



The Principles Of Sustainability Of Marriage And Family Relationship

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ABSTRACT

Marriage is not a social or business contract that can be terminated at will by the partners involved. It is a relationship that demands mutual giving and self-giving for its sustainability. The husband ought to satisfy the emotional needs of the wife in such a way that she sees him as the only true friend, lover, brother, father and husband; and the wife as well ought to satisfy her husband's emotional needs to the extent of regarding her as the only true friend, lover, sister, mother and wife. In other words, both partners must satisfy each other physically, emotionally and spiritually. How this would be achieved in marital union is the objective of this paper titled: "The Principles of Sustainability of Marriage and Family Relationship." The paper examines the relationship of the man and his wife, the vital role of love in the mysterious union, building of the wife's potentials and the children in godliness. It also discloses the areas of battlefield of marital adjustment. The study concludes that the secret of a successful marriage and family relationship is in the family altar where Christ is worship on daily basis. Love is the second secret, in which the man maintains a tender love for his family and the wife develops unselfish love to sustain her family.

Keywords: Principles, Sustainability, Marriage, Family, Husband, Wife, Relationship.

INTRODUCTION

A successful man or woman is the product of a successful marriage and family life. The home is the backbone of the society. The home ought to be *the first divine moral school* where the man and his spouse is bound together by agape love; where children are natured in the way of the Lord, and Lord Jesus, the Son of God, is the actual and the visible Head and not an invisible guest; where the husband, the wife and the children gather daily for family worship of the Almighty God. In this *home-church* the man is not a *pastor* but a husband to the wife and a father to the children neither the woman a *pastor* but a wife to the husband and a mother to the children.

A happy and sustainable marriage is a home where members of the family enjoy rest, privacy, a sense of security; and learn to work, play, pray and plan together. It ought to be a home in which members learn to regard one another as having equal rights and benefits; where loyalty, honesty and cooperation are practised and learnt by each person in the home. This home ought to radiate Christ, welcome strangers and be hospitable without measure. To have this ideal godly home it must consist of a God-fearing father, God-fearing mother and God-fearing children (Douglas, 1991:209). Therefore, it is the responsibility of the man to make a deliberate decision to build such a strong marriage and family life and that makes the difference.

What God said about Abraham and his family is applicable to every man today as His creature: "I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. Then I will do for Abraham all that I have promised" (Gen. 18:19 NLT). God has singled every man out so that he shall direct his sons, daughters and their families to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. Then God will do for him all that He has

promised. The second text for this study is, "Draw me after you and let us run together." This text is to challenge every married person to examine his or her marriage relationship to see if it carries the joy, pleasure and satisfaction God intended it to have. Song of Solomon is a celebration of the love between a man and his wife. God-given love is presented here which every godly married couple should strive for. "Draw me after you and let us run together" (Song of Solomon 1:4a). This is a celebration of pure, monogamous love between a husband and wife. Something is missing in that marriage if this romantic love is not being celebrated in the marriage. When a couple experiences romantic love as God designed it, such spouses will find great joy in marriage (Blackaby, 2006:791). We begin our discussion with the relationship of the husband and wife.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE MAN AND HIS WIFE

A Relationship of Mysterious Union

The Bible looks upon the husband and wife relationship not as a social or business contract that can be terminated at will by the partners, but rather, it looks upon the relationship as a mystery. The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians says, "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (5:32 NAS). Then in the next verse he says, "This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church" (5:33 GNB). Thus, the relationship that exists between Christ and His church is a model for husband and wife relationship, which means that much of the real joy in the relationship comes from giving not getting, just as Christ gave himself to the church. The *mutual giving* and *self-giving* which reflects the relation of Christ and the church must be reflected in the man-and-his-wife relationship.

Therefore, it is a daily opportunity for the man to give towards his wife the love of one who gave up His very life for His Bride and likewise for the wife to give like the faithfulness of the church as it is painted in Ephesians 5:24, 27 (GNB), "... submit itself to Christ . . . pure and faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any other imperfection." The husband should be able to satisfy the emotional needs of the wife in such a way that she sees him as the only true friend, lover, brother, father and husband in one hand; and in the other hand, his wife should be able to satisfy her husband's emotional needs to the extent of regarding her as the only true friend lover, sister, mother and wife. This mystery means that both must satisfy each other physically, emotionally and spiritually (Uzorma, 1994:60). This peaceful co-existence does not happen in a vacuum nor occur as a one-time experience; rather it is a gradual development as both share life together daily.

