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WHY GOD CREATED SEX

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SALONGO SSENTABA RONALD

WHY GOD CREATED SEX

Sex in christian and theological percepective

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to our theological class students particularly miss Zalwango Erinah and Mr. Kityo Jacob who have been close to the Authors.
We also dedicate this book to all fellow soldiers and fighters in the body of Christ in all areas of the world especially the true teachers of the word, May the Holy Spirit tirelessly continue to use you and reveal Himself to you.

I dedicate this book also to my beloved mother, Georgina Mwebe, I love you mum.

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Special thanks to my co-writer and lecturer in theology Dr. Nathan Wakhungu for the theological perspectives he employed in this book.
Acknowledgment goes specifically to our wives Dr. Jennifer and Josephine kirabo Nalongo for the family support. Kindly enjoy the book as it speaks to your heart.

Ap. Salongo Ssentaba Ronald
Dr. Wakhungu Nathan

ABSTRACT

Sex and sexology is one of the exciting concepts that capture people of all ages of all ages, the young, youth, adults and elders; to our surprise, the church or entire religious institutions are very shy in the teaching and preaching on these topics. Most of the challenges facing families and the high rate of "chucking", separation, and divorce in love relationship.

Surprisingly in African society there were systems and structures that passed on this information notably the "SENGAS" and "KOJJAS" who were entirely dedicated to grooming of young people towards manage. This explains why the concept of virginity was very strong institutions would even reward such teachers with goats and chicken for grooming youths. Today there is what is called "KUTOMERA" where girls or boys bumps into each other, test each other and consequences that follow are either positive or negative. The scriptures reveal the original mind of God, the purpose of sex and sexology. This book will guide us and level us to the right biblical teaching.

We welcome you into this body of knowledge that once acquainted with it, you pass it to the neighbor.

You should watch out for the next publication which will focus mainly on sexuality and health

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Nathan Wakhungu is born in butiru manafwa district, married to Dr. Jennifer with four children namely Daniel, Leviticus, May and Joshua. Dr. Nathan is seasoned lecturer of theology and Education for over 20 years. He has research and published numerous books like church and prostitution, social behavior and Academic performance, legal aspects in the church, the contribution of the Salvation Army to the spiritual growth in Christianity and other universities UCU, KIU, and KU.

Apostle Salongo Ssentaba Ronald Robinson Mwebe is born in lwamaggwa Rakai District, a church pastor of Kingdom intercessors Ministries in serinya Wakiso, who for long term has pastored youths and organized several youth conversions in different Pentecostal churches. Married to one Josephine kirabo Nalongo with 3 beautiful daughters, Faith Angel Ssentaba, and the twins Easter power Ssentaba & Easter Pearl Ssentaba. Ronald is a teacher of the word of God when God clearly called him to rise up through Hosea 4:6 and now pursuing bachelors in theology yet a philosopher and new Author of Christian books, I am glad this is my first publication. Glory be to God.

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Introduction.

This book is intended to introduce the concept of sex and sexology which was the original mind of God and has captured the center stage of humanity.

It is intended to help both the young and the old, to understand the principles and mind of God. Sex was a special tool that God intended to use for pro creation and to bring happiness and joy in marriage relationships. Unfortunately the devil has also distorted Gods mind among human beings and today it's the source of misery and frustrations both among the young and the old.

You are therefore invited to carefully read study and analyze this book with the hope that at the end of it all you will be in position to help not only yourself but a million others outside there.

Sex education helps people gain the information, skills and motivation to make healthy decisions about sex and sexuality. (According to planned parenthood.org). sex education is high quality teaching and learning about a broad variety of topics related to sex and sexuality, exploring values and beliefs about those topics and gaining the skills that are needed to navigate relationships and manage one's own sexual health.

Chapter one:

Gods purpose of creating sex.

Sex by definition may mean either of the two major forms of individuals that occur in many species and that is distinguished respectively as female or male especially on the basis of their reproductive organs and structures.

It also be the sum of the structural, functional, and sometimes behavioral characteristics of organisms that distinguish males and females Doctors can alter the physical characteristics of sex, but bodily sex does not determine gender. — Dinitia Smith

The gift of sex is so holy, and so Sacred that God deemed it necessary to immediately proclaim the boundaries in which sex may be enjoyed, and its ultimate purpose of procreating the human race. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Genesis 2:24.

Few understand the purpose of sex. They are told that sex is an evolutionary accident. Therefore, they assume that *anything goes* as long as it occurs between consent-

ing adults. But that approach is naive. It is an unsubstantiated assumption that avoids candidly addressing the question of where sex and marriage came from.

A whole book (the Song of Solomon) celebrates the sensuality of erotic love. The Bible reflects exactly the attitude you would expect from an inventor writing about his invention. God, better than anyone else, appreciates what his invention means. He understands how it works and knows exactly what it's good for. He tells us how to use it—and how not to.

So what is God's view of sex? Simple: Sex is wonderful within marriage. Outside of marriage, it's an offense to the inventor.

The simple and often overlooked answer is that *God reveals that He created both sex and marriage.* His reasons for doing so are nothing short of wonderful. Ignorance of God's purpose for sex has brought about enormous problems.

'We live in a world saturated with sex. But are we missing an unrealized dimension when it comes to sex and marriage? When and how did sex originate—and why?'

How would you describe our age? Sociologists have used various labels to define the mood or mentality of the world we live in. For example, some say that an "age of anxiety" followed World War II. That era was followed by an "age of melancholy." More recently we hear terms such as the "computer age" or the "information age."

If we define an era by what people have most on their minds, the most accurate description of our time is the age of *sex*. None of us can remember a time when sex has been more openly flaunted with so many people obviously obsessed with the subject.

Sexual awareness has always existed. It is natural in the human mind. But today it is incessantly stimulated by sex-saturated news and entertainment media. Sexual content is not only blatantly displayed, but objects that have no sexuality are labeled as sexy-from cars to computers and beverages to body lotions.

Is this the way we should treat sexuality?

We're in a kind of sexual wilderness, lacking right directions and guidelines. Sadly, this situation has cost societies dearly in many major ways-in financial losses, health crises, marriage and family breakdowns and a lack of sexual fulfillment and happiness.

Few understand the purpose of sex. They are told that sex is an evolutionary accident. Therefore, they assume that *anything goes* as long as it occurs between consenting adults. But that approach is naive. It is an unsubstantiated assumption that avoids candidly addressing the question of where sex and marriage came from.

The simple and often overlooked answer is that *God reveals that He created both sex and marriage.* His reasons for doing so are nothing short of wonderful.

Ignorance of God's purpose for sex has brought about enormous problems.

i. Why did God create sex and marriage?

Let's consider the reasons.

1. **Sex is pleasure-filled.**

The first thing we note is that sex is between a man and a woman. No other combination is acceptable –man shall hold fast to his wife. There can be no mistaking this –there was only Adam and Eve when God gave this command –man and woman. Not two men, not two women, not with any other creature and not even alone –man shall hold fast to his wife. God's biblical law is for sexual intercourse between a man and a woman. God created two perfect human beings –one male and one female –created to perfectly fit together in the act of sexual intercourse for the purpose of their **joint enjoyment and procreation of the human race.** There can be no "fitting" together between two males or two females for their mutual enjoyment. There can be no procreation. "Male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27), "be fruitful and multiply" Gen. 1:28

2. **Part of God's plan.**

Sex takes place within the covenant of marriage only. A man "shall hold fast to his wife". A man shall devote himself to his wife –one wife only, and no adulterous

adventures and no sex outside of marriage. Though God created our sexuality and ordained sexual relations between married men and women to populate the earth, this was only the *first* part of God's ultimate vision for humanity. God desires to fill the earth with human beings who can eventually *enter His own spirit family.* The physical human family, brought about through marriage, is a *model* of God's spirit-composed family of the future. God designed human reproduction through sex as a means to populate the earth. But His eventual intent is to bring as many of the billions who have been born-those who will repent-into His family as spiritual children. In a sense He, too, is reproducing Himself. Therefore, we can see that reproduction of human beings has two purposes-to give physical life now to our posterity and to provide the potential for many children of God to receive eternal spirit life.

3. Showing love in marriage.

God created a *continuing* sexual interest and sexual appeal in human beings. This in itself is a healthy trait of the human mind and is triggered by hormones that God designed the body to produce. But why? God created this sustained interest in sex as a means for men and women to *express love in marriage.* God designed the male and female bodies to provide pleasure in marriage. Regrettably, one of the tragic results of distorted religious views stipulating that sex was given solely for reproduction was that it often caused enormous guilt in married cou-

ples who engaged in sexual behavior as an expression of their love for each other, as God intended.

That sex is a means of expressing love is made plain in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for her, that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies … For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Ephesians 5:25-31). What does Paul say is the purpose of marriage and of becoming one flesh through sex? The purpose is *love.*

Many are not aware that marriage should be a relationship built on love. One thing many people do not realize is that the relationship between a husband and wife should provide a mirror image of the loving relationship between Christ and His Church. After speaking of a man and his wife becoming one flesh in Ephesians 5:31, Paul said, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning *Christ and the church"* (verse 32). In the physical realm a man and woman become one flesh in marriage. In a Christian's relationship with Christ, he or she becomes spiritually "joined to the Lord [and] is one spirit with Him" (1 Corinthians 6:17). The genuinely loving "one flesh" relationship of marriage parallels the close "one spirit" relationship we are to have with Christ.

4. **Sex seals a marriage and affirms us as relation-**

al beings.

When Adam first views Eve in Genesis 2, he exclaims, "This at least is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man." Then the narrator says, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." Sure enough, Adam celebrates, "This is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh." The narrator then tells us they shall become one flesh. Lest there be any doubt that the text is talking about sex, a later biblical author, Paul, in forbidding sex with a prostitute says, "Do you know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is written, "The two will become one flesh."

What happens in sexual intercourse? Two bodies graphically become one, as one goes inside another. This both seals the marriage and it affirms us as relational beings. We were created to be in relationship with another in the most intimate way. Throughout the Old Testament, what actually seals the marriage is their act of sexual union. For instance: "Then Isaac brought Rebekah into the tent of Sarah his mother and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her."(Gen 24:67)

5. **Sex constitutes a family.**

Sex constitutes a family. I'm not talking about procreations and kids here. I'm talking about the couple them-

selves. Remember how Adam responds to the woman: "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." (Gen 2:23) This was a Hebrew idiom for saying, "This is my family. This is a person to whom I am, as it were, biologically united." So a man leaves the biological family of his birth, and holds fast or cleaves to a "new creation" biological family. Remember how I spoke of the power of sex, and of how it impacts us at such a deep level. Why is that? Because it constitutes a family. It creates family ties. What happens when you mix flour, water, and yeast, and then heat it? You get bread. What happens when you mix sex and a public commitment? You get a family: a kind of new blood relation.

