

LAYING A GREAT FOUNDATION FOR YOUR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Lead texts- Psalm 11:3; Mat 7:24-27

INTRODUCTION

Foundation is the most important aspect of a building because it is the part of the building on which the whole structure rests. No building can stand without a good foundation.

The quality of the foundation of any building determines the durability of the structure on it. The higher the building, the deeper the foundation. In the same vein any marriage and family that will stand the test of time must have a strong and solid foundation.

Prospective husbands and wives ought to prepare themselves physically, spiritually, financially, emotionally in order to have a good marriage that cannot be pulled down by winds and storms of life. Mat 7:24-27.

TIPS FOR BUILDING A GREAT FOUNDATION FOR YOUR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

1. **Personal spiritual, emotional and economic self-development.**

- 1) Develop a vibrant relationship with God. Make peace with God and diligently use all spiritual resources (bible study, attendance at churches, prayers, spiritual leaders) to grow in the knowledge of God and in Christlikeness. Gal 5:22-23, 1 Cor 13:1-4.
- 2) Learn submission to the word of God.
- 3) Acquire knowledge on marriage and all related issues. Knowledge is power. Hosea 4:6.
- 4) Fully develop into a full grown man or woman who is self dependent. Gen 2:24
- 5) Have a job; a steady source of income.
- 6) Develop inner strength or quality of self-control, courage, boldness, firmness, bravery, wisdom etc.
- 7) Develop relational skill- remaining calm at all times, accommodation, adjustment, doing to others as you would them to do to you. ,
- 8) Acquire communication skill.
- 9) Develop culture of neat and attractive appearance.
- 10) Acquire cooking skill as a woman. It is good for you as a man to know how to cook.

2. **Wise Choice.** 2 Cor 6:14.

The following steps of wisdom should be taken in choosing a life partner:

- Pray well for God's guidance. Gen 24:12-14
- Allow the Lord to lead you.
- Involve your pastor and spiritual leaders.
- Do not choose under pressure.
- Do not choose out of pity.
- Do not choose for money or material wealth.

Check the following before you propose or say yes:

- Is he or she born again?
- Does he or she love the Lord?
- Do you really love him or her from the bottom of your heart?
- Does he or she fear the Lord?
- What is her level of commitment to the word of God?
- Does he or she believe the word of God as the final authority?
- Is he or she ready to love you in the face of adversity?

3. **Pure and purposeful courtship.** Heb 13:4

Never go into marriage without a period of courtship. Not too short and not too long.

Arrange counselling time with your pastor and his wife.

Discuss and take decisions on how your dream home will look like.

Discuss and agree on the number of children you want to have.

Discuss on your dreams and future ambitions.

Take time to study and know yourselves.

Pray and fast together.

Agree on pure courtship during courtship. Remember that Bible standard is no sex before marriage: Col 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:3; 2Pe 2:7. Sex before marriage can weaken the foundation of the home.

- No touching. Do not tempt yourselves.
- No kissing. Do not tempt yourselves.
- No sex. You are not yet married.
- No locking of door while together, no meeting in secret places. Do not tempt yourselves.
- No late night visit. Do not tempt yourselves.

Conclusion:

You must seek to be the right person in marriage before you go into it. You must be a wife material or a husband material fully prepared before going in marriage relationship. The above will help you immensely to lay a good foundation that will help you to build a great marriage and family in future.

COMMITMENT IN MARRIAGE AT RHODE ISLAND

Genesis 2:24; Ruth 1:16-17; Ruth 2:11-12

Relationships and Friendships are sustained majorly by **COMMITMENT** and faithfulness.

Marriage is a combination of relationship and friendship. It is sustained by commitment and faithfulness.

We shall look at the subject under the following sub-headings-

1. Understanding true commitment.
2. The demand for commitment in marriage.
3. The Power of commitment in marriage.
4. Motivations for commitment in marriage.
5. Cultivating or growing commitment in your marriage.

What is Commitment in?

Ruth 1:16- But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God my God.

1. Commitment is giving yourself willingly, totally and sacrificially to the success and happiness of your marriage.
2. Commitment is assuming full responsibility for the success of your marriage and intentionally ***doing your best always at all cost*** to make your spouse happy.
3. Commitment is very strong and resolute determination to make your marriage work, succeed and happy at all cost.

