

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Doctor of Ministry
Emphasis in Mission

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: REDUCING THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL PRESSURES THAT CAUSE
DIVORCE IN ASANTE NEW TOWN SECTOR (ANTS) OF THE SEVENTH-
DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN GHANA

Researcher: Kwabena Annor Boafo

Advisor: Samuel Adama Larmie

Date completed: June 2016

Problem

There is growing concern of a high incidence of culturally influenced divorce cases among Seventh-day Adventists in Ghana, especially in Asante New Town Sector (ANTS). The South Central Ghana Conference records showed a minimum of 47 divorce cases every six months and at least 17 out of this come from ANTS, Kumasi, Ghana.

It was therefore the purpose of this work to develop and implement a biblically based strategy to solve this problem.

Method

Having gathered an initial baseline data, relevant literature was consulted, and a focus group discussion and interview guide was developed for a survey. A total of

168 participants were engaged in interview and discussions in ANTS. Findings from these groups helped to design an intervention to deal with the problem identified.

Revivals, sermons, prayer, counseling, forums, love feast and marriage festivals were embarked upon to assist in the reduction of the divorce problem.

Results

Post project data received showed a reduced conference-wide divorce figure of 114 per year and 39 in six months. That of ANTS moved from 42 a year to 11 in half a year. By this projection, the conference and ANTS figures per year will now be 78 and 22 respectively. Six counseling centers were established; and a document to guide the church on traditional issues on marriage and divorce was developed.

Conclusion

There is a new trend of culturally influenced divorce cases in SCGC, especially in ANTS. Some members now use legal and cultural considerations as grounds for divorce. However, scripture makes it clear that only adultery and the abandonment of the unbelieving spouse can stand as a basis for divorce. The church must hold firm to this position in spite of the pressures culture may present.

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A dissertation

presented in partial fulfillment

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Doctor of Ministry

by

Kwabena Annor Boafo


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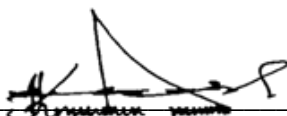
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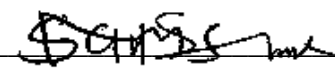
Advisor: Samuel Larmie, DMin



Programme Director, DMin
Kelvin Onongha, PhD, DMin



Reader: Emmanuel H. Takyi, PhD, DMin



Dean, Theological Seminary
Sampson Nwaomah, PhD

Extension Centre: Babcock University, Nigeria

Date: June 2016

Dedicated to Abena, my late wife

Tiwaa, my current wife

and

Kwame, Antwiwaa, Kwadwo, Afia, our children

Also to

The Seventh-day Adventist Church

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACGC	Ashanti Central Ghana Conference
AMA	Accra Metropolitan Assembly
ANTS	Asante New Town Sector
ASWA	Adventist Seminary of West Africa (Illison Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria)
CGC	Central Ghana Conference
GNAAS	Ghana National Association of Adventist Students
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
GIS	Ghana Information Service
KMA	Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly
KNUST	Kwame Nkrumah University Science and Technology
NGUM	Northern Ghana Union Mission of SDA-(The territory of church that covers: Ashanti, Brong – Ahafo, Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions of Ghana)
SCGC	South Central Ghana Conference (One of the conferences in Ashanti Region of Ghana with its headquarters at Gyinyase, Kumasi.)
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist Church (used for the purpose of this work)
WAD	West Central Africa Division of SDA Church, (headquarters – Abidjan)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Ministry Context

This chapter gives a general overview to the project work. It addresses what the project is all about, why it is necessary, and how it is going to be carried out.

During the past two decades, there has been a trend of an increased incidence of divorce cases among Seventh-day Adventists (SDA) in Asante New Town Sector (ANTS) of Kumasi. Reports received from SDA Churches and leaders in this area link culture, among other things, as a developing phenomenon that influences the incidence of divorce and its associated challenges.