What happens when I take sex, and I divorce it from lifelong public commitment? Maybe I place it in a pre-marital relationship, or I take it outside of my marriage? If I do this, I will make a mess. Why? Because I'm using the ingredients for a family and so making all kinds of indescribable connections and bonds. I'm drawing in my vulnerabilities and my inner-self and handing them to you, and asking you to be trustworthy with them, and I'm doing the same for you. What hurt, brokenness, and loss we bring into our lives by bringing sex outside the boundaries that God has created for it. It's not that those boundaries are arbitrary. It's that sex is so powerful. It creates bonds. It creates family. It relies upon exposure, vulnerability, and trust. It seeks a protected space so that is can fully flower. The biological act of sex transcends

biology.

6. **Sex shadows something greater.**

At one point in his ministry, Jesus observes that "when people rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage." (Matt 22:30) It seems there is no marriage or sex in heaven. What?! Why not? The apostle Paul gives us a hint when he commands husbands to "love your wives as Christ love the church, and gave himself up for her." marriage and sex are not the ultimate reality to which Christ's love for the church points. It's the other way around: marriage and sex are just the symbol, the road signs, the shadow. What is a shadow? It is a two-dimensional wispy reality, pointing to a three-dimensional substance. And if sex is the two-dimensional shadow, what must Christ's loving embrace of the church be like! Does this diminish marriage or sex? No, sex is the pleasure-producing, powerful force that I've said it is. I'm just saying that Christ's love for his people is that much greater.

Jesus and Paul were single. They never married or had sex. Yet they were surely complete persons. You don't finally need sex to be a complete person, because, for as powerful and as deep into our soul as sex goes, it doesn't go all the way down. It simply points to a deeper, greater union and completion. Which brings us to a fifth point…

7. **Sex anticipates the pleasure of heaven and the intimate knowledge of God. It provides a lan-**

guage for understanding union with Christ. A Bible scholar named D. A. Carson writes, "It is as if the only pleasure and intimacy in this life that comes close to anticipating the pleasure of the church and her Lord being perfectly united on the last day is the sexual union of a good marriage" (Love in Hard Places, 191). A pastor-scholar named similar John Piper writes, "God created us with sexual passion so that there would be language to describe what it means to cleave to him in love and what it means to turn away from him to others"; and again, "God made us powerfully sexual so that he would be more deeply knowable. We were given the power to know each other sexually so that we might have some hint of what it will be like to know Christ supremely" (Sex and the Supremacy of Christ, 28, 30).

Why do you think Christians are always talking about Jesus, and the love of Christ? Do you think they are just brainwashed? Really? Could it be that they've actually begun to experience a love better than anything in this world? Could it be that they've begun to experience a truth so deep and an embrace so profound that they are even willing to let it define their sexuality?

8. **A Christian view of sex embodies an ethic and heart of forgiveness amidst brokenness and shame, just like the reality to which it points.**

Let's go back to Genesis 1: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." Why weren't Adam and Eve ashamed? Is it because they were beautiful and had perfect bodies? They may have been beautiful, but even if you're beautiful, you're not safe from the criticisms of the scoffer, the selfish, the angry. No, they were unashamed because there was no sin in the world. Genesis 3 confirms this: they disobeyed God's Word, and then they saw that they were naked, and they try to hide behind trees and with covering of leaves. There's a very real sense in which we can say we spend our entire lives trying to cover our nakedness and our shame. I mean that both literally and symbolically. How do you feel about the idea of standing physically naked before another person?

More than that, how do you feel about standing before all humanity and God himself on the day of Judgment—completely undressed emotionally and spiritually, with all your deeds and desires and ambitions completely exposed? We try to cover ourselves with fashion, with intelligence, with hard work, with good deeds, with boasts of sexual prowess and size and working out so that we have good bodies. In all this we're looking to cover our shame and justify ourselves. But nothing finally works. Sex, I said, is a shadow. The substance is Christ's loving embrace. It's also true that nakedness is only a shadow.

The substance is sin and the shame that follows sin. How do you cover your sin and shame?

That's why Jesus came to die on the cross: to pay the penalty we deserve and to cover over our sin and shame. If we turn away from our sin and accept his covering, we can come out from behind the tree, take off the leaves, and say, "Here I am world. I'm a sinner. Say what you will about me. Christ has loved me. Christ has forgiven me, and embraced me. My satisfaction, my justification, my worth, is in that." So now, there's a sense in which my own Christian marriage pictures this. My wife, I assure you, does not behold a perfect body when she's looking at me. And with every passing year it fades. And yet, she embraces me completely, and there is no shame. Neither of us has to justify ourselves, or prove ourselves. Instead, our forgiving, overlooking love deepens and grows with every passing year, even as our physically bodies fade.

i. Traditional Values Associated with African Marriages

When we talk of values we refer to interest, likes, preference, duties, moral, obligations, desires, wants, needs, aversions and attractions and many other modalities of selective orientation (William, 1968:283). Unlike mod-

ern society where sex is also for pleasure purposes, in ATS it was for pro creation. In most societies women once they got pregnant they stop having sexual relationships with their husbands. Even younger girls were never allowed to practice sex but such deviants were stoned to death or thrown from the cliff of the mountain.

However, the limits of value maybe conceived very broadly or quite narrowly, but the limits should never be arbitrarily set and their location ought to be justified in any particular case. A broad comprehensive conception of values has the advantage of calling attention to possible value elements in all behavior save the most rigidly instinctive or automatic. While a narrow definition may have the virtues of specificity and definiteness but may lead to errors if the excluded phenomena are not taken into account through concepts closely related to the idea of value (William, 1968:283)

In such an expanse of allowance therefore we would like to identify some values in the traditional African nature of marriage and see whether they can be of help in strengthening the lapses that are noticeable in marriages today. What is clear, before us is that we find the essentials of marriage in all cultures, namely a lifelong union of husband and wife for mutual support and progeny to continue the ancestral line and to promote the welfare of the tribe or clan (Moler, 1982:3).

That is why anything that deliberately goes towards the destruction or obstruction of human life is regarded as wicked and evil. Therefore, anybody who under normal conditions refuses to get married is committing a major offense in the eyes of the society and people will be against him. In all African societies everything possible is done to prepare people for marriage and to make them think in terms of marriage (Mbiti, 1969:104).

In some parts of Africa pare choose marriage partners for their children even before they are born. This is to make it absolutely sure that they do get someone to marry. Other parts the choice is made for the young people by their relatives, while another custom is to let the young people themselves find the person they wish to marry and then inform their parents or other relatives. The opportunities for them to do this are provided by social gatherings, dance and communal work and by their knowing other people in the neighborhood (Mbiti, 1969:107).

The obligation to get married is therefore the only means of human survival as far as the views of African peoples are concerned. For that reason, it is a religious obligation. It is as old as human society, through marriage and childbearing, human is preserved, propagated and perpetuated. Through them life is also deepened vertically and spread horizontally. Therefore, marriage and childbearing are the focus of life they are at the very center of human existence, just as man is at the very center of the universe (Mbiti, 1969:106) “The abundance of life is

the reason behind all forms of marriage and unions and this is why African religion sanctions many variations of unions. Even when these forms are situated within certain social economic context that is social prestige or the assurance of hands to work the fields (which motivations are always present, given the unity of life) they all serve to preserve and prolong life, to provide for ritual fecundity and physical procreation (Magesa, 1998:128).

Another attracting value, which is upheld most in African marriages, is creatively, depicted in kigatla proverb 'a pretty girl either steals or wets her bed'. They mean by this that physical beauty alone is not the most important thing to look for in a wife. Industry in physical work, a respectful demeanor towards elders and a generally good reputation as defined by the ethnic group are the most significant characteristic for both partners. These characteristics are assessed by the qualities of the parent themselves. Wealth on the part of the boy's parent is of course a factor in his favor but that is less important than personal character." (Magesa, 1998:114). However, with easy access to resources, families would not be expected to try to limit the number of children. Daughters did not share in the property of their father and were not differentially endowed at marriage. In fact, they attracted the bride wealth necessary for the marriages of their brothers. Girls were as important as boys and there is no evidence of any fertility 'stopping rule' or indeed of any tendency to prefer children of one sex (Goody, 1997:457).

Similarly, an aspect that is equally of significant value and rears it5 head continually in African marriages is the communal value of marriage. In marriage the family is the person's channel of integration into the clan and the wider society. Consequently, in marrying his wife. . .the man accepted the responsibilities towards another family and she likewise, this social and communitarian character of African marriage means that the two communities are bound so closely together through a marriage that certain condition such as a rift between the two communities can actually nullify a marriage between two persons. Enmity between the clans notwithstanding any amount of cordiality and love between the two individual can not only nullify a marriage but also make it impossible in the first place. The value of marriage is communal and the couple's consent has validity only in this communal social context (Magesa, 1998:113).

It could be argued that in this context today such marriage has no relevance because it pries on people's individuality but it should be remembered that the sacredness of the value attached to this union and the commitment which is made to one another deserves that the institution is protected and connected to the community. Marriage is not just an individual or the couple concerned business as noticed today it concerns all and is affected by all. For instance the traditional system in Africa required a high degree of cooperation between members of the same household (family) and lineage (or other wider grouping of kin or community) given the absence

of specialized services and of centralized welfare institutions, there was considerable dependence upon kith and kin, orphan hood, widowhood and divorce, while always personal tragedies (despite the assumptions of some European family historians and demographers) were not faced alone, even if there were in general few sources of welfare other than kin (Goody, 1997:458).

As a value of marriage this bilateral orientations and kinship affiliations are really essentials in seeing to the sustenance of the African marriage. Even among the matrilineal and matri local peoples, as for example among the Akan speaking Ashanti of Ivory coast and Ghana, or bakwaya of Tanzania, bilateral orientations remain a strong feature. In the study among the Ashanti, Meyer Fortes found that the basis of all social relationship is the bond between the mother and her child, between the father and the child exist only a bond of love as a father has no legal rights whatsoever over his children. Instead this is the prerogative of the mother's brother. Thus the Ashanti say your mother is your family, your father is not. Yet he is recognized as playing an indispensable role even in the kinship structure. Generally, he names his children after his own ancestors in an important religious function as noted above.

Furthermore, by the very fact of his paternity he is recognized to bequeath his personality or spirit to his children without whom they cannot thrive or succeed in life. He

takes pride in bringing up his children and in supervising their moral and civic training (Goody, 1997:458).