Commitment is not like attraction or affection or admiration which can come naturally and easily. Commitment is a spiritual decision or choice. It is not an emotion (feeling).

The demand for commitment in marriage

1. God demands commitment in marriage;

- a) The man shall cleave to his wife
- b) The two shall be one
- c) No divorce

2. The marriage vows are majorly about commitment to one another in body, soul and spirit-

The man's vows are all about commitment:

- a) I now take thee to be my wedded wife
- b) As my own flesh to love and cherish
- c) I hence forsake all other women to love you
- d) I shall love you as Christ loves the church and gave Himself for her.
- e) I shall cleave to you, protect and care for you;
- f) With my body I honor you and
- g) All that I am I share with you, and
- h) All that I have I endow you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
- i) Come what may, I shall remain faithful to you at all times for the rest of our lives together

The wife's vows are also all about commitment-

- a) I now take you as my husband,
- b) I now take you as my own flesh to love and to cherish.
- c) According to the word of God, I shall be your help meet.
- d) I shall submit myself to you as the head of this union and
- e) I shall now forsake other men to remain faithful to you at all times for the rest of our lives together.
- f) I joyfully and wholeheartedly accept this ring/Bible as a sign of your covenant with me. May the Lord help me to be faithful to you and to his truth all the days of my life.

The power of commitment in marriage

Commitment is an inner strength. No marriage can SURVIVE without commitment on the part of the couple involved.

- 1) Commitment is the life of marriage. It is not love? When fire of love is going down commitment keeps prevents from dying all together.
- 2) The higher the level of commitment the stronger a marriage becomes.
- 3) With commitment you can painstakingly stay with your spouse forever whatever.
- 4) Commitment makes it possible for you to withstand very ugly and wicked storms.
- 5) Commitment will empower you to make all necessary adjustments at all cost.

Practical demonstration of

Commitment is demonstrated in the following ways- faithfulness, loyalty, sacrifice, compromise, adjustment, reassurance, collective attitude and caring attitudes and efforts.

1. Faithfulness

1 Corinthians 4:2 (KJV)

Moreover it is required in stewards that a man is found faithful.

- a) Doing that which is expected of you at all cost
- b) Avoiding all that are not expected of you at all cost
- c) Putting in your best
- d) Disciplined sexuality to keep to your spouse alone. Don't say everybody is doing

2. Loyalty

3. Sacrifice

Denying yourself of something you highly value for the sake of your marriage.

- Turning down a highly paid job offer for the sake of your marriage and children is a sacrifice.

4. Compromise-

This is settlement of your differences and conflicting opinions by mutual concessions or a win-win philosophy.

It is looking for the 3rd alternative as Stephen Covey called it in his book 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

5. Adjustment

Taking pains to make changes that can help you to adapt to new situation that your marriage might impose on you.

6. Reassurance.

7. Collective attitude or mentality that always talks and thinks in terms of

US instead of ME;

We instead of I;

Ours instead of Mine

8. Caring attitudes and efforts.

Your spouse can not see into your heart to see your commitment or love for her/him. What can be seen are the care you show from time to time.

Keys to becoming a committed spouse in your marriage

Commitment is grown.

It takes time for commitment to grow appreciably in some people.

Some grow commitment before going into marriage.

They counted the costs before going into it; and were ready to pay the cost. Even then, experiences in marriage will tell you that you need to grow the muscles of your commitment.

Most people start to count the cost when they get into marriage. If this seems overwhelming they walk away from the marriage.

The following tips will help you to build a good degree of commitment into your marriage relationship-

1. Start on a very positive note

- a. Many may fail around us. We will not.
- b. With God all things are possible.
- c. For every situation, there is at least a solution.
- d. It may be difficult but it is not impossible

2. Think or the positive side of your spouse and not just the weak side.

3. Start on a realistic note.

- a. Don't be swept off your feet by emotions of love.
- b. Avoid over expectations. Know that your spouse is not an angel and will therefore have imperfections and make many mistakes. Prepare yourself for these.
- c. Know that your spouse will offend or irritate you many times WITHOUT INTENDING

TO. Make allowance for offenses. This is large heartedness and maturity.

