dogs, rats, and what have you. Rather let us take good care of them, in providing for all their needs (not wants) and showing them love, like kings and queens that others may ask, "who born queen?" Or "who born king."

Of course we ought not, in seeking to treat our young as kings and queens turn them into brats, lest people also ask instead, "who born brats?" But let us love them dearly, bring them up in wisdom, character and the fear of God, as noble kings. Where discipline is required let us do it. Where denying them their cravings is required let us deny them. But let all things be done in love without dissimulation.

Training Up A Child

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."
(Proverbs 22:6)

Now, why does Solomon use the word "train" in describing how a child ought to be brought up (in Proverbs 22:6)? This should be of utmost importance if we are to understand fully what we're being told in that verse. There're different levels of imparting knowledge into people. We can simply tell them something, for example, "be a good boy." This way they know what you want them to be. We can teach. This involves explanation. In teaching we also give reasons, for example explaining the advantages and disadvantages of taking certain decisions. But the ultimate way of imparting knowledge is by training. In training you don't merely tell people things, you don't merely teach them explaining things to them, it goes beyond those.

That is why there are professions in life you could tell people how to do them. For example, I learnt that there were some jobs that you didn't need to learn especially in the past. They only need you to know how to read and write to employ you. Once you got employed you'd be told what to do. For example, "when such information arrives you indicate here. At the end of the day you summarise all here." Very simple isn't it? Yeah, for simple things you are only required to tell people what to do and that shall suffice.

There are professions that practicing it requires that people be taught. Teaching involves telling but goes beyond that. Teaching also requires the teacher to have thorough understanding of what he's teaching. A teacher must himself not be a novice. Most professions of this life are taught. You can teach a person accountancy, business management, psychology, leadership, legal studies, etc. This can also be made without physical presence. One can get as much of such knowledge and skill from study as

much as being taught by a teacher being physically present. Teaching helps people to be able to take sound and independent decisions even as different circumstances come up. This isn't easy as it involves having to use the brain critically. It requires comprehending each circumstance properly, and carefully drawing up a right course of actions for the best advantage. Doing this requires having a lot of knowledge and understanding. This method therefore is adequate for instruction in most of life's course.

However, there are still professions that can't be taught. Such professions require training and they are the toughest to be practiced. For example you can't teach a person how to be a soldier, you can't teach a person how to be an engineer, you can't teach somebody how to be an athlete. Such professions requires training. Training also involves teaching but goes beyond that. As a young person I was an aspiring footballer. I never got to succeed but I did have the privilege of being trained by some really quality coaches. I remember one coach who, just passing by, not knowing us before, saw us playing football and took interest in training me and my friends. All he trained us on that day was how to do the "power shot." He would come to us and with his hands show us the posture to take when shooting. He would then place his palm before us and ask us to kick it as if shooting a ball. This way he could tell if we were doing it right. The time he spent with us was very effective. There are many other coaches like him who took us through some rigourours drills that made me a much better footballer. Such things can't be taught and most definitely can't be learnt by being told. The major difference between training and teaching is that training can by no means be done in the absence of the trainer. He must be there observing the progress of the trainee and watch out for any mistakes impeding the progress of his training.

I remember a one time football manager of Newcastle United FC who had a heart problem and had to be managing the team from the hospital. He was a great manager, but he couldn't continue that way so he resigned and someone else who could be physically present had to take charge of the training of the players. This is the same way it is in the military service,

engineering, etc. It is the most rigorous of all methods of imparting knowledge and involves the two other methods, telling and teaching. But the trainer must be present and observe closely the progress being made by the trainee.

So why does the Bible use this word when talking about bringing up children? It is because living right is the toughest thing in life and such requires the ultimate method of bringing up children. Children cannot be properly brought up by merely telling them what to be. It is very sad when you see parents who would spend their lives pursuing money and only tell their children before going to work, "be a good boy/girl." And when they return late at night would only say to their child again, "hope you were a good boy/girl today." It is good though that they desire something good of their children, but such a way of bringing up children is bound for failure.

It is also good that some parents take out time to actually teach their children, but what the Bible says is "train up a child." Failure to first of all spend time learning about life, spend time teaching to one's children, spend time observing the progress of children, and spend time nurturing them as they grow, would amount to failure on the part of the parents. Mere telling or teaching shall make child depart from the right way in which he is taught when he is old.

My dad used to tell us that when he was young, to be able to know if they were living by the teaching they had not to steal, his dad, who was a fisherman, would carefully count the amount of fish he had in a room being sumptuously fried, then would ask him to go bring something from the room while he's not around. When he brings it, he would later count the fish to see if he had stolen from it. This way he was able to know if his child was living according to what he's being taught. If he were to notice that he wasn't living by what he's being taught he would then know he needs to work more on instilling the virtue of honesty into his child. So it is good to device means to know the progress a child is making in imbibing the virtues of life and help them by godly correction means to imbibe them

fully.

Richard Baxter, that good and pious man, wrote, "Good laws will not reform us, if reformation begin not at home." This informs us that lawmakers are more less wasting their time if children are not well brought up from the home. A lot is therefore dependent on how well we as individuals and as a society carry out this very important commandment of God to train up children in the way they should go.

I must categorically state here that all the endeavours that one undertakes to ensure he fulfils his role as a parent adequately must done prayerfully. We must learn to prayer both for wisdom to do the right and that the right we do be effective. It is written, "And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children." (Isaiah 54:13). If the Lord does not teach them himself, your effort is sure to almost be in vain.

As we look at this all important duty together I pray that God will help us to know his will fully and grant us the grace to raise godly kids for him in Jesus' name. Amen.

***Prayer:** Dear Father, teach us the role of parenting and give us the wisdom to carry it out successfully as you desire. Let each thing we do to bring up our children be effective. As we progress through this section help us to understand fully your expectations of parents and the grace to meet your expectations. In Jesus' mighty name we ask.
Amen.*

TRAINING UP A CHILD

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

(Proverbs 22:6)

Now I wish to talk on the most important training a child can be given. The training in the ways of God. This is a somewhat neglected responsibility of parents today. It is not like Christian parents completely neglect this, but it needs more commitment and tact. From my little observation more could and should be done for the proper upbringing of children. I shall share my thoughts on ways children can be better brought up.

When To Teach Children The Ways Of God

"And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it."

(Deuteronomy 31:13)

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

(2 Timothy 3:15)

Now, the key verse of this chapter (Proverbs 22:6) presents is one of the

best verses in scriptures on children upbringing. From a mere glance at the verse we can see the right time to train up a child in the right way is when he is young. Now, this means whatever a child ought to be in life including when he is old should be taught him when he is still young. This is the right time to begin grooming them for life especially in matters of the fear of God, building of their character, knowledge of the truth, proper reasoning, and all other virtues. Other aspects of training is good but these are the best to instil in a child while they're still young.

It is also written, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." (Proverbs 13:24). Discipline should therefore be used on children early. Betimes means before the usual or expected time. How early is before the usual or expected time? I suppose it is a time of which the world assumes is too early. To chasten betimes does not mean to chasten every time as some parents that enjoy beating their kids would like to understand it. From the contextual meaning we get for the word as it is used in the Bible means very early to be even considered too early.

Timothy was about the most consistently profitable young man to Paul. At a rather young age he served as the first Bishop of the church of Ephesus. To have entrusted the care of a church which Paul had laboured passionately for into his hands meant he commanded trust and impeccable character and piety. One may wonder why and how this was so. We can not give room for speculations but the answer is simple and can be found in the words of Paul: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:15). From a child he had been brought up to know the holy scriptures. It is that early upbringing in the ways of God that made him a reliable, consistent and profitable man to Paul. If parents want their young ones to become a stalwart for the faith like Timothy, they should start right early in instructing them in the ways of God.

Through out scriptures God is always particular about teaching young ones. It is written, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall

be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." (Deuteronomy 6:6 - 7). These verses show us the importance of training children in the ways of God very early. It also shows that a casual approach is not to be given to the upbringing of children in the ways of the Lord. What we read here shows some form of obsession. It says "talk of them [the commands of God to children] when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." We should approach the teaching of children in the ways of God with a form of obsession and talk to them about it all the time.

Refusing to teach young people about God is like doing what the apostles did when children were brought to Christ. They shunned them (Mark 10:13). They must have thought they had good reasons for shunning the children just as many parents today think they have good reasons to defer the thorough teaching of the ways of God to their kids, but however good their reasons may have been, it displeased Christ much. It is written, "But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." (Mark 10:14). The same way many parents are displeasing God by deferring to teach their children his ways therefore keeping them from God. Dear parents, "Suffer the little children to come unto him."

We must keep training little children even if they don't live by what we teach them at the moment. What we teach them is more for their use in the future than it is for their use in the now. That is why it is written concerning training children, "... and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6). It is for when he is old. I don't mean we should be lenient when they do things that can destroy them. But we should not be discouraged in training them should they fail to be what we are training them to be at the moment. The things they are learning now may not seem important to them, but as they grow it would then they'd realise the

importance.

Let me share a little of my experience while learning 3D animation. While I learnt it I used to read in the instructions that each object should be given a proper name. I used to wonder why that should be an issue. If I modelled a head for example, if it looks like a head why do I need to name it as head? It looks like one so I couldn't make a mistake of thinking it was a leg. If I made an eye I needn't name it an eye to know where to click when I needed to animate the eye. So most of the time my models took the default name of the object type I made them with. For example, the two eyes of a person would be something like sphere 01 and sphere 02. When later I started working on really complex projects in which it were way easier to work using the names of objects to select them than looking for them in the 3D view, it was then I realised the importance of naming things by their appropriate names as I was taught to do.

I experienced the same about planning and storyboarding. It seemed quite useless to me to be bothering about storyboarding or planning before commencing a project when you have the story in your head. Storyboarding and planning before commencing the project seemed to be doing double work. However, after doing some projects that ended nowhere because I had no plan or storyboard I was following I ended wasting my time and effort in doing what was bound to fail. So these things were very important, but inexperience made me think they were not necessary. However when I got tangled in my own web, I immediately knew what the solution was. I didn't need to start thinking or wondering what the solution could be. It was at this point such useful instructions came in handy.

Even if children don't seem to be gaining anything from our training, we should still keep training them. What is taught by the experienced requires experience to be fully understood. A time will come when they would begin to realise the importance of the things they're been taught now. But if they're not taught now they would have nothing to fall back on when they

grow older and have need of the wisdom they ought to have been taught. They would be without direction.

Benefits of Training Betimes

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."
(Proverbs 22:6)

There is no better time to start training up children in the ways of God than the very moment we perceive they have began understanding words, or even before then. The life of Isaac Watts is a good example of the benefit of teaching people early the ways of God and exposing them to mature reasoning in the ways of God. His father, who was a nonconformist, used to engage him in discussions that require good and deep reasoning. He also did not tolerate bad behaviour in his son and disciplined him severely when required. According to an account I read of one of his hymns, it was in one of the occasions when they had a lengthy discussion that he talked to his father on the need of the church not to rely only on the psalms for hymns, but that the church needs to compose her own hymns and speak also on the wonders of the New Testament especially about Christ. He then proceeded to write his first hymn titled, "Behold The Glories Of The Lamb" at the age of fourteen. This hymn was a call on the church to turn its focus on Christ in her hymns and that was why it had these words, "prepare new honours for his [Christ's] name, and songs before unknown." As early as fourteen, he could think spiritually, scripturally, constructively, maturely, and critically enough to see a need in the church that many didn't seem to see. Not only did he see the need, he also began the movement for the needed change.

What do our fourteen year olds of today do? Chat? Take selfies with dog

ears and dog noses, and wreaths on their heads? Or at best, we could once in a while hear one clever little dude that invented a heater powered by the sun that works best when the sun is shining the most. How many of them do have a thirst for the ways of God and the desire for the church to be the way God wants her to be? I don't think there are many. But this is not how it ought to be. They ought to be brought up early in the knowledge, fear, and love of God.

If you wish to develop pious goals to pursue in the upbringing of your children it would be very helpful to expose yourself to good books on noble deeds of parents or of children who loved God at an early age down history lane. I strongly recommend the book, "Stories of Boys and Girls Who Loved the Saviour/A Token for Children," by James Janeway to young couples. This book is sure to fill you with godly aspiration for your kids. As a matter of fact, to present to us the benefits of early godly upbringing I shall use one of the stories from the book soon. I also recommend the biography of Susanna Wesley, the mother of the Wesleys, and how she trained her children.

In the book, "Stories of Boys and Girls Who Loved the Saviour/A Token for Children" mentioned above, there's a story titled "The Merchant's Son." It started with these words, "JOHN HARVEY was born in London, in the year 1654: his father was a Dutch merchant: he was piously educated under his mother, and soon began to hear Divine things with delight." Due to this early upbringing he developed really fast both in his learning and in his character. Before he was two years and eight months old he could speak as well as children of five years. That tells us how fast he grew in learning. He was allowed to play around because he was not old enough to go to school, but rather than playing he found himself a school near his house and asked the mistress to teach him how to read without his parents knowing. That tells us of how fast he grew in character. He chose learning over fun. The story goes on and on to tell us of this very unusual child. His parents brought him up early in the ways of God, that was why his understanding was opened. We do read about Jesus and how he opened the

understanding of people that they might understand the things which previously they could not understand. The same way when we bring our children to him, as he admonishes us saying, "suffer little children to come to me," he shall open their understanding in ways not common to the natural man. The earlier we bring them to him the better for them.

It is also good to bring up children early in the good ways of piety and a thorough knowledge of God because this are good things to do. It was what is taught at this stage that becomes a habit and is hard to break. If therefore to live a life of piety and a thorough knowledge of God is good, then it is good to teach them early. If due to failure to form the mind well, in the fear and love of God, the mind of the child is badly formed, it will be near impossible to correct at a later stage.

Now, I am not talking about what some call child dedication in which they bring children to the pulpit to be prayed upon by pastors or bishops. There's nothing wrong with that just as there's nothing wrong with praying on food before eating it. But it is by no means a substitute to what I'm talking about here. It is not also the vain prayer of a dead faith for children, a faith that is dead because it has no works. Should any man desire to have godly children, let him put him self before God asking for the strength and wisdom required to raise godly children. Let him pray for his children of course, but let him pray harder and more earnestly for himself, that he may have the strength and wisdom required to raise up godly children.

When people are able to raise godly children they shall make their parents proud and joyous when their lives radiates their conspicuous merits. It is for this reason that it is written in Proverbs 27:11, "My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me." The man that does raise up his child well shall have abundance of reproach and shall be dumb before them that reproach him. But he that brings up his child well shall be able to answer those that reproach him. So the benefits of bringing up children well early cannot be over emphasised. Let us therefore in prayer and devotion bring up our children well....

Teaching The Love Of God

*"And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with
all thy soul, and with all thy might."*

(Deuteronomy 6:5)

The first thing I suppose to teach children is the love for him. This is the natural place to begin. If we are going to teach his law we must begin here, "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (Deuteronomy 6:5). So before we go talking about fearing God, discipline, virtue, etc. we must lay this key foundation of loving God. There is no better thing to teach a child than to teach him to love his God with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might. A child having this foundation laid in his heart is indeed ready for life.

I notice many deficiencies in this aspect of training up children. Not many children I discover really love God the way we are commanded to. I see children who are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." (2 Timothy 3:4). They choose things of pleasure above things of God. I remember that we once organised a retreat for teenagers in my local church. I anticipated that we shall be pursuing revival in such a retreat by spending quality time in hearing of the word of God, godly admonition from elderly and experienced, and in fasting and fervent prayer. But these teenagers started clamouring for Sua night (i.e. barbecue night). They clamoured for movies, and clamoured for other things that were fun and having no spiritual benefit. As a matter of fact they were counter spiritual. All these they clamoured for at a retreat. I was totally against all these things, but some of the organisers allowed for a movie in the retreat. What baffled me though was that some teenagers said, "the Sua night which

was the ONLY thing that could have make them come had been cancelled." I thought they were just joking or merely exaggerating their disapproval of the cancellation of what they looked forward to have, but to my greater surprise as many as said that word did not show up for the retreat.

Now don't tell me that such children were this way because the Devil had sought to have them more than others, or that they were this way by nature. It was Selwyn Hughes (1928 - 2006) who said children are spoilt not by nature but by nurture. These are children whose parents taught them only to pursue happiness and to find fulfilment in the flesh. Thus they knew nothing about loving God above all things else. To seek him with the whole of the heart and to dote on him.

Children ought to be taught not just to love God but why they ought to love him and how they ought to love him. They ought to love him for their own good as is the natural reason for selfish man to love another. But must not stop there but should be helped to love God for himself, for true love says, "I want you and not yours." Anything short of loving God for himself alone is not true love and is sure to fail with time. Bernard of Clairveux (c. 996 - 1081) wrote this words, "This is to love God because we for our sake, which is wise. But perfect love must be for the sake of God himself. Such love produces contrition, not asking 'what have I done to myself?' but 'what have I done to him?'" It is upon such refined love that every act of devotion to him, the fear of him, the service to him, piety, and every virtue is to be built. No other foundation shall do.

Teaching The Fear Of God

"Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD."

(Psalm 34:11)

Children ought to be taught the fear of God. Both the reverential fear and the terrifying fear of his majesty. This is the best lifelong guard of a child. To live being ever conscious of his maker and to revere him and live in constant terror of his judgment. It seems quite strange to hear the psalmist put forward such an invitation. Teach me the right approach to living, teach me how to know, teach me how to prevail over life's challenges, teach me how to be an architect, a doctor, etc. But why invite me to teach me how to fear? Ah, but herein is wisdom, for it is written, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." (Proverbs 9:10). If this fear is the beginning of wisdom, oh how important and wise it is to teach it to children.

People often think that it is not good to live in terror of God's judgment, but I have not seen any who got genuinely saved without this terror. I got saved when I got so terrified about eternal damnation. My terror led me to Christ and it was this way he saved me. The hymn writer who wrote "Amazing Grace," wrote these words, "Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved..." The grace by which he was saved first taught his heart to fear and the same grace relieved the fear. This is how I've found it in the life of most people who were genuinely saved. Not that children should be taught in an unnecessarily frightening way, but the truth of God's judgment naturally causes terror and we must not, in seeking to keep them from terror, deny them the truth.

It is written, "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." (Acts 24:24 - 25). When we reason on these important things of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, it has a natural effect of causing us to tremble. It is falsehood and deception concerning these things that does not cause trembling. So if we must teach children right and important things it would naturally cause them to fear and tremble. They must therefore be told the

whole truth about the life we live in. About death, about hell, about heaven, about salvation in Christ, about good works, and about the damnation of those who neglect the salvation of Christ. It is in this fear and trembling that they are to work out their salvation (Philippians 2:12).

Just like Felix, talking on such things that causes us to tremble has a natural effect of making us to seek deferment of the discussion. The same way parents seek deferment of talking on these important issues to their children. They want their children to think on other things and work on doing other things like achieving good grades, having fun, etc. They sometimes hope to teach them later in life or that they would get to know it by themselves. This way, like Felix, they are seeking what they term a convenient season. There is however no convenient season for that which causes trembling. If you defer it now you have to defer it forever, and as we know, convenience is the enemy of progress. These are the most important things for children to know and to hold. They are their surest guard through life. We must not therefore try to hide the truth of judgment from them but must present it to them as well as the way to salvation.