A Relationship of Mutual Esteem

This relationship demands a mutual esteem and right appreciation of the place which God has assigned to husband or wife and the acknowledgement of this will foster happiness in the home. To esteem one's spouse is to see the partner as more than an individual but as one set in a sacred position by the sovereign God. Mutual esteem protects the man-and-his-wife relationship from becoming a victim of the inevitable ups-and-downs which the partnership may encounter (Christenson, 1970:27-28).

A Relationship of Effective Communication

A complete and true fulfilment depends on the establishment of a good relationship between the man and his wife and for such a relationship, there must be two-way traffic which is communication. The real sharing and loving cannot be possible if there is no communication. Communication brings the couple together. It is a basis for the spouse to know each other better, build trust and confidence. Effective communication enables the couple to face problems together more positively and objectively. It is a beautiful venture for the husband and wife to provide the conducive atmosphere which enables communication easily.

The wife especially, has an eternal resource to set the right atmosphere. She needs only to be available and draw from it. The atmosphere set by the wife gives the man the desire to run home for shelter in time of difficulties or failures. The husband is always home-sick when there is real objective creativity and dynamic amusement in the home. Communication involves listening,

talking and showing interest in the other person's thoughts and women are gifted in that (Simbiri, 1984:23, 25). This is richer when both share one bedroom, sleep in the same bed on daily basis and eating together as well. It is vital and indispensable to a successful relationship between the man and his wife (Aghawenu, 1995, 18).

A Relationship of Loving Partnership

This mysterious relationship is a partnership in love. It is a partnership in love which requires loyalty from husband and wife respectively. When a young man takes a lady to be his wife, he offers her the first place among all his earthly ties. Likewise, when a young lady joins to a gentleman to be her husband, she offers him the first place among all her human affections. That is why both leave their parents and unite together to become one flesh (Gen. 2:24). Without love it is impossible for husband and wife to really become one flesh. Love cannot be love but a mere passion if esteem is underestimated. If the couples tenderness and care for each other depends upon physical appearance of feeling on any given day, and if respect for each other fluctuates with mood or judgement as to how well the partner is satisfying one's standards and expectation, that relationship is on a shaky foundation. God will for love to be grounded upon a more stable and solid foundation in this kind of relationship. That foundation is a regard for the role each has to play as designated by God. God's command of love which involves the intimate affection between husband and wife is above the mere basis of the natural attraction. Let's talk more about this marital love.

THE VITAL ROLE OF LOVE IN THE MYSTERIOUS UNION

In the Old Testament Amos the prophet asks, "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed" (Amos 3:3 NKJV). Husband and wife cannot walk together without an agreement. They are to be united in heart, aim, objectives and to share mutual comfort and true fellowship in a totally free atmosphere – free from conflicts, strife and division (Kumuyi, 1985:146). In this mutual agreement love has a vital role to perform. There are three types of love: *eros*, *phileo* and *agape* in Greek language and each one is vital in marital affairs.

1. Eros is the sensual love which manifests itself sexually.

The biological structure of human body inspired this kind of love. It is the physical urge which seeks fulfilment in sexual union. A good relationship between the man and his wife does not last without it. *Eros-love* is more than just sexual fulfilment. It involves all the loving expression of what makes a man, a husband and what makes a woman, a wife. *Eros-love* is strictly meant for husband and wife, and any display of eros-love outside marriage is a sin against the Creator. It is an act of disobedience to God for any man or woman in his or her normal senses to unveil his or her nakedness to another person sexually outside the wedlock.

2. Phileo-love is companionship, the delight and joy exhibited in the company of each other.

This kind of love includes the sharing of common goals, objectives and interests. *Phileo-love* is expressed by doing things together as well as just being together. While *eros-love* is almost a face-to-face relationship, *phileo-love* is very often a shoulder-to-shoulder relationship. In other words *eros* is sexual while *phileo* is natural.

3. Agape-love is 'the gift-love' and the highest and holiest type of love any couple can ever know.

It is love in action, something makes it to happen, not just a whim of emotions but an act of the will. This is the kind of love that keep on loving even when the one loved responds indignantly. This is the kind of love describes in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, "Love is patient and kind, it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrong; love is not happy with evil but is happy with the truth. Love never give up; and its faith, hope and patience never fail. Love is eternal" (GNB). This description shows that *agape-love* is apt to make the best of everything; it will judge and believe well. This kind of giving love is the only love that can sustain the man and his wife relationship over the years. When they cease freely to give to each other, relationship sours and sensual love becomes an exercise in exploitation (Denhan, 1983:12).