- d. Be ready for compromise.
 - e. Tell yourselves that marriage is made to work and you will work hard to make yours work.
4. Understand what commitment is and it's vital role in marriage.
 5. Hold your marriage vow sacred and keep them in your mind.
God honors people
 6. Reaffirmations of your vows and rededication of yourself to your
 7. Engage in positive prayer for couples that God:
 - a. For evergreen and ever growing love
 - b. Power to continue to love
 - c. Power to tolerate
 - d. Power to overlook
 - e. Power not to be petty but large hearted.
 - f. Power to endure
 - g. Power to forgive and keep on forgiving.
 - h. Power to put in our best
 - i. Power to be patient with one another
 - j. Power to shift to long-suffering whenever you are running out of patience.

PROTECTING YOUR HOME AND MARRIAGE AGAINST INTRUDERS AND INTRUSIONS

He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him. Ecc 10:8

1. Definition of terms:
 - Intruders
 - Intrusions
2. Identifying potential intruders.
3. Protecting your home from potential intruders/intrusion.
4. What do you do if/when there is an intrusion?

Who Is An Intruder?

- Someone who is in a place where he is not wanted.
- Someone who enters a place/situation despite not been invited.

What Is An Intrusion?

- When someone does something that affects your private life or activities in an unwanted way.
- Something happens that affects your private life.
- Poke-nosing into your privacy in marriage.

Identifying Potential Intruders

1. Anyone who does not acknowledge the significance or importance of your spouse e.g.
 - changes subject when you mention your spouse
 - never ask how your spouse is doing
 - When you are referring to your mate and he keeps acting as if the person doesn't exist.
2. Anyone who makes sexually oriented comments and jokes e.g. continually addressing your sexual appeal even in subtle ways.
3. They love to hug or kiss or even pat each other on the buttocks every now and then.
4. Someone with unmet or unfulfilled needs and desires.
5. Someone with who there is a feeling of fondness, feeling of attraction, etc.
6. A co-worker of opposite gender that you travel alone with away from your spouse.
7. Other potential intruders including in-laws, children, work, hobbies, ministry, etc.

Protecting your Home against Intruders/Intrusion

Protecting marriage means that the marriage relationship must come before relationship with all others except God. It is important that couples take the following steps to guard their marriage relationship and prevent it from intruders.

1. Do not let anything come between you and your spouse.
2. There should be transparency and openness between husband and wife. There should be no secrets between spouses.
3. Couples should also take time to build spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical connection i.e. cultivating friendship with each other sharing fears and worries, praying together, bathing together, openness to one another, planning finances together, etc.
4. Spend more time together. The more you spend as a couple having fun, the less time and space is made available for outside influences to step in and damage your marriage.
5. Be accountable. Set healthy boundaries for yourself.
6. Deal with sins.
7. Avoid temptations. See no evil. Hear no evil. Speak no evil.
8. Mind the kind of person you allow into your home (1 Corinthians 15:33). Ask questions e.g. Does this person or people lead us closer or further from God? closer or further from each other?
9. Every person including well-meaning family members must take a step back when their presence threatens marital harmony.
10. Fellowship with other believing couples will strengthen each other in friendship, accountability and mentoring. It allows you to see beyond your own experiences.
11. Make sure you are spiritually and emotionally sound.
12. Remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit regarding your marriage. Stay alert to warning signs.
13. Put on the whole armour of God.
14. Affection grows out of closeness and conversation so
 - Avoid intimate conversations with the opposite gender. Don't share your

innermost thoughts, fears, despairs, dreams, yearnings with the opposite sex and discourage listening to such to avoid undue access into your heart.

- Do not communicate with friends or others as closely as you would do with your spouse.
 - Do not complain about your spouse to friends, co-workers, or even clergy of opposite sex behind your spouse. If you do, you are revealing your unmet desires and wishes to them and indirectly inviting this other person to meet our needs.
15. Be a prudent/wise helper. Our guiding goal in life should be to help others get closer to their spouse and to God but not to us. That means that someone else must be involved e.g. spouse, a friend, a fellow church member so that an exclusive bond cannot develop.

What do you do when there is an Intruder?

1. Pray all manners of prayers.
2. Find out what could be the underlining problem.
3. Truly acknowledge your feelings to your spouse.
4. Let go off the memories of feelings and longing for the other person.
5. Stop further contact with the intruder.
6. Seek outside help when the need arises. Set pride aside.