As I said before the natural reason for which the fallen man can love is for his own benefit but that perfect love is that by which we are to love God. That is to love him for himself alone. But you see, we are weak and do live in a fallen world and that perfect love is hard to come by. For this reason must we learn to put the terror of God before us reminding ourselves of the damnation that shall be meted out to all his haters. Being fully conscious of this we ought to love him, if for nothing, at least for our own sakes. Thomas à Kempis wrote these words, “it is a good thing, if love as yet cannot restrain thee from evil, that at least the fear of hell should hold thee back. But he who putteth aside the fear of God cannot long continue in good, but shall quickly fall into the snares of the devil.” He also wrote, “So then in the beginning man loves God, not for God’s sake, but for his own. It is something for him to know how little he can do by himself and how much by God’s help, and in that knowledge to order himself rightly towards God, his sure support.” How right was he!

Teaching Them Doctrine

*"... Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children."
(Deuteronomy 4:10)*

In the verse above, God said that his people should be gathered together so that he will make them hear his word. The reason for this is that they may learn to fear him all the days of their life, but what my key interest here is is that they may be taught to their children. So if we have the doctrine of God, it is for the purpose that we may teach them to our children.

We must teach children a clearly spelt out doctrine of our faith. We must place before them a well defined faith. We must teach them the creed of the Christian faith. The Nicene creed is a good one. This does not only provide them the knowledge of the summary of the faith, it presents them the path and boundary in which they are to think as they grow.

It is written, "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." (Isaiah 28:9 - 10). This verses explains yet again how early children must be taught the ways of God, but my interest is in what it says about how such children shall be taught. It says, "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." This shows that children ought to be taught the doctrine of the faith in details, carefully, logically, and systematically. It is not good to just tell children what to believe without giving them the logical reason to hold such views.

So the issue of doctrinal teaching must be a thorough work. As they grow and as they proceed in our teachings they shall be able to build upon this knowledge, word upon word and precept upon precept.

We must however not stop here. We must also go on to explain the creeds to them. This is where catechism is very useful for instructions. Each creed must be reasonably explained. Of course not explained with falsehood. We must be very conscious of the unavoidable fact that every good thing that shall be taught a child would be challenged in the society. It is inevitable. If we teach them with falsehood just to make them accept it easily, they shall feel betrayed when what they hold to are challenged and they are not able to defend it, and that rather what they hold is proven false. They must therefore not be trained by presenting them with false realities, hopes and fears. For example, when I was young, one of the major disservice parents used to do their girl child was to tell them to avoid boys because if a boy should touch them they would get pregnant, and being pregnant their lives would be ruined. To tell them to avoid boys is good but the reason they put forward were absolutely false. They presented their girls with false realities and false fears. The girls would sheepishly take this to be true and start running away from boys. Pious I hear someone say, but that is piety with a bad foundation. Should these girls accidentally touch a boy or a wayward boy touches them against their will they would become dejected and feel it is over with them. But when time goes on and they don't get pregnant they would realise what their parents really are; LIARS. From that time forth it would be hard to believe anything their parents tell them. They would rather rely on friends who would then lead them astray from the way of life. The boy who touched them telling them they won't get pregnant seem even more reliable and trustworthy than their very parents. Such bad actions of parents has the effect that is almost the same with selling out their children for naught. I have seen, firsthand, the very bad effect that this has. So we must put children on the ground and pillar of truth.

For this to be effective, we must present them with the sophistry of the world that seek to challenge each creed. For example when we say in a

creed, "I believe in One God..." The sophistries that challenge that are atheism, agnosticism, etc. When we say, "I believe that the Bible is God's word," or "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God," we have the host of false religions challenging that. We are as a matter of fact surrounded by heresies and sophistries with all their arsenals pointing at our most holy faith. But we must make sure that our young are thoroughly grounded in the truth.

From what seen here we can know that it is no easy thing to bring children soundly in the Christian doctrine. No woman who is a novice or a nonchalant person towards the matters of our faith can teach these to her children. Where parents lack the thorough knowledge of these things, they should look for someone who they trust in the faith and ask their children to go spend time with them, asking the person to assist in instructing their child. This is a good way to make up for one's inadequacies in having sufficient knowledge in bringing up their children.

Reliance On God

*"It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes."
(Psalm 118:9)*

Another thing worth mentioning to teach children is the absolute dependence and reliance on God for all things. There is nothing in the whole life that should win the trust of man than his God. Man ought not to trust others and ought not to trust himself but must trust God alone. All others will fail but God never fail. To help children by teaching them to rely upon God for all things shall make them walk through life with minimum disappointment and fear.

This also brings us to the point of prayer. Reliance on God means we go to

him for all things, for this reason must children be taught to pray and ask all things they need from him. A life of total reliance on God is all we see in scriptures. Christ relied on no man (John 2:24-25). And for his absolute reliance on God always went to God in prayer.

Virtue And Ethics

"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

(Proverbs 1:10)

Virtue should be instilled in a child. Virtue is the ability of one to choose right over wrong even when choosing right is contrary to what is pleasing to the self. It is having good virtue that can keep someone from succumbing to the enticements to do and benefit from evil.

Some of the key virtues of life are hard work, diligence, love for knowledge and truth, honesty, and the fear of God which we have talked about already. These things are very important for living a good life devoid of offence towards God and man. He who is not hard working and diligent would steal and tell lies to survive. He who does quest for knowledge shall work harder to make ends meet. He who does not quest for truth shall be swallowed up in the confusion of heresies. He who does not fear God shall be damned.

It is a good thing for young ones to be taught on the beauty of earning one's living in truth and honesty. I read a poem for kids in which was written the rigours of the life of a blacksmith. One statement I like in the poem are found in these words, "His brow is wet with honest sweat, he earns whate'er he can, and looks the whole world in the face, for he owes not any man." To see that this was meant to be taught to children was delightful. This shows the beauty of hard work, honesty, and making ends meet

without owing any man. The work of the blacksmith was rigorous and not one that many could be proud of, but it earned him the pride of self worth and the dignified state of owing no man.

Key to instilling this knowledge in children is still the inconvenient teaching about heaven and hell. For such virtues must be chosen most especially on the grounds of the knowledge of the eternal penalty of either choosing this way of life or neglecting it. Choosing a virtuous life is therefore an answer of a good conscience towards God. If we only choose virtue because of the fear of men and the penalty they serve us we don't have any reason to do the right when we know we can as well get away it. Even when we do good for such fear, it cannot be termed virtue in the truest sense. It is also on this inconvenient knowledge of heaven and hell that all other ethics should be taught. The ethics of one's profession, business, and other engagements. It is sad that not many people go about their profession ethically. They cut corners, rip people off, manipulate them, lead them astray to make unfair profit out of them, falsify documents, and tell lies. Such unethical practice are rife today. Children must be taught right early to choose to be ethical in all their engagements through their lives.

I know people who cut corners get what they want easily and this makes their corrupt practices naturally attractive to our fallen nature, but children should be trained to develop a strong character to choose what is right even when it hurts. There is no reason why someone should choose good over evil even when it hurts if he is not conscious of the inconvenient truth of heaven and hell. But being conversant with this reality let maintain a good conscience void of offence before God and choose to suffer for good's sake rather than to make fast advancements in life only to end up in hell. And people ought to know that doing good does not necessarily mean you won't do well in this life. Doing good may not have an immediate reward but it is sure to come in this life and in the next eternal life.

Teaching The Right Approach To Learning

"When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee."

(Proverbs 2:10 - 11)

Training involves rigour. So when the says Bible, "train up a child" it meant we should apply a rigorous approach for their learning. We should not be bringing up children too long with fun and amusement. If at all we use it we must have a plan to wean them off such ways of life. Just like a child is weaned so that he stops being breast fed, so also, if at all we use amusements and fun in training children, we must wean them off that as early as possible. I do believe that it is possible to train children with very minimal fun and amusement. If they are taught in and fun and amusing way at the start you may have to continue that way all through their lives. A life that can't be lived without fun and amusement is set for ruin.

It is good to teach children using teaching aids, activities, and videos, which has some elements of fun in them, but they must also be weaned of this too to learn to exert themselves in reading books and striving to get understanding in doing so. Learning using videos and audios is great all through life, meaning it is useful even for adults, but it is also a lazy way of learning. All lazy methods of doing things have their disadvantages. Learning with videos and audios have the disadvantage that they keep playing even when your mind have wondered away. They keep playing even when you have dozed off. When this happens you may only wake up to hear the end of what you were watching or listening to. But this is not so with reading text. I know it is possible for us to read over lines while the mind has wondered far away and not even know what we are reading as a result of this, but it is considerably rarer for this to happen and when it is easy to guard against when reading text. We also think we can multitask by listening to audio (which can also happen when watching videos), but that

our eyes has nothing to engage it while listening, our mind is far more easily distracted by almost anything and everything. But reading text engages our eyes in such a way that we can't advance our learning without the full engagement of the eyes which brings distraction to the very minimum. Any time there is a distraction the learning process pauses and continues when the distraction is over. Apart from this, it is easier to pause and think about something that comes to mind and continue reading later than when listening to audios or watching videos. So while audios, videos, and other learning aids are good, serious personal study can be best done by reading text. We must for this reason help children form the best learning habit of reading books.

Seeking fun and amusement in serious matters is the destruction of many today. Many people and even aged adults can't do anything except it is fun and amusing. This is due to bad upbringing I believe. We see this reflecting in many of our Sunday worship services. Rather than singing hymns and meditative solemn songs of praise to God as commanded in scriptures, people wish to sing and dance pop, rap, rock, and reggae. I have seen that many times people don't care about the meaning in the songs they sing in church as they do about the rhythm. This is because people are seeking fun and amusement where they ought to seek worship and edification. If worship is what people desire and not a "good fun time" they would by no means part with hymns because no mode of singing is fitter for the worship of God than hymns. The list of the harmful effect of seeking fun and amusement in serious and weighty matters goes on and on. This bad habit is a snare that destroys slowly, steadily, and surely.

We must help children not to fall into such a trap. Not many useful things can be learnt the fun way. Not many great things can be achieved the fun way. But by rigour, discipline, denying one's self pleasure, and exerting one's self can useful things be learnt and great things achieved. It would be better for children if it is the love of knowledge that drives their learning rather than if it is the love for fun and amusement. All through the book of Proverbs we could hear Solomon encouraging people to love knowledge,

understanding and wisdom. To go after it and to love it. That is why he says in our text above, "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee." (Proverbs 2:10 - 11). We ought to seek knowledge because it is pleasant to our souls. So parents must be careful to make their children love knowledge so that it can be pleasant to their souls. Let them love knowledge so much that they'd love quietness and seclusion, to keep out of the way of distractions, and spend many long hours in personal studies. Let reading be like water to them that when they don't get to read for a long while (probably due to being busy with other engagements) they'd feel the thirst to read and make sacrifices to have the time to read again.

Nowhere does Solomon encourage seeking fun or amusement. Rather he likens such to foolishness. Like we see in the book of Proverbs, children should therefore be spurred to love knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. That they advance their learning with full consciousness of how good these things are. And that knowing this, they should gladly be willing to go through the rigours of attaining them and spend hours and hours on their own reading and pursuing after knowledge. And there is no better time to start training them this way than when they are very young. According to scriptures, at a time in which they are yet to know anything (Deuteronomy 31:13). For this reason, the time to use fun and amusement to teach young ones must be very short indeed.

I do not wish to glorify rigorousness as if things are profitable just because they're rigorous. No, rather, all I'm saying is that we must not, in trying to keep children from rigours and fun, deny them the best way of learning. So we should be careful not to be promoting the idea that anything rigorous is good for us just because it is rigorous.

Finally, John Chrysostom (c. 347 - 407) wrote, "Dearly be loved, sloth is a terrible fault: just as it makes easy things seem hard to us, so enthusiasm and alertness render even hard things easy for us." I do not advocate

harshness in bringing young ones to love knowledge for harshness would do more harm than good. But with wisdom and tact let them be thought to acquire knowledge the rigorous way. The reason why people flee from doing things the rigorous way is sloth which John Chrysostom calls a terrible fault. He says it makes easy things hard and this is so true. But if we, gently and by wisdom, bring children to love knowledge and understanding, creating an interest in them to go after it, that enthusiasm would make even the hardest things easy. This way surmounting the hurdles of learning would be a cinch to them.

Teaching By Personal Examples

"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

(John 13:15)

Teaching by example is about the most effective way to teach. Even Jesus our Lord knew the importance of examples and always backed his teaching with examples. Not only did he use parables for examples but he presented his very life as an example. He says, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." (John 13:15). Peter in 1 Peter 5:3 says elders should be an ensample (which is example) to the flock. He said this knowing that the best way to lead the flock is by examples.

For this reason parents should always be conscious that their every action is an act of teaching. Their children learn a lot from them. What is taught to children would have more force when they can see that parents do practice what they preach. If you practice what you preach yourself it makes them believe that what you preach must have its benefits. But when you fail to practice what you preach it makes them believe that there's no benefit to it and trying to instil it in others is just an attempt to keep them from

enjoyment. It is in this light that John Chrysostom (c. 347 - 407) also says, "... correct doctrine is of no benefit unless one attends to the business of living... I mean, far more dependable and trustworthy than the teaching of words is teaching in action." So we must be what we want our children to be.

For example if both parents are always occupied in studies, their children would easily imbibe the habit. It would therefore be very easy to spur them on in advancing their learning if parents themselves show signs of being devoted to advancing their own learning.

Let the desire to practice what one preaches to a very good extent not lead parents to become hypocritical or try to put up a false perfection. They must remain humble and in humility admit that they're fallible. When they do wrong they shouldn't justify it just to appear perfect. Rather, let them acknowledge their weakness in meekness and this would be a good example for the children too. If also children fail to live by the high standards that experience has taught them as parents, they should remember that they too were once young and remember the weaknesses that children are prone to.

Correction And Discipline

"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."

(Proverbs 22:15)

We've seen before that the training of a child should start very early. So also must discipline. Herein is love, that a man disciplines and chastises his child. We can see all through the book of Proverbs the need for disciplining children. The importance of this cannot be overemphasised. This is

because, as it is written in the verse above, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child..." (Proverbs 22:15). The only remedy is the rod of correction. Chastising children is especially important for bringing up boys properly. I believe girls could be brought up properly without much need for chastisement. Though they may require it, but I think it is most essential for boys.

In days of foolishness a child does not have the fear of God and in the absence of this a person is bound to make grievous and injurious mistakes. But in the absence of the fear of God the fear of parents is essential to keep them from destroying themselves. The fear of parents could serve as worthy school master until a child attains to maturity and is reasonable enough to fear God independently. When they know well that their wrong actions will attract the trashing of their parents they would keep from that which is wrong. Consistence in keeping away from wrong actions would eventually become a habit which is very good for them.

Discipline (which also includes inflicting pain) should only be used as a corrective measure especially on matters of morals and not to be used to make children learn, the way horses are spurred on with a whip. Rather, to make them learn, we ought to work on making them develop interests in that which we want them to learn. Interest is the fuel of learning. To force children in learning or to inflict pain on them when they're not coping as fast as we desire would make them hate learning. Rather we should patiently work with them lovingly as they learn. No matter how slow. So chastisement is not the way to spur children on in learning but should be used especially for misdeeds that tend to moral wrongs.

This is where the aspect of love that displays itself in inflicting pain comes in. This is not charity but love as explained in chapter 1. So let us ensure that we make right use of disciplinary measures to ensure children grow properly. It is important to know that no discipline should be done without the child knowing for what he's being disciplined and what he could have done instead of the wrong. To inflict pain on a child in a way that he can't

know the right to have been done is not love but wickedness. It is not the inflicting of pain in itself that is love, but the object it is meant to achieve.

Conclusion

"I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father."

(2 John 1:4)

The summary of what we've spoken about here is that parents ought to begin training their children at a very early stage. They should not avoid the inconvenient things of eternity, hell, and heaven, righteousness, temperance, and the grave judgment to come. If they're going to be waiting for a convenient time, it shall never come. What should be taught them at this early stage are the love of God, the fear of God, the doctrine of the faith being well spelt out, defined, and explained, reliance on God, virtue and ethics, and that children should have the right approach and drive for advancing their learning. Parents must also teach their young by the examples of their own life. Discipline must be done in love as a corrective measure for moral wrongs and not as a measure to spur them on in learning.

In all, whether in teaching or in discipline, let everything be done in love and reflect love.

Prayer: *Dear Father, the responsibility to train up children is not a little one and requires strength from you alone. Teach us to know wisdom and give us the strength do that which is right for the proper upbringing of our young. Thank for we know you'd do it. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen.*

GENDER ROLES IN PARENTING

"My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother."

(Proverbs 1:8)

We shall be revisiting gender roles again but now in the areas of parenting. It is true that both parents have the duty of raising godly children, and there are no aspects of upbringing that is to be assumed by only one parent, but because of the difference in roles, some parts of parenting are better played by one than the other. I hope to look at these briefly before proceeding further in this book. As we can see, the verse above starts with the man before the woman, so we wish to take that order too in this book.

The Man

"My son, keep thy father's commandment..."

(Proverbs 6:20)

The key verse of this chapter instructs sons to keep their father's instructions, but says he should not forsake the law of his mother. This instruction is repeated almost verbatim in the verse just above in which it is written, "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother." (Proverbs 6:20). This seems to present us with an idea of the role of each parent. Commands and instructions pertains to fathers while laws pertains to mothers.

I cannot say definitely what this implies, but we may deduce some things from trying to see the difference between commands and laws. We have the ten commandments for example and the law is built on these ten commandments. The commandments are brief and concise, and form the foundation of the law. The law however is the detail governing principles founded on the commandments. For example, in the commandments we read, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:3). That is a commandment. But the Law spells out many things including the descriptions of circumstances in which the commandments is to be obeyed, the penalties of failure to obey, how the penalty should be executed, the blessings of obedience of each commandment, exceptions to each commandments, remedy (if there is) upon failure to keep them, etc. For example about the failure to have no other god before the Living God, we read the penalty, "Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die." (Deuteronomy 17:5). I also wrote about how the command not to kill was explained in the law to pardon those who kill accidentally, and not punish them because it was accidental, how they should investigate the matter and how the case is to be handled, in my article titled, "KILL OR MURDER: Which Is More Appropriate?" We find a detailed explanation in the law about how each command should be kept.

So I think we can say that commandments pertains to fathers while laws pertains to women. This also agrees to a good extent to the other things we have seen about the roles of a man and the roles of a woman. As we seen before that husbands are to provide leadership for the home. This also applies to the upbringing of children in the ways of the Lord. However, being primarily responsible for the provision for the home, they may not have the luxury of time required for training a child properly. For this reason they give commands which are rather concise and straight to the point.

But every time they can afford must be spent well in the upbringing of their children. At least they must be able to monitor their progress in keeping their commands so as to be able to know the next best course of action. They should also make out time to discuss with their spouses on their observations so as to make well informed decisions about their children.