In a nut-shell, God created man and woman to enjoy each other and to find deep satisfaction in the marriage relationship. The ability to express marital love (*eros-phileo-agape* love) is a beautiful gift from God. Let love be the banner over your relationship (Song 2:4). The love for one's spouse should be clear to everyone who sees your relationship with your spouse. Everything one does in marriage relationship should be motivated by love and expressed in a loving manner.

BUILDING THE WIFE'S FULL POTENTIALS

Behind every successful man, there is a loving, respective and submissive wife. But the age long prevailing attitude towards women has affected the wife as well. In many cultures women have habitually been despised and demeaned by men and unconsciously some godly men have that cultural attitude towards their wives today. Some men treat their wives as mere play things and sex objects, unpaid cooks, housekeepers and child-minders, and as brainless simpletons incapable of receiving training or education. This woman will labour without appreciation; her personality smothered, her freedom curtailed, and her service in some areas are exploited or denied (Stott, 2006). A man who wants to succeed in life should desist from such attitude towards women and towards his wife in particular. It is high time, for men to redeem the image of their wives in the society. The wife has a complementary role to play in the society. Grant her the opportunity to grow and fulfil her potentiality as a human being. It is indeed that motherhood is a divine vocation, and demands great sacrifices. But it is not her only vocation. There are other equally serious and unselfish forms of responsibilities she can equally render to humanity in general.

The wife has a vital role to play in the life of her husband. Let the wife develops her full potentials in life irrespective of her chosen vocation and the husband to be in full support. She is an instrument the man cannot avoid in achieving success in life. Encourage your wife to exercise and to fulfil her God-given abilities. Prepare her for a successful marriage and vocation. This woman is special to your life and your relationship with her will determine your success or failure in life and even in your profession. Please draw her after yourself and let both of you run together (Song 1:4). Again the sweetheart expression in the Song of Solomon would be of help for you and your wife. It is a marital revival book for husband and wife relationship.

BUILDING THE CHILDREN IN GODLINESS

The children are special gifts God has graciously given to the couple (Gen. 33:5). The Psalmist says, "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward." It is a parental duty to provide for the children – food, clothing and opportunities for an education and means to choose their own life profession under the leadership of God. According to Apostle Paul, "If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for his own family, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim. 5:8).

The man and his wife ought not to subject their children to suffering or poverty in the name of sacrifice. Poverty has adverse effects on many children of today in many homes. So acute is the pain that some of these children regretted being born into such family; while some become a thorn in the flesh to the family and to the society, and some others vowed never to become rich by all means. That is the picture some family have portrayed to these God-given children, which ought not to be. God does not subject any family to abject poverty, where the children cannot receive the basic things of life.

The man and his wife can bear the human-made suffering, but not these innocent children. It is never intended to be a curse for being born by any family neither will it be. The children are born to be role models in all areas of life. Some parents are doing well children up-bringing, but more efforts are needed to be made and more awareness to be created that many children are at risk. Many of them may likely have no inheritance or basic education with which to begin life (Aghawenu, 2017:43).

It is the duty of both the man and his wife to make a living for their children. If you cannot make a living for your family, examine your labour. For "the labourer is worth of his wages" (Luke 10:7).

A healthy man or woman does not need to beg from people before he or she can feed his or her family. Parents should not deny the children the basic things of life, nor make them to serve as slaves of the other families.

The man and his wife should be able to raise God-fearing children. God's ideal family is where the entire members loves Jesus. It is the parent's responsibility to lead their children to the Lord when they are very young (Matt. 19:13, 14); to train and discipline them for the Lord (Prov. 22:6).

THE BATTLEFIELDS OF MARITAL ADJUSTMENT

The major battlefields in marital relationship are the in-laws, finances, children and sex. A battlefield is a place where two enemies come face to face to fight out their differences (Coble, 1975:101). These factors are the major areas husband and wife may likely have strong disagreement from time to time, and it can lead to divorce if not properly handled. Let's consider these factors and see how a couple can blend their lives together, instead of tearing each other apart.

In-Laws Adjustment

The in-laws interference is a serious case in husband and wife relationship. The in-laws include the parents, brothers and sisters as well as uncles, aunts and cousins of both partners. A poor relationship with the in-laws leads to a lot of conflicts between the couple. Avoid as much as possible the interference of the in-laws in your marriage (Leigh, 1993:1-6). Learn how to settle your differences without involving any of them. However, there should be cordial relationship with both the in-laws. Render the help you can without discrimination, be considerate and thoughtful of the in-laws. On no condition should the man or his wife give greater attention to the in-law than the spouse nor ignore each other for the sake of in-laws. However, a good and a serene relationship with the in-laws will enrich the spouses.