LET YOUR WORDS BE SEASONED

BIBLE REFERENCES: Colossians 3:13-17, 4:6

Introduction: *In recent sermons* we had learnt that words are powerful and capable of influencing lives and destinies. Words are means of communicating our thoughts and intentions to others and thus we cannot do but talk. Through words we get our goals fulfilled, the message of the Gospel is preached, and through words we develop one another in the family. When words are spoken, thoughts, imaginations and actions are provoked; which may be desirable as the speaker intended or undesirable and unexpected. The way and manner by which words are spoken can give it differing meanings. That is why the Bible talks about sweet words (Proverbs 16:24) - giving health and life, soft words (Proverbs 15:1, 25:15) – turning away wrath and breaking bones i.e. softens hard hearts.

Our lives have been shaped over the years by the words spoken to us by members of our families or people we had lived with. We are also shaping the lives of our children, wards, spouses and people around us by the words we speak to them.

Seasoning our words as counseled by God in His word implies that there are better ways of presenting our words. It means we can make it more acceptable, pleasant, welcoming, and interesting to the hearer as food is seasoned to give it a better taste, to be more palatable,

acceptable and marketable. It is adding favour to your discussions and conversations. Seasoned words will spice up your marriage and home.

Why Do We Need To Season Our Words?

- To be like our Father in Heaven and our Lord when He was on earth. Matthew 5:45-47, Acts 10:38, Isaiah 53:9
- To be able to relate with people in order to win them to Christ. 1Peter 3:1
- To be at peace with all men. Romans 12:18, Hebrews 12:14.
- That we may edify and build others to becoming Christ-like.

Words that will bless and build your marriage and family to be strong

1. Respectful words
2. Reassuring words
3. Encouraging words
4. Comforting words
5. Caring words
6. Appreciative words
7. Romantic words

Great words that will make marriage and family great

1. Thanks
2. Please
3. Sorry
4. 'We' or 'our' or 'us.'
5. Wonderful
6. Perfect

How Do We Season Our Words? We are called to season our words with salt. (Colossians 4:6)

What are the things that are like salt with which to season our words?

1. Put on the new man; be born again. John 3:3,7, Luke 5:36-38, Ephesians 4:24
2. Fill your heart with the Word of God. (Matthew 12:34)
3. Seek to please God in your talking. Colossians 3:17
4. Seek peace always. Proverbs 15:1, Ephesians 4:27
5. Be positive always. Ephesians 4:29
6. Be filled with love; wanting the best for others. Colossians 3:14
7. Control your anger. Ephesians 4:26, Ecclesiastes 7:9, James 1:20
8. Choose your words and let it be few when angry. Proverbs 10:19
9. Avoid slander and filthy talks. Colossians 3:8
10. Associate with Christians of good character. 1Corinthians 15:33
11. Dissociate from fools and ungodly people (*and through books and media*). Proverbs 15:2

Results / Benefits of Seasoning Our Words Especially Within The Family

- Life and health will be drawn to us and our family. Proverbs 12:18, 15:4, 18:21.
- Peace will reign in our homes.
- Prosperity and progress will be in the family.
- We shall be able to win others to Christ. 1Corinthians 7:16, 1Peter 3:1

Conclusion: Communication is important for development. For our children and members of our families to grow and prosper in life. We have to let our words be seasoned and develop the habit of speaking positive words to one another.

LITTLE ACTIONS THAT ARE ABLE TO MAKE YOUR MARRIAGE GREAT

Texts: Eph 4: 23-32; Eph 5: 21-33

Introduction:

Almost every marriage starts out as a huge celebration, full of hopes and dreams. It is to be noted that a great marriage starts with the building of its foundation. This involves the actions to make godly choices with parental and pastoral blessings, counselling and mentoring.

However, to have a great marriage, there are some actions (deeds, things, acts, behavior, and conduct) that are necessary to be put in place by the couple to make their marriage strong, stable and sweet. Most of these actions are not are not big things.

Little drops of water make the great oceans of the world. Little grains of sand form the vast beaches of the earth.

Little deeds of kindness, little words of love, make our earth an Eden, like the heaven above. And the little moments, humble though they may be, make the mighty ages of eternity.

Little foxes spoil the vine (songs of Solomon 2:15).

So our little errors lead the soul away, from the paths of virtue into sin to stray.