Apart from giving commands, I think the father is also in the best place to discipline children should the need arise. When a child fails to keep the commands of his father, what ought to follow is discipline. I feel very sorry for the type of boys the modern day society is bringing up. Boys without discipline, no thrashing, nothing. Boys don't grow into great men that way. Dr. Ben Carson, a great man, often recounts how his mum used to trash him and discipline him often. It was by this means he became the great man that he is today. Not merely a man of great achievements, but a man of great character. My dad too was a man that trashed us very often, while I don't want to boast, I'm far better than I could have been without those thrashings. Discipline, very important aspect of upbringing, is to ensured by both parents but most especially the father.

The Woman

*"My son,... forsake not the law of thy mother."
(Proverbs 6:20)*

Now to the mothers. As said, laws pertains to mothers. She is to spend quality time in teaching, training, and shaping a child in the ways of God. I'm not a feminist and don't go by their agenda that does not allow women to be able to spend quality time with their children. I believe that women are to be busy at home for only then can they be able to give what is able to be qualified as law to their children.

Proverbs 31:10-31 spells out the doings of a virtuous woman, and one of the verses says this, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the LAW of kindness." (Proverbs 31:26). In her tongue is the LAW. Furthermore, the Bible says concerning how women should conduct themselves, "The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." (Titus 2:3-5). Two phrases I want to talk about here are these, "teachers of good things," and "keepers at home."

Women should be teachers of good things. As I said women should be occupied with teaching and training of young ones. This is how they can give laws to their children. To give laws by which one can be guided through life is not a little or easy thing. Making such laws requires thorough knowledge and understanding about life. Seeing women are thus commanded to be teachers of good things, their life ought to be occupied in study of good things. How shall one teach when she herself lacks knowledge or is so ill informed. Confusing tragedy is when ignorance tries to teach. So wise women should study to know what to teach and how to teach it. They should therefore spend their time wisely in study and teaching.

Even when all their children are grown up, they could still be actively involved in teaching younger women, grandchildren, children of younger spouses, etc. When compared with other parts of scriptures it is obvious that they are not to teach, talk, or even ask questions in church (1 Corinthians 14:33-35), neither should they think it their role to be teaching men (1 Timothy 2:11-14). But their attention should be to teach the young and counselling younger women.

So I believe that bringing up children is that which should require much of

the time of mothers. I believe that God's institution for bringing up children is the home and not the nursery. Shall a man live his responsibility as the provider (as we have seen in an earlier section) to be at home to train up their kids? They should spend as much time as possible to help but they may not be able to have time adequate enough for such an important duty. Nature itself teaches us that raising kids is primarily a woman's responsibility. For while in the womb the baby is nourished and formed in her womb. The baby is given birth to by her. Breastfed by her, etc. If nature teaches us this, it would be too bad to forget what we have learnt by nature so easily so as to hand over a child to a nursery, a school, etc. to afford time to go after money. Schools are good, but a child should not be separated from their parents until they have reached a certain age and their parents have been able to train them to a good extent by themselves. Schools should only assist parents in bringing up their children, not the parents assisting schools to bring up their own children. The educational system of the past understood to a good extent the need for children to be with their parents for a period long enough to form their character before helping out in the importation of knowledge. For this reason they would not admit any child into an institution that will take them from their parents until they get to a certain age. When the ages of children were hard to be determined they would ask them to put their hands across their heads and hold the ear on the opposite side of the head. If they couldn't do it they would send them back home to their parents. Today however, I suppose some people would be happy of it were possible to have nurseries for the unborn.

Among the host of wrong things contained in her book, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," Mary Wollstonecraft actually said one thing right. She said, "they who do their duty by proxy should not murmur if they miss the reward of duty—parental affection produces filial duty." No one can fulfil the role of the parents like parents can. Therefore it is wrong to give children away to daycare or crèches. Let them be catered for to a particular age and the foundations of their reasoning be well built, then, and only then, let them be admitted into a school for their learning. The school is to

help the parents in bringing up their children and not take over their responsibilities.

Have you ever come across the definition of the word "superwoman?" It reads, "a woman who succeeds in having a career and raising a family." Isn't that amusing? Do you think there is any superman in all the world. That guy with an S on his chest who can lift trucks and throw them aside like a discus? Such a character is only fiction that exists only in movies and comics. It is the same way that a superwoman, a woman who succeeds in having a career and raising a family, is a fiction. Successful women often fail in raising a family, and they who appear to be succeeding are only lucky that their failures are not conspicuous, or they who judge them a success in regards to raising a family don't know what such success entails.

Christian women ought to take the issue of children upbringing seriously. They should always remember that most great men had great mothers, but such mothers were never super career women. Think of the great men of today. Were there mothers super career women, or women of power and affluence? They were not, but their children became great by their nurture. Then think of the powerful women and tell us about their children. You can go as far back as Jezebel and Attalia if you want, their children rarely amounted to anything meaningful. They usually become a nuisance. Let us come home to a time closer to ours. Britain had one Prime Minister who was considered the most powerful woman of her time. A world shaker. Her name? Margaret Thatcher. But tell me about her children. Nothing to write home about. I am not interested in bringing out the demerits of people, but that we may learn, I shall not go into details of the horrible things I read, but even one of her children served jail terms in a foreign country. Apart from Margaret Thatcher, we don't want to speak of Hilary Clinton, or Angela Merkel who some call the "lady boy." But these are what feminists want to turn all women into.

But about the time of Margaret Thatcher was also a woman not well known though she was the first lady to a very powerful president. Her name?

Barbara Bush. She's about the most respected of women for me. But she wasn't a super career woman. She could have attained any height in politics had she wanted, but she didn't. She carried out her role as a mother and wife well and did not sacrifice it for these temporal honours. As a result both her husband and her son became presidents of the United States of America. That is a wondrous achievement. A friend of mine told me that she was once asked [paraphrased], "what are your achievements by the way?" She responded [paraphrased], "I married a man and made him a president. I gave birth to a son and made him a president." That is what good wives and mothers do. That is what God made women to be; mothers and wives. Shall we talk of the mother of Dr. Benjamin Carson, or the Wesley brothers, or of other great people?

Understanding the proper purpose of mothers, Charles Spurgeon wrote, "There is a poor mother; no one ever knows anything about her, she goes to the house of God, her name is not in the newspapers, or anywhere else, she teaches her child and brings him up in the fear of God; she prays for that boy; she wrestles with God, and her tears and prayers mingle together. The boys grows up. What is he? A missionary- a William Knibb- a Moffat- a Williams. But you do not hear anything about the mother Ah! but if the mother had not been saved, where would the boy have been?" The truly successful women are not those who are famous and widely acclaimed, but those who through labour, prayer, and patience raise up great children with a well refined characters. Let Christian women keep this in their minds.

"The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." (Proverbs 29:15). This informs us that children should not be left to themselves. Those people whose mothers were ambitious pursuing political and career attainment ended up serving jail terms. How shameful is that. They've brought shame to their mothers. But they whose mothers played their roles as mothers and spent their time in bringing up their children well made them great in the earth. And in that it says a child who is left to himself bringeth shame to his mother (not his father), it means it is the role of women to nurture up young ones and this requires

much of their time. A child that bringeth shame is a product of a mother who failed in her responsibility.

Those who are advocates of prioritising the girl child education above the male child education think they are fighting for a good cause. I am not against the girl child education, but why prioritise it over the male child education? That is foolishness. "Train a man, they say, and you train an individual, but train a woman and you train a nation." I don't doubt this at all as unlearned women can only teach their children things that can be considered to be only a little more than rubbish. So her learning is important for the coming generations. But to train a woman so as to press her so much to pursue unprofitable goals in life, pushing her to compete with men in the field, to strive for equality where no equality can be found, encouraging her to strive for a life of independence where she needs no husband or children, so much that, should she give birth, she would have no time to personally train her own children, and you have only trained a weaker individual when you should have at least trained an individual. Women are a link connecting the present generation to the future. The strength of that link in terms of learning and understanding determines the health of the future generation. Their learning therefore should be such as would be beneficial to the upbringing of the young and not to be pursuing vain ambitions.

My advice therefore is that the learning of women should tend towards things that provide the right knowledge on how to build the mind. We've said before that to be a good trainer requires a lot of knowledge. Children cannot be trained by ignorance or a knowledge irrelevant to their training. So women should strive to acquire the right knowledge relevant to fulfilling their God given roles. I therefore advise that they pursue knowledge in areas such as psychology, education, study skills and teaching approach, etc. Knowledge of health related studies are also good. I shall talk about other fields of study that are beneficial for women in a later chapter. But the bottom line is their choice of path of learning should be made with careful consideration of their God given role. A course of

study that shall enable them to better fulfil this role.

When I read about the life of the mother of the Wesleys, her passion for Christ led her to acquire skills of upbringing that are quite unusual. Applying them well she was able to bring up children that the church can't forget easily, especially John and Charles Wesley. She had a psychological approach to bringing up her young ones. For example she never gave a child anything he cried for, but she gave it when they asked for it. This made them realise very early that their crying was useless and that way they were influenced to quit being crybabies and become more mature in their reasoning very early. That is very much in line with the psychological theory which says that a habit dies when you refuse to reward it and a habit thrives when it enjoys reward. When a baby cries (which is very annoying) and you give him/her what they want, you've rewarded their bad habit and they shall cry again the next time they want something. Rather bear the inconvenience of their cry now that they may learn early to ask for things rather than cry for them. I shall not go into details of how she raised her children, but I recommend that Christian women should read about her life. We are more privileged today to have a greater source of knowledge than she had in her time, so women should avail themselves of as much knowledge as is possible to help them fulfil their noble roles well.

Proverbs 31 was written by Lemuel. And he said those things he wrote were the things his mother taught him. He was a man of profound wisdom and his mother was responsible for it. Women are to lay out life before their children like a map before a sailor. They ought to show them how to navigate through this sea of life. We see this in the mother of Lemuel. She told him everything he needed to know about life. It would be too bad for mothers to allow their children go through life without themselves spreading out life before them and thoroughly teaching them. This way they would discover life by themselves, that is if they discover it at all, but it shall be with much harm. In verse 4 of Proverbs 31, Lemuel's mother warned him against strong drinks that they don't pertain to kings. Imagine the harm that Lemuel must have gone through to discover this by himself.

To discover such, if ever he does, he must have first ruined himself, but his mother kept him from such ruin.

I shall round off my advice to women with a word from Richard Baxter who wrote in his book, "The Saint's Everlasting Rest," "mothers, remember this, who are more with your children, while young, than their fathers. What pains are you at for their bodies? What do you suffer to bring them into the world? And will you not be at as much pains for the saving of their souls? Your affections are tender; and will it not move you to think of their perishing for ever? I beseech you, for the sake of the children of your bowels, teach them, admonish them, watch over them, and give them no rest till you have brought them to Christ."

Other things related to this matter shall be discussed in a later chapter on Family Finances.

Conclusion

*"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."
(Ecclesiastes 9:10)*

Parenting is a responsibility of both parents and they ought to work as a team. Child upbringing is a full and real project and should be treated accordingly. As executing a project requires much knowledge, research, planning and projections, taking of counsel, etc., so does the upbringing of children require these. Both parents should see themselves as a team. Goals as well phase of a child's growth should be well spelt out. Their progress well monitored. What can be done to improve on the growth should be carefully researched upon and prayed about. Mistakes made in child upbringing should be carefully looked out for and never be repeated. Let older parents teach younger ones on parenting and point out mistakes to

watch out for. May God help us in bringing up children properly in the ways of God in Jesus' name. Amen.

***Prayer:** Dear Father, teach us to know our roles and work as a team in bringing up our young ones. Teach us to do the duty of parenting with all our might. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.*

PIETY, CIRCUMSPECTION, AND INNOCENCE

*"I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning
evil."*

(Romans 16:19)

Now I wish to talk on the major virtues that should be instilled in a child. We've talked about virtue in an earlier chapter, but I wish to be more elaborate here for emphasis. There are many virtues but I think these are the key virtues upon which others can be easily built. These things which I am about to talk on are about the most neglected aspects of modern Christian life and teaching. They are piety, circumspection, and innocence. I wrote about these things in my article titled, "PIETY, CIRCUMSPECTION, AND INNOCENCE---by the Word." But I shall share them here for the purpose of our discussion.

Piety

*"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had
in reverence of all them that are about him."*

(Psalms 89:7)

Piety is a state of life in which one is deeply religious. This has a lot of connotations. In the Christian perspective, we know that piety is void of pretence. When we teach them the love and fear of God, and other Christian virtues we've discussed in an earlier chapter, it has the natural

effect of making children pious. It is the true state of one's life in which he has deep reverence for God and the fear of God, and these are not without an outward reflection. Being pious, as a Christian, entails holding the word of God in high esteem and fearing him deeply. It means being circumspect. Piety means minding each and every action we take, thought we think, places we go, associations we keep, information we imbibe, how we relate with others, etc., and ensuring that they are according to God's perfect will. And this is the life we are called to live as Christians when the Bible says, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." (Ephesians 5:15). This is the life that we must teach our young to live.

Piety is not being superstitious. It is not being taught how to fear your Sunday School teacher, or pastor, and take them as little gods. Christian piety must be founded on scriptures, reason, and expediency. To teach any of reverence outside the confines of scriptures, reason, and expediency is mere superstitions. To be teaching the fear of men as some preachers do is to teach mere superstitions. True piety must be borne of absolute fear of God alone and none other.

It is written, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." (Psalms 89:7). Therefore this fear of God expressing itself in piety must be clearly seen and observable in our assemblies as Christian brethren. And so must Children be taught from their early age pious deeds, conducts, and observances.

Circumspection

*"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise."
(Ephesians 5:15)*

Being pious has a natural effect of making us circumspect. Circumspection is an act of piety. Being circumspect means not taking risks or taking chances. It means you keep as far off as possible from what is perceived to be immoral according to Biblical standards. It doesn't have to be outrightly wrong nor does it have to be clearly spoken against in scriptures. The pious man would not go near what is even perceived as tending to be evil. This of course may be misinterpreted as being superstitious or exaggerating things out of proportion.

I like a story of which Charles Seeth in his book, "A Christian In A Non Christian World." I have used the story a number of times, but it wouldn't kill if I present it here again:

"Once upon a time, a rich man put an advertisement for a chauffeur to drive his car. Three men responded and came for interview. Each of them was asked exactly the same question by the rich man: "How close can you drive to the edge of a cliff?" The first man interviewed said, "I can drive so well that I can drive the car one foot away from the edge of the cliff." The second man, not to be outdone, said, "My driving skill is so good that I can drive just one inch away from the edge of the cliff." But when the third man was asked this, he replied, "I will drive as far away from the edge of the cliff as possible!" Well I think you can guess who got the job – the third man."

That is what it means to be circumspect. Staying as far away as possible from perceived danger, but in our case perceived evil. The others thought they were presenting a proof of their driving skills, but the owner of the car saw it for what it was, sheer recklessness. When people teach young ones not to be circumspect, they're merely teaching them to be reckless not just with their lives but with their very souls.

Now to what extent are we to be circumspect? It is written, "And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect." (Exodus 23:13). We are told here that we are to be circumspect in ALL things that God has

commanded us to do. So far God has commanded it, we must be circumspect about it.

The Bible's commandments touch almost every part of our lives and for this reason we are to be circumspect in almost everything we do. I know there are areas of our lives that we have no commandment from God, for example, whether we should take a cup of water before a meal or whether it should be after the meal. But in almost every other thing we have a commandment from God. So in all these things of which we have a commandment, we must be circumspect.

Sadly today, children are being taught not to be circumspect. They are being taught that God is loving, God is gracious, and for this reason, you don't have to live your life in fear of him. Go ahead and do what you want, he doesn't care. But let them say what they want, this is what is written, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." (Psalms 89:7). If he be revered, then we must live before him in circumspection.

Hear what apostle Paul says: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Romans 14:21 - 23). It is a sin to do even that which one has doubts about. Meaning a Christian should only do those things he is sure is right. There is no middle ground of ignorance that justifies doing things of which one is not sure if or not it is a sin. If he isn't sure and goes ahead to do it, though the deed may not be evil in itself, yet is it a sin for such an action is not of faith. Paul says such people ARE damned. Not that they shall be damned, but they are damned in the present tense. So Christians, in the spirit of circumspection, ought to do only those things they are certain is right. If they have any doubt about whether or not it is right they shouldn't do it.

In the spirit of circumspection Paul wrote, "Flee fornication..." (1 Corinthians 6:18). Why flee? I find it rather interesting that when talking about the Devil, that old and cunning serpent, the fierce dragon (Revelations 20:2) that goes about like a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8). Yet despite his cunningness fierceness and terribleness the Bible says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7). That is the devil, the fierce dragon, that goes about like a roaring lion is what the Bible admonishes us to resist. But it asks us to flee fornication. Why should we not resist that too? Because it is not circumspection to be resisting fornication. What is circumspection is to flee from it.

Innocence

"I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil."

(Romans 16:19)

Paul said plainly, "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil." (Romans 16:19). What does it mean to be simple? To be simple means to be void of understanding. All through the book of proverbs we see the simple being disapprovingly spoken of as ignorant and is always likened to a fool. "A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing." (Proverbs 9:13). "The simple inherit folly..." (Proverbs 14:18). So, quite funnily, the Bible advocates a form of ignorance here. This is the true blissful ignorance. This form of simplicity is an integral part of the pious Christian life and must be sought after both as individuals and collectively by the Christian brotherhood. Not to be lacking knowledge about everything, rather it is just only things pertaining to evil that we are to be ignorant. Such ignorance concerning what is evil is what it means to be innocent. It is sad that many amidst us are entirely the

other way round. They are simple and very gullible concerning what is good, and very wise and rich in knowledge concerning what is evil. But we must strive to be innocent in respect to what is evil.

There is a difference between being virtuous and being simple. While being virtuous is choosing to do the right despite the knowledge of the evil and the supposed benefit of doing it, being simple is when you are ignorant of a thing. So the pious Christian life we ought to strive to attain to as prescribed by scriptures is not a pious life where we would always choose not to lie when the temptation arises, but rather we shouldn't even know how to tell the lie. Not only should we not fornicate, but we shouldn't even know about it, or how to go about it, nor should it come to mind. This is what it means to be simple in respect to evil.

In the absence of innocence, being virtuous is the only alternative to help in living a holy Christian life. We must know however that living a godly Christian life based on virtue requires painful struggle and discipline, as we shall discourse in the next chapter. The blissful ignorance of the innocent would make living a godly Christian life easier on our part. So we should understand that virtue is only a remedial element of the pious Christian life when innocence is lost. But the Lord delights in the simple. It is written, "The LORD preserveth the simple." (Psalm 116:6).

So parents must keep their young from the corruptions of the world. We must do our utmost best to keep them from secular things, their music, publications, activities, and other forms of entertainment. It may mean that they be prevented from watching the television, listening to secular music, or keep a close watch on them, hand them over to very trustworthy teachers to watch them while in school and keep them from evil acquaintances, etc. Whatever it takes we must struggle to preserve their innocence.

I believe that Abraham and Sarah were parents who brought up their child in absolute innocence. That guy Isaac actually got up to forty years, having

a very wealthy dad, and the thought of marriage didn't seem to have crossed his mind. His gaze was probably always straight forward and never looked right or left. He seemed never to notice women. His parents probably waited for him and when he wasn't making any decision until his mother passed on (Genesis 23), Abraham had to act (Genesis 24). I really think Isaac really lived a life of blissful ignorance thanks to his parents. I think parents should strive to bring up children this way.