Issues about marriage and divorce are not only seen in contemporary times as a religious and social matter but as a developmental phenomenon that affects church and society. Families get shattered, conflicts and misery have been the results. Poverty, pain, neglect and untold harm have befallen children. People have fallen sick and died. Societies have broken down. Systems have gotten disorganized and many will eventually lose their souls due to the way humanity have handled and managed marriage and divorce.

Over the years the Church has been confronted with diverse complex trends in marriage and divorce. New policies and practices have evolved to direct leaders and members of the church on practical ways of dealing with marriage and divorce. Among the many evolving trends of issues affecting divorce in the Seventh- day Adventist

Church in contemporary times, is how culture has impacted seriously on the many divorce cases in the church.

Church leaders and members continue to ask the question: Is it permissible to grant divorce on the grounds of acceptable cultural practices in the society? Experience in ministry since 1992 in Kumasi, Ghana, where Asante New Town is situated, made me personally witness and arbitrate several complex marriage cases. As a former Health & Family life Director, District and Church Pastor, and currently a Conference President, I have seen and learnt a lot about the complex nature of the dynamics of marriage and divorce.

By and large it is realized that in some congregations, legal and cultural considerations have taken prominence over the Bible in decisions made by the church when members seek divorce. But, biblically, it was God's purpose that the piety and companionship of couples stay intact until adultery or death parts them (Matt 19:3-9).

Marriage has been God's designed gift to humanity since Eden as "a lifelong union between a man and woman in a loving companionship"¹. God saw during creation that Adam's loneliness was not proper (Gen 2: 18); and that Eve (the woman) made out of Adam (the man) becomes a helpmate comparable to him (Gen 2:19). This is a divine statement of fact and provides a solid platform for the foundation of this project.

The first couple though different in personalities, complemented each other. When God did this, "He oriented their sexual feelings towards those of the opposite sex. The differentiation and connectedness that characterize people are manifested in the attraction that draws the two sexes to each other in order to form a whole relationship"².

¹ Ministerial Association of General Conference of SDA, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 2nd ed. (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 329.

²Ibid., 338.

It is therefore not in agreement with God's plan to have same – sex relationship in marriage. In the beginning it was not so. Even though Christ and the church love homosexuals, the Bible frowns upon homosexuality or homosexual practices (1 Tim 1:8 - 10; Rom 1: 26 – 28; Lev 18:22; Gen 19: 4-10; Lev 20:13; Jude 7, 8).

A male and a female were the first family unit created by God. It is actually for the same reason why polygamy is also biblically unacceptable. Lamech was the first to take two wives (Gen 4: 19-24). The polygamous relationship of Abraham (Gen 16:1-16; 25:6) ended in strife and discord (Gen 16:4-6; 21:9-11). Other examples include Moses, Esau married Judith and Basemath (Gen 26:34), David (2 Sam3:2-5), Joash was given two wives by Jehoiadah (2 Chron 24: 1-3), Jacob, and Solomon. These men's involvement in polygamous relationships eventually brought some unpleasant repercussions upon them. Ellen White states:

Polygamy was practiced at an early date. It was one of the sins that brought the wrath of God upon the antediluvian world. Yet after the flood it again became widespread. It was Satan's studied effort to pervert the marriage institution, to weaken its obligation and lessen its sacredness; for in no surer way could he deface the image of God in man and open the door to misery and vice.³

Contemporary views on homosexuality and polygamy stand in contention with the above biblical principles; but even historically and logically the experiences have been in favor with what scripture upholds. This work will therefore derive and depend much on biblical principles and teachings as basis for the conclusions drawn.