All these ensured that the survival of the marriage and the kinship structure in Africa depended on marriage. Without going into great details about these kinship and clan structures, it is important to say something about the relationship between marriage and kinship. What establishes clan relationship to begin with is consanguinity, which is considered to be primary and most important relationship in the social structure. It is recognized, however that consanguine relationship (affected through birth) are not possible without a final relationship, that is relationship affected through marriage. In the long run, marriage always establishes very strong bonds between the individual belonging to different families and clans particularly when children are born (Magesa, 1998:112).

The truth is marriage in the African sense conferred status and dignity, Analysis asserts that it conferred certain rights on the wife and corresponding duties on the husband and vice versa. The various rights that a man acquires after he has performed all the necessary customs (presentations) are divided into two classes. They are firstly, rights in *uxorial*, meaning rights in genetricism, which are the rights of a woman as a mother. This means that the man has to feed and protect the wife and children (Ayisi, 1997:8 – 9). These rights although they seemed obvious are supposed to be taken seriously for failure to perform this sacred function could lead to a loss of

the marriage and leads eventually to family breakup and shame.

This responsibility becomes grave in the sense that there are no complete breakups in our African marriages. As an institution divorce is widespread in Africa though it appears to have been less common among some patrilineal groups that incorporate wives into the husband linage However it is not clear that this term provides description, since wives (apart from slaves) always retain some ties with their natal families and lineages, which remains important for the children. These are the ties that Fortes refer to as complementary affiliation (Goody, 1997:459).

Indeed, from what we have underscored, we could safely conclude there is within the African marital systems the adequate properties of value to justify a proper marriage that will not only be fruitful but long lasting. But there is more to marriage apart from its rights and duties, fidelity and sexuality carries with it a whole gamut of responsibilities and expectations.

i. The Understanding of Sexuality in the Context of the African Marriage

We have tried to emphasize the sanctity of marriage as

experienced in the traditional setting. But in marriage the place of sexuality is paramount because it is geared towards procreation, however "in African societies sex is not used for biological purposes alone. It has also religious and social uses. For procreation and pleasure, sex plays an important and obvious role in any normal marriage and in any society of the world. There are African people among whom rituals are solemnly opened or concluded with actual or symbolic sexual intercourse between husband and wife or other officiating persons. This is like a solemn seal or signature in which sex is used in and as a 'sacrament' signifying inward spiritual values" (Mbiti, 1969:146).

This suggests that the purpose for sex and its use are clearly stated in African society and it is expected that sex will be limited to this arena. To ensure the sustenance of this 'deified arena' taboos are sounded and expressed out allowed. It does not give room to the situation we are faced with today where sexual licentiousness is promoted and adorned with pride. Infect sexual organs are considered pathway to lie in traditional societies. Mbiti strengthens this fact that sexual organs are the gates of life, for many African people the genitals and buttocks are the parts of the body must carefully be covered; their lack of covering constitutes 'nakedness' in the eyes of traditional Africans (Mbiti, 1969:146). A phenomenon that is worth preserving today considering the influx of media appeals to the discomfort of seeing our women and young girls almost go naked in the name of new

wave fashion.

Moreover, there was the procreative emphasis of sex in marriage itself which the social structures of traditional society, especially the family, community adequate made provision for. So, sexual deviation was indeed a threat to these structures. It became apparent that youth be trained for reproductive life in conformity to the structure through social initiation rites. Sexual morality was safeguarded by the structures of society, more than by individual personal responsibility. Sexual activity was the subject of much ritual symbolism. It was frequently dramatized in dances and arts, and was surrounded by many taboos, a typical example which was avoidance (Shorter, 1999:94).

Fornication, incest rape, seduction, homosexual relations, sleeping with a forbidden 'relative' or domestic animals, intimacy between relatives, children watching the genitals of the parents (in the wide usage of the term) all constituted sexual offences in a given community. Society deal variously with these offences and African people are very sensitive to any departure from the accepted norm concerning all aspects of sex. This is a fundamentally religious attitude, since any offence upsets the smooth relationships of the community. Which includes those who have already departed. For this reason, the offences must be followed by a ritual cleansing whether or not the offenders are physically punished, otherwise misfortunes may ensue (Shorter, 1999:95).

Be that as it may, virginity is held to be a good thing insofar as it is a promise of a harmonious marriage. If a girl is chaste before her wedding she will probably be faithful after it. Adultery is vicious because it not only steal's the wife fertility, but kill the marriage. The bride price does not buy a woman, but rather compensate her family for her fertility. In general, a man marries for life. Above all this applies to the first marriage; children cement the relationship, for their presence indicates that the contract has been fulfilled (Moler, 1982:4). I have continually contended that African traditional marriage system contained the proper ingredient to a healthy marriage. Africans understood marriage and sexuality and in their own rite, and had a way of upholding the richness of the value of marriage. But the 'husks' even though might not be 'foreign' to the African were not the prime motif for marriage, invariably one can conclude that the African marriage were stable.

The 'husks', which is the exteriors in marriage, have been referred to severally. This was not the objective of marriage, meaning wealth, beauty, and other attributes were not solely the reasons for marriages, even though it was considered. Most African marriage were hinged on the centrality of life, its preservation and propagation, such was their understanding and worldview, a heritage that need to be recovered if we have 'address the wave of destructions that abound in marriage and have affected society in recent time.

Chapter 2.

The Doctrine of Marriage to the Church Today.

Marriage is defined by the vow exchanged by a couple. This essence of marriage is seen whether the definition comes through philosophy, theology, sociology, or law.

Marriage as an institution was God created and God ordained in Adam and Eve making them husband and wife permanently until their departure from mortal life. Within it, He sealed their relationship by allowing them to be naked (sex and sexuality) before each other without shame. Gen 1:28 gen 2:21-25. In the New Testament Jesus teaches about the value of sex and marriage by emphasizing the oneness (Matthew 19:5). This was intended to emphasize the sacredness and holiness in sex and

marriage. St Paul in 1corinthians 7:5 emphasized that no one should deny the other unless it be with consent time for a time that you may give time for prayer and fasting.

Basing on the above scriptures, the church therefore emphasized the importance of marriage by inscribing the literally scripture based vows. The vow conveys a commitment to be open, honest and flexible in growing together. The couple agrees to "live together in the covenant of marriage" (*Book of Common Prayer, pg. 424*) through all possible events ("***for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death"; BCP, pg. 427***). The seriousness of this is not only conveyed by fidelity until death, but also by the phrase "This is my solemn vow" The depth of the commitment conveyed by the vow is one that requires adequate thought, the ceremony noting, "Therefore, marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God."

i. Facts about marriage

Marriage is the intimate, exclusive, indissoluble communion of life and love entered by man and woman at the design of the Creator for the purpose of their own

good and the procreation and education of children; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.

Intimate communion of life and love: Marriage is the closest and most intimate of human friendships. It involves the sharing of the whole of a person's life with his/her spouse. Marriage calls for a mutual self-surrender so intimate and complete that spouses – without losing their individuality – become "one," not only in body, but in soul.

Exclusive communion of life and love: As a mutual gift of two persons to each other, this intimate union excludes such union with anyone else. It demands the total fidelity of the spouses. This exclusivity is essential for the good of the couple's children as well.

Indissoluble communion of life and love: Husband and wife are not joined by passing emotion or mere erotic inclination which, selfishly pursued, fades quickly away. They are joined in authentic conjugal love by the firm and irrevocable act of their own will. Once their mutual consent has been consummated by genital intercourse, an unbreakable bond is established between the spouses. For the baptized, this bond is sealed by the Holy Spirit and becomes absolutely indissoluble. Thus, the Church does not so much teach that divorce is wrong, but that divorce is impossible, regardless of its civil implications.

Entered by man and woman: The complementarity of the sexes is essential to marriage. There is such widespread confusion today about the nature of marriage that some would wish to extend a legal "right" to marry to

two persons of the same sex. The very nature of marriage makes such a proposition impossible.

At the design of the Creator: God is the author of marriage. He inscribed the call to marriage in our very being by creating us as male and female. Marriage is governed by his laws, faithfully transmitted by his Bride, the Church. For marriage to be what it is, it must conform to these laws. Man, therefore, is not free to change the meaning and purposes of marriage.

For the purpose of their own good: "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen 2:18). Conversely, it's for their own good, for their benefit, enrichment, and ultimately their salvation, that a man and woman join their lives in marriage. Marriage is the most basic expression of the vocation to love that all men and women have as persons made in God's image.

Covenant: While marriage involves a legal contract, this must be subordinate to the spousal covenant which provides a stronger, more sacred framework for marriage. A covenant goes beyond the minimum rights and responsibilities guaranteed by a contract. A covenant calls the spouses to share in the free total, faithful, and fruitful love of God. For it is God who, in the image of his own Covenant with his people, joins the spouses in a more binding and sacred way than any human contract.

ii. The Centrality of Marriage in God's Plan

"Sacred Scripture begins with the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God and concludes

with a vision of the 'wedding feast of the Lamb.' Scripture speaks throughout of marriage and its 'mystery,' it's institution and the meaning God has given it, its origin and its end, ...the difficulties arising from sin, and its renewal 'in the Lord.'" Throughout the Old Testament, God's love for his people is described as the love of a husband for his bride. In the New Testament, Christ embodies this love. He comes as the Heavenly Bridegroom to unite himself indissolubly to his Bride, the Church.

Pope John Paul II goes so far as to say that we cannot understand the Christian mystery unless we keep in mind the "great mystery" involved in the creation of man as male and female and the vocation of both to conjugal love. According to the analogy, God's eternal plan is to "marry" us (see Hos 2:19). He wanted this eternal plan to be so present to us that he stamped an image of it in our very being by creating us male and female and calling us to marriage.

iii. The Purposes of Marriage

What are those purposes? The ceremony notes, "The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord." (BCP, pg. 423) So, there are three purposes:

- **joy, comfort, and children**. The first two are

clearly primary, as it notes children may not necessarily be possible. A further understanding of what brings joy and comfort is added in the prayers for the couple during the ceremony, hoping that husband and wife can be "a strength in need, a counselor in perplexity, a comfort in sorrow, and a companion in joy." To allow someone to be a strength in need" implies trust, and to be "a counselor in perplexity" implies openness and flexibility to the loving advice from the other.

Scriptural support

For this rests upon a few key texts,

1. Genesis 2:18: God says that "it is not good for man to be alone". Verse 23: The man is so happy, noting, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh". C, verse 24: The ultimate goal is intimacy: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."

2. Song of Songs: The core of this text goes back to the early days of the reign of Solomon, but its significance is describing the tender love between Yahweh and his people in the metaphor of the love between a man and a woman. It describes true devotion in contrast to the fertility rites in pagan temples mimicking the actions of Baal and Astarte.