It is sad that people claim children ought to be given sex education and it gets me wondering what for? Sex education, through seemingly good ways, corrupts the innocence of children. This is wicked for it is far better to maintain a life of morality in innocence than to maintain it in the struggle of abstinence. Now, sex education should not be mistaken for teaching children decency. By decency I mean teaching them to maintain, as much as possible, friendship with children of their own sex, not to allow themselves to be touched by the opposite sex, and to avoid being with them in secluded places. That is decency not sex education. Sex education can be defined as, "teaching how to do it." You needn't know how to do it if you shouldn't be doing it. And they that should do it needn't education for it. Often, those who encourage sex education would start off from the teaching of decency, which is good, and sway into teaching children how to do it, which is evil. Let us be clear about this, it is evil and has to stop.

Others would talk so loosely about pornography to children thinking that mentioning it to children to condemn it is helping them in any way. They see themselves as wise people teaching young ones how to abstain from evil by teaching them the evil they are to abstain from. When you teach children about sex in a state of which they should not be engaging in it for any reason, what is that than teaching them evil. What grievous evil it is to present a child with a sumptuous food and tell him not to eat of it. Teaching children about sex is tearing the veil of their innocence off their faces. I was glad when a repentant person who once operated an abortion clinic later confessed that they promoted sex education to help create a market for their abortion clinic. This was quite revealing of the true evil and

hypocrisy behind sex education.

The reason given for sex education in the church is it is better we teach them in the church where we could safely guide them aright than not talk about it only to have their friends talk to them about it and guide them in the wrong way. This must have originated from people who have mastered the art of hypocrisy. If we have followed the simple commands of scriptures, our children (even in their innocence) would not be the ones turning to evil, rather they'd be the one turning people to righteousness. Teaching the love and fear of God, piety, etc. shall suffice to keep them from evil. How shall someone who has been well taught about hell and heaven be turned away to do evil?

This manner of hypocrisy is rife today. I have seen a number of videos that the makers claim they are trying to educate people on how to be wary of people who wish to harm them, but they seem to me to be educating people on how to harm others. One of the videos was about how drinks could be poisoned to render a girl unconscious so as to rape her. The video was very detailed on how to convincingly ask a girl to get something and while she is at it to quickly put the poison into the drink. Now when the girl in the video returns she takes her drink and when she is about to drink it they shout in such a concerned way, "No! Don't drink it! It is poisoned!" Then they tell the girl how they had poisoned her drink and how she should be careful. They pass the same message to you the viewer. Now I was innocent in this matter and never knew that a girl could be poisoned this way, but they've just educated me on how to do it to the very minutest detail so that if I wanted to I could do it successfully. That is how sex education is. If the safety of girls was the concern, there are better ways to say it than to be very detailed about how to go about poisoning her drink. For example, just saying don't accept drink from strangers, or be cautious about what you drink when alone with guys, etc. would suffice for their safety. Going into details of how their drink can be poisoned is working against their safety. Not every girl would watch that video but some evil minded men would watch it and be enlightened in their evil ways....

One may ask if we weren't supposed to be talking about sex, romance, etc. to children, then to what purpose was Songs of Solomon written in the Bible? I believe that first of all, the Songs of Solomon was written for married people and has its benefit which I shall talk about in a later chapter. The words, "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse..." (Song of Solomon 4:12) informs that it is all a conversation between two spouses. Apart from this, it would be rather foolish to assume that the Songs of Solomon was written concerning sex. We can find no direct reference to sex in the whole book. It is all about love. But just as I was writing this paragraph I saw somewhere on the net that they were going to have a series of sermons on Songs of Solomon for children and they will be talking about sex. Apart from the fact that it spoke little or nothing about sex, it teaches us more about love than about sensuality. If at all children should be taught out of the book, it should be so as to teach them on how to be committed to their future spouse. As we shall see, such sense of commitment encourages chastity not sensuality.

Moreover, Aurelius Augustine wrote in one of his letters the following words, "If, for instance, a man were to take in a literal and carnal sense much that is written in the Song of Solomon, he would minister not to the fruit of a luminous charity, but to the feeling of a libidinous desire." So if people treat the good book of the Songs of Solomon in a carnal sense in teaching children he is only seeking their death for it is written, "For to be carnally minded is death..." (Romans 8:6). I have heard powerful sermons preached out of the book of the Songs of Solomon and non was used to talk about romance not to talk of sex. This is the right use of the book for it is written, "... but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Romans 8:6).

Working On Societal Transformation

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."

(Matthew 5:13)

Now what immediately comes to mind is; what shall we do? The whole earth is full of corruption. Well it means Christian parents shouldn't be passive about the things that happen in the society, but should actively engage in society transformation activities. For example, when we see dirty videos being aired, we shouldn't just sit there looking the other way. Rather we should form some sort of group of parents to resist such trends, and have the representatives of such a group seek an appointment with relevant persons that could effect the needed change. When I say resist I don't mean confrontational resistance. Rather it should just be by sending out messages, writing articles on the need for a change for good, writing letters, seeking appointments for one-on-one discussion with decision makers. It is my opinion that women would be more successful in this endeavour. To reach out to such people and prevail on them to make the needed changes, appealing to their reason and conscience.

I was once watching a program in which was a lady who was alone in her house. A boy came in, held a brief conversation with her and went out. The girl then said [paraphrased], "O how would he just come and go and not throw me into a world of ecstasy." Now that creates an impression on the mind of the viewers that women desire to be used and this could lead to rape. Now, we can not just allow ourselves do nothing about such. I too have done absolutely nothing about it, so it is what I am also guilty of. But parents need, for the sake of their children, to be more active in societal transformation and prevail upon decision makers to maintain a decent society that shall enable us raise godly children who shall happily live a life of absolute innocence. Being passive would harm our children to a very great extent.

The best form of defence in most cases is to be on the offensive. In military

practice, to be only on the defence would often result in disaster. It would give the enemy time to prepare and launch coordinated attacks so that defence would become impossible. The Devil is ever at war with us over our children. If we are defensive in our approach to protecting them, such protection will over time be impossible to maintain. If you want to be on the defence and protect your kids, sooner or later they'll have to interact closely with that corrupt society you've protected them from. Striving for societal sanity is the best thing to do to be able to afford us a sane and safe place to raise children in piety and innocence.

Next parents need to be well informed on the strategies of the evil one. Paul says, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." (2 Corinthians 2:11). Satan is sure to get an advantage of us if we don't constantly keep ourselves abreast of his schemes as soon as they come up. Knowing his devices we must warn our young ones about them. One of the devices today is to tell children that the urge they have in being attracted to the opposite sex is as a result of the hormones in their bodies and that the secretion of these hormones is as a natural result of growing up. You see, the world today have failed young ones and they'd never wish to acknowledge it. What they show on television, newspapers, music videos, and what they air on radio are the things that cause the secretion of such hormones, yet, not wanting to own up to their failures, they tell lies that it is the natural result of growing up. Some parents too, thinking it would make look vast in body science, would participate in selling these lies to their young ones.

I spoke to an elderly man who told me about life in his days. They didn't have television, radio, etc. All that can influence children are their parents, their pastors, and their teachers. From the things he told me it was obvious that they grew up in complete innocence. No hormones stirring up sensual desires or undue feelings of attractions towards the opposite sex. But we in this age from childhood are exposed to movies in which people are kissing and cuddling (if not worse), videos that stir sensual cravings, and in the end we blame growth for the sensual cravings people feel as a natural

result of growing up. If that is the case growing up must be evil.

Parents need to warn their young ones not to fall for these lies. Should they have sensual cravings they ought to rethink their ways, to shun certain forms of entertainments, publication, etc. They shouldn't think that it is natural. It is the effect of a fault they are to seek to correct. Should they see it as natural then it should be natural to seek satisfaction for those evil cravings. The world has betrayed our children and parents should not join in this conspiracy. So parents are to protect their children not just from the evil media, but also from the lies designed to ruin children.

Rather should children find themselves in such a case, godly parents should let them know that they have fed their minds with wrong things so they should seek to wash those filth off by having a change in what they engage their minds with. One of the things that Christ does for us is the renewal of our minds. When the hormones are tugging them into sensual desires they're to come to Jesus for cleansing. "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4:21 - 24). This is what I call re-innocencialisng. When one loses his or her innocence he could gain it back in God by the renewing of his mind. This is the right response for young ones to make when their hormones are secreted in their system and leading them astray. Rather than blame growth, we must go back to God in prayer, change our ways, and consistently feed our minds with his word that our minds may be renewed.

Conclusion

"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise."
(Ephesians 5:15)

Piety must be instilled in children. We must seek by all means to preserve their innocence. We must not in trying to teach them how to behave expose them to things that can defile their minds, for example exposing them to the so called sex education. We should teach them judgment by which they can think independently to choose that which is right. Should they lose their innocence, their virtue which has been built on the love and fear of God shall keep them safe. They may have to struggle to do that which is right but they shall not be swept away. I think these struggles are not without their benefits. I think as they wrestle with temptations they become stronger. Lastly, the right response when one starts having sensual cravings is to go to God for the renewal of his mind and not blame his hormones. May God help us and grant us the wisdom to be good and godly parents in Jesus' name.

Prayer: *Dear Father, teach us to instil piety in our young. Help them to live lives in deep reverence of your terrible majesty and walk before you in piety and circumspection. May they also live lives of innocence before you. Thank you heavenly Father. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

ABSTINENCE, SELF CONTROL, AND SELF DISCIPLINE

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour."

(1 Thessalonians 4:3 - 4)

It is almost certain that innocence shall be lost one way or the other. Even when we strive to keep the society from the evils it is prone to. By the way, man did not live in the garden forever. They were not corrupted by television and stupid music, but of the Devil and the lust of their own hearts. It does not mean that we should now be careless about preserving the innocence of children all the way till they become adults and independent, but should this happen, we must know the remedial things to do.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter that virtue is only a remedial element of a pious Christian life. The way God made man was that he should live in a state of blissful innocence. But when he fell and had the knowledge of good and evil, the remedy was that he should choose the good over the evil. So virtue was a remedy when innocence was lost. This is the same way it is with children. It is this virtues I wish to talk about briefly here.

It is at such times that the teachings we have given them from early childhood (before they knew anything) will come in handy. The teaching of the love of God, the fear of God, of righteousness, temperance, and the

judgment to come, etc. This will help them greatly when innocence concerning evil is lost. It is not in this state that we should now start seeking to teach them these things. They should have been grounded in them since early childhood.

To ensure that they don't make mistakes when they lose their innocence, we need to teach them how to independently discern between good and evil and having discerned it to keep to that which is good and keep away from that which is evil. We don't need to spell out evil for them and defile their innocence while pretending to be seeking their good. In teaching them judgment we are arming them for the fight. When the fight begins then shall they know the use of what they have been armed with and use it adequately. So, through the teaching of that which is good alone, we must teach children abstinence, self control and self discipline.

Now it is worthy of note that when talking about sensual gratification, abstinence, self control, and self discipline, is what children should be taught, not patience. We often hear parents telling their young, "don't have sex now, wait until you get married. When you get married then you can have sex as you like." Not that patience isn't a good virtue to help in such matters, but there are two reasons why I say that patience is not the right virtue to make young ones abstain from sensual gratification. The first is that how long shall one be patient for that which shall happen in a very distant time. If you ask someone to wait for something that shall happen next week, that would be understandable. But why would you ask someone to wait for something that shall happen in about fifteen to thirty years time?

The second is teaching people to wait for marriage to gratify their sensual desires often creates a wrong perception about marriage. If children are taught to put sensual gratification on hold till they get married, it creates a wrong perception that marriage is a legalised restricted sex institution. People who go into marriage thinking "now that I'm going to get married, I can have sex all I want..." may not see the need to continue in it after few

months, and such can wreck their marriage very easily. They need to hold right views of marriage. I have heard of people who actually seek divorce, despite knowing the complex issues that comes with it, just on grounds of not being sexually satisfied. It is quite strange to sacrifice friendship, companionship, the joys of one's espousal, etc. on the altar sexual gratification.

Furthermore when unmarried people imitate Christ in keeping away from the opposite sex as much as possible, it helps them stay focused in life. The temptation to be close to the opposite sex, or to engage in unlawful sexual intercourse, is always there so far one allows his or her mind to be idle, so when one chooses not to be close to the opposite sex, he has no choice than to occupy his mind with helpful things. People who draw close to the opposite sex can allow their minds to wonder as they wish. Also, drawing close to the opposite sex is a major distraction from one's life's goals. Doing this often makes one to keep thinking of the girl or boy they've drawn close to which does not allow them to concentrate. So let young ones be taught to stay focused and not allow the distractions of being close to the opposite sex be a hinderance to them, keeping them from being the best they could be.

So, rather than teaching patience in matters of sensual gratification, it is better to teach abstinence, self control, and self discipline. It is better to restrain oneself from that which is wrong by means of self control and self discipline than merely teaching them to defer gratification for a later time. Let them be taught to occupy their minds with useful things and work on developing themselves. Even in marriage must we show abstinence, both towards one's spouse and in being chaste. Towards one's spouse because it is written, "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency." (1 Corinthians 7:5). There is need for married people to still show abstinence to be able to give themselves to prayer and fasting. In being chaste because though one be married does not mean that temptations shall not arise to go after other

people other than one's spouse, but it is only by abstinence, self control, and self discipline that one can maintain a chaste life. Children should therefore be trained to imbibe this as it would be wall around their morality all through their lives.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, help us to teach our children the judgment to discern between what is good and what is evil. Help them to imbibe the virtues of abstinence, self control and self discipline. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

CONCLUSION

*"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."
(Ecclesiastes 9:10)*

I will like to conclude by presenting to us these words by Richard Baxter,

"I shall conclude with this earnest request to all Christian parents that read these lines: that they would have compassion on the souls of their poor children, and be faithful to the great trust that God hath put on them.

If you cannot do what you would for them, yet do what you can. Both church and state, city and country, groan under neglect of this weighty duty. Your children know not God, nor his laws, but take his name in vain, and slight his worship, and you neither instruct them nor correct them; and therefore God corrects both them and you. You are so tender of them, that God is the less tender both of them, and you. Wonder not if God make you smart for your children's sins; for you are guilty of all they commit, by your neglect of your duty to reform them. Will you resolve therefore to set upon this duty, and neglect it no longer? Remember Eli. Your children are like Moses in the bulrushes, ready to perish if they have not help. As ever you would not be charged before God as murderers of their souls, nor have them cry out against you in everlasting fire, see that you teach them how to escape it, and bring them up in holiness, and the fear of God. I charge every one of you, upon your allegiance to God, as you will very shortly answer the contrary at your peril, that you will neither refuse nor neglect this most necessary duty. If you are not willing to do it, now you know it to be so great a duty, you are rebels, and not true subjects of Jesus Christ. If you are willing, but know not how, I will add a few words of direction to help you. Lead them by your examples, to prayer, reading, and other religious duties. Inform their understandings. Store their memories. Rectify their wills. Quicken their affections. Keep tender their consciences.

CONCLUSION

Restrain their tongues, and teach them gracious speech. Reform and watch over their outward conversation. To these ends, get them Bibles and pious books, and see that they read them. Examine them often what they learn: Especially spend the Lord's day in this work, and suffer them not to spend it in sports or idleness. Shew them the meaning of what they read or learn. Keep them out of evil company, and acquaint them with the godly, and fail not to make them learn their catechism. Especially shew them the necessity, excellency, and pleasure of serving God; and labor to fix all upon their hearts."

Prayer: *Dear Father, as we bring this section to a close, keep in our hearts all that we've learnt. Help us not to neglect this all important duty. And help our children to accept the teachings we give to them. Thank you dear Father. In Jesus' name we've prayed. Amen.*

SECTION 5

CHALLENGES FACING THE FAMILY INSTITUTION

FEMINISM

*"A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing."
(Proverbs 9:13)*

Feminism is a pleasant monster in the society and must be dealt with decisively. It is therefore imperative that all things pertaining to man and woman that feminism is seeking to skew must be straightened out. One may wonder why I'm concerned about feminism to such a great extent. It is because it poses a major threat to the wellbeing of our homes.

Dealing with feminism is a very tricky affair and is not without its tremendous risks. As a man, your motive for striving against it would be questioned. I stand a risk of being charged with pride, and having the will to have women play their submissive role only because I'm a man. However, seeing these risks and refusing to speak out against the vice of feminism would amount to cowardliness. Feminism is ruining and wrecking homes and by this means is wrecking our societies in a steady degree.

Why do I call feminism a pleasant monster? Because it has a goodly outer covering, which is fighting for women to ensure their better well being, and all that. This it claims to do and people believe it is doing so, but within, it is just wrestling against God's order and warring against the church. So it has this outward look of protecting the weak from the strong oppressor. This is pleasing. This is good. But it is a monster with many weapons that is capable of destroying our society as a whole.

For this reason, I'll like to explain to us the failures of feminism as well as its deceptions that we may see the devil in the movement of feminism. The evils of feminism is widespread, but I shall seek to confine my discuss on

how it affects the home as much as possible.

What Is Feminism?

*"The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses;
from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever."*

(Micah 2:9)

Feminism is an advocacy that women should be seen as equal to men. As I've mentioned before it tries to present itself as seeking the good of womankind by arguing that the only way to achieve a woman's best interest is to make her equal to man and independent of him. Along with these comes a lot of other things. To gain advantage in this quest they put forward stories of women being battered by their husbands yet can't leave him because she can't survive alone as she can't find sustenance in the society where she finds herself, or can't leave him because she shall be stigmatised as a divorcee. So in order to prevent battery and other domestic abuses make her equal to him so she can hit back at him and leave him when the need arises. So it basically claims to be fighting for the interest of women.

The Fabric Of Feminism

*"Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it
down with her hands."*

(Proverbs 14:1)

While I was writing this book I chose to read a book by one of the pioneers

of modern day feminism to be well abreast of what feminism is all about so I don't misrepresent it by the mere definitions of it. I wanted to hear a feminist talk in detail. In it I find a lot of things that showed me the true fabrics of feminism.

All the times that the issue of feminism became prominent it always tries to make man a villain. This is the only way that feminism can succeed. If it does not present men as villains how shall the rationale of their strife be defended? So it always portray men as brutal and wicked tyrants. Without this they can have little hope of presenting their points as something rational.

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759 - 1797), that very unwise and bitter woman and one of the pioneers of the philosophy of modern day feminism, whose book I read, argued in her seemingly philosophical way that women ought not to be protected and treated courteously and that they themselves ought to reject such protection and act in ways independent of men. Her argument was that this is a slavish dependence and that courteous treatment of women was a device to make them comfortable in a slavish state. She claimed that if a woman accepts these comforts, it would only bring her disdain sooner or later. This is a woman who claims to be seeking the best interest of women.

You can see that the object is to make men villains. Even the best act of men would be painted black by them to have a reason for their strife. They do not really want the good of woman. While they may claim this and be deceived themselves that they are seeking this, the Devil working within them knows very well that all he seeks to achieve is to put enmity between man and woman. How can a woman frown at women being treated courteously so much as to paint that kind act black?