In the Genesis 2 account, it is understood that God's original and primary purpose for establishing marriage was for companionship. Other considerations, including personal benefits derived from each other may be treated secondary. Unfortunately most people come into marital relationships with the secondary considerations - placing

³ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1890), 338.

expected benefits before the primary purpose (companionship). And when these are not achieved as desired, they resort to abuses and perversions like adultery, polygamy, incest etc. which may lead to divorce. However, Jeffrey Brown contributing in the book: *Church and Society*...states:

While marriage and the Sabbath are two institutions emanating from the Garden of Eden, there is a danger in labeling them twin institutions. The practice of Sabbath-keeping is mandated; the practice of marriage is not. Marriage, while being a divine institution, must be kept in proper perspective. The goal of life is not marriage. It is ministry. The purpose of life is not sex. It is service.⁴

Scripture consistently elevates marriage by highlighting the joy, pleasure and love associated with it (Prov 5: 18 – 20); (Songs of Solomon 2:16; 4:9-5:1). Marriage is likened to the type of relationship that exists between God and His people (Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 3:1). God’s original plan since creation was to have a *never – to – end* marital relationship on earth (Gen 2: 18 – 25; Matt. 19:6).

Statement of the Problem

It is observed that there is a high incidence of divorce among Ghanaian Adventists, especially those in ANTS of Kumasi, Ghana. The South-Central Ghana Conference (SCGC) Family Life committee sits on a minimum of forty-seven conference-wide divorce cases every six months. Out of this figure, at least seventeen usually came from ANTS (Table one explains this). The Committee was much concerned about this problem and therefore sought audience with the Conference Administration to have a serious look at the issues with the view to finding appropriate solutions.

The conference leadership and local church leaders became particularly upset with these figures during family life meetings and workshops and therefore resolved to have

⁴ Rudi Maier, *Church and Society: Missiological Challenges for SDA Church*, (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Missions, Andrews University, 2015), 600.

various strategies developed to address the problems involved. A few of the cases were settled at the end of the day, though.

Unfortunately, the numbers continue to add up day by day, with men being greater culprits, according to the reports received from the churches.

Factors contributing to men divorcing more than women do may include:

- a) Men's natural ego that usually yields false pride and arrogance that they are always in charge. Hence most African societies are seen to be male controlled.
- b) African men believe that since it is generally men who marry women, they (men) are also the ones who can divorce; and society tends to endorse this.
- c) Many African cultures seem to tone down on adultery cases of men and rather hype and sanction those of women.

Meanwhile, attempts to reduce the growing incidence of divorce are generally proving unsuccessful. It is therefore urgent now to address some of these emerging trends and take decisive stance on the proper way to go as a church. The outcome of this work, if well embraced and implemented by the church, will contribute positively towards addressing this divorce problem.

The following information and statistics throw more light on the magnitude of the problem under discussion:

Table 1. SCGC – Divorce Cases Handled from 2009 – 2014

PERIOD	CONFERENCE WIDE CASES
1 ST and 2 nd Quarters 2009	60
3 rd and 4 th Quarters 2009	47
Quarters 1 and 2 2010	56
Quarters 3 and 4 2010	59
Quarters 1 and 2 2011	59
Quarters 3 and 4 2011	54
Quarters 1 and 2 2012	58
Quarters 3 and 4 2012	59
Quarters 1 and 2 2013	57
Quarters 3 and 4 2013	56
Quarters 1 and 2 2014	54

Source – SCGC Family Life Department Jan 2009 – Jan 2014

Table 2. SCGC (ANTS) - Divorce Cases from 1994 – 2014

1994	48
1995	37
1996	40
1997	42
1998	34
1999	46
2000	42
2001	42
2002	40
2003	43
2004	42
2005	41
2006	42
2007	41
2008	42
2009	41
2010	43
2011	42
2012	43
2013	41
2014	42

Source: Family life Dept. Report from ANTS Churches -1994-2014.

According to the leaders of the churches, what compounds the issues among other things is the fact that some church members resort to certain unbiblical African traditional cultural practices as justification for divorce. Many now argue that if the church accepts traditional customary rites (culture) as a mode of entering legitimate marital relationships, how come the same church cannot accept the cultural practices allowed by the traditional society as a basis for divorce. This is a challenge facing the church in contemporary times that calls for urgent pragmatic attention.