3. Matthew: a.5:27-30: Now we hear of a higher standard, where the bond between husband and wife is so strong, so complete, that to even lust after another wom-

an is considered adultery.b.19:1-11: Therefore, divorce cannot be considered "for any reason whatever" as in the days of Moses when the hearts of men were "hard", the only reason being "marital unfaithfulness".

4. The fourth purpose of marriage is a sacramental one, namely, that marriage "signifies touts the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church" (BCP, pg. 423). When you think about it, the Church, the Body of Christ, needs Christ to be "a strength in need" and "a counselor in perplexity". And, the more years that process has been evolving, the more love is felt by the Church for Christ, and more love between a husband and wife. The more a couple love each other, the clearer is their vision of the love God has for them. To gaze into the eyes of your spouse is to gaze into the eyes of God. To feel the love of your spouse is to feel the love of Christ for you.

Therefore, the theology of marriage is not saying that reflection upon the love of a couple gives the observer an intellectual awareness of God, but rather that it gives a more complete awareness of God: intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. Again, scripture speaks of this window into the understanding of God and his love for us, the primary text being Ephesians 5: a.25-27: Evolution of Self through Marriage:

5. **The Need for Support**: Those and other transition points serve as challenges that can either move a couple closer together or break them apart. Just as no man is an island, so too no couple can function well in a vacuum, the wedding ceremony itself asking the family and friends present, "Will all of you witnessing these promises do all in your power to uphold these two persons

in their marriage?" (BCP, pg. 425) As our society has weakened the ties of extended families, and as it has focused in communities upon the individual family instead of the communal family, essentially a "me" instead of "we" orientation, then the couple of today are often left more alone than they should be. Is it any wonder then that the divorce rate has skyrocketed?

Chapter 3

MATRIMONY AS AN INSTITUTION

1.1. *The Human and Divine Views of Matrimony*

The matrimonial pact is founded upon preexistent and permanent structures that constitute the difference between man and woman and is "instituted" by the spouses themselves, even though in its concrete form it is very subject to different historical and cultural changes as well as, in a certain sense, to the particular way in which the marriage is carried out by the spouses. In this, marriage shows itself to be an institution of the Creator himself, both from the point of view of mutual help in conjugal love and fidelity as well as through the rearing of children born in marriage within the heart of the family community.

1.2. *Marriage in Christ*

As is easily shown in the New Testament, Jesus confirmed this institution which existed "from the very beginning", and cured it of its previous defects (Mk 10:2-9, 10-12) by restoring all its dignity and its original requirements. He sanctified this state of life (*GS* 48, 2) by including it within the mystery of love, which unites him as Redeemer to his Church. This is the reason why the task of regulating Christian marriage (1 Cor 7:10f.) has been entrusted to the Church.

1.3. *The Apostles*

The Epistles of the New Testament say that marriage should be honored in every way (Heb 13:4) and, in response to certain attacks, they present it as a good work of the Creator (1 Tim 4:1-5). Rather, they exalt matrimony among the faithful because it is included in the mystery of Covenant and love that unites Christ and the Church (Eph 5:22-23; *GS* 48, 2).

They ask, therefore, that marriage be contracted "in the Lord" (1 Cor 7:39) and that matrimonial life be lived in accordance with the dignity of a new creature "(2 Cor 5:17), "in Christ" (Eph 5:21-33), putting Christians on guard against the pagans' habits (1 Cor 6:12-20; cf. 6:9-10). On the basis of a "right deriving from faith" and in their desire to assure its permanence, the Churches of apostolic times formulated certain moral orientations (Col 3:18ff; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7) and juridical dispositions

that would help people live matrimony "according to the Faith" in different human situations and conditions.

1.4. *The First Centuries*

During the first centuries of Church history, Christians contracted marriage "like other men" (*Ad Diognetum* 5, 6) with the father of the family presiding, and only with domestic rites and gestures, as, for example, uniting hands. Still they didn't lose sight of the "extraordinary and truly paradoxical laws of their spiritual society" (ibid. 5, 4): they eliminated from the home liturgies every trace of pagan cult. They placed special importance on the procreation and education of offspring (ibid., 5, 6), they accepted the bishop's vigilance over matrimony (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Polycarpum* 5, 2), they showed in their matrimony a special submission to God and a relationship with their Faith (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 4, 20), and sometimes at the marriage rite they enjoyed the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice and a special blessing (Tertullian, *Ad uxorem* 2, 9).

1.5. *The Eastern Traditions*

From very ancient times in the Eastern Churches the shepherds of the Church themselves took an active part in the celebration of marriages in the place of the fathers of the family or even along with them. This change was not the result of a usurpation but was brought about to answer the requests made by the family and with the approval of civil authority. Because of this evolution, the

ceremonies formerly carried out within the family were little by little included within liturgical rites. As time passed the idea took shape that the ministers of the rite of the "mystery" of matrimony were not only the couple alone but also the shepherd of the Church.

1.6. *The Western Traditions*

In the Western Churches the problem of what element constituted marriage from a juridical point of view arose with the encounter between the Christian vision of matrimony and Roman law. This was resolved by considering the consent of the spouses as the only constitutive element. The fact that, up until the time of the Council of Trent, clandestine marriages were considered valid is due to this decision. Still, the blessing of the priest and his presence as witness of the Church, as well as some liturgical rites, had already been encouraged by the Church for a long time. With the decree *Tametsi*, the presence of the pastor and witnesses became the ordinary canonical form of marriage necessary for validity.

1.7. *The New Churches*

According to the desires of Vatican Council II and the new rite for celebrating matrimony, it is to be hoped that new liturgical and juridical norms will be developed, under the guidance of ecclesial authority, among peoples who have recently come to the Gospel, to harmonize the

reality of Christian marriage with the authentic values of these peoples' own traditions. This diversity of norms, due to the plurality of cultures, is compatible with basic unity and therefore does not go beyond the limits of legitimate pluralism. The Christian and ecclesial character of the union and of the mutual donation of the spouses can, in fact, be expressed in different ways, under the influence of the baptism that they have received and through the presence of witnesses, among whom the "competent priest" occupies the prime post. Today various canonical adaptations of these various elements may seem to be opportune.

1.8. *Canonical Adaptations*

In the reform of canon law there should be a global view of matrimony according to its various personal and social dimensions. The Church must be aware that juridical ordinances must serve to help and develop conditions that are always more attentive to the human values of matrimony. Nevertheless, it must not be thought that such adaptations can bear on the total reality of matrimony.

1.9. *Personalistic View of the Institution*

"The beginning, the subject and goal of all social institutions, is and must be the human person, which for its part and by its very nature stands completely in need of so-

cial life" (*GS* 25). As an "intimate partnership of life and conjugal love" (*GS* 48), matrimony is a suitable place and way to improve the welfare of persons in line with their vocation. Therefore, marriage can never be thought of as a way of sacrificing persons to some common good extrinsic to themselves, since the common good is the sum of "those conditions of social life that allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily" (*GS* 26).

i. CREATION AND REDEMPTION

✓ *Marriage as Willed by God*

Since all things were created in Christ, through Christ and in view of Christ, marriage as a true institution of the Creator becomes a figure of the mystery of union of Christ, the groom, with the Church, the Bride, and, in a certain way, is directed toward this mystery. Marriage celebrated between two baptized persons has been elevated to the dignity of a real sacrament that is, signifying and participating in the spousal love of Christ and the Church.

✓ *The Inseparability of Christ's Actions*

Between two baptized persons, marriage as an institution willed by God the Creator cannot be separated from marriage the sacrament, because the sacramental nature of marriage between the baptized is not an accidental element that could be or could just as well not be, but is rather so tied into the essence of it as to be inseparable from it.

✓ *Every Marriage between Baptized Persons Must Be Sacramental*

Thus between baptized persons no other married state can exist really and truly that differs from that willed by Christ, in which the Christian man and woman, giving and accepting one another freely and with irrevocable personal consent as spouses, are radically removed from the "hardness of heart" of which Christ spoke (cf. Mt 19:8) and, through the sacrament, really and truly included within the mystery of marital union of Christ with his Church, thus being given the real possibility of living in perpetual love. As a consequence, the Church cannot in any way recognize that two baptized persons are living in a marital state equal to their dignity and their life as "new creatures in Christ" if they are not united by the sacrament of matrimony.

✓ *The "Legitimate" Marriage of Non-Christians*

The strength and the greatness of the grace of Christ are

extended to all people, even those beyond the Church, because of God's desire to save all men. They shape all human marital love and strengthen created nature as well as matrimony "as it was in the beginning". Men and women therefore who have not yet heard the Gospel messages are united by a human covenant in a legitimate marriage. This legitimate marriage is not without authentic goodness and values, which assure its stability. These goods, even though the spouses are not aware of it, come from God the Creator and are included, in a certain inchoative way, in the marital love that unites Christ with his Church.

✓ *Union of Christians Who Pay No Heed to the Requirements of Their Baptism*

It would thus be contradictory to say that Christians, baptized in the Church, might really and truly take a step backward [and be] content with a non-sacramental marital state. This would mean that they could be content with the "shadow" when Christ offers them the "reality" of his spousal love. Still we cannot exclude cases where the conscience of even some Christians is deformed by ignorance or invincible error. They come to believe sincerely that they are able to contract marriage without receiving the sacrament as to catholic.

In such a situation, on the one hand, they are unable to contract a valid sacramental marriage because they lack any faith and lack the intention of doing what the

Church wishes. On the other hand, they still have the natural right to contract marriage. In such circumstances they are capable of giving and accepting one another as spouses because they intend to contract an irrevocable commitment. This mutual and irrevocable self-giving creates a psychological relationship between them that by its internal structure is different from a transitory relationship.

Still this relationship, even if it resembles marriage, cannot in any way be recognized by the Church as a non-sacramental conjugal society. For the Church, no natural marriage separated from the sacrament exists for baptized persons, but only natural marriage elevated to the dignity of a sacrament.

- ✓ ***Progressive Marriages***

It is therefore wrong and very dangerous to introduce within the Christian community the practice of permitting the couple to celebrate successively various wedding ceremonies on different levels, even though they be connected, or to allow a priest or deacon to assist at or read prayers on the occasion of a non-sacramental marriage that baptized persons wish to celebrate.

- ✓ ***Civil Marriage***

In a pluralistic society, the public authority of the state can impose on the engaged a public ceremony through which they publicly profess their status as spouses. The

state can furthermore make laws that regulate in a precise and correct manner the civil effects deriving from marriage, as well as rights and duties regarding the family.