So it is quite obvious that they do not seek the good of woman. Merely reading the chapter of the role of a woman to a man as well as the chapter of the hierarchy of the Christian home, it is quite glaring that the things we

see in scriptures concerning these issues are the things that feminism is pitting a war against. First they claim that women should be equal to men on grounds of some women being battered by their husbands. Second they paint man who is made in God's image bad. Then they try to make men and women lock horns in the home.

But you see, we needn't listen to the words of people blinded by bitterness, whether they be words of Mary Wollstonecraft or any other feminist. Men ought to treat their wives courteously in love and in the fear of God, and it behoves a godly woman not to spurn such courteous treatment but appreciate and reciprocate it. It is the role of a man to take upon himself all unpleasantness that may come the way of his home and not allow his spouse, as much as he can, to even stand at risk of those unpleasantness. This Christ did for his church and so must Christian men learn to do to their spouses and ought Christian women not to spurn it but, like the church of Christ, ought to accept it with appreciation.

With the rise of feminism the respect of womankind dropped. When I was little and the ideologies of feminism had not become prominent, women were well respected. But with the rise of feminism fell the respect accorded to women. When I was young you dare not speak ill of a woman, but today women becoming bold and unreserved have made themselves contemptible. You could just be in your room and hear a woman get into a quarrel with the taxi driver who dropped her off and what follows are ugly insults. That was not so in the past. They were well respected. I find this to be also true when I get to read about the affair of women in the past of other regions. They were revered in the society for they knew it was their lot to be submissive to their husbands and for this reason they were respected. Today women are despised and are used for amusements and their bodies used for commercials. I have often referred to the observation in the book titled "Ideas Have Consequences" in which the authors wrote, "When Lewis de Sade published his writings that advocated the brutal exploitation of women, the whole society rose up in arms against him. But what he advocated looks tame in comparison to what is openly and freely

sold in neighborhood shops today. Such offensive material is sold openly." I often refer to this because it is a classic example. If the women of the past were exposed to reproach and shame women of today, whose status feminists claim to have exalted, are exposed to, they would weep and their very heart would bleed. So rather than exalting women, it has only degraded women.

As I have said before, feminism is a pleasant monster. I liken feminism to the harlot woman that sat on the scarlet beast in Revelations 17. She was first a harlot, she sat on a beast that was full of blasphemy, she had a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication, she had on her forehead a name written, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH," and drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Such a woman would have been the most repulsive to a Christian. She would no doubt have filled the Christian with horror and disgust. But what did John, the saint of God to whom this mystery was revealed say? He said, " ... when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration." (Revelation 17:6). Great admiration? Though she was so horrible, repulsive, and damnable, she won the GREAT admiration of the saint of God. I don't know anything else about the look of this woman beyond what is written, but there probably was something goodly about her appearance that made her evil to go quite unnoticed, so much that the saint of God looked at her with great admiration. That is how feminism is. It has so much evil in it, but it has a goodly outer covering claiming to defend women, the weak from the strong, the simple from their tyrants, etc. so much that a saint would admire greatly. But in truth it is full of evil. However what did the angel revealing these things say? It is written, "And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel?" (Revelation 17:7). I sense that the angel was displeased with his admiration. So also I believe that heaven is displeased when we go admiring feminism because of all its false goodly claims.

Some Other Sad Truths About Feminists

*"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:
Neither give place to the devil."
(Ephesians 4:26 - 27)*

Women need to take note that those who are champions of feminism are always two types. One category are those who came from homes where their fathers often battered their mothers. The second are those who, finding it grievously hard to submit themselves to their husbands, ruined their relationships and would never wish to admit failure on their part. But one thing is common in both, they are both eaten up by bitterness and resentment. And we are told in the verses above to be angry and sin not. I believe that it also means to say that being angry gives place to the devil. It is no wonder that these angry women have given place to the devil who is in turn using them to champion his own cause. I have studied the life of some women who are champions of feminism and as many as I've studied about they all seem to have these things in common.

The first is quite excusable. They see the battery, insult, and abuse of their mothers by their fathers. For this reason they have resentments toward their fathers and men in general. So they have some level of reasonable cause to feel resentment. But it is not excusable altogether. It is not excusable to judge all men by one man. It is not excusable to let anger lead one to sin. It is not excusable to entertain foolish notions in the heart for foolishness defiles a person (Mark 7:22-23).

The second are not excusable in anyway, but are both foolish and evil. They may have been from homes where their mothers were abused, and allowed the unwillingness to submit and resentment to ruin their own relationship. Such people often meet younger women to teach them their rebellious ways.

I have also noticed that many feminists get angry when they see a woman that is happy with a man. This anger is obviously responsible for Mary Wollstonecraft's claim that for women to accept the courteous treatment would bring them contempt later on. She advises women to spurn such good treatment because it obviously makes her angry when she sees such. Her anger was well expressed severally in her book. They see such women as fools who are not wise enough that they should live without their men and not derive any happiness from them. It is glaring that one of the key things that makes women happy in a relationship with a man is the submission of the self. This submission of the self is foolishness to the standards of feminism.

I feel that the reason for such feminists to be angry at the happiness of others is they are well aware that not only have they lost their own joy, their temperament and proud disposition shall never allow them be happy with a man, they tend to think, "if I can't have it then let no one have it." This ill feeling is common with some women. We see it in the account of Solomon's judgment of the two prostitutes. The one who had killed her son said they should kill living the child saying, "Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it." (1 Kings 3:16-28). This I feel is the same ill feeling behind this feminists that have killed their own joy. For this reason they strive to pit women as a whole against men. We ought to know that the current form of feminism has an emphasis on unity and sisterhood. That is uniting women against their "oppressors." Bringing women together to make them feel they have common enemies which are men, thereby losing the joy that comes from loving a man and being loved by a man. From owning a man and being owned by a man.

Feminism is a clamour, and as Proverbs 9:13 says, women who are clamourous are foolish, simple, and know nothing. This is very visible in the strife of feminism and the personalities of feminists. They are deniers of reality. They are blinded and dislodged from reality, pursuing unexisting fantasies of equality. They can't succeed in their quest for equality unless they deny reality and deceive others to see the reason to do the same.

Clamour is the characteristic of a foolish woman says the word of God, and by this we know that the clamorous women are foolish and know nothing.

Don't think however that they sound stupid. Mary Wollstonecraft for example sounds very intelligent and philosophical in her writing. She showed her vast knowledge in so many things and argued seemingly intellectually. But behind almost everything she said was folly. For example the following are her words:

“I may be allowed to doubt whether woman was created for man: and though the cry of irreligion, or even atheism be raised against me, I will simply declare, that were an angel from heaven to tell me that Moses's beautiful, poetical cosmogony, and the account of the fall of man, were literally true, I could not believe what my reason told me was derogatory to the character of the Supreme Being: and, having no fear of the devil before mine eyes, I venture to call this a suggestion of reason, instead of resting my weakness on the broad shoulders of the first seducer of my frail sex.”

I give her credit as the best feminist writer whose writing I've ever read because she does appeal to scriptures in trying to defend her claims, but here she shows absolute irreverence to the scriptures clearly saying that she doubts the truth written therein that the woman was created for man. She reduced the truth of creation to a poetical cosmogony and rejects its truth. She says she would prefer what her reason tells her than what is written in scriptures, for in her ignorance, what is written in scriptures is derogatory to the character of the Supreme Being. How foolish can one get. This is a good example of how most feminists think. They may sound intellectual but when brought under the scrutiny of proper reason their foolishness and ignorance become glaring. Mary Wollstonecraft like most feminists shows that all her high learning were a waste of her time and that of her teachers. She still knew nothing.

Whether they fall into any of these categories, one thing is common to them; they are all in the gall of bitterness and pride. Having such evil

within them they have unwittingly yielded themselves to the Devil for his ruinous use. For this reason, though they be convinced and appear to be fighting for the best interest of women, nobody insults womankind like feminists do. When you read the writings of Mary Wolstonecraft for example, you'd see countless insults, both direct and indirect, and degrading remarks on the gender.

How Is This A Challenge To Our Homes

*"The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses;
from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever."
(Micah 2:9)*

We could have gone on and on dissecting the pretence, evils, and failures of feminism but we'd leave that to talk on what should bother us. How does feminism affect the Christian home?

We can see easily that they oppose everything the Bible lays down for us as instructions. The idea of woman being equal to man is alien to the Bible. It also makes the idea of gender role repulsive, that is when people have the idea that a woman is equal to man. When this happens the whole of the hierarchy (the structure for our teamwork) is torn apart. The command to women to be subject to their husbands seem like injustice on the part of our very God. Without this hierarchy and playing of our God given roles we shall not be able to fulfil God's purpose for the home, "That he might seek a godly seed." (Malachi 2:15). Feminism drags women away from their homes as the Devil's decoy that the children may be vulnerable to him.

It is God's will for a man to live happily with his wife in unity. The joy of the espousal of couples is one we see spoken about endlessly in scriptures. This is a gift and a great mystery. But it is the object of feminism to pit

women against men that they may not be happy. In the sight of God, who made man and who instituted the home, men and women are meant to be companions. It is written, "... yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant." (Malachi 2:14). We also read these words in the Bible, "Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love." (Proverbs 5:18 - 19). So God made them to be companions and to be happy together, but feminists want them to be competitors and not companions.

When we consider these things we see that feminism as a cause is a great evil. It is a tool in the hand of the Devil to destroy God's purpose for man and woman. Jesus says, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." (Mark 10:9). But feminists seek to put asunder what God has joined and designed to exist in happiness, though in doing this great evil they hide behind pretended "good motives." While I may have presented some things here as assumptions, one thing I am most sure about and have a first hand experience is that women of today, being raised up with ideologies that tends towards feminism, find it so hard, so very hard, to accept the things written in the Bible. Some wrestle with the things written therein with all subtleties and hypocrisies, not willing to accept it the way it is written, others are brazenly blunt about it. The home that is therefore not built upon the word cannot be called a Christian home and such a home is destined for failure regarding God's goal for the home.

Advice To Christian Women

"Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."

(Ephesians 5:24)

To live as a Christian woman in a world ravaged by feminism is not easy, consequently to maintain a good Christian home is also hard. But let every Christian woman make sure that she is not swept away by the wind of feminism. Let them remember their true identity that they are daughters of Sarah. We have the faith of Abraham and we are his seed by faith. It is written, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29). So if Christian women are Abraham's seed according to the promise then are they Sarah's children. The children of Abraham not according to promise are the children of the bond woman who knew nothing about submission and was sent away for this reason. But the children of promise was Isaac the child of Sarah. As daughters of Sarah what are they to learn from her? It is written, "For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." (1 Peter 3:5 - 6).

In one of his sermons A.W. Tozer said, "It is not degrading at all to take a lowly place." Feminists think that they are upgrading their status by seeking to take high places of prominence. But never in history has the reputation of women be at such an all time low and the abuse of women is common place. A.W. Tozer also said in the same sermon, "Humility wins when force can't possibly win..." Feminists have been trying to win happiness for themselves in trying to prove that they are equal to men by force, but they've been losing big time. Humility should have won them the happiness God has designed for them.

God made the home to start when a man loves a woman. And the man and the woman were made not for rivalry but to compliment one another. The joy of the home can only be complete when father, mother, and children, play their role cheerfully. Christian people, whether father, mother, or children, should gladly do God's will irrespective of what's going on in the society.

Christian women should seek their God-given roles and play it diligently. The Bible says they should be keepers at home and by extension they should be primarily responsible for bringing up their children. If only women would play this their role diligently the world should have been a much better place.

Conclusion

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

(Titus 2:5)

I have only focused on how this movement affects our homes. I shall find time to write extensively a more complete condemnation of this monster of a movement and how it affects the society too, and most importantly, how it affects the Christian church. But the summary of what I have discussed here are this:

- feminism is a movement painted good as one that seeks the best interest of womankind,
- it is however an evil movement with goals that are diametrically opposed to scriptures and does not seek the interest of women in truth,
- feminists are ignorant and bitter,
- feminism is capable of ruining our homes, the structure of our teamwork, and joy that should hold us together.

May God help us not to be deceived by the pleasantness of the feminist movement so as to allow it ruin our homes and societies. Amen.

Prayer: Dear Father, keep us from the deceptions of feminism. Let the

*foolishness not ravage our homes. Let us live in simplistic obedience to
your word and find health for our homes therein. This I ask in Jesus'
name. Amen.*

DESACRALISATION OF MARRIAGE

*"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but
whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."
(Hebrews 13:4)*

One of the challenges facing the family institution is the desacralisation of marriage. Aggressive secularism targets the sacredness of marriage and makes light of the issue of marriage. A lot of foolish entertainment in popular media make light of sexual sins. For this reason sexual sins are rife.

In western countries where they're pursuing feminist agenda vehemently, they have policies that contributes to the desacralisation of marriage. When a man gets married the terms of the marriage makes him a prey to his wife. Should he seek a divorce with his wife she would go with half of his wealth. It is good to seek the interest of women and to have laws that shall protect their welfare in the case of a divorce, but I think that is a step too far. For this reason many maintain a sexual relationship with a partner without marriage. This is wrong.

If such laws were meant to protect marriages so that people won't seek divorce, its inadequacy in effecting this is glaring. Many rich people are afraid of getting married for this reason. So they prefer to have wives with the status of a common girlfriend. But it is evil to maintain a sexual relationship outside marriage. Such a law contributes greatly to marriage and sexual relationship being seen as a casual and unsacred thing. The reason being that it puts men under pressure not to desire marriage. It is like putting a trap in the marriage institution. Who'd wish to go into it? In

making such laws they have made marriage repulsive to as many as seek their best interest as every human ought to do.

This does not solve any problem still. It only makes marriage repulsive while people still go round the law and marriage. Rather than get married people would rather do what should be done within the confines of marriage outside and without marriage. This is not honourable. What the Bible says is honourable is marriage not just any sexual relationship. Having a girlfriend who is committed to being "faithful," give birth to children, and train them up, etc. is not what is holy and honourable. What is honourable is marriage alone and all that is done within the confines of marriage alone. Any law or policy that renders marriage repulsive to people desacralises it.

It is not in the laws of places like Nigeria but people still live like the laws are in place. The west needs to know that they have a far reaching influence. People here in Nigeria would go living with their girl friends like married people do. This is despite the fact that we don't have such laws that renders marriage repulsive. Why? Because they watch it in movies produced by the west.

Another reason is that young people find it hard settling down. Jobs are few, pay is little and inadequate, everything is expensive and the values of properties that can serve as a form of financial security increase faster than young people can save. How shall they take such a bold step to get married without such security in place?

It is not for naught that wise King Solomon wrote, " money is a defence..." (Ecclesiastes 7:12). B being able to meet the financial requirements to get married is hard. For this reason, not having the adequate defence, they only keep a girlfriend without the commitment of marriage. So poverty and hardship contributes immensely to the desacralisation of the institution of marriage.

Seeing the amount of evils in this present time evident in the amount of sexually provoking content of the media, it is safer for young people and easier for them to maintain a holy life in their matrimonial homes and not out of it. Therefore, a good way to maintain the sacredness of marriage is that both church and state actively try to make getting married and settling down in life very easy for young people.

This problem of desacralising marriage needs to be dealt with. Marriage must not be treated as a light trifling. It is sacred and must be treated as such. The teachings we give to our young ones and in the church must enforce this knowledge. We must also frown at anything that tends to encourage the desacralisation of marriage if our family institutions are going to be strong. May God help us in Jesus' name. Amen.

***Prayer:** Dear Father, please give us strong family institutions in the church and also in our societies. Let the sacredness of marriage be held and protected by all. Teach us true wisdom in this respect. This we ask in Jesus' matchless name. Amen.*

WEAKENING AND BREAKING OF FAMILY BONDS

*"... a threefold cord is not quickly broken."
(Ecclesiastes 4:12)*

Now, everything we have talked about regarding the problems facing the home today tends to weaken family bond. We shall talk about some more here. As we go through this chapter, I wish the reader would take special note of how feminism contributes to each of the problems explained here. Much of the things proffered here as solutions are mostly opinions I hold. However, though they be just opinions, I suppose they are useful first to guide and also to help readers in coming up with other solutions that best suit their own peculiar challenges.

When Jesus spoke concerning marriage he said these words, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife." (Mark 10:7). Note the word "cleave." He is not just to stand by his wife or hold her hand but cleave to her. Now, for Jesus to use this word means there shall be forces that shall seek to separate spouses but they must consciously hold tight and resist such force. It is in spouses cleaving to themselves that their homes shall be strong and united. The things written in this section are meant to help spouses maintain a strong family bond.

Lack Of Family Interaction

"Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel."
(Proverbs 27:9)

The first thing I'd like to mention that weakens the family bond is lack of adequate family interaction. Poverty causes a lot of problems in the home which can be easily understood, but the lack of family interaction tends to increase with the increase in wealth. For example when a family is so wealthy that father, mother, and children can afford to have a room to themselves, and each of those rooms have the whole world in them. They've got TV, PC, DVD player, a small sized dining table, etc. They never need to go out of the room to do anything. They never need to share anything. Each person lives in a world of his/her own. That which baffles me most in this regard is when even husband and wife want a room to themselves. I don't believe that that is right. I believe the family ought to exist in a way that there should be constant interaction and sharing of things. We must therefore have an eye always on the bond of the family and deal with anything that tends to weaken it.

Many other things in the society cause us to lack adequate family interaction enough to create a strong bond. As we proceed in this chapter we shall talk about more. But we must ensure that we don't allow anything, in wealth or poverty, to stand in the way of a good family interaction. The book of Proverbs says, "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel." (Proverbs 27:9). So when we have such interactions with one another, it rejoices the heart. The more we interact the more understanding exists in the home.

How To Improve Family Interaction

"I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full."

(2 John 1:12)

Before I proceed to the next problem that weakens family bond, let me proffer some solutions to the issue of lack of family interaction. As that which I have mentioned above has to do with having wealth enough to afford buying the world for each individual member of the home, I believe we must show some restraints concerning this even when we can afford it. When building a house we must put the issue of family interaction in mind as the house is planned. It should be built to a size that affords comfort without breaking the family bond. For example the house could be built in such a way that children of the same sex can share a room, while the parents share a room too. Places in which time is spent the most could be built close with no major demarcation. For example kitchen and living room could be built close with open access, so that both the cookers and the tv watchers could interact easily. These are just my random thoughts on the matter, but family interaction should be considered carefully when coming up with the architectural plans of homes.

A big house (bigger than is necessary) makes it harder to monitor children. But when a house is small and fitted for necessary use, it becomes easy to know what exactly children are up to. Some may think that parents shouldn't be monitoring their children closely but the truth is children are not to be left to themselves for any moment as the Bible tells us (Proverbs 29:15). Of course it does not mean that parents should be always breathing down the necks of their children and forbidding everything they do just to show them who's the boss. Rather they should be monitored and studied so that they could be guided and helped in cases where they do require help. When a house is too big with many rooms, you can't have eyes hovering from room to room. So the smaller the better.

The next is that children should be encouraged to have their best friends in the home. First, parents should make themselves friends to their children and not lords. I believe that there are immense benefits when a home exist in seclusion to the world. Rather than having close friends from outside the home, it is better to maintain that bond within. Asides school and other basic things that requires being done outside the home, there should be little interaction with the rest of the world. I read about a family that lived this way in the novel titled *Agnes* and it had a good effect on the children. People could easily learn bad habits abroad though their family be a pious one. As one family teaches their children good things, some other families don't care, while yet others consciously and actively teach their children horrible things. If children from good homes often interact with such poorly brought up children they will learn their bad ways. "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." (1 Corinthians 15:33). Why should you suffer for the bad choices of another family. So living in seclusion does have its moral benefits and it improves family interactions too.