Meanwhile, what is happening in the church is not different from what obtains in the country generally. In Ghana, divorce cases are of late on the ascendancy. According to the 15th January, 2008 edition of *Public Agenda Newspaper of Ghana*, 618 customary marriages were dissolved as against 1511 marriages registered.

A report published by Ann Adjassah states: “Last week, the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), reported that nearly 600,000 marriages contracted in Ghana have collapsed, more than three times the divorce cases of England and Wales put together in 2012.”⁵

In Ghana’s Matrimonial Causes Act, 1971 (Act 367) Section 1, - Petition for divorce as captured by the law states that, “A petition for divorce may be presented to the court by either party to a marriage. The sole ground for granting a petition for divorce shall be that the marriage has broken down beyond reconciliation.”⁶

The Finder Newspaper on 10th July 2014 reported that, Mr. Fred Lumor (Head of Marriages, Accra Metropolitan Assembly, (AMA) commented on Divorce as follows:

- A total of 4080 divorce cases took place the last 8 years.
- Most of them were customary ones, and happened between 2006 and 2013.
- Between January and April 2014, there were 204 Divorce cases.
- The year 2009 recorded the least number of cases (407); But in 2013 there were 427 cases; 2012 (468) and 2010 (426).

Mr. Lumor also added that “the figures could be higher if divorce cases for ordinance marriages were added.” He noted that under ordinance marriage, the couple

⁵ Ann Adjassah, “Marriage and Divorce,” accessed 14th Dec. 2014 (*General News* 21-3-15 edition), www.graphic.com.gh.

⁶Ghana’s Matrimonial Causes Act – 1971 (Act 367) Section 1, accessed 14th Dec. 2015, www.laws.ghanalegal.com.

files notice with AMA for 21 days and if no objection is received a certificate is issued to them to get married.” Couples after receiving the certificate have two months to get married. The filing and granting of divorce cases go through a similar process.

Causes of divorce according to the *Finder Newspaper* 10th July 2014 included beating, drug use, alcohol use, financial difficulties, unemployment, frustrations, infidelity, when women become breadwinners of homes because husbands are unable to provide for the needs of the family.⁷

According to the Legal Department and the Registrar of Marriages and Divorce at the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly of the Ashanti Region, Ghana, high divorce cases were recorded between 2009 and 2014. “The declaration of customary divorce in the law courts increased from 200 in 2009 to 268 in 2013, while 2014 recorded a decrease of 150. We also had ordinance marriages increasing from 1668 in the year 2000 to 2553 in the year 2014. However, customary marriages decreased from 1340 in the year 2000 to 451 in the year 2014.”⁸

Table 3. Marriages Contracted the Same Period under Review-KMA

YEAR	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
MARRIAGES	3443	1541	2087	2309	3426	4082	4270	2807

Source: Marriage and Divorce Registry KMA-Ashanti, Ghana

⁷ Fred Lumor, *The Finder Newspaper*, 10th July 2014 edition.

⁸ Isaac Okyere, Legal Department, Registrar of Marriages and Divorce, Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA), *Regional News*, 20th Jan 2015.

The facts and figures given above provide strong arguments on how bad the state of marriage and divorce is. They seem to suggest a bleak future for the institution. But they also inform researchers, church leaders and the general society to develop the right interventions to bring down the rising tide of divorce.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation was to develop, implement and evaluate biblically-based designed programs and strategies that will help bring down the unacceptable levels of the incidence of divorce among SDAs in ANTS in Kumasi, Ghana.

Justification for the Dissertation

The passion that inspired this study stemmed from very strong sentiments and frustrations expressed by a cross-section of Ghanaian Adventists—Pastors and the laity, on the increased divorce incidence in the church. Members desperately continue to seek answers to this matter.

Many contemporary Adventist leaders and stakeholders' position on marriage and divorce are more and more skewing towards cultural and legal considerations.