Insignificant small things become big or great when they come together. The gigantic houses around us were built of small blocks. Little kindness here and little disciplines make great saints. Little actions most of which are fun can make your marriage big and full fulfilments.

Definition of Terms

Actions: The process of doing something or steps taken in order to achieve a purpose.

Marriage:

Marriage is the union between an adult man and an adult woman of opposite sexes to become husband or wife under delegated legally recognized authority.

Little actions that are able to make your marriage great.

1. A word or two of prayer for her or him directly now and again.
Father I thank you for my wife/husband. Please give her/him special strength for her/his - - - Have a strong, vibrant and consistent personal prayer life and family altar.
2. Saying "Thank You" for little and great things – showing gratitude and appreciation is magnetic.
3. Saying "I love you" repeatedly – This is to renew your commitment to each other, to show you are still in love and should feel loved. Love for Life.
4. Being quick to say "I am SORRY". Also learn to forgive and forget without excuse.' I am sorry but you know- - - is not apology.
5. Complimenting, recognizing and praising each other frequently. We all do some things well; have good qualities, positive traits which deserve praise and appreciation.
6. Empathizing – walking in your spouse's shoes.
7. Warm greetings when back from outing or work.
8. Smiles and cheerfulness
9. Saying thank you for even little good efforts
10. Asking how the day went.
11. Call to ask how the journey is going when on a journey.
12. Saying please even for very simple task or requests.
13. Listening attentively to what he or she has to say. Women have the nature of wanting to be listened to.
14. Soft direct answer. Avoid answering a question with a question.
15. Dating your spouse. It could be just driving round a quiet part of your city in the evening.
16. Feed one another occasionally.
17. Crack jokes and laugh together.
18. Soft touching or erotic pats.
19. Long amorous hug at unexpected times.
20. Remember her/his birthday.
21. Coming home regularly with small gifts like groundnuts, walnuts, roasted corn. Know what he/she likes.
22. Let go your annoyance fast.
23. Finding time to bath together.
24. Maintaining intimacy and passion, both inside and outside the bedroom. Enjoying sex with the spouse of your Youth. Do it cheerfully.
25. Seeking Godly counsel, advice and guidance.
26. Hold hands even during car rides.
27. Having great fun. Going for walk, smiling, kissing and laughing together with your spouse often.
28. Talking about pleasant old experiences.
29. Observing successful couples with great marriages.
30. Being kind and patient with one another. This is an extraordinary way to let your spouse know you truly care about him/her.

31. Correcting one another in love and with wisdom. Sharp corrections are not good for relations.
32. Getting offences behind you very fast. Learn to forget issues of the past. Don't remind your spouse of his/her mistake of the past. That will ruin your happiness. Eph 4:32
33. Keeping communication line open even when you are annoyed.
34. Building upon what you have in common continually.
35. Respecting and trusting one another and be humble. Eph 5:21
36. Taking care of your appearance and health.
37. Being open, sincere, honest and genuine. Never sweep burning issues under the carpet.
38. Spending quality time together and planning with great commitment to developing great determination, will power and grit to make your marriage great.
39. Keeping/Continuing **learning, unlearning and re-learning** for marriage is God's Institution. Successful couples are SAVVY or clever and insightful on practical issues no matter how insignificant they may seem. They read books, attend seminars, browse web articles etc. Prov. 9:9

Conclusion

Little drops of water make the great oceans of the world. Little grains of sand form the vast beaches of the earth. Little deeds of kindness, little words of love, make our earth an Eden, like the heaven above.

And the little moments, humble though they may be, make the mighty ages of eternity. Little kindness here and there, and little disciplines make great the great saints. Little actions most of which are fun can make your marriage big and full fulfilments. And little foxes spoil the vine (songs of Solomon 2:15). Despise no good little actions.

WISE FINANCIAL CHOICES FOR COUPLES TO BECOME FINANCIALLY STRONG AND REMAIN SO TILL OLD AGE

What you must know about money, prosperity and wealth:

1. That financial freedom fulfillment or prosperity is God's will for His people: Dt 8:17-18, Eccl 5:10, I Sam 2:32, 2 Chro 1:12.
2. That God is the source of true wealth and not parents or relations -
3. That genuine money does not come cheaply or fast. Avoid shortcut to wealth.

It is wrought with dangers. It may lead you into lifelong financial burden. **Pro 28:20** says "Committed and persistent work pays off; get-rich-quick schemes are rip-offs."