We should deliberately break off busy schedules to spend time together with our families. We could choose to let go of even some opportunities with financial benefits (provided we have enough) just to spend time with our families.

Lastly, I believe strongly that each home should run a family business. Couples could still be employed elsewhere, meaning they don't have to do the business full time but they should have a business they do together. It would be best if they could do it full time but it is not necessary at least for a start. If their business become very lucrative, they could resign and face it squarely. This has great benefits in increasing family interactions as they would have more reasons to talk together, reason together, pursue goals together, fail together, learn together, and succeed together. This has two dimensional benefits. The first is that which I've listed, the second dimension is that all businesses require well trusted partners. Such trust can

be easily found in a spouse. So both the business and the matrimonial relationship compliments one another. The matrimonial relationship provides trust that is required for businesses to thrive, and the business compliments the relationship with improved interactions.

So those are the solutions I have to proffer in the issue of family interactions. We could think carefully of what works best for us.

Individualising Family Members

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

(Matthew 19:6)

Now we move to the next issue that weakens family bonds; individualising family members. By individualising family members I mean portraying the family as individuals rather than a body. But the family is not a group of individuals but a body of which the man is the head. We prefer to deal with individuals rather than families. We see this in both church, politics, and other spheres. This is not only bad but also disadvantageous.

The family, especially couples, should be seen as one. If for nothing, at least because God made them one. I believe this is part of the mystery behind forbidding women from speaking in the church. Many people including Christians think such belief is old fashion. But it is not and it has many benefits. Obeying this simple command would have help strengthen our family bond to a very great extent. Flaunting this command weakens that bond. We all are humans and our differences could cause frictions in the home, the more we have to share and do things in common and together helps us to overcome these differences easily. If women would rely on their husbands for answers and have to reason together with him to

find answers to the questions of her mind, the bond in that marriage would be greatly strengthened. But shunning this commandment we have greatly weakened the family bond. Because we make such provisions for them to exist independently and as individuals, couples can keep malice for longer than they should. They need each other less. They can in fact exist very well alone.

In governance we also like to see couples as individuals. If we didn't see them as individuals we wouldn't be hearing of these clamour for the voices of women being represented in governance. When I hear such clamour I do wonder if the men holding such positions don't have wives who could express whatever concerns women have. But the popular opinion today sees them as individuals and that if a man is a leader he's leading for himself. But we ought to see things from a rational perspective. Whatever voice women wish to have should be expressed through their husbands. Let women not be excited into striving for leadership positions. There are many reasons for this, but that which I feel is most important is this; they can't give adequate attention in bringing up of young people without sacrificing active leadership roles. We must revive our view of the oneness of couples and the home. It would do our societies a whole lot of good like medicine.

In the past women were not allowed to vote, modern feminist see this a deprivation of womankind of her right. But they who practiced this saw couples not as two but as one. The man who voted therefore was not voting for himself but for his home. They were wiser than we. That too strengthened family bond. If we continue to follow the path of feminism we shall increasingly find the sexes that were meant for each other exist against each other. Feminism and homosexuality are on the same train and seek to achieve the same thing which is to make the two sexes independent of one another.

It is worthy of note that we should be weary of nurseries. As feminism and other vices weaken the bond between man and woman, so nurseries

weakens the bond between parents and their children. Why do children cry when taken to nurseries and are abandoned by their parents? I suppose because in the simplicity of their nature they recognise the grave evil being done to them. I'm not too sure of the advantages or disadvantages of boarding schools, but I believe it also weakens that bond. We ought to encourage actively family togetherness.

Maintaining Interdependence And Complimentary Relationships

*"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."
(Mark 10:9)*

To maintain a good family bond we must strive to maintain a view that promotes maintaining complimentary and interdependence among male and female. If we should promote views of rivalry, that is women trying to matchup to men, it would ruin many things. When we maintain interdependence and complimentary relationships women would be the best friends of men, but where there is rivalry there is no friendship.

I know that because feminism hasn't eaten deep into our societies, that is here in Nigeria, I found that, as a man, it is easier to tell ladies of your successes than to tell fellow men. I have said in an earlier chapter that when, as a man, you share your success with a lady, because she is not a rival, she becomes so happy for you. But when you tell a fellow man, he could express happiness (because that is the right thing to do) but it could also make him depressed. This is natural because as a fellow man, the grounds of comparison is there. Your success makes their failures pronounce, your intelligence makes their dullness pronounce, everything good about you makes their bad pronounce because there is a ground for

comparison. Like in a scale, when one side goes up, the other goes down. But when a woman knows of your success, rather than feel envy, they become proud of you and you win their admiration. However, I notice that women eaten up by feminism become bitter when they see men advancing. Should all the women have this mindset, men would have no friends left. Having no friend he'd be back to the state he was before God made Eve. And God said that it was not good for him to be this way (Genesis 2:18).

So it is healthy to maintain a complimentary relationship between man and woman. God has never meant that the woman should be independent of man seeing that he made the woman for the man. Independence for women is therefore a contravening of God's original purpose. God also never meant to relate in solitary loneliness for he saw that is not for man to be alone. And this knowledge should guide how we shape our laws, policies, and practices.

Prayer: Dear Lord God, we know that it is not your will for our families to exist as individuals but as a single body with different parts. Teach us to cleave to one another and not let the forces to separate us prevail. This I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

CORRUPT MEDIA, ENTERTAINMENT, AND EDUCATION

"The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence."

(Genesis 6:11)

Another challenge facing the home is the corrupt media, entertainment, and education. We have taken a look at this before but it is worth revisiting it as a challenge to the family institution. Maintaining a healthy home would have been easier if we could just sit back and hand children over to the society for everything. It would have been easy if parents could just focus on their own affairs and dump their children in front of a tv screen all day. If those things aired on it were healthy, it could have saved us a lot of stress. But I believe that stress is good for us to show how committed we are to do that of which we are duty bound.

The media today keeps harassing its viewers today with nudity, obscenity, filthy language, etc. Apart from this, the media has a way of brainwashing people and reengineering their reasoning for the worse. For example, in movies you'd see this really good guy that puts his life on the line to save a little child from its wicked captors. He puts his life on the line as he couldn't bear to see a child held captive by evil men. When watching such a movie, people, especially young ones, would see this guy as a thoroughly good guy even worth emulating. This good guy also wins their sentiments. But at the end of the movie (or maybe not at the end) this good guy corners one girl whose affection has been won by his good acts and starts caressing her. This way they have made fornication to seem as if it were not bad and

that rather it is a booty you win for being such a good guy.

Not long after I had completed the first draft of this chapter my friends and I thought we should hang out on one of our public holidays. So one of them said we should go to a cinema that this blockbuster movie just came out. Being curious I agreed and we went. This was the first time in my life to go to a cinema and from the experience I had I believe it would be the last. Rather than spend money on such entertainment I'd rather step into my room, close the door and windows, put off the lights, and project my imaginations on the wall. The waste of money and time are little issues, but this movie did have those elements of brainwashing. There were these good guys who wanted to save the world from destruction, they fought and strove with the bad guys not minding if or not they'd die, but there were still kissing and all. I asked my friend, "how many women do actors have to kiss before their careers come to an end?" If I were younger and yet unsaved I could have seen these guys as emulate-able guys.

This is just one example, but there are many devious schemes to destroy the reasoning pattern of young ones. The effects such movies have on children are not glaring, but when you try to persuade young ones not to engage in frivolous relationships with the opposite sex, it seems to them that you don't know what you're talking about. This is because their reasoning has been damaged by the media.

If the media were the only one designed to destroy the constructive reasoning of young ones, it would have been a bit okay, but the very educational institutions are also contributing greatly to destroying young ones. Students are taught about evolution in schools. Gladly in our time we saw the whole topic as an academic comedy. But who knows how many children it has turned out of the way. They instil atheism in students and bash the faith of those who believe in God. Many go to educational institution only to come out with no faith in God at all.

These evils being promoted by the media and our learning system do

quietly eat into our homes and infests them with all manner of disease. The media is therefore not something with which to occupy young ones, and we must follow our young ones carefully as they advance in learning to ensure they don't leave the way of God. Having a healthy mainstream media that promotes constructive reasoning and a learning system that promotes godliness would have been very useful. Alas, they are not helping matters at all. However, these only make it harder to raise children up but does not make it impossible. I believe parents should actively engage their young ones in constructive activities which they have well vetted themselves. As said before, they're to seek societal reforms, and maybe global reforms too. If these challenges are well faced it could turn out to be a profound blessing. May God help us all. Amen.

***Prayer:** Dear Lord and Father, help us to be weary of the corruptions in the world, especially in the media, entertainment, and educational system. As the challenges of the present times are high, so also make our will and strength to be more than equal to the challenges. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.*

SECTION 6

SUNDRY ISSUES

DIVORCE

"But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

(Mark 10:6 - 9)

I chose to speak on divorce as one of the sundry issues because I don't believe it is a characteristic of the institution of the Christian home. Why is this so? As we have seen from the beginning that marriage as God ordained it is a great mystery. When talking about marriage Paul wrote, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Ephesians 5:32). Marriage is therefore a mystery concerning Christ and his church, and concerning God and his people. Any marriage therefore that ends in divorce has fallen short of that mystery for which God ordained it. It is therefore a woeful failure. Since a Christian home is essentially one that exists the way God ordained it and that divorce is a woeful failure in respect to this, divorce is therefore not a characteristic of a Christian home.

Apart from this we need to understand that God hates divorce. It is written, "For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously." (Malachi 2:16). Putting away refers to divorce. A Christian home is one that does what God loves and eschews what he hates. How can a person who loves God do what he hates? It were better for ones spouse to opt for divorce than for a person himself who loves God to opt for it. Even in a case of a person where the other party opts for it, it shall be with pains that such a person would seek to differ the divorce. How much more less then shall a

Christian opt for divorce even in the bitterest circumstance. The moment we start opting for what God hates, we can't call our homes a Christian home.

We have seen a number of times through the course of this book that marriage is a representation of the relationship that exists between God and his people. For this reason, the success of marriage is defined by how much it reflects the beauty of God's love for his people. Divorce reflects absolutely nothing about God's love for his people or Christ for his church, rather it reflects the division between God and his adversaries. For God and his adversary shall be forever separated though they were once together. Therefore a marriage that ends in divorce is a failed one. That which was bound to fail is one which shouldn't have existed in the first place.

Malachi 2:16 describes divorce as treachery. It is treachery to say "I do" today but say "I don't" tomorrow in respect of the same thing for which one said "I do." Malachi 2:16 also calls this a covering of violence with the garment. I'm not sure what this means, but it is one of the reasons we warned against divorce. It probably means there is more to divorce than the eye could see. In that the violence is covered. These things don't have the characteristics of what the working of the Holy Ghost would do.

For these reasons I should have left it out altogether, but I felt it is still an issue that needs to be talked about should things grow sour or people see it as a light matter. Remember, it was the ignoring of the stance of scriptures regarding divorce that caused me to start writing this book in the first place. So I shall talk about it briefly before bringing the book to a close.

Bible Texts On Divorce

*"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."
(Mark 10:9)*

So what the Bible says concerning divorce are simple. They are as follows:

1. "But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." (Matthew 5:32)
2. "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." (Matthew 19:9)
3. "And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery." (Mark 10:11 - 12)
4. "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." (Luke 16:18)
5. "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife." (1 Corinthians 7:10 – 11)
6. "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou,

O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" (1 Corinthians 7:12 - 16).

Conclusions

"Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed..."
(1 Corinthians 7:27)

The conclusion we can draw from these verses are:

1. In reference to the words of Christ on the matter, the only justifiable grounds for divorce is fornication and/or adultery. Not because one's spouse is nagging, annoying, a beater, etc. To divorce one's spouse for anything other than fornication and/or adultery and marries another is to commit adultery. Where adultery is involved there are justifiable reasons for divorce remarriage. Some would like to say even in cases of adultery one should remind bound to his/her wife/husband, but here is what Christ says, "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." (Matthew 19:9). Notice the word "except." So there is an exception to the rule. So to divorce one's spouse and to marry another is adultery, except when the divorced spouse is guilty of adultery. The same way all the other words of Jesus on the matter agrees to this.

As I've pointed out before, people should not see it as a godly thing, probably thinking it is the forgiveness that God commands us, to continue in a marriage marred by adultery. There are those who try to undermine the gravity of adultery by painting it as just a minor sin. This they often defend by referring to the instance of God asking Hosea to marry an harlot. After he married her, she still continued in her harlotry, but God asked him to go

and bring her back to himself despite her harlotry. They therefore say people should forgive an adulterous spouse and continue in that relationship. But such people don't realise that no prophet in all of Israel's history prayed a prayer as grievous against Israel as Hosea did. Hear this for example, "Give them, O LORD: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts." (Hosea 9:14). The book of Hosea is full of so many more grievous prayers like this against Israel. This was because he felt the pain of unfaithfulness. This grief he felt for loving an adulterous woman was the purpose God intended for giving him the instructions to marry an harlot. We should not draw meaning from God's actions contrary to what he intended. The intent of God, in respect to his instructions to Hosea, was to show the people of Israel their sin and not to give us an example of continuing in a marriage marred by adultery. Now, this is not an issue of forgiveness but a matter of not partaking in their sins. There are also health issues and sexually transmitted diseases that come with adultery. For this reason it is not best to continue in an adulterous relationship. Jesus, when prohibiting divorce, used this clause, "except it be for fornication." So we have no command binding us to an adulterous spouse.

2. In reference to 1 Corinthians 7:10 - 11, if a woman (or a man) choose to depart from her husband (no reason given here) she could depart but she should remain unmarried. To marry another is therefore adultery. The only option left her if she doesn't want to continue in a divorced state is to be reconciled with her husband.

3. What Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 7:12 - 16 are advice and not commandments from God. Notice that he says, "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord..." At the end of those verses he also wrote, "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" These confirms to us that they are his advice and not a command from God, for in that he asks, "what knowest thou, O wife?" and "how knowest thou, O man?" it shows that he is not certain. But his advice should still be taken very seriously. Apart

from this, he is speaking to people whose homes are not absolutely Christian. Not that it is okay to marry non-Christians, but in those times where Christianity just reached those places, a man may have been converted and his wife not, or a woman may have been converted and her husband not. Christians must marry Christians. What union has darkness with light? It is to people who got converted and their spouses did not that he wrote these words. Even in such a state the Christian is advised not to leave his/her spouse. But if after insisting the unbelieving spouse still wishes to be divorced, he says, "A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases." I believe he means that a person in such case is free to get married to a believer if he/she sees it fitting. This rule does not however apply to them who are married as Christians.

Summary

*"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."
(Mark 10:9)*

Divorce is a world of confusion. It is a woeful failure, it is a bitter experience, and it is a decision that jeopardises one's chances of going to heaven. Why should anyone do this to themselves? I don't see it as an option for Christian homes whatsoever. Let people go into marriage prayerfully, carefully and cautiously, with the resolve never to part from their spouse.

Prayer: *Dear Father, deliver our homes from anything that shall make us to seek divorce. Help us to live in sincere love and unity. Help us to not to deal treacherously but to be loyal and committed to our marriages. This I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.*

REMARRIAGE

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

(1 Corinthians 7:39)

Now to remarriage. We have seen that divorce and remarriage is wrong, but we see in the verse above that remarrying after the death of one's spouse is okay on any grounds. It is not a sin whatsoever. This is the only grounds upon which a person could marry another after his/her first spouse without sin being involved. This was where the bishops that wedded Meghan and Harry greatly erred. Meghan is a divorcee whose former spouse was still alive and Harry had his past too. He had a girlfriend who was also alive. They may have not done a wedding ceremony, but by what constitutes marriage in the sight of God they were married. So why should these so-called bishops wed them in the church? It is completely against scriptures. Had they lost their former spouses to death, then the bishops had no faults. But they greatly erred in this which they did and have brought much reproach to the church of Christ.

Back to our discussion, it is true that remarriage after losing one's spouse is permitted in scriptures, but it does not mean that people must remarry, just like I said that it is not a necessity to get married in the first place. These things I write on the issue of remarrying are just my opinion. I believe that in most cases remarrying after the death of one's spouse is an act of stooping and bringing the self very low by my estimation. If there is a definite role one needs a spouse to play, then it is good to remarry. For example, maybe a man has children who still need motherly attention when he lost his wife, it is good to marry for their sakes. The same with when a woman loses her husband when they still need them for some specific and

necessary role.

With all that we see about the benefits of being single in these evil times, to still remarry after the death of one's spouse may not be an expedient thing to do. It is written about Anna, "And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." (Luke 2:36 - 37). She only lived seven years with her husband before he passed on. We don't know if she had children or not. She didn't get married again but continued night and day in prayers and fastings. Prayer and fasting is the same reason why Paul says couples should occasionally stay away from one another (1 Corinthians 7:5), this among other many verses informs us of the immense benefits of being single. So where there is much to be achieved in being single, getting married again without a definite need of it is to do that which is not expedient. I do not therefore encourage widows and widowers to remarry.

However, it is still better to remarry than to burn. It is also better to remarry than to live a life void of responsibilities. The absence of responsibilities causes one to be idle and very susceptible to the use of the Devil. That is why Paul wrote, "But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan." (1 Timothy 5:11 - 15). The point being made here is that younger women (and maybe men too) should marry and bear children and bear the responsibilities on their shoulders. This would keep them from being idle tattlers and busybodies.

So, remarrying is permitted to those whose spouses have passed on, but should be done with a proper understanding of the need for it. Where it is not needed or does not solve any problem, but is rather going to deny one the privilege of being wholly dedicated to God, let it be avoided. May God give us a perfect understanding in this regard and the grace to act according to wisdom and expediency. Amen.

Prayer: Dear Father and Lord, teach us the wisdom to guide us in the issue of remarriage. Grant us the grace not to allow the desires of our flesh pose a hinderance to our devotion to you. Thank you heavenly Father. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

FAMILY FINANCES

*"A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all things."
(Ecclesiastes 10:19)*

We have looked at the roles of husbands and wives before, but I'd like to visit it again with special focus on finances. Now the home cannot stand without proper finance. There are some hyper-spiritual people who try to play down the role of money to a good life and raising a good home. Of course they have verses in scriptures they suppose backs their opinion, but it is not until they have misinterpreted, misquote, and misapplied those verses that it can seem to support their opinions. However I considered the issue of finances to be a light issue and wanted to leave it out of this book, but while I was writing it, a Facebook friend of mine started posting a series on mammon that made it look like it is evil to save for the future. I couldn't get the full point he was making for the posts were broken up in pieces I couldn't put together. Seeing his posts I thought it won't be good to bring the book to a close without giving some words on family finances.

So what is finance? Finance is monetary support. But is money not suppose to be evil? Did not the Bible say, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Timothy 6:9 - 10)? And did not Christ say, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24). Of which we know that mammon refers to money.