A case in point is this Adventist doctor who married a nurse after he had joined the church barely two years. A year after this marriage he reported divorce to the church, adding that his dowry has been returned by the wife. On enquiry, he argued that his marriage was accepted by the church on grounds of the performance of cultural rites; so he is as well, quitting by the same cultural rites and demands.

He was though educated biblically on true Christian marriage principles, yet insisted on divorcing. He was unfortunately disfellowshipped eventually; but he still attends church till today, anyway.

Matters like this is really undermining the Church's biblical teachings on marriage; especially in Africa. In Mark 10:2-12, Jesus' response to the Jewish leaders' quest on divorce and remarriage clearly puts tradition and scripture in their proper perspectives. The preservation of the sanctity of marriage is well highlighted in that discourse by Jesus.

Ellen White admonishes that "The well- being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influence"⁹. Apart from the Bible, many traditions and systems tend to appreciate marriages that do not see divorce in their lifetimes. Therefore:

- Sanity must prevail in the church regarding doctrine and practice as it relates to divorce and remarriage.
- The universal SDA Church must be seen to be upholding truth in uniformity.
- In matters of doctrine and practice, the Church should not be directed by personal inclinations or culture; but by sound biblical foundations and considerations only.

The success of this project will therefore, not be a blessing to SCGC only but also to all churches in Ghana and the world at large.

Delimitations of the Dissertation

The research will be carried out among only the Akan Adventists in ANTS. An exception may be granted to other ethnic groups in the area who share similar cultural beliefs and practices on marriage with Akans.

⁹ Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), 349.

The study will also be restricted to people with at least 25 years or above, the age group where most of the married and divorcees belong. Unless otherwise stated, all scriptural references will be taken from the New King James Version of the Bible.

Methodology

This research was the qualitative type. Having gathered an initial baseline data, from the conference and ANTS churches, a focus group discussion and interview guide was developed for a survey.

A total of 168 participants were engaged in the interviews and discussions. These comprised: nine focus groups (six in each group), twenty-three District and Church Pastors, seven nucleus team members, three teachers, a senior staff from the Asante King's palace, seventy-two church elders and family life leaders, one retired pastor, five chiefs, one Catholic Priest and a linguist.

Findings from these groups helped in designing and implementing a project intervention in ANTS. The interventional activities included: revivals, sermons, prayer, counseling, forum, love feast and marriage festivals. These were to help reduce the culturally influenced divorce problem in the area.

In doing so only Akan people in ANTS were engaged. The reason being that the problem under discussion emanated from Adventist churches in ANTS where the rise in culturally influenced divorce cases was seriously affecting the Church. Also the inhabitants in the area are predominantly Akans. Lastly, the high incidence of divorce in the area is linked with Akan culture. An exception was however, granted to other ethnic groups in the area who shared similar cultural beliefs and practices on marriage with Akans.

Various literature covering, Protestants, African, Jewish and Adventist authors were consulted for wider, comprehensive information for the research

Expectations

It is expected that the implementation of the results of this dissertation will:

- Contribute to the general global pool of knowledge.
- Help to slow down, the incidence of increased divorce among SDA Church members in Ghana.
- Assist in influencing new policy formulations on family life in the SDA church.
- Motivate church members to aspire to higher levels of spirituality in their family lives.
- Enhance Adventists' understanding of sound biblical foundation on marriage and divorce through workshops, sermons, seminars and forums.
- Widen the scope of members' knowledge on issues affecting marriage, divorce and remarriage.
- Re-orientate Adventist prospective couples to appreciate the place of culture and tradition in Christian marriage.
- Provide a better picture about the Adventist church to the traditional communities in Ghana, on the church's position on cultural practices that stand in conflict with scripture.

It is also expected that this work will be completed by 30th March 2016.