Financial Adjustment

Finance is not really that big of a problem. But who is in charge? Who should handle the money? And how important it is to each other as husband and wife is where the problem lies. Many a time a selfish attitude towards money on the part of either mate is responsible for marital friction. Finances may be a source of trouble in the home when there is no close co-operation between the man and his wife. In financial relationship we should never forget that money and other material values are only means to an end (LaHaye, 1982:27-29). However, good financial relationship requires diligence in earning, carefulness in spending and liberality in giving.

The amount of money in the home or bank account does not guarantee happiness or sadness, but what matters is the amount of character in the partners. One thing that is required of the spouses, among others, is to be faithful to one's partner and the Sovereign Lord as a good steward. One's spouse should be valued and respected more than money or material things. None of the spouses should major on wealth like the prodigal son, feeding itself on husks when a banquet is available. The couple should always be conscious that money and other material values are only means to an end so that it will not affect their relationship (Rutledge, 1952:53-57).

Children Adjustment

Procreation of children by the couple is God's heritage, but mismanagement can turn God's blessing to a curse. That is why the arrival of children in the home can cause conflict between husband and wife. When couple starts to bear children conflict of loyalties is sometimes felt. Most especially after the birth of the second child there is that tendency of the mates to forsake each other emotionally. The wife may be tempted to switch the regard she had for the husband to the children (Rutledge, 1952:57). One of the biggest common mistakes couples make at times which may lead to misunderstanding is to expect the children to be a duplicate of *Mum* or *Dad*, which cannot be (Simbiri, 1984:22-24). It is the responsibility of parents to devote time to the children, share in their problems, fears and joys. Their problems vary and are peculiar according to age group and relationship to the outside world. Discipline of the children is for the both couple; and this should be done within the parental love for the children not within selfish means (Odunze, 1989:80).

Sexual Adjustment

Sexual relationship is a major area of conflict between couple and very complicated because couple hardly disclosed the issue to a third party. Sexual discord can be attributed to ignorance, selfishness or fear. Unfortunately, most of what people see or hear about sex issues is all about its perversion. Profane talk and perverted actions in the world of sex makes people feel ashamed about it. What we see or hear in the society is not the normal use of sex. The abnormal pictures of sex affected some men and their wives. A proper attitude, knowledge and experience are necessary things to insure satisfactory sexual adjustment between husband and wife. Sexual union for spouses who have not been exposed much before marriage involves the breaking down of much shyness and embarrassment which can be achieve through a slow process of becoming accustomed to dressing and undressing, bathing, sleeping and living together, having one bedroom. Love-making in marriage has no age limit (Rice, 1974:143-144).

A young man called one evening complaining that his wife left the bed and was sleeping on the floor. "Why are you complaining, join her on the floor," was my quick response. Later I asked him whether the wife do complained of pain during sexual union. He answered in affirmation. I encouraged him to buy lubricant lotion or Vaseline cream for both to use before sex. He jump out the bed and went to buy it that same night. He called later and said, "Sir it worked, thanks so much." Many spouses are ignorant of this thereby avoiding sex because of pain especially when aging. Many men and their wives have never even began to enjoy the richness of sexual oneness. Sex, for them, is a hurting experience instead of a healing experience. A nonchalant attitude towards sex has wreaked havoc on many homes. Whereas sex is a place in the relationship where God delights to perform miracles upon miracles if properly and wisely consummated (Foster, 1950:140-141). It is high time for spouses to begin to enjoy the richness of sexual oneness with life-partners.

CONCLUSION

The secret of a successful marriage and family relationship is in the family alter where Christ is crowned as Head of the home. Make Christ the Head of your home – both Lord and Saviour of the home. The husband should gather his wife and children daily for family worship. Love is the second secret. Let the man maintains a tender love for his wife and children. Let the wife develops unselfish love of a wife and a mother to sustain her family. Marital relationship should always be God first, spouse second, children third, and vocation or work fourth. Apart from God, the immediate family comes first before the work. Remember what God said about Abraham which is also applicable to every man, "I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. Then I will do for Abraham all that I have promised" (Gen. 18:19 NLT).

Also remember King Solomon's romantic love with his African woman, the Shulamite. Every man should celebrate pure, maintain monogamous and undiluted love with his wife. Dramatize the Song of Solomon together as husband and wife. Verbal expressions of love can speak to the soul and produce an excitement that physical actions do not. When the Scriptures are read this way, we realize God expresses His love for us in a variety of pleasing ways. This book places marital love between man and his wife in its healthy, appropriate context. "Draw me after you and let us run together." Please woman do not let your husband run alone. Let him take you "into his chambers" (Song of Solomon 1:4).

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