The Christian faith is more about putting things in their right order. That is why it is written, "seek ye first the kingdom of God..." (Matthew 6:33). From this we see that it is not that other things are bad. The other things could be very good. In fact Christ says that we have need of them and that when we seek first the kingdom of God these other things shall be added to us. So why should they be added if they are bad? But even though they are very good, it becomes evil for us to place our interest more in them than in the kingdom of God. So what is important is that we have our priorities set right.

Also, when Jesus says we cannot serve God and mammon, we need to understand the difference between serving mammon and making a living. Making a living is not serving mammon, though there is a degree that one would pursue making a luxurious living that shall make it equivalent to serving mammon. It is the duty of as many as are able to make a living to do so and to sustain themselves and their families. Failure to do this is in itself a sin. As we have seen before, the Bible tells us that a person who fails to provide for his home is worse than an infidel and has denied the faith (1 Timothy 5:8). This is the level of importance the Bible places on finances. Making a living therefore should be done as an act of obedience to God who commanded us to earn our living. This is good, noble and right. On the other hand to serve mammon is to place money at a par with God or above God which naturally violates the very essence of the Christian life. John Calvin wrote concerning self denial saying, "... we are consecrated and dedicated to God and therefore should not henceforth think, speak, design, or act without a view to His glory... We are not our own: therefore, neither our own reason nor will is to rule our acts and counsels... We are God's: therefore, let His wisdom and will preside over all our actions." These things form about the core essence of our Christian calling and are well supported by 2 Corinthians 5:15 and many other verses in scriptures.

The great man said many other things in this light. In these lie the very essence of the Christian faith; that we live no more for ourselves but for

God our Creator. When however we no longer live for God but begin to live for money, so that money dictates how we think, speak, design or act, then we are serving mammon. In such a case it is no more his wisdom and will that presides over our actions but our interest in money. This is noticeable most when we can violate God's law because of money. When we can fight, cheat, steal, lie, suppress the poor, or even kill for money. But there are still more subtle ways that we could serve mammon and not realise it. When money takes the place of God in our hearts in any way, then we are serving mammon and not God.

It is hard to distinguish between when we are doing the good, noble and right act of making a living in obedience to God's command and the subtle ways of serving mammon. Usually the only way we could know is when we are faced with some tough circumstances that reveal ourselves to us the way a mirror reveals our faces to us. Circumstances in which we are forced to make a choice between God and mammon or some other things including the self. Other times it could be that we lose all our money or most of it to some tragic event. It is at such times we shall be able to know indeed who is our God. Money or our Maker. In a case in which we are faced with a circumstance of which we are forced to choose between God and money, it is how easy or how hard we find it to let go of the money for the sake of God that reflects to us the extent money has taken the place of God. In a case of which we lose all most of which our money to some tragic event, the extent to which it shakes us reflects the extent we have shifted our trust from God to mammon. If we see it as if the world has come to an end, then we have made our money the God in whom we trust. If on the other hand we are able to still maintain a joyful and confident disposition to life knowing that God is alive and is in control, then is he our God indeed and shall come to our aid in due time.

In the bid to know the state of our hearts, we needn't pray for such things to happen to us. We needn't seek to be put into a situation of which we are forced to choose between God and our finances because Jesus taught us to pray, "lead us not into temptation..." Also, we needn't pray for a tragic

event to sweep away all our money because Jesus goes on to teach us to pray saying, "deliver us from evil..." However, all through life there are countless ways and circumstances to know the true state of our hearts. The state of being prosperous can also reveal to us the state of our heart and our weaknesses in such a way that we couldn't have realised had we been poor. There are people who never knew they could be proud until they got rich, and there are people who never knew they could be humble until they got poor. So prosperity provides us with almost as much opportunity to examine ourselves as tragic circumstances. Therefore, whether tragic circumstances or temptations come or not, we on our part should examine ourselves regularly and search our hearts thoroughly to know who is our God. Is it the self, money, possessions, friends, family, and what have you? If anything takes the place of God it violates the essence of our Christian calling and this is evil. We can't serve God and serve anything else. Whether money, self, or friends. As we strive by all godly means, we must never forget this simple command, "if riches increase, set not your heart upon them." (Psalm 62:10). Our trust must remain in God.

Rather than pray or wait for tragic events, we could place ourselves in such circumstances and in the thought of those things examine our reaction to them. We could ask ourselves how would we be should we lose all our money in one night. Would our life come to an end or would we continue in the strength of God? Is our confidence of tomorrow because of the money we have or because of the fact that God lives? So far we have the duty of making a living, we are likely to drift away into putting our confidence in money rather than on God from time to time. Maybe not grievously. I know many hyper spiritual people would claim it is not possible for a born again to drift this way. But hear the words of the psalmist, "And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved." (Psalm 30:6). His prosperity was the source of his confidence, but he says later, "... thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." (Psalm 30:7). So all men alike are prone to allowing their confidence drift from God to their possessions. Some times it may be a little and other times we may have greatly drifted away. Each time we discover our trust drifting towards our

money or possessions it should be met with genuine repentance and amendment of our ways. For more on these things I strongly recommend listening to the sermon of A.W. Tozer titled, "The Dangers of Prosperity and Adversity." It is a very insightful sermon that draws a balance on dealing with prosperity and adversity.

Matthew 6:24 and 1 Timothy 6:9 - 10 are sufficient for any to paint a bad picture of money and make it look evil. But all we see in scriptures is not that money is evil but that the love of it is evil and not merely evil but is the root of all evil. Not that there are not other sources of evil apart from the love of money, but the love of money can lead to all types of evil. So the summary of what the Bible is saying is we must not love money and we must not serve money. However we are to make money and make wise use of money while in the flesh.

For this reason it is good to give family finance a very good thought and place on it a high priority (not the highest priority) before marriage and all through it. We have seen before that it is more the role of the man to provide financially for the home and the bringing up of children to women. However just as a man ought to still be actively involved in bringing up children, so should women help in the finances of the home but never at the expense of having time for personally bringing up their children.

Responding to the post of my friend on Facebook who posted about mammon, someone said that men are not to blame for not being able to provide for their homes in Nigeria because the economy is too hard. Well, it is true that the economy is indeed hard, but let me assure anyone anywhere that so far one is profitable, finances are guaranteed in most cases. It is written, "And let our's also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful." (Titus 3:14). Note the word "necessary." People are only poor when they have no skill or their skills have no necessary use. For this reason ought Christian persons to be committed to self development, study, research, etc. And when they find a work to do let them do it diligently and honestly. There are people who are

retained in their jobs simply because of their honesty. Others are retained because they work hard and do their jobs diligently. If we can live by all that the Bible commands in respect to study, hard work, and diligence, we shall not have reasons to lack even in the hardest economy.

Hilary of Poitiers (c. 315 - c. 367) wrote, "Not every man that is a sinner is also undutiful: but the undutiful man cannot fail to be a sinner." Laziness is alien to the Christian faith from the foundations of the world. No man being lazy, slothful, a lover of pleasure and ease should consider himself a Christian in truth. Some of the verses we can see in the New Testament that talks about working with our hands are as follows, Acts 20:33-35, 1 Corinthians 4:12, Ephesians 4:28, and 1 Thessalonians 4:11.

For this reason ought Christians to learn never to throw time away in trifles. It is sad to see how some people waste time on unprofitable things or lazying away. It is written, "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." (Proverbs 6:9 - 11). This does not mean we should undermine the importance of rest as when due (after work), but the recipe for being able to earn a good living is making a profitable use of one's time.

The manner Christians waste their time are often in unnecessarily long worship services. This is not the fault of the church goer but the fault of the service planners and leaders. I believe that worship services should be concise and meaningful. Many times you see unnecessary things like drama, choreography, partying, etc. There are times when sermons are also unnecessarily long. Everything should be edifying, meaningful, concise and impactful. The length of worship is not a reflection of the level of the spirituality of an assembly. The level of spirituality is the amount of time the members spend in personal study of the Bible, prayer, worship, and singing of hymns. That is what is spiritual. I agree with what someone (quoted by Tozer) says. He said, the amount of time people love to pray in

gatherings is often inversely proportional to the amount of time they pray in their closets. I think that's the whole truth. There are times where we should let go of every other activity and dedicate days to just spiritual activities of prayer, preaching, singing, etc. together. This we call retreat, but even in this we should be careful lest it be just a colossal waste of time. Each moment spent in it should be meaningful. Another way Christians waste time is attending unnecessary ceremonies, such as marriage, burial etc., and watching ridiculous televangelism. There are countless ways time can be wasted, but let as many as love God refuse to waste their time. As the wise saying goes, "time is money."

Christians should also imbibe habits of proper investment of money, savings, thriftiness, and other good habits that are finance-wise. It is written, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." (Proverbs 6:6 - 8). From what is said here we see hard work, profitable use of time, refusal to procrastinate, thriftiness and the practice of saving for the future. It is sad when I see young people wasting money on buying expensive clothes, expensive phones, on looking good and feeling good. This is unwise. Money should only be spent on essential things (including personal service to God) and the rest should be saved or used on things to secure their future.

It is expedient for each individual to have a career path and choose it wisely. When we do get employed we shouldn't be relaxed so as to take our minds off our career path. We should diligently seek career advancement and keep developing ourselves. In choosing or planning a career path we should choose that which suits the kind of life we'd be happy living. Among many things we should consider, in determining what suits us, are time for God and family. Your career shouldn't take away all your time so much that you no longer have time for God or your family. These are very important. Jesus told a parable, in Luke 12:16-21, of a man who was wealthy and had secured his future for many years, wishing to relax and enjoy his wealth, God told him that the same day was his life going to be

taken away from him. God asked him that whose shall those things be which he laid up for many years. In conclusion to that parable Jesus says, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:21). So let us be careful to ensure that in choosing and planning a career path we opt for that which will give us sufficient time to be rich in our service towards God.

Jobs today are increasingly oppressive and demanding of our time. Some employers even want you to come to work on Sundays. For this reason it is best to follow a career path that shall make us independent of employers over time. This way we can be more flexible with our time. To achieve this we must learn to save and invest in good ventures and not spend up our money recklessly. Investing shall allow us to have a multiple stream of income which is necessary for one to be able to stand alone. In choosing what to invest in we must be careful. Sometimes it is more profitable to just save your money than to invest them in profitless or risky ventures. This is not to mention the danger of falling prey to scammers. It was Adam Smith who said, "The chance of gain is by every man more or less overvalued, and the chance of loss is by most men undervalued." It is for this reason that many lose money trying to invest. We must be cautious and be realistic in our projections. The safest and surest things to invest in are things we would do ourselves. For this reason the best investment to invest in is self development which will enable us do a lot ourselves.

Even when Jesus told the parable of talents, the good servants used their lord's money in things they did themselves. However, the bad servant only kept his lord's money for his return to hand it back to him. This does not in any way refer to saving. The least thing the lord of that servant expected was expressed in these words, "Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?" (Luke 19:23). So the least thing one can do with his money is to give it to others to do business with. But the profitable servants traded with their money themselves rather than give it to other traders to trade with. There's no body to trust to defend your interest more than your own self. It

was Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894) who said, "Put not your trust in money, but put your money in trust." When it comes to defending your interest, asides God, you are the best trust you could have. Therefore, the best and surest way to make money is to put your money into what you shall do and oversee yourself.

Whatever we choose to do on our own should be something with actual economic value. That is either they have direct economic value or enhance the economic value of other services. To make money from what does not have any actual economic value impoverishes the state and would overtime lose its profitability to you. Examples of things without economic value are gambling and ponzi schemes. Though people sometimes make money from these things they add nothing to the economy. Seeing the harmful effect that making money from things without real value does to the state, government agencies ought to prevent people from engaging in such things. But we on our part, as good Christian citizens, should steer clear off such practices whether the government prevent it or not. If sinners entice you with gambling or ponzi scheme, consent thou not. Let them succeed all they want, you keep up doing your business. As we make money let it be our pride that we are contributing meaningfully to our nation and community.

We must be however very careful that when we do succeed to be able to make a good living and at the same time have time for ourselves we don't convert this freedom as an occasion for sloth. It is very easy, when we are not under pressure of employers, to slip into a state of laziness, sloth, and engaging in profitless things like watching movies, jesting, etc. We must spend those times we've gotten in active service for God. Both in personally building ourselves in the study of his word, Christian books, and in prayer, as well as doing things that build his church and kingdom. There is always something to do for Jesus sake and in Jesus' name.

For women, in the bid to contribute to the monetary support of the home, I believe they should be more engaged in developing skills that would

enable them work effectively without having to neglect their responsibilities as mothers. Such skills should be such that would enable them to work effectively from home. It is often assumed that when one says that women shouldn't work full time it means they should idle away at home watching dumb romantic series. But this is not so. They should work but it should be in doing the right things. The Bible does not in any way support laziness or idleness for any reason. Even though the Bible says women should be keepers at home (Titus 2:5), it also says concerning women, "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." (1 Timothy 5:13 - 14). This is Paul is forbidding women from idleness. So keeping a house is by no means a way of being idle. Though it is easy to fall into a state of idleness and sloth when not under the pressure of full time employment. However, wisdom should be sufficient to keep us from sloth even in such a state.

For the purpose of writing this book I asked some married women about what it is like managing a home. They told me that a woman needs at least between six and eight hours to cater for all the affairs of the home. Though it could be more. Now if a woman sleeps for eight hours, caters for the affairs of the home for another eight hours, sixteen hours of a day is gone. She is then left with eight hours. Those eight hours are usually not a continuous period of time and most of it are during the night hours. Then tell me how can you be a mother doing a full time job that takes you away from the home without having to sacrifice the well being of the home? It isn't possible. There is therefore no rationale behind asking women to go into time demanding careers such as politics, full time jobs, etc. They should steer clear off such career paths.

One of the women I asked about what it is like to manage a home as a mother was a colleague who worked as an intern at my place of work. She started her program in the university years after she had become a mother.

She clearly was just doing her program just for the sake of it. She was wealthy and her husband was wealthy too. Even while at work during her internship she still managed her business effectively just by making calls and sending text messages. (Mind you, you can't manage a home by making calls and sending text messages.) She told me how hard it was for a woman to combine both the duty of working and managing a home. It wasn't at all easy and there is a great sacrifice to be doing this. A sacrifice good mothers shouldn't be making. She expressed her regret at the fact that she had to be sacrificing the time for her home for work and learning.

So it is best that women do all the learning they can in formal institutions before they get married, after marriage they should both work and continue learning from home. While learning in the formal institutions before marriage they should opt for programs that would enable them work effectively from home. To be trained to do what will require you climbing poles, diving in the deep blue sea, or breaking records of being the first women to go to the moon while you should be at home would be a colossal waste. Please don't believe the saying that no knowledge is a waste. They should also develop their skill in things like first aid, psychology, nutrition, and other things that would enable them fulfil their roles as mothers effectively.

For this reason it is best for women who are mothers to build their careers around things with flexible time. I believe that working from home is possible more than ever before in known history. I have worked from home too myself and found it a very effective way of working. For this reason I strongly recommend that, when considering what could be done to earn money, women build their skill more in business management and entrepreneurship. With this skill they could manage their business without having to leave their homes and leave only at the brief times when their attention is not needed at home.

Now about spending on children. We have talked about, in a previous section, how life is evil and that, for this reason, the only moral grounds of

giving birth is to resolve to act in all the way we can to ensure that the children we give birth to are able to live a good life. The knowledge of this would inform us how well we ought to spend on children and their development. Jesus said to the Phoenician woman, "Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs." (Mark 7:27). Wow. In saying this Jesus used the term dogs to refer to humans. Isn't that mean? No. Rather, this informs us that children are to be placed on a totally different pedestal by their parents from all others. What he meant is that to give what is meant for children, their welfare and their development, to any other is as bad as casting it to dogs. When compared with the need of the children, the need of others is as unimportant as the needs of dogs. For this reason it is a bad thing for parents who lack the finances to properly cater for their children to be going about giving to the poor, giving for church projects, etc. while their own children are in lack. Preachers often push even poor people to give to them citing the story of Elijah and the widow. But that is very wicked.

In the abundance of ones wealth is what one should give to other things. "Let the children FIRST be filled..." says the Lord. This does not mean that the moment they are filled for the now we can take everything else and throw it to the dogs. We mustn't also throw their food of tomorrow to the dogs. So we must only give to the dogs in ways we are confident will not hinder the provision of the food of the children for tomorrow. If we are to trust God that when we give everything away to the poor and in philanthropic acts that God will miraculously provide for the children tomorrow, then we should not limit our faith to the provision of the children's bread but to the very things we give to. We should have faith that without our giving to them God will miraculously provide for them. If we consider it a necessary thing for us to give to the dogs, then we must consider it a more necessary thing for us to save and invest to secure the bread of the children for tomorrow.

Life is full of risks and no one knows what tomorrow holds. The little we think may be enough to secure the bread of the children for tomorrow may

end up to be very inadequate. Parents should therefore limit their philanthropic acts until after they're through bringing up children. When they are through training their children and their children are standing on their feet and fully independent, and are doing well, only then is it safe to engage in great philanthropic projects. It would be unwise, indeed wicked, to gamble with the future of the children in the bid to satisfy dogs.

Now, even when one is through training his children and their are now independent and fending for themselves, we must still be conscious of the fact that it is the duty of parents to lay up wealth for their children. It is our duty to leave behind something tangible for them to inherit. It is written, "the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." (2 Corinthians 12:14). So, if we brought them to the world, we must be committed first and foremost to their well being. Only after that should we consider the dogs.

Now away from children, we ought to give our lives a right order. We should know what comes before the other. Is marriage before getting a source of good income, or getting a good source of income first? Is it a priority to build a house or is it a priority to build a business? The Bible says, "Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house." (Proverbs 24:27). This advice of Solomon teaches us that it is better to build a business first than to build a house. The wisdom in this is quite glaring. A business is an asset while a house is a liability. I know some think a house is an asset, but it is in truth a liability. Having a business or a good job would enable us take care of all the expenses of a house properly. It is in the same way we must think carefully and set the course of every other thing in our lives in order. There things that once we do them it becomes incredibly hard to do the things we should have done first. For this reason, let first things come first.

It is worthy to point out that it is a bad thing to form a habit of borrowing. It is written, "thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow..." (Deuteronomy 15:6). This was said when God was blessing his

people. If it is a blessing not to borrow why should it be seen as a light thing to form a habit of borrowing. Let us also keep away from taking loans. It is a good idea to take loans for a business that would yield far more than the loan collected especially if the yield is multiplied by the amount of money put into it, but to take loans to cater for a need because one's finances is not enough is unwise. Rather let us strive to live within our means. If you can't live properly within your means how shall you then cope with the added need of paying up the accrued interest?

In funding one's wedding it is good to also spend within one's means. I get surprised to realise that some people borrow to fund their wedding. That is too bad. A wedding should be simple and affordable. Even if one has the money he doesn't have to blow it all away in a flamboyant wedding. When talking with a friend on this matter he asked, "which is better? To have a flamboyant wedding and then struggle to survive after wedding, or to have a simple wedding and then live comfortably so much that when it is time to give birth one could comfortably afford to travel out of the country for six months, and return after child birth?" In saying this he tried to show the foolishness of blowing one's finances away in the bid to have a flamboyant wedding. So let's be wise.