The Catholic faithful ought to be adequately instructed that these official formalities, commonly called civil marriage, do not constitute real matrimony for them, except in cases when—through dispensation from the canonical form or because of a very prolonged absence of a qualified Church witness—the civil ceremony itself can serve as an extraordinary canonical form for the celebration of the sacrament of matrimony (cf. canon 1098). For non-Christians and often even for non-Catholic Christians, this civil ceremony can have constitutive value both as legitimate marriage and as sacramental marriage.

4. *Pastoral Care of the Divorced Who Have Remarried*

While this illegitimate situation does not permit a life of full communion with the Church, still Christians who find themselves in this state are not excluded from the action of divine grace and from a link with the Church. They must not, therefore, be deprived of pastoral assistance (cf. Address of Pope Paul VI, 4 November 1977). They are not dispensed from the numerous obligations stemming from baptism. They ought to be concerned about the Christian education of their offspring.

The paths of Christian prayer, both public and private, penitence, and certain apostolic activities remain open to them. They must not be ignored but rather helped, like all other Christians who are trying, with the help of Christ s grace, to free themselves from sin.

5. *Combating the Causes of Divorce*

The need for a pastoral action to avoid the multiplication of divorces and of new civil marriages of the divorced seems ever more urgent. It is recommended that future spouses be given a living awareness of all their responsibilities as spouses and parents. The real meaning of matrimony must be ever more adequately presented as a covenant contracted "in the Lord" (1 Cor 7:39). In such a way Christians will be better disposed to observe the command of God and to witness to the union of Christ and the Church. And that will redound to the greater personal advantage of the spouses, their children, and society itself.

ii. INDISSOLUBILITY OF MARRIAGE

❖ ***The Principle***

The early Church's Tradition, based on the teaching of Christ and the apostles, affirms the indissolubility of marriage, even in cases of adultery. This principle ap-

plies despite certain texts that are hard to interpret and examples of indulgence—the extension and frequency of which are difficult to judge—toward persons in very difficult situations.

❖ *The Church's Doctrine*

The Council of Trent declared that the Church has not erred when it has taught and teaches, in accordance with the doctrine of the Gospel and the apostles, that the marriage bond cannot be broken through adultery. Nevertheless, because of historical doubts (opinions of Ambrosiaster, Catharinus, and Cajetan) and for some more-or-less ecumenical reasons, the Council limited itself to pronouncing an anathema against those who deny the Church's authority on this issue.

It cannot be said, then, that the Council had the intention of solemnly defining marriage s indissolubility as a truth of faith. Still, account must be taken of what Pius XI said in *Casti connubii*, referring to this canon: "If therefore the Church has not erred and does not err in teaching this, and consequently it is certain that the bond of marriage cannot be loosed even on account of the sin of adultery, it is evident that all the weaker excuses that can be, and are usually brought forward, are of no value whatsoever. And the objections brought against the marriage bond are easily answered" (cf. DS 1807).

❖ *Intrinsic Indissolubility*

Intrinsic indissolubility of matrimony can be considered under various aspects and grounded in various ways:

— ***From the point of view of the spouses.*** Their intimate conjugal union as a mutual donation of two persons, just as their very marital love itself and the welfare of the offspring, demands that indissoluble unity. From this is derived the spouses' moral duty to protect, maintain, and develop the marital covenant.

— ***From God's vantage point***. From the human act by which the spouses give and accept each other rises a bond, based on the will of God and written in nature as created, independent of human authority and removed from the sphere of power of the spouses, and thus intrinsically indissoluble.

— ***From a Christological perspective***. The final and deepest basis for the indissolubility of Christian matrimony lies in the fact that it is the image, sacrament, and witness of the indissoluble union between Christ and the Church that has been called the *bonum sacrament.* In this sense indissolubility becomes a moment of grace.

— ***From the social perspective***. Indissolubility is demanded by the institution of marriage itself. The spouses' personal decision comes to be accepted, protected, and reinforced by society itself, especially by the ecclesial community. This is for the good of the offspring and

for the common good. This is the juridical-ecclesial dimension of matrimony.

These various aspects are intimately tied together. The fidelity to which the spouses are held and which ought to be protected by society, especially by the ecclesial community, is demanded by God the Creator and by Christ who makes it possible through his grace.

❖ *Extrinsic Indissolubility and the Power of the Church over Marriages*

Hand in hand with the practice, the Church has elaborated a doctrine concerning its powers over marriages, clearly indicating its scope and limits. The Church acknowledges that it does not have any power to invalidate a sacramental marriage that is concluded and consummated.

For very serious reasons and with concern for the good of the Faith and the salvation of souls, all other marriages can be invalidated by competent Church authority or—according to another interpretation—can be declared self-invalidating. This doctrine is nothing more than an individual example of the theory, today more or less generally accepted by Christian theologians, on the evolution of Christian doctrine in the Church.

Neither is it to be excluded that the Church can further define the concepts of sacramentality and consummation by explaining them even better, so that the whole doc-

trine on the indissolubility of marriage can be put forward in a deeper and more precise presentation.

iii. Preparation for Marriage

To begin to reverse the trend towards divorce is to begin at the beginning, that is, to help couples to better prepare for marriage. This does not doubt the ability of couples to make wise decisions, but rather recognizes the need to help couples help themselves, to make them more aware of the process into which they are entering, and to give them better skills with which to grow.

Skills required for a successful marriage

Skills in communication, for if a couple doesn't continue to talk at depth about who they are and how they are facing continual challenges, then the creative vow that defines their covenant with each other begins to erode. How often have you heard a couple sadly stating that "we grew apart"? They grew apart because they were apart, not together talking.

Pay attention: Give the other your full attention. Sit relatively close to your fiancé / lover to model physically what you are attempting to achieve psychologically and spiritually, and maintain eye contact. Do not try and talk while watching television, playing computer games, or even cooking dinner.

OBSERVE THE NON-VERBAL: If the other cries, pouts, or looks away, ask why. Do not drone on and ig-

nore an obvious sign that something is wrong.

PARAPHRASE: After your spouse speaks, then summarize / paraphrase / give the essence of what they said. If you get it wrong, then have your spouse say it again, and you paraphrase it again, until your spouse says, "Yes, that's it". While this sounds like pouring glue all over the process of communication, it forces you to identify the core issue before responding, thereby avoiding the danger of addressing the all-too-obvious, but not central, surface issue.

DON'T INTERRUPT: If you are interrupting, then you are not listening. You are being defensive. Put aside you and listen to the other.

MIND READ: You can ask how someone is feeling, but you cannot tell them how they are feeling. Even if you are married for 100 years and are right 100% of the time, it is still an insult to tell your spouse how he or she is feeling.

NAME CALLING: While we no longer call each other "fatso" or "four eyes", we do "push each other's buttons"; meaning that we attack what is important to Other (such as one's career) to hurt their feelings and win the argument. But going for the jugular vein only destroys trust, and the purpose of communications not to win, but to be one.

POSTPONE FOR TOO LONG: Remember the old saying, "Don't go to bed mad"? Well, while we cannot

always do that, it is wise to express instead of suppress our feelings. Instead, many couples hold what is bothering them inside, only to explode in anger at a later point. To face what is bothering you when it is bothering you will make you nervous, but your anxiety will be your friend, helping you to carefully say what is on your mind instead of cutting someone off at the knees.

TIT FOR TAT: Arguments peppered with "Oh yeah, well you did this or that!" only confuse the couple as to what is really the key issue. Remember, your goal is empathy, to truly understand and feel what the other is really saying. Defensiveness will only blind you to the issue at hand, and throwing too many balls in the air will confuse both of you.

This is not an argument in a court of law where you are trying to stack the deck to win. The goal here is not to win, but to understand. If one of you wins, you both lose!

Good News for the World

History tells the tale of entire nations separating from the Church because of disputes over the nature and meaning of marriage. In the face of fierce persecution and resistance, right up to our own day, the Church stands firm in her teaching. Why is the Church so obstinate? Because marriage is the primordial sacrament of God's love. To diminish in any way, the nature and meaning of married love is to diminish the nature and meaning of God's love.

The Church's teaching on marriage can seem almost impossible to live. "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Mt 19:26). As we surrender our lives to the grace of redemption, it is truly possible to know the joy and freedom that come from living and loving according to our true dignity as men and women made in the image and likeness of God. It is truly possible for men and women, husbands and wives, to experience restoration of proper balance and mutual self-giving in their relationship.

This is the Good News of the Gospel. The Holy Spirit has been poured into our hearts (Rom 5:5). The Spirit of love makes the cross of Christ fruitful in our lives enabling us to live the full truth about marriage. The Church never ceases to proclaim this Good News for the salvation of every man and woman.

Chapter 4.

THE DEMON OF DIVORCE AND CASE OF REMARRIAGE

By definition, Divorce can be the judicial declaration dissolving a marriage in whole or in part, especially one that releases the marriage partners from all matrimonial obligations.

Or any formal separation of husband and wife according to established custom, total separation; disunion: The Bible tells us since the fall of mankind when Adam and Eve chose to believe and obey the serpent rather than God, we have all inherited a nature to sin. Any newlywed couple can confirm that sinful nature—in the life of their spouse. But what about in your nature and in mine? *"There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one"* (Romans 3:10-12 NASB).

There are four words listed in *The New Strong's Ex-*

panded Concordance of the Bible that mean dissolution of the marriage vows. The word in the book of Mark is Strong's #647, the Greek word *apostasion.* It is defined as "Separative. A defection. A standing off. Writing a bill of divorcement."

Jesus quotes the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark and adds further clarification: *"But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and the two shall become one flesh; consequently, they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate"* (Mark 10:6-9 NASB).

i. Why divorce is not acceptable in marriage.

Divorce is painful. It is emotionally more wrenching than the death of a spouse. It is often long years in coming and long years in the settlement and in the adjustment. The upheaval of life is immeasurable. The sense of failure and guilt and fear torture the soul. Like the psalmist, night after night a spouse falls asleep with tears. Work performance is hindered. People draw near or withdraw with uncertain feelings. Loneliness can be overwhelming. A sense of devastated future can be all consuming. Courtroom controversy compounds the personal misery.

And then there is often the agonizing place of children.

Parents hope against hope that the scars will not cripple them or ruin their own marriages someday. Tensions over custody and financial support deepen the wounds of years. And then the awkward and artificial visitation rights can lengthen the tragedy over decades.

Because of these and many other factors people with sensitive hearts weep with those who weep. They try not to increase the pain. And sometimes this care is confused with compromise. People think that loving care is incompatible with confrontation—that the tenderness of Jesus and the toughness of his demands can't both be love. But surely this is not right.