Definition of Terminologies

In the write-up of this work, definitions of relevant terminologies featured severally in the text. Frequently used ones are explained as follows:

- **Adventists** Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) members.
- **Adm.** Administrative

- **Akans** An ethnic group in Ghana who speak Twi (Asante, Akuapem, Sefwi, Fante and Brong) as language. They normally reside in Ashanti, parts of Eastern, Central, Western, Volta and Brong Ahafo regions.
- **Ash Town** Asante New Town (a suburb in Kumasi)
- **Assoc.** Associate
- **Cent.** Central
- **Chap.** Chaplaincy
- **Church members** Baptized Seventh-day Adventists (Sabbath School members are those awaiting baptism)
- **Comm.** Communication
- **Conference** A collection of Districts within a larger territory of the SDA church.
- **Dir.** Director
- **District** A group of churches within a territory in a conf.
- **Family Life Department** – A directorate that deals with marriage and family issues in the SDA church.
- **Gh.** Ghana
- **Hosp.** Hospital
- **Ksi.** Kumasi
- **Pr.** Pastor
- **Quarter** Three months within a year.
- **Sec.** Secretary
- **Sector** A number of districts put together in a given Conference
- **Tech.** Technology

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS ON MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

This chapter deals with what the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy say about the theological foundations on the issue of marriage and divorce.

Marriage, according to Genesis 2:18-25, the Bible is described as being divine, holy and a purely established covenant. In Malachi 2:14 this covenant is seen as a holy bond between a man and his wife in the sight of God.

According to Mary Fairchild (Christianity Expert), in ancient Israel, the Jews according to their custom sealed the marriage covenant with a written agreement during the ceremonies. This they do committing themselves before God and humanity. In such agreements, husbands pledged to provide such things as food, shelter, clothing and emotional needs, to the wife. Mary explains further that people held three general views about what marriage is:

- a) That a couple is viewed married in the sight of God, when they are physically united in a sexual intercourse as a consummation of the relationship.
- b) When a couple is legally joined together in marriage.
- c) When they have formally performed a religious wedding ceremony.¹⁰

These and other related issues are going to be discussed in detail as we move along in our discussions in this chapter.

¹⁰Mary Fairchild, *What is the Biblical definition of Marriage?* 17th Oct 2015, accessed 15th March 2016, www.christianityinstitute.org/.

It was God's purpose for men and women to live in perfect joy, togetherness, and purity. There is therefore the need for humanity to preserve the sanctity of marriage even in our state of brokenness. Scripture projects marriage as a holy and honorable. God in his wisdom made the first couple, having already created all other things, and then declared them "very good" (Gen. 1:31).

Adam and his wife were created in God's image and were given dominion over all things (Gen. 1:27, 28; cf Ps. 8:6-8). It was God's intention that this first union would be a standard for emulation in all future relationships with some level of independence enjoyed by the parties involved (Gen. 2:24).

Marriage in the Old Testament

The Old Testament paints a mixed picture of good beginnings and later acts of perversion in marriage.

God's Purpose for Marriage

Primarily, marriage was made for companionship. This idea is clearly expressed in the Genesis account of the marriage of Adam and Eve.

And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Gen. 2:18, 20-24)

Other equally important benefits in marital relationships including, sex, procreation (Gen 1:28), honor, physical assistance, prestige, material acquisitions and other social satisfaction, are considered secondary. These come to the couple as gifts in the course of their stay, provided they continue to follow God's directives. This has been

the will of God for humanity. Unfortunately, in our societies, marriage faces a lot of challenges that tend to shake its very foundation and survival.

Marriage and family if well established, serve as a lesson book conveying many biblical values like: procreation (Gen 1:28); socialization (Gen 2:18, 24); child training and nurture (Prov 22:6); promotion of family spirituality and evangelization (Deut 6:6-9); managing sexuality within committed and protected confines (Exo 20:14; Prov 5:15-21; Songs of Solomon); and also ensuring proper and effective home management(Prov. 31:10-31).Marriage defines the social status of individual members of the family, and all humanity traces their restoration and upliftment to marriage and family'.¹¹

Tracing its roots to creation, marriage was instituted as a monogamous, heterosexual relationship between a single male and a single female (Gen 1: 26-28). In Genesis 2:24, God instructs man to leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, to become one flesh. Implied in this text, is the idea of permanency in marriage.