Why Jacob Wept

*"And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept."
(Genesis 29:11)*

Before I'd bring this chapter to an end I'd like to share with us a little thing about Jacob. In Genesis 29 we read about how he went in search of a wife. When he saw Rachel he kissed her and wept. Now it is strange to see an elderly weeping and that which must move him to cry must be a great thing. It was not just a sob but the Bible says he lifted up his voice and

wept. It was a loud cry. What could have moved him to cry this way not caring his age, or the people standing by? Was it her beauty that was so refined that he cried? I don't think that beauty moves people to tears not to mention crying loudly before all. What could that be exactly that made him cry?

When Abraham got a wife for Isaac his servant did not cry when he saw beautiful Rebekah. When Isaac saw her, he too did not cry. We didn't read of anyone crying when they saw the woman they were going to marry or wished to marry. However one thing we notice between Isaac and his son Jacob was that when the servant of Abraham saw Rebekah he first gave her a gift and brought so much wealth for her family. Such a man ought not to cry when he sees the girl his master would marry. When Isaac saw Rebekah he too needed not to cry. But Jacob seeing a lady he wished to marry cried with a loud voice because he was broke and impoverished. For this reason the only way he could show his love was to quickly start watering his uncle's sheep. When the servant of Abraham went to get a wife for Isaac he immediately told them his mission and the next day he was on his way back home. This was not so with Jacob. He stayed with his uncle speechless for a full month serving for free as if he came all the way to meet them for nothing but to work. It was not until Laban asked him, "Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what shall thy wages be?" (Genesis 29:15). It was at this point he was able to say he wanted to marry Rachel. He had no money so he offered to serve for seven whole years. If he had money he wouldn't have made such an offer.

But why was Jacob this way? Abraham was super rich and was considered a mighty prince though he had no link to a throne (Genesis 23:6). This was because God blessed him greatly and he had abundance of wealth. Isaac also was wealthy and prosperous (Genesis 26:12). But what happened to Jacob? Did Isaac leave him no wealth? Did he not give him gifts to go with when he sought a wife? Was he himself not a keeper of sheep while with his father? Why then was he so impoverished that he had nothing at all

with him when he went to his uncle's house? To have little is quite bad, but to have nothing is quite unimaginable. He himself said in his prayer to God concerning his state when he went to Laban, "with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands." (Genesis 32:10). He had only his staff at hand when he went seeking for wife. The Bible did not tell us why, but the Book of Jasher gave us a detail explanation of what happened to him. He had been prepared to go with a lot of gifts but while he was on the way he was robbed by the sons of his brother, Esau, and they took all that he had. It is was in the distress of his heart that he vowed saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." (Genesis 28:20 - 22). This was the true foundation and basis of Levitical tithing unlike what many preachers teach today that it is in Abraham's gift to Melchizedek that tithing is gotten. The Levitical tithing is the fulfilment of Jacob's vow to God and it applies to him and his children alone.

Before I go on, I would like to warn you that I refer to the book of Jasher only because the Bible itself refers to it in two portions, that is in Joshua 10:13 and 2 Samuel 1:18. I do not wish that other books of creation or historical books of that kind should be read. Many of them are false and demonic. Please avoid them. I however encourage Christians to read the book of Jasher. You'd find it very useful. It is from it I present the things written above.

Seeing the plight of Jacob, we could understand better the pain that made him, though a full grown man, to lift up his voice and weep. To have seen the lady he wished to marry and yet lack the finances to marry her is a very painful thing indeed. More painful it is knowing that he only came to this impoverished state because he was robbed. All the embarrassment he went through was because of this lack. There are many embarrassment that lack of money can cause today when it comes to the issue of marriage. It may

not come in exactly the same way as Jacob experienced it, but they do come in diverse ways whether one deserved to be poor or not. I've seen a man who wedded and on the thanksgiving day he was not allowed to speak because he had no money and the lady's parents who were very wealthy paid for all that pertained to the wedding. Both parents of the lady spoke, the lady spoke, but the man was not allowed to speak. He just stood there like a humble servant.

Let the issue of finance not seem like a light matter. I do not wish to scare people about marriage, neither do I wish to encourage people to be very demanding regarding money, or to make the possession of a man a criteria an issue before giving their daughter out in marriage. A man that is rich today can be poor tomorrow and a man that is poor today can be rich tomorrow. Money, as important as it is, does not in itself make a good or happy home. However, let young men not have lackadaisical attitude towards their finances. They should be hard working, diligent, and wise in spending. They should not throw away their money on frivolities, buying expensive phones, fine clothes, fine shoes, only to end up poor.

Conclusion

"For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it."
(Ecclesiastes 7:12)

The things the Bible teaches about finances and things related to it are as follows:

- ◆ Save for the rainy day (Proverbs 6:6-8)
- ◆ Be thrift and invest (Proverbs 21:20)
- ◆ Do your business and be industrious at it (1 Thessalonians 4:11,

Romans 12:11)

- ◆ Acquire skills that shall make you profitable (Titus 3:14)
- ◆ Don't be lazy, rather be hard working and diligent (Proverbs 10:4)
- ◆ Study (1 Thessalonians 4:11, 1 Timothy 2:15)
- ◆ Give your life a right order (Proverbs 24:27)
- ◆ Don't waste your time (Ecclesiastes 4:5)
- ◆ Lay up wealth for children (2 Corinthians 12:14)
- ◆ Most importantly, be rich towards God (Luke 12:16-21)

In summary, we are not to serve money and allow it take the place of God. But we are to make money and make good and wise use of it. As a matter of fact our jobs or businesses by which we make money is a part of our Christian calling. It is a holy service to God to earn our living while we serve. To act against any of the things the Bible teaches about finances is a refusal to be a good Christian. May God give us a perfect understanding concerning family finances in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer: Dear Father, teach us to be wise about money. Help us never to trust in money but to put our money in trust. In all that we do, help us to be abundantly rich towards you. Do this for us dear Father. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

BEING ROMANTIC: A CHRISTIAN VIRTUE

"... rejoice with the wife of thy youth."

(Proverbs 5:18)

I once read a post that says ladies in church sometimes prefer to marry unbelievers because believers are not romantic. That was a very amusing one to read and since it has come to my notice, I feel it would not be good to bring this book to a conclusion without saying a word about it. I don't know if that post spoke true, though I suppose it does else it shouldn't have been posted, therefore I do believe that the post is true. And if it is true I really don't know what they mean by being romantic. Sometimes ladies don't seem to know what they want and they misunderstand and misdefine their desires. Henry Sampson in his book, "A History of Advertising from the Earliest Times," humorously wrote, "A lady advertises [in a newspaper] her desire to obtain a husband with 'a Roman nose having strong religious tendencies.' A nose with heavenly tendencies we can imagine, but even then it would not be Roman."

I myself have heard firsthandedly of a Christian lady who is very spiritual and takes spiritual stance on almost everything, yet when she heard of this other brother who takes similar spiritual stances on things, when she was spoken to about this brother in respect to marriage (not to herself but to someone else) she said, "I hope he's not this over spiritual type of person." So, it seems there is something in women that makes them scared of spiritual people even if they themselves are spiritual. If what makes such ladies to be attracted to unbelievers is their being "romantic," I think what they really want is a wife beater and an unfaithful drunkard. For if it is true romance that they truly desire, they'd find it best and most beautifully in

the people whose very God is love (1John 4:8, 16). We shall see why below.

I know there're people who try to be very spiritual so as to demonise the virtue of romance, but you can't blame them. The media puts forward stupidity and they call that romance. So it is the stupidity of the media that warrants such demonising. However, let us take a good look at this virtue from a right perspective.

So what is romance? Romance means, "feeling of excitement and mystery associated with tender love." Being romantic therefore means showing tender love in ways that stirs such feelings of excitement. Such feelings are a natural reaction to feeling loved. Showing love to one's spouse is therefore a very great virtue. It is written, "Open rebuke is better than secret love." (Proverbs 27:5). Not being romantic towards one's spouse is the same thing as having a secret love. Such love is of little value. I once read of a man who said something like, "Pastor, you know, sometimes I love my wife so much that I almost tell her." That is what it means not to be romantic. Such a man probably never expressed his love to his wife despite loving her so much. That is bad.

Some people probably don't like to express their love for others because they feel it makes them look weak. In the same way there are parents who can't tell their children that they love them. Some others don't like to express their love because it makes them cry. Still others for some other strange reason(s) don't just like to do it. It may be because of a resentment of some sort. Such resentment may have occurred as a result of a lack of understanding towards their spouses. Whatever it be that be the obstacle to showing and expressing the love that one feels for another must be surmounted. Why? Loving someone and not showing that love when the person is in the position to feel loved is evil. This is tantamount to robbery. Christian couples must know that they must first of all love each other from their heart passionately, then they must learn to express that love by word and deed regularly.

The Bible is not against couples being romantic. The biggest evidence of this is the Songs of Solomon which is a full book of thorough romance. It is a book filled with two spouses expressing their love to each other. I was seventeen when I first read it for myself and I was shocked to find it, even the first two verses, in the very HOLY Bible. But reading the whole was a beautiful experience. Some say it only refers to the relationship between God and his people, and that it should not be understood in the romantic way. That it does refer to the relationship between God and his people is very true. It fills me with wonder how some awesome preachers and Christian writers take verses out of the Songs of Solomon to preach on loving God and developing an intimate relationship with him. So wonderful and deep the spiritual revelations they present through those verses. It is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. So it is absolutely true. However it does not take away the fact that it is a book of romance all the same. Rather than claiming it is not a book of romance at all, it would be better to come to the conclusion that there is a lot to learn about our relationship with God and being intimate with him through observing the relationship between a man and his spouse in holy matrimony.

Indeed there is a lot to learn. We see all through scriptures that God likens himself to the husband of his people. In the Old Testament we can see God being presented as the lover of his people. For example it is written, "... and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." (Isaiah 62:5). Elsewhere it is written, "Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." (Jeremiah 2:2). In the New Testament it is written, "... I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:2). And Christ and his church are represented as the bridegroom and the bride respectively. In the concluding part of Revelations it is written, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life

freely." (Revelation 22:17). When we see these texts representing God and Christ as the bridegroom and his people as the bride, it does not remove from those verses the reference to the actual natural love that exists between a man and his spouse. But we can have a better understanding of the love that exists between God and his people when we look at the holy love that exists between godly spouses. For example when it says in Isaiah 62:5, "... and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee," one may never understand that rejoicing to the fullest until he himself has experienced what it is to be a bridegroom. It is in the joy he feels at such a moment that he may know that this is how God rejoices over him. It is in such a state that he could appreciate being loved of God this way himself. It is the same way that though the book of the Songs of Solomon, though it has deep spiritual meanings of intimacy with God, cannot be seen as a book not meant to be understood in the romantic way.

We find in the book of Ecclesiastes where it is written, "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 9:9). Concerning that verse Selwyn Hughes (1928-2006) wrote a commentary in his daily devotional with a title, "Are You Fun To Live With?" That is a good question with which good people ought to examine themselves regularly. Not understanding this truth about the need to live joyfully with one's spouse, some, when in the company of their spouse, always have their faces like flints that cannot be moved. But being a godly spouse also entails being fun to live with.

Isaac was seen sporting with his wife. In other words he was catching fun with his wife. It was by the sporting with her that Abimelech knew that Rebekah was his wife (Genesis 28:8-9). For Abimelech called Isaac and said, "Behold, of a surety she is thy wife." Without sporting with his wife Abimelech would probably have little reason to conclude she was his wife. This is because the right and good thing for a man to do with his wife is to

catch fun together. That, my holy brothers and sisters, is being romantic.

In the book of Proverbs it is also written, "Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love." (Proverbs 5:18 - 19). Being ravished in the love of a spouse is a blessing from God and spouses should delight and rejoice in this. It is good for spouses to express love in words (written or verbal), in love songs, fond activities, and whatsoever else ravishes (in the positive sense). So sit your spouse down and tell them what he/she means to you. Tell him/her what a horrible place the world would have been without them. Tell him/her how much you love him/her. Ravish his/her heart with the sweetness of the words of your mouth. Make it a regular practice.

Evidently, romantic activities is one of the things we can understand that apostle Paul referred to when he said, "But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband." (1 Corinthians 7:33 - 34). So far one has chosen to be married as opposed to being celibate, they have the responsibility to please their spouses. That, my holy brothers and sisters, is being romantic.

Even when the children of Israel went to war, the person that is newly married was not to go with them. It is written, "When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken." (Deuteronomy 24:5). Why should he be free and at home one whole year? To cheer up his wife. You can't be free one whole year in the world of today, so don't even think it, except you're the child of a billionaire. You probably won't even get a week off work. But time could be made out regularly for that.

Now back to the stupidity the media presents to us as love. I had said above that the media presents stupidity and call it romance. Here in Nigeria there are many Mexican series that aired on tv that portray stupidity and call it love. You'd see a man moving from one woman to the other in sexual relationships, and after going with many women comes back to the first woman, and then the story concludes that for them to have still ended up together, it means that it is true love. I don't watch it but the things I overhear people saying makes me wonder why people would spend their time watching such stupidity so much as to allow it corrupt their reasoning. They call their series romance, but all that is not romance. Infidelity is not love. Showing lack of commitment to one's spouse is not love. Rather it is hate and wicked disregard. But how it should be deemed a means of entertainment to show such irrational behaviours and how people indeed find it entertaining baffles me.

But that which we see in the Bible is pure in all its characteristics. It is an expression of love between couples, not unmarried fools like we see in the media. It is an expression of love of commitment and chastity, not a frivolous relationship that makes the lover change his/her love as often as he/she changes his clothes. It is an expression of love from the heart, not the lust of the flesh. It is an expression built on reason and moral principles, not one built on infatuations and the wanderings of a mind filled with concupiscence. It is a love that reflects God's love for his people, not one that reflects disregard for the chaste commands of God. It is a love by which the man could say most confidently to his spouse, "... my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled..." (Song of Solomon 5:2). But what could these profane people say? Probably, "my defiled and profane fried-haired tattooed canvas."

Aurelius Augustine (354-430) expressed his observation in the following words, "In matrimony, however, let these nuptial blessings be the objects of our love — offspring, fidelity, the sacramental bond... Fidelity, not such as even unbelievers observe one towards the other, in their ardent love of the flesh. For what husband, however impious himself, likes an adulterous

wife? Or what wife, however impious she be, likes an adulterous husband?" This informs us that even impious and irreligious people don't like adulterous people for spouses. So how can people be jumping from one person to the other in an adulterous relationships be presented as romance, even for the purpose of entertainment? Sheer stupidity.

The Scarlet Pimpernel is one of my favourite novel because it is a great novel of adventure, wit, suspense, and drama. But apart from this it had an element of good romance in it. A romance like we see in the Bible. I enjoyed that very well because it was pure and therefore beautiful. I have said in one of the previous sections that, judging by what we can learn from Christ's life, it is wrong to even maintain an on going relationship with the opposite sex, how much more should one avoid romance before marriage. But if one is married, it is good to be romantic towards one's spouse.

Sexuality And "Venial Sins"

"Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency."

(1 Corinthians 7:5)

Before I bring this issue to a close, I would like to however point out that we must remember that we live in an evil time. We must be able to put aside matrimonial affairs for the sake of the kingdom from time to time (1 Corinthians 7:5). In such cases let it be obvious that it is for the kingdom's sake that both spouses decide to stay away from one another for fasting and prayer. We must keep in mind that the choice of marriage is not the best choice given the evilness of the time we live in. The choice of celibacy would have been best, but because of the weakness of our flesh it is better

to marry than to burn (1 Corinthians 7:9). For this reason we must show some restraints even within marriage.

Some are of the opinion that after marriage it is good to fan the flames of lust, but this is not right. It was also Aurelius Augustine (354-430) who wrote, "Carnal concupiscence, however, must not be ascribed to marriage: it is only to be tolerated in marriage." Those are sound words of great wisdom. So it is not expedient to fan the flames of lust in marriage. And knowing that we live in an evil world in which the work of the master requires urgency, to sacrifice that work to pursue the cravings of the flesh so much that one goes on as far as to fan the flame of lust (when the natural cravings is not there) is not expedient at all. In that Augustine says it is only to be tolerated he meant it should not be pursued after. The scriptural view of marriage is that it serves as a safeguard against fornication. This truth is hidden in this words, "... that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency." (1 Corinthians 7:5). Marriage is a safeguard against such temptations and not for pursuing after fleshly lusts.

Conclusion

"... rejoice with the wife of thy youth."

(Proverbs 5:18)

I do not by talking about showing restraints in marriage seek to contradict the main import of writing on the matter of romance as a virtue, but there must be a balance. Romance is more about showing love and making one's spouse happy. To be pursuing lusts within the confines of marriage is another thing entirely. Showing love is just a way of living and of relating with our spouses which does not in itself hinder our service to God, but pursuing carnal concupiscence does hinder our service to God. Though I am not in the position to judge to what extent it is evil, it is most certainly

not expedient seeing the evilness of the time we live in. We must therefore remember the more important purpose of preparing for eternity, that is both in preparing ourselves and preparing others. But so far as we choose to be married, our matrimony should not be without romance.

Let us therefore live happily with our spouses (or future spouses when the time comes), expressing the love and affections we feel. Let us be committed to their happiness, for this is well pleasing to God. May he guide us into perfect truths concerning this matter by his divine wisdom. Amen. Thank you and God bless you.

Prayer: Dear Father whose name is love, I pray today that we may understand your love to the fullest. As we do, may that most holy love reflect in our relationship with our spouses, that we may live joyfully with our spouses. This I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

SECTION 7

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

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

(Malachi 2:15)

I'm overjoyed to realise that this book is being wrapped up. We started off at looking at the foundation of the home which is love. We also looked at marriage with is a bond of love. We went on to talk about the role of the different parties in a home. We looked at conjugal commitment, parenting, challenges facing the home, and some sundry issues about the Christian home.

It should be obvious that there is no hard and fast rule to building a good Christian home, but all things must be done in love. This love requires that we shall be making a lot of sacrifice from time to time. It is my prayer that God will grant us, his children, the grace to both be committed to having a good Christian home founded on his word and where the Holy Ghost is a residing member. Amen.

Let us sing again the introductory hymn of this book:

*How fragrant, like sweet heaven, that home where Christ is Lord,
Where fathers love His Gospel and sons feed on His Word,
Where mothers pour His mercy on daughters of His love,
Where waves of His compassion bring joy where'er they move.*

*How beautiful their union; how God-like, how serene;
How like that Triune Oneness who reigns in Heav'n, unseen.*

*How like that God Incarnate—Of God and Man the Son,
How wondrous this affection: the many live as one.*

*One flesh, one heart, one spirit, one bone, one blood, one soul;
One covenantal promise to keep while ages roll;
One blended life that gives life to children clothed with prayer,
One mighty rock, one shelter from every storm and care.*

*Come, feast of Heaven's table; come taste of rich delight!
Come revel and come ravish with pleasures passing sight!
Come radiant, holy Splendor, knit all our hearts in one:
Come mirror here Your glories, Great Father, Spirit, Son!*

Prayer: *Dear God and Father, thank you for helping me to come to the end of this book. Help me to do all you require of me in fulfilling my role in my home at each point in time. Thank you dear Father for I know you will do it. In Jesus' name. Amen.*