4. That money has wings and can easily fly away if not carefully tied down.

Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For *riches* certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven. **Pro 23:5; Prov. 27:24**

5. That money is good and it is needed for full emancipation and fulfillment – money answerth all things. **Eccl. 10:19**
6. That the love of money, trust in money is the root of all evil and they must be careful when money comes. **1 Timothy 6:10**
7. That more sense, wisdom is needed in making money than in spending it effectively.
8. That money is a seed. It has the tendency to multiply rapidly if well planted or invested.
9. That all the same, happiness does not depend on money only.
10. That they must not spoil their children with money.

11. That the older they grow, the more are their responsibilities, needs and the more the money they will need.
12. That it is best for couples to have financial agreement and plan their financial resources together. (**Luke 11:17**). In this way you the usual frictions and conflicts that money issues bring in marriage would be avoided. Further, you will be able to get the best from your money. **Eccl. 4:9**
13. That they need to plan their spending so that they get the best out of their money.
14. That they must exercise discipline to save form the word 'go'. **Prov. 6:6-8**
15. That they must start to invest early in life. **Eccl. 11:6**
16. The investment must be given priority over building – **Prov 24:27**.

Advisable financial understanding and agreement types for couples

1. Spending from the same purse (usually called common purse).

This requires high level of

- 1) Mutual understanding
- 2) Mutual trust
- 3) Openness
- 4) Honesty
- 5) Discipline in spending

2. Spending from agreement on contributions to cover common interests.

Spending from the same purse (usually called common purse)

This requires high level of

1. Mutual understanding
2. Mutual trust
3. Openness
4. Honesty
5. Discipline in spending
6. Having a budget or spending pattern in place

When these are not the rule, the contributory option should be adopted.

Spending from agreement on contributions to cover common interests

Each person contributes certain amount as agreed upon into the funding of common things like feeding, rent, building project, children school fees, transportation, mortgage etc.

Practical steps on the management of your finance in order to become financially strong and remain so till old age

1. Pay your God first

Tithes and offering is 10%.

2. Pay yourself next. Save 20% of your income
3. Keep all other expenses within the 70%- your accommodation, transport bill/fuel bills, food bill, the school your children attend, entertainment, furniture, electronics-
4. Your saving is for investment to make you retire young and rich.
5. Start saving very early.

6. Start investing very early.
7. Continue to invest in the middle age and into senior years.
8. Invest in APPRECIATING ASSETS that money and time will work for you. Examples are
 - 1) Shares of reputable companies,
 - 2) Landed properties, Land at the outskirts of growing cities.
 - 3) Bank deposits,
 - 4) Government bonds
9. Invest also in small scale enterprises,

In small scale enterprises that is possible in your area and you have ability and passion to do

TURNING YOUR CRISES TO CROWNS AS A COUPLE

Text: James 1: 2 – 12.

Key Verse: *Consider it pure joy, whenever you face trials of many kinds, Jam. 1: 2 NIV, paraphrased.*

1. INTRODUCTION *(Presenter to digest and summarize in 5 minutes)*

Marriage is a journey of a life time, “as long as you both shall live”, is the wedding creed, affirmed also in the scriptures (Rom. 7: 1-2). The union, as in every journey in life, is faced with its ups and downs, sometimes very discomfoting, sudden and unexpected, sometimes because either or both parties miscalculated, or the route is extremely rough or turbulent.

The jostling may widen a small untended (neglected) crack, and a larger crisis ensues. This is common in nature: a crack is the starting point and the propagation site of fracture that leads to eventual failure. Many “little things” have wrecked homes, while others mastered the storms and became stronger and obtained tall testimonies today. The pressure of trials are not designed to separate the couple (Matt. 19: 16), but to bind them more firmly. The glory men see in your marriage, and the honour you are accorded, depends on how you handled the crisis times.

What you get, crowns or crashes, depends on what you saw at the points of crises, *Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, seeing the joy set before him, endured the cross, and got the crown ...Heb. 12: 2.* Our very old resilient mothers saw the tomorrows in their children, endured the hardships, and their stories are written in gold. They did not react, but responded to the crises: abandoned by uncaring spouses, they disrobed themselves to clothe and educate their children; they were driven by passion and not the pains of the trials, which made them joyful under troubles (Jam. 1: 2). A story is also told of a struggling man who was diagnosed of cancer and told he had 5 years only to live; driven by the passion that his wife and two little children would not suffer after his demise, labored hard and in three years got them robust 5 million-dollars lifetime insurance, only to learn after review that he was wrongly diagnosed! The glory he desired, pushed him out of poverty to become a millionaire when poverty was the norm – crisis turned to crown.