The couple is said to have been created in God's image (Gen. 1:27); equal but with different gender roles (Gen 2:18). The woman is to be a helpmeet comparable to the husband. Also Adam's declaration: "bone of my bone...." (Gen. 2:23) was an exclamation of pleasant surprise of his new bride; seeing in her a fulfillment of his desire and part of his own being. The statement also depicts an element of equality between Adam and Eve. But the woman ("ishah" Heb.) was to be different from the man, ("ish" Heb.) in terms of gender and complimentary roles. Adam "was henceforth to love her as his own body, for in loving her, he loves himself."¹²

¹¹ Jean Sequeira, Pat Habada, ed., *Uphold that Which Is Good: The Pan African Consultation on the Family* (Silver Spring, MD: Family Ministries, Department of Church Ministries, General Conference of SDA, 1994), 120.

¹² F. Nichol ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed., (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Heralds, 1956) 1:227.

The issue of subordination to the husband arose only after the fall. In Genesis 3:16, it is stated that: “He shall rule over you”... This was one of the statements of curse to the woman after the disobedience.

“Leaving,” “Cleaving” And “One-fleshness”

In Genesis 2:24, there seems to be a progression of the marriage process. The build -up starts with: “Leaving” to “Cleaving”, and then becoming “One-flesh”. One step leads to the next important one, ensuring an ultimate fulfillment of the love relationship.

The first step (leaving) involves untying the family apron in order to establish a new unit of co- existence. It does not mean abandonment or total cut off from parents, but rather some autonomy to found a new responsible relationship and family. The principle expressed here emphasizes the idea of detaching in order to attach permanently to a new life mate.

‘Cleaving’, the second step, stresses a strong bond that should exist between husband and wife. The word “Cleave” is used in the Bible in two ways. First, the Hebrew “b’qa” means “to split” or “to rend” as employed in Gen 22:3: “Abraham clave the wood for the burnt-offering”¹³; and in I Samuel 6:14, the men with the Ark at Beth Shamash, “Clave the wood of the cart...” and had a burnt-offering. The Psalmist also speaks of Yahweh “cleaving” fountain and flood (Psalm 74:15), and the plowman cleaving the earth (Psalm 141:7).

The other usage of the word is the word ”d’baq”-; a third person masculine singular perfect verb translated: ‘cling’ or ‘keep close’¹⁴, often used in Old Testament as

¹³ W. Fortune and Geoffrey Bromiley, ed., “Cleave,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1964), 1:723.

¹⁴ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon (BDB)*, based on Lexicon of William Gesenius (London, UK: Oxford Univ. Press, 1952), s.v. “d’baq”.

“sticking to each other”¹⁵. It “carries the sense of clinging to someone in affection and loyalty.”¹⁶ Which means: “to adhere to” or join one’s self to”¹⁷. It means to *cling* firmly after *leaving*. The process of leaving therefore terminates into cleaving.

The man is asked to cleave to his wife (cf Matt 19:5). The Psalmist declares his tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth if he does not remember God (Psalm 137:6); Ruth also vows to cleave to her mother-in-law (Ruth 1:14). “Cleaving” here suggests total loyalty devoid of compromises. The word “d’baq” also means “to stick”, “to fasten”, “to join” or “to hold to”¹⁸

The husband is asked to stick to, join to and have a close permanent bonding with his wife. This is compared to the carpenter’s glue, which after sticking two sheets of wood together, becomes very difficult to separate without parts of each sheet detaching and sticking to the other. This illustrates the fact that marriage actually never gets separated absolutely. Attempt to break the union, rather injures the two individuals bond.