Jesus was an extraordinarily caring person. His teaching on divorce and remarriage was also firm: "What God has joined together let not man put asunder" (Mark 10:9). In fact firm and loving confrontation with the demands of Christ IS a form of caring, because a sinful decision is just as harmful to a person as the emotional pain.

The great challenge to the church in the face of divorce and remarriage is to love Biblically. John wrote, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments" (1 John 5:2). In other words, the test of true love to people is not only the feeling of compassion in the heart but also conformity to the commandments of God in behavior. The great challenge is to mingle the tears of compassion with the tough love of obedience. This alone will honor Christ and preserve

the spiritual health and power of the church.

In that time [old testament], a bill of divorcement was written. A man could do this if the wife failed to please him or if he found uncleanness in her. Then she was sent away. However, there were warnings and severe consequences if any of the parties lied. It is to be noted that God established the husband/wife and consequential family unit before He established the nation of Israel or the Church. He is a God of order, righteousness, and holiness.

"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts in her hand and sends her out from his house, and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife, and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance" (Deuteronomy 24:1-4 NASB)

ii. Why Is there a Special Concern with Divorce and Remarriage?

There are at least nine reasons for devoting a special position paper to this issue.

1. People who come to christ want to know where we stand on this issue, as church & spiritual leaders.

2. Inside the church people need clarification about where the leadership of the church stands and what the church position is on divorce & re-marriage.

3. Divorce involves sin that is more destructive than many others. The hurtful impact of a broken marriage on the spouses and the children and the web of relationships surrounding the marriage is immense.

4. Divorce is thrown into the public limelight by the recognition in our society that it must be handled by the civil courts.

5. Marriage, divorce and remarriage involve the mingling of solemn oaths and sacred physical union unlike any other relationship.

6. Marriage is unique among all relationships in that it is set apart by God to signify to the world the relationship between his Son and his bride the church (Eph. 5:21-33). Therefore, the breaking of

this bond is extraordinary among all human bonds.

7. Divorce falls into that group of acts which when they are committed are very hard to undo. The words "I'm sorry" can make right many sins against another person. But divorce and remarriage cannot be made right like that.

8. Divorce happens by plan and intention of one or both spouses. It is not like a habit against which one struggles with successes and failures.

9. Divorce has reached epidemic proportions in our culture to the extent that even secular leaders are groping for a place to stand that may preserve the stability of the home.

iii. THE DIVORCED WHO HAVE RE-MARRIED

1. *Gospel Radicalism*

Faithful to the radicalism of the Gospel, the Church cannot refrain from stating with Saint Paul the apostle: "To those now married, however, I give this command (though it is not mine; it is the Lord's): a wife must not separate from her husband. If she does separate, she must either remain single or become rec-

onciled to him again. Similarly, a husband must not divorce his wife" (1 Cor 7:10-11). It follows from this that new union following divorce under civil law cannot be considered regular or legitimate.

2. ***Prophetic Witness***

This severity does not derive from a purely disciplinary law or from a type of legalism. It is rather a judgment pronounced by Jesus himself (Mk 10:6ff.). Understood in this way, this harsh norm is a prophetic witness to the irreversible fidelity of love that binds Christ to his Church. It shows also that the spouses' love is incorporated into the very love of Christ (Eph 5:23-32).

3. ***"Non sacramentalization"***

The incompatibility of the state of remarried divorced persons with the precept and mystery of the Paschal love of the Lord makes it impossible for these people to receive, in the Eucharist, the sign of unity with Christ. Access to Eucharistic Communion can only be had through penitence, which implies detestation of the sin committed and the firm purpose of not sinning again (cf. DS 1676).Let all Christians; therefore, remember the words of the apostle: "Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily, sins against the body and blood of the Lord. A man should examine himself first; only then should he eat of the bread and drink of the cup. He who eats and

drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks a judgment on himself" (1 Cor 11:27-29).

iv. Is Divorce or Remarriage the Unforgivable Sin?

When divorce begins to be discussed in this way it is common for someone to ask whether divorce is the unforgivable sin. The answer is found in the following texts.

"Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Hebrews 9:22).

"(Jesus said) this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

"Every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (Acts 10:43).

"All sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" (Mark 3:28f.).

"Let the wicked man forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

From these wonderful promises we learn that forgiveness for sins is available on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus. Forgiveness is available for all sins, without exception. Forgiveness is received freely through trusting Christ. And trusting Christ involves confessing sin as sin and turning away from it to embrace the ways of God with joy.

The only unforgivable sin is the sin that we refuse to confess and forsake. We commit unforgivable sin when we cleave to a sin so long and so tenaciously that we can no longer confess it as sin and turn from it. The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31f)is the resistance of his convicting work to the point where he withdraws, leaving the sinner in helpless hardness of heart.

Neither divorce nor remarriage is in itself the unforgivable sin any more than murder, stealing, lying or coveting. "All sins will be forgiven the sons of men." God is faithful and just to forgive—he will honor the worth of his Son's sacrifice for all who confess their sin and bank their hope on the saving work of Christ.

Forgiveness is NOT unconditional. It is conditional. This does not mean it can be earned. It means forgiveness is given to those who truly trust Christ. Trust is not an act by which anything can be earned. It calls attention to the

worth of God's grace, not the worth of our action. But trust is not mere intellectual assent to Biblical facts. It involves hearty affirmation of the will of Christ. Therefore, trusting Christ involves confessing sin as sin and taking up arms against it.

Therefore, the ultimate form of church discipline (excommunication) is never a simple response to past sin. It is always a response to sin that a person continues to affirm or practice. No past sin that is renounced, confessed and forsaken is a ground of church discipline.

Therefore, marital sin is in the same category as lying and killing and stealing when it comes to church discipline and church membership. If someone has lied, killed, stolen, or illegitimately divorced, the issue is not, can they be forgiven? The issue is do they admit that what they did was sin? Do they renounce it? And do they do what they can to make it right?

If a person in the church was known to affirm lying, killing or stealing as appropriate behavior for a Christian, that person would be liable to the discipline of the church. Not because they have lied, killed or stolen in the past and cannot be forgiven, but because they go on affirming NOW that sin is not sin. Or if a person was openly planning to lie, kill or steal with a view to receiving (cheap!) forgiveness afterward, that person too would be liable to church discipline.

In all these ways illegitimate divorce and remarriage are

NOT in a class by themselves. They are not the unforgivable sin. When it comes to church discipline and church membership they should be treated the same way other public sins are treated.

What makes divorce and remarriage seem to be a special matter of concern in the church is that very seldom does someone affirm the rightness of lying, killing, and stealing. But people often affirm the rightness of divorce and remarriage.

In other words, what usually causes the conflict is not whether divorce and remarriage are unforgivable sins, ***but whether they are sins at all —to be confessed (from the past) and to be avoided (in the future).*** If a person has stolen things in his past and wants to join the church, no one would say that we are treating stealing as the unforgivable sin if we insist that this person confess his sin and begin to make amends to those he defrauded. A sin is not unforgivable because it must be confessed as sin, renounced as an option, and its effects made right (as far as possible).

So it is with illegitimate divorce or remarriage. It should not keep anyone out of the church nor put anyone out of the church any more than a past life of robbery. But there must be a heartfelt confession of the sin committed and a renouncing of it and an affirming of what is right, just as with all other sins of the past.

When we affirm the church covenant we are not only

affirming what we pledge to do. We are also affirming what we believe ought to be done. In other words, church membership is a commitment to hold in common convictions about what is right and wrong in behavior (Church Covenant) as well as in doctrine (Affirmation of Faith). Without this shared conviction the possibility of holding each other accountable is gone.

So the decisive issue concerning divorce and remarriage in Christianity is what we can agree on from the Scripture is right and wrong. Is there a Biblically legitimate divorce and remarriage which is not sin and so does not need to be confessed or avoided? If so what are the circumstances that define it?

Note that;

- **Marriage is a Covenant Between a Man and a Woman with God as the Witness;** The prophet Malachi spoke of the marriage contract as a covenant—a binding agreement—with God as the witness. This prophet tells the people that they have wearied God with their words, and like most people today, they replied, "How have we wearied Him?" The Israelites had returned from captivity in Babylon, rebuilt the temple, and the people were dismayed…God had not come to the new temple like He did to Solomon's temple, so the people turned their backs on Him. *"'This is another thing you do; you cover the altar of the*

Lord with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant…(Malachi 2:13-16 NASB). So divorce was not allowed because it led to breaching and breaking of the covenant thus making God a liar like They began saying and believing: *"Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them…"* (Malachi 2:17).

- **Jesus said** many times that He did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. But like some people today, the Pharisees looked back at their history and either added to or misunderstood what Moses said about divorce. In Matthew 19:7, the Pharisees asked Jesus "*Why then did Moses command to give her a Certificate of Divorce and send her away?*" Through the ages, the Rabbis and Pharisees watered down or misinterpreted the law. Moses did not actually *command* a certificate of divorce. Jesus quickly rebukes them: *"He said to them, 'Because of the hardness of your hearts, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for*

immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery'" (Matthew 19:8-9 NASB).

- God does not change, nor does His Word. Even though we slice, dice, and split hairs, God doesn't. These two final passages purge any doubt and sharpen the focus of all who desire to hear and heed what Jesus the Son and God the Father have to say about divorce. *"And it was said, 'Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of unchastely, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery'"* (Matthew 5:31-32 NASB).

"What therefore God has joined together let no man separate" (Mark 10:9 NASB). Therefore, divorce is prohibited like one will have gone against Gods will.

Chapter 5.

OBSERVATIONS ON DIVORCE

I have therefore observed the following consequences of divorce and grounds to why it was prohibited. If you're considering divorce or you have recently entered the process, you have already experienced months or years of struggle with your spouse. You are familiar with emotional distance, insecurity, fear, depression, anger, and perhaps betrayal. Life has become so difficult that divorce seems like the only path toward peace and happiness. Look into these consequences and change your mind and opt for another solution than divorce.

- **Grief:** Divorce is a death of a union, and therefore the death of a dream, a promise, a life, and a family unit. Everyone involved—even a perpetrator—will feel grief and loss during a divorce. If there are children involved, they will experience severe grief over the loss of being with both parents together, living under the same roof. They will feel a familial loss. Divorce also separates in-laws.

Grandparents lose their daughters or sons-in-law; they might lose easy access to their grandkids, or they might have to assume a parental role to help their son or daughter. Grief hits every part of a family during a divorce.

- **Trauma:** Divorce marks a pivotal moment in a person's life, especially for children; life as they know it changes forever and they become different versions of themselves, adapting to new routines and new versions of their parents (who have also changed). They might move to a new home, new school, or be a part of a new step-family. Often, children take responsibility for their parents' divorce, internalizing guilt and regret over the break-up. Even normalizing the widespread acceptance of divorce and step-families in our culture can't diminish a child's trauma at losing his/her parent from the home, especially to someone else like a new wife or step-child. (55 percent of divorcees will remarry.)