Trials in the way of duty will brighten our graces now, and will earn us crowns at last. Let us take care in times of trial, that patience, and not the pain, is set to work in us: whatever is said

or done, let patience be seen in what we say or do. When the work of patience is complete, it will furnish all that is necessary for our Christian race and warfare. We should not pray so much for the removal of affliction, as for wisdom to make a right use of it. Ask God for wisdom to guide you under trials, both in regulating your spirit, and in managing the issues.

2. Causes of Common Crises (*Rehearse to spend 2 minutes on each point*)

Let us examine some sources rather than the signs of common crises amongst couples, so we could nib then in the bud. What can the couple do, even now?

- (i) Wrong foundation of the relationship, Psa. 11: 3, I Cor. 7: 12-13, 20, 39.
- (ii) Poor adjustments of either or both partners, Mark 10: 7, Psa. 45: 10-11.
- (iii) Scars of disappointments (from previous or present relationship), Phil. 3: 13, Col. 3: 12-13, Matt. 18: 33.
- (iv) Lack of progress in one's life, financial difficulties, sickness, etc. Jer. 33: 3, Isa. 40: 4.
- (v) Interferences, from extended family members, friends and work schedules, Eph. 5: 33.

3. Sustainable Responses Turning Crises to Crowns (*Rehearse to spend 2 minutes on each point*) Our goal here is to see what we may habitually do, turning our crises into crowns

- (i) Exercise patience, habitually, Jam. 1: 4, Heb. 10: 36
- (ii) Exercise practice of rewarding intimacy (quality time) – togetherness, talk, touch, I Cor. 7: 2-5, Psa. 133
- (iii) Exercise yourself in prayers, particularly as a couple, Matt. 18: 19 (have a day of fasting in agreement).
- (iv) Exercise your hands to profit (materially and spiritually), I Thess. 4: 11, Act. 18: 26.
- (v) Exercise your mind to always see the crown beyond the crisis, Jam. 1: 2, Heb. 12: 2.

4. Conclusion (*Spend 2 minutes here*)

Crises, trials, or temptations, when you are on the side of God, are tests of life, assessing your qualification for the next higher level in life, will you pass or fail the tests? See beyond the trials, and you shall receive the crowns. Fortunately, this crisis also shall pass away.

Slack time, or to initiate prayers and altar call, 2 minutes.

KEYS TO EXCITING AND SATISFYING INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE

Lead Bible Reference: Genesis 2:20-25

Introduction

One of the three purposes of marriage is companionship. The others are procreation and to have our sexual instinct met in the healthy way. Intimacy is good for marriage. It is must be learnt very early in marriage and nurtured to grow stronger and stronger as the years role by. The strongest marriages are the ones in which husbands and wives are confidently and completely close and open to one another.

Women by nature desire intimacy more than men. To them it is the essence of marriage. It makes feel them very secure in marriage. Every man must know and appreciate this.

We shall look at this subject under the following sub-titles:

1. What is intimacy
2. Types of intimacy
3. The importance of intimacies
4. Hindrances to intimacies in marriage.
5. Keys to intimacies in marriage
6. Maturing and growing intimacies in marriage

What is intimacy?

Intimacy suggests-

1. Very close relationship and togetherness
2. Close friendship
3. Deep connectedness
4. Sticking or Cleaving to one another
5. Bonding

Types of intimacy

There are three types of intimacies in marriage-

1. Physical intimacy
2. Sexual intimacy
3. Emotional intimacy

Emotional intimacy

This is the greatest of the three. It means closeness and strong connectedness in mind and soul. Emotional connectedness is greater than physical and sexual connectedness. Emotional intimacy promotes and enhances the quality of physical and sexual intimacy.

Emotional intimacy is characterized by the followings:

1. Unreserved freedom of expression of feelings and wants.
2. Faith in one another and deep soul connection.

It is your greatest asset as a couple.