- **Relationship with the Ex-Spouse:** Couples get divorced because they want to stop talking, problem-solving, and living with their spouse. However, if they have kids, not only do they have to stay in contact with one another, but their communications skills (which were bad before) actually must improve. Parents must still work together to solve problems concerning their children, which now

involve a tug-of-war over time, money, influence, gifts, vacations, etc. And to make things harder, there will likely be new spouses influencing these decisions. Parents still have to figure out how to get along.

- **Emotional Problems:** Following a divorce, parents and children often experience emotional problems that can last for years, even for the rest of their lives. Anxiety, depression, fear of abandonment, distrust, insecurity, lack of intimacy, confusion over sexuality and/or gender, guilt, avoidance of conflict, faithlessness, control, loneliness, bitterness, and rebellion manifest themselves in children who have lived through a parents' divorce.

- **The Chance of another Divorce:** 60 percent of divorcees who remarry will divorce again; third marriages dissolve 93 percent of the time. Why? Perhaps people don't work on their issues; perhaps they're too busy trying to survive. Realistically, most people carry their issues into the next marriage (along with the new baggage from their last divorce). Very often, people are also attracted to the same type of person as they were before.

- **Dividing of Memories and Belongings**: While household items and family photos don't hold a lot of intrinsic value, dividing them between par-

ents can be heart-wrenching because household items represent memories and commitment. Family photos capture times of love and unity that can be both painful and precious. Just like going through the belongings of a parent who's died, dividing up a household between spouses (or even if one person keeps it all) brings feelings of heartache, resentment, and regret.

- **Singleness**: Singles comprise 43 percent of America's adults. If you're in a bad marriage, singleness looks attractive. But once you've been married and you find yourself divorced, you probably aren't so comfortable back out there in the dating world. Divorcees must navigate singleness very carefully, especially if they have kids. Without another parent in the home, single parents tend to rely heavily on neighbors, boyfriends/girlfriends, and extended family to babysit when they can't be home. Another caution here is dating itself—having a potential new mom or dad in and out of the house is emotionally confusing and traumatizing for kids. If you date with kids in the house, be wary of exposure and attachment until you feel confident about the security of the relationship. Children of divorce are especially susceptible to feeling abandoned and unwanted. You might consider remaining single until the kids are grown.

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at

peace with everyone." (*Romans 12:18*)

i. Statement of Guidelines for Mutual Accountability

Marriage is a human relationship ordained and instituted by God (Malachi 2:14-16). [6] His original design was one man and one woman united by covenant and sexual union for life (Genesis 2:23-4). The relationship was a mystery in that it set forth symbolically in physical form the relationship between himself and his people (Eph. 5:21-33; Isaiah 54:5; Hosea 2:14-23; Ezekiel 16; Jeremiah 3:20). Therefore, God hates divorce for what it does to people and for what it does to the glory of his own covenant with the church.

Nevertheless, because of the deceit and power of sin and because of the remnants of corruption in our own hearts, divorce still happens in the lives of some Christians. A mature and spiritual Christian may be forsaken by a disobedient or unbelieving spouse. Two professing believers may drift so far from the Lord that they no longer acknowledge in their hearts the authority of the Lord Jesus or the binding nature of their marriage covenant.

The church, as a spiritual family with radical commitment to Christ and earnest love for each other, should be ready to minister forgiveness, healing, reproof, discipline, correction and restoration wherever appropriate

to its members. Specific guidelines are needed regarding divorce and remarriage, and these are given below.

The following guidelines should be read in the light and spirit of the preceding introductory pages.

They should be read with the constant awareness that for many of us in the church they represent a minimum expectation for Christians and a weakening of Biblical standards. Even those of us who affirm them as entirely Biblical can imagine a married couple, previously held back from a divorce by the conviction that it would be contrary to Scripture, now going ahead with it because they can see an "out" in one of the statements below. None of us wants these guidelines to encourage divorce or weaken the commitment God means for us to have to our marriage covenant.

To encourage this kind of sensitive reading and careful application of the following statements we will expand on the statements with words that bring out the differences among us. In this way we will avoid giving the impression that all the statements are put forth as ideal positions.

The Guidelines

1. A believer and unbeliever should not marry (1 Cor. 7:39; 2 Cor. 6:14-15).

2. Since death breaks the marriage bond (Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:39), remarriage is permissible without

sin for a believing widow or widower, if the marriage is with another believer.

3. Divorce may be permitted when a spouse deserts the relationship, commits adultery, or is dangerously abusive (1 Cor. 7:15; Matthew 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:11). I am not here dealing with remarriage. I am simply acknowledging that there are times when the Bible permits separation.

Some of us want to stress that "divorce" in this statement should not imply a decisive and permanent end to the relationship while the spouses are alive and not remarried. Even after long periods of separation and alienation reconciliation can happen, as when the people of God return to the Lord after periods of waywardness (Hosea 2:14-23). Others of us want to stress that decisive divorce in certain cases is permitted, and that this leaves the deserted, or abused spouse free to remarry (see #5).

We all want to emphasize that the phrase "may be permitted" holds out the possibility that inquiry may reveal that the deserted partner engaged in a wrong behavior that drove the other away, so that a change is called for at home rather than divorce.

In addition, we all want to stress that forgiveness and reconciliation between sinning spouses is preferable to separation or divorce even where adultery has occurred. This is implied in Matthew 18:21-22, "Then Peter came and said to Jesus, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin

against me, and I forgive him?" Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.'" (See Luke 17:3-4)

1. The remarriage of the aggrieving, divorced spouse may be viewed as severing the former marriage so that the unmarried spouse whose behavior did not biblically justify being divorced, may be free to remarry a believer (Matthew 19:9), if he or she has confessed all known sin in the divorce, and has made significant progress in overcoming any destructive behaviors and attitudes.

Recognizing the honest and devout differences of conviction in the church, those of us with more limiting standards for remarriage consent at this point not to make them normative for the whole body. Others of us, who regard this fourth statement as fully Biblical, respect those among us with a more limiting interpretation and do not require or expect them to act in any way against their consciences in attending, supporting or performing enactments of marriage they regard as contrary to Scripture.

All of us urge every member who contemplates remarriage to struggle in prayer and study with all the relevant Scriptures, with the sole aim of glorifying God through full obedience to his word. Consider fairly the arguments against remarriage and those for it.

Moreover, we want to affirm the goodness and beauty

of a life of singleness in God's service both before marriage and after marriage. It is commended in 1 Corinthians 7:7,11,32-35, and elevated by the examples of Jesus and Paul and hundreds of great single saints.

1. After serious efforts have been made toward reconciliation the aggrieved partners referred to in guideline #3 may, together with the leadership of the church, come to regard their marriages as irreparably broken. In such cases remarriage may be a legitimate step, if taken with serious reckoning that this cuts off all possibility of a reconciliation that God may yet be willing to produce.

This guideline is for some of us the hardest concession to make. Remarriage after a divorced spouse marries again at least has in its favor that the possibility of reconciliation was decisively cut off before. But while the spouse is still unmarried and alive reconciliation is still Biblically possible. This makes it very hard for some of us to condone a step that decisively cuts asunder what God meant to be permanent and which could yet be permanent (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

Others of us believe that 1 Corinthians 7:15 ("If the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so, in such a case the brother or sister is not bound.") gives freedom to a Christian to remarry if abandoned. We also believe that denying remarriage puts an unwarranted strain on the chastity of the divorced person who may not believe

he or she has the gift of celibacy (1 Corinthians 7:7).

But we all agree that serious efforts should be made at reconciliation, including the intervention of the church if necessary, before any aggrieved spouse is resigned to singleness or is free to remarry.

1. The aggrieving partners referred to in #3 (who were guilty of abandonment, adultery or abuse) should repent and be reconciled to God and to their spouses (1 Corinthians 7:11; 1 John 1:9). If it is too late because their spouses have remarried, then they should remain single because they left their first marriage without Biblical warrant (Matthew 19:9; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:11).

2. If a second marriage ends in death or divorce, the widow or widower in this case is not permitted to return to the first spouse in marriage (Deut. 24:1-4).

3. Persons remarried after divorce will forego positions of official leadership at Bethlehem which correspond to the role of elders or deacons (1 Tim. 3:2, 12).

4. The amount of time that has passed and the change in standing from unbeliever to believer does not alter the application of the guidelines for divorce and remarriage (See Matthew 19:4-6 which highlights the fact that enduring marriages are part of

God's plan for all his human creation, not just his redeemed people.)

ii. CAN A DIVORCED MAN PASTOR A CHURCH?

When the question of divorce concerns a man who has been called to preach, it is always controversial. There was a time when the possibility of hiring a pastor who was divorced was rare but by the 1980s, a growing number of clergymen were divorced and married. There are many divorced pastors serving in churches today, including evangelical, Bible believing churches. This is a greatly debated issue, particularly among conservative believers. Not all Christians and churchgoers are comfortable with the idea of a divorced pastor leading. Many believe divorced pastors cannot serve as a pastor or in a leadership role within the local church but is this biblical? Does even a 'biblical divorce' exclude a man from ministry?

1Timothy 3 lists the qualifications for bishops (pastors, elders). The controversial second verse says, "the husband of one wife." Many believe this means literally one wife or never have been divorced. Others suggest it refers to bigamy or one wife at a time. Some teach it to mean a man must be married in order to serve, thus removing single men from any opportunity of leadership service. Some of these interpretations can be problemat-

ic. What about a man who leaves his wife but refuses a divorce? What if his divorce was pre-conversion? What if the pastor is a womanizer? What if he is the innocent party and couldn't save his marriage? Do these examples disqualify him from serving? What about the grace of God?

This is not to say that divorce is ideal. When the Pharisees questioned Jesus about divorce, he told them that It was only allowed because of "the hardness of your hearts," (Matthew 19:1-9). God's intention was for one man and one woman to marry and stay together. He said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." The wedding vows state, "Till death do us part." But as unfortunate as the reality is, people get divorced. The two cases in which God permits divorce are fornication (Matthew 19:9) and desertion (1 Corinthians 7:15). In those two cases, the marriage can be dissolved and the spouse is free to remarry (1 Corinthians 7:28) without living in adultery.

In order to dive deeper into this question, let's take another look at the list of qualifications for a bishop. First Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 say that the bishop must be the husband of one wife. But what does this actually mean? If you read the Bible from Genesis through Revelation and come across these verses in 1Timothy and Titus regarding the pastor's marital status, you would say he could not be a polygamist. You would think that because many of the Old Testament men that you had read about

had more than wife.

There are a number of polygamists in the Old Testament that are mentioned by name including Lamech, in Genesis 4:19, who was the first polygamist. Then there were Jacob, Esau, Elkanah, Ashur, Shaharaim, and many of the kings, like David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijah, Ahab, Jehoram, Joash, Jehoiachin and Belshazzae. Even people who know very little Scripture know that Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines. Today, among certain religions and cultures polygamy is still common. So when you come across a verse in the New Testament that tells you a bishop can only have one wife, you're going to think that the Bible means exactly what it says. The man can't be a polygamist, through his contemporaries in other religions may be and though many of the Jewish fathers were. It's important to look at historical context when interpreting these verses.

The thought that 1Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 could be referring to a preacher who had been divorced and remarried wouldn't even cross your mind, unless someone gave you that thought. You would remember that a man and woman who are divorced are no longer husband and wife (Hosea 2:2). Therefore, you wouldn't even consider that Paul was referring to a pastor who had been remarried after scriptural divorce. You would know from the Bible that he still only has one wife. When a man is married, he has one wife. When he is divorced, he has no wife. When he remarries, he has one wife.

Many people believe that Christians can be divorced and remarried under certain scriptural conditions and still serve the Lord. They know the remarried couple is not committing adultery, even though they have been married before, because they were scripturally divorced. Neither are they polygamists, though their former spouse is alive. Most people understand that they only have one spouse. How then do they conclude that when a man called to preach is remarried he is disqualified to pastor? The Bible says that the bishop is to be the husband of one wife, which should be the same for anyone else who has been divorced and remarried. The definition of "one wife" doesn't change because he's called to preach.

The proponents of the doctrine that a man called to preach is disqualified to pastor use 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 6 to say that divorced men cannot pastor. Yet, you will not find the verse or verses to say that the bishop must not have been divorced and remarried. They are not in the Bible.

One of the most common statements that I've seen is "Christians divorce at the same rate as non-Christians," undoubtedly giving the world another opportunity to shout "Hypocrite!"

111. Age is just a number

We have noticed that many young girls are running away

from reality of right choice and have started falling in love and having sex with old men & women not for love but for money, material wealth and prestige. Girls have a saying "***age is just a number***" a statement that is not biblical but secular. It's a scapegoat to allow girls& boys access material benefits, and their responsibilities.

Sex is not only the sexual organ enjoyment but the entire body feelings, expressions, or like touch and above all mutual communication in areas of eyes, voice, sharing and exchanging ideas. These are the areas that develop love and sex. Youths of 18-30 marry men or women of 50 years plus create a very big gap in communication. Sex will be done not in love but in fear, shyness, and even guilt. Old couples should be in position to identify their fellow age bracket (lovebirds). We recommend that at least this chat be considered that;

Girls	**men**
21-30 years	25 – 40 years
31 – 40 years	41 – 60 years
41 – 50 years	61 – 75 years

Besides children, sex was also meant to bring above all happiness, joy, satisfaction and rescue from sexual immorality, pervasion and masturbation. However it should be with a moderate age brackets if communication is to flow joyfully not finances.

Some Advice that will help you in marriage and the escape divorce trap.

Well, since it is about marriage, I'll share from my own loving relationship with Nalongo Josephine. We are not perfect, but here are 10 basic principles I've learned in over 15 years of marriage that may be helpful to consider as a married couple or even as a single person thinking about getting married and serving or leading a man or woman in covenant love for the rest of your life.

1. **Marriage is worth the investment.** Yes, it is and investment. I know that it is not always easy, but it is always worth it. I'm thankful for a strong marriage.

2. **You have to invest in a marriage for it to be worth the investment.** It sounds strange, but it's true-- it takes continual investment on the investment. I've seen "perfect" couples—like some we knew in high school and college—get married, drift apart, and end up divorced. We did not. It's not because we are perfect, it's because we work hard.

3. **Choosing your marriage partner is the most important human decision you will ever make and take them to God for approval.** I've seen many, many miserable marriages. And a big part

of that relates to bad marriage choices. My wife was/is beautiful, but that's a really bad foundation upon which to build a marriage.

4. **Most fights are over stupid things that don't matter.** When I was younger, I always wanted to prove my point. It's more important to prove your love. You do that by not arguing over stupid things. Note: most arguments are from stupid things.

5. **Most arguments are resolved when both people are more concerned with being in a relationship than with being right.** I'm amazed at how many times I thought I was right. I had to be right. I had to show her I was right. And, let me say, that's just wrong. It's dumb. And it does not work.

6. **Sex is essential to a marriage relationship.** It's not everything, but when you value and prioritize it, your intimacy impacts your relationship. Yet sex does not just happen. It, too, is something you work at. It's fun to do the work, though!

7. **Practices (like date nights, long conversations, and trips together) make your marriage stronger.** Some of these are essential—you need a regular date night if you are married. If you can't afford dinner, you can walk in a park, go shopping, hold hands. You won't have a strong marriage if

you don't act like you are married.

8. **Kids are awesome, but stress your marriage.** I'm a pretty obsessive parent. I love my kids as a salongo. I spend time with them. They are a treasure. But they also make marriage more complicated and stressful. Kids should know that your marriage is your first priority. The most important thing you can pass on to your children might not be what you give them, but the marriage you show them.

9. **Never go to bed angry.** Yes, that's true for everyone according to Ephesians 4:26, but stretching an argument into two days usually leads to stretching it longer. Then bitterness sets in. However, you can't really settle most arguments if you are not willing to just say, "Well, we can't agree, but we can forgive and move on." (See number 5.)

10. **You need the Holy Spirit.** I started dating Jose because of her faith. She had shared her faith with the girls in her neighborhood, came to the Bible study every Wednesday. I was leading in high school, and loved the Lord deeply. She still does. When we put Jesus at the center, everything else revolved around Him well.

I really love being married. Without a strong marriage, everything else in my life suffers. And I am well aware that such a marriage is not always so easy for many cou-

ples.

However, I learned that—in our marriage—I was the cause of many of the challenges and conflicts. Jose was the cure. Either way, we have learned a lot. We are still learning. But, maybe you can be encouraged by our experience. With these in practice Divorce will see no way through to your marriage.

Happy, strong marriages are definitely possible, but it takes work—an ongoing effort. We're all sinners who need a Savior, and when you put two sinners together in a relationship like marriage, it's bound to be difficult sometimes. Our sin supplants sacrifice with selfishness in our marriages. If we want to experience marriage as God created it to be, a reflection of his sacrificial love and leadership of the Church, we've got to keep him at the center of our marriages. Your spouse isn't your Savior, Jesus is. Live that truth and your marriage will more likely thrive.

'Our sin supplants sacrifice with selfishness in our marriages'.

'Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is an attitude.'

Married people must have sex with no one except their husbands/ wife (Hebrews 13:4)

Single people must not have sex with anyone (1 Thess. 4:3-8, 2Tim. 2:22 & 2 Samuel 13:11-13)

"Remember every person will be judged by God for the

good or bad he did in his body" (2 Cor. 5:10)

"Who finds the most beautiful pleasures in sex? Is it people who live in sin? No! It's husbands and wives who love God and save sex for each other only. (Song of Songs 4:12-13)"

"During love play, talk freely, tell each other what feels good. Give your partner pleasure in whatever ways he/she likes. Don't hurry, take time, enjoy each other" (Song of Songs 7:13)

The best way I know to fight for beauty in my marriage is through prayer.

I hate to admit it because, I hate to be wrong, but if I am feeling stress in my marriage, some of it is probably my fault. There is insecurity, uncommunicated expectations, some bitterness, that has planted its seed in my heart, all those things must go because the fruits they bear is anger.

Let's pray

Dear Lord,

Thank you for the marriage and the purpose it has in refining us. We lift any and all marriages that are facing conflicts and ask for your Holy Spirit to help resolve it. Please guide both husband and wives in how they should respond to each other. May your peace fall upon them, May your power humble them and show them how to solve the conflicts. Pleas protect them from hurting each other or from hurting themselves. We pray Dear Lord that may your will be done in Jesus name.

Bless whoever reads this book.

Amen.

Conclusion remarks.

The only way God has recently revealed himself in areas of creation is through sex and sexology. The devil does not create mankind but God does. Sex therefore is a holy sacrament, a tool through which procreation is advanced in families.

Sex therefore should be handled with outmost care bearing in mind that it's a tool of God himself. Sex must be practiced within the confines of marriage. Any sex out of marriage is simply a sin beyond human flesh, a sin beyond the mind, a sin that penetrates the spiritual realm.

It should be born in mind that anyone who messed it up in African Traditional society was stoned to death, rejected, and such a family were not honored. Even at marriage such a lady and relatives were not rewarded with any gift at all.

The bible recommends that it's only in marriage a man will be naked before his wife and there will be no shame or embarrassment or guilt (genesis 2:25). Sex is a bond that intertwines two people male and female. The recent issues of homosexuality are simply an ideology developed as a result of reasoning. It started on earth during the time of Abraham (genesis 19:5) and it was badly condemned in the scriptures. There was massive destruction

of that generation. We still have to warn our children of this new generation that their attempt to promote homosexuality is merely looking for Gods curse, rejection and destruction.

Having said above, is not to say there should not be close friendship of boys and girls. This is accepted in Christian fellowships to enable young people develop love, feeling and decision making towards marriage; however, it should be done with the spiritual guidance of the parents, pastor and mentors like aunties and uncles. Youths ought to avoid seductive places like bedrooms, love relationships in cars, beaches, nights etc. These are the areas of great temptations. We should know that at most nature can force you to end up in this grave of sin. St Paul says "flee from dangers, sin, risks and temptations"

As regard to the age of when to be taught sex education, we would recommend any age so long as there is close teaching and guidance by the responsible people. In ATS, young children would be given to men but with cautions they mentored them until time of maturity like 14-17 years to start on sex. Sex education in homes should start and be introduced as early as primary so that parents take full responsibility of their children. There after secondary curriculum should incorporate sex education.

GOD BLESS YOU.

AMEN

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Personnal Prayer

Dear Lord,

I pray that during conflict my wife and I would not sin against each other. Help us to remain calm, kind and compassionate. I pray that we would not allow conflict to tear us down or hurt in anyway. I also pray that we would experiences a quick recovery. I lift my heart and emotions right now, remind me to extend grace. Help us to remember when we first met and the strong love that grew between us. To work that love into practical things so nothing can divide us. We ask for both kind, loving and hearts always to ask forgiveness and as well as forgive.

Dear Lord we put our marriage in your hands in Jesus mighty Name we pray

AMEN!!

If you have any questions or requests to make,

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