1. It contributes in no small measure to: marital peace, strength and stability.
2. It makes communication easy and dynamic.
3. It promotes physical, mental, spiritual and financial health.
4. It promotes physical, mental, spiritual and financial prosperity.
5. It promotes long life.
6. It makes sex life of couples great and fulfilling by promoting sexual understanding, sexual adjustment, sexual adventures and harmony.
7. It is often easily sensed by the children and it impacts their lives positively. It must be pointed out that bottling up of feelings and wants is gravely damaging or destructive to marriage.

Why many people find it difficult to achieving emotional intimacy

Emotional openness and intimacy is more difficult to achieve than physical or sexual openness and intimacy. It requires greater sense of security than is needed in sexual intimacy. Emotional openness and intimacy is often difficult to achieve for the following reasons:

1. Fears- of rejection, denial, causing disturbance, getting punished, getting exposed and ridiculed later if the other person gets offended.
2. Past unpleasant experience with emotional openness and intimacy.
3. Habitual sense of insecurity.
4. Lack of trust which could be due to many causes.

How to develop emotional intimacy

Every effort you put in to develop emotional intimacy is worth it as the benefits enunciated above show. Such efforts should be directed in the following directions-

1. Display of love in form of respect, patience, understanding, gentleness and having listening ears in dealing with one another on daily basis.
2. Frankly discuss and agree to be open to one another and give each other freedom of expression.
3. Always encourage your spouse to express himself or herself. Every time your spouse tries to express himself/herself, show appreciation and say something like '*thank you for bringing this up, it is well appreciated. It will help me a lot to know how to do things better or understand you more.*' Do this first before any comment. Your comment if it is going to be negative should be postponed for deeper reflection. Don't cut in, gag, damn or condemn. This will encourage both of you to be naked and not ashamed.
4. Regular assurance of love as we did in courtship.
5. Sharing the values and interests of one another helps to connect.

6. Touch one another a lot.

Sexual intimacy

As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times, and always be enraptured with her love. Proverbs 5:19

His mouth is most sweet. Yes he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved. And this is my friend O daughters of Jerusalem. Songs of Solomon 5:18

The importance, the hindrances and the keys

Sexual intimacy is a state of openness and freedom with one another in sexual matters.

It must be stated here that you have no private part when it comes to physical sexual intimacy in marriage as the bible says in 1 Corinthians 7:4

“The wife does not have authority over her own body but the husband does And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body but the wife does.”

Sexual intimacy is characterized by-

1. Wholehearted commitment to one another sexually,
2. Freedom to express and discuss sexual desires and expectations,
3. Freedom to embark on adventures in sexual relationship and
4. Strong will to please and satisfy one another sexually.
5. Learning about sex at every stage of marriage with the mind of satisfying one another deeply.

Importance of Sexual intimacy

Sexual intimacy makes it possible for couples to derive all the emotional and health benefits of sex. It also turns sex to a strong bonding energy for couples. Sex does not make marriage happy but when there are unmet sexual needs the marriage will not be happy.

Hindrances to sexual intimacy

1. Over commitment outside the home- to work or social engagements
2. Over commitment to social media techs.
3. Inappropriate environment
4. Constant fatigue
5. Ill health
6. Fear of getting pregnant
7. Extra marital affairs
8. Fear of contact diseases
9. Mistrust
10. Frequent misunderstanding
11. Unresolved conflicts
12. Offensive breath (mouth odour)
13. Offensive body odour
14. Communication ineptitude
15. Taboos about sex.

Keys to achieving sexual intimacy

1. Respect one another.
2. Care for one another.
3. Be faithful to one another.
4. Trust one another.
5. See sex in marriage as a duty and play your part well.
6. Do away with unbiblical sexual inhibitions.
7. Have sex regularly
8. Think about a timetable and respect the timetable.
9. Study and understand the sexuality of one another.
10. Discuss your sex life frequently. Talk about sessions you relish. Lovingly talk about your expectations.
11. Try to adjust to one another
12. Touch one another a lot.

Physical intimacy in marriage

Physical intimacy in marriage is finding time and arranging your life in such ways that promote physical interactions and being in the presence of one another.

Promoting and developing physical intimacy

1. Sleep together
2. Bath together.
3. Prayer together.
4. Play together.
5. Go out on dates.
6. Retreat together
7. Touch a lot.

Call everyday possibly at the same time if you are away from