The word also conveys the idea of divine bonding between God and His people: “Him shall thou serve, and to Him shall thou cleave, and swear by His name” (Deut 10:20). After leaving one’s home, to establish a new family, a firm bond of cleaving gives no room for duplicity of partners in marriage.

The third level of the progression has to do with *One-Fleshness*. The expression *one flesh* – (‘chad basar) represents the coming together of the man and his wife in sexual conjugation and sharing of bodies. It involves the exchange of hearts, fluids and the beings of the couple. It is a physical closeness of the two. It means the man and woman

¹⁵ R. Laird Harris, ed., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT)* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1981), s.v. “d’baq”.

¹⁶ Ibid., “d’baq”.

¹⁷ W. Fortune, “Cleave,” 1:723.

¹⁸ Ibid., “d’baq”.

becoming *one flesh* or united in “sexual embrace”¹⁹ that go to ensure sexual and emotional fulfillment.

In Genesis 4:1, Adam is said to have known his wife and she conceived. They were described as being “both naked, and the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” (Gen 2:25). This means that becoming one flesh also connotes sexual intimacy. So true one Fleshness can take place only in a marriage setting where nakedness cannot be shameful. Shirley Allen contributes in *Uphold that which is Good* that: “Within marriage, sex can be so wonderful. Outside of marriage, it’s nothing but destructive.”²⁰

Meanwhile, it is realized most times in practical marriage life that, complete maturity at one step in order to effectively move to the next level suffers some crisis. In most fresh relationships, for instance, some couples do not fully *leave* before ushering into *cleaving*. This has given rise to lots of post marital conflicts.

The couple who goes through these levels maturely exhibit this behaviorally. They are seen to be solving their own problems without going back to their parental homes with incessant complaints. Post marital quarrels and other conflicts are also reduced. They live as a unit and not as separate husband and wife.

Historical and Cultural Backgrounds

Historically, the sanctity of marriage thrived perfectly in Eden before the fall. However, after the fall, marriage has suffered her worst times, from the time of Lamech through to the ante- and post-deluvian periods till now. Perversions and incessant abuses in marriage forced Moses to permit some rules intended to bring in some sanity, protection and to regulate the way the Israelites related to marital issues. Moses widely

¹⁹ R. Laird Harris, ed., *Theological Wordbook of Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1981), s.v. “b” “r”.

²⁰ Jean Sequeira and Pat Habada, ed., *Uphold that Which Is Good: Pan African Consultation on the Family*, 38.

spoke and wrote on sexual immorality, homosexuality, divorce, and other abuses to safeguard the threat that faced the marriage institution at his time (Deut 22:13-20; Deut 24:1-5; Deut 25:5-10; Lev 20:13).

In the Decalogue, God made strong declarations to His people on marriage and family (Exo 20:14; Deut 5:18). Although in the Old Testament times, polygamy was common and seemed to be generally permitted. Historically, several biblical references clearly suggest that the one-man-one-wife principle in marriage was generally endorsed (Ps 128:1-3; Prov 12:4; 18:22; 19:14; 31:10-31).

In the Old Testament times a lot of traditional rites and practices accompanied marital engagements. Culturally, men took wives from the bride's parents, and some rites were performed. Marriage rites were either in the form of service (as in the case of Jacob), gifts (as presented by Isaac), bride wealth, dowry or other forms.

Apart from Adam who had Eve from the hands of God (their parent), examples in the Old Testament show that public rites were usually performed with the consent of the parents. "In Jewish society, various features of marriage were assumed: 1) First, marriages were arranged- albeit consensually. (2) A bride price was paid by the groom to the bride's father"²¹. In taking Rebecca for a wife, Eliezar who acted as a go between or a liaison for Isaac, presented gifts to the family of Rebecca as dowry (Gen 24:21-22, 52-54).

In the case of Jacob, however, a 14-year service had to be rendered to Laban by Jacob before he finally won Rachael (Gen 29:16-30). Other examples include: David bringing Philistines' foreskin to Saul in place of dowry for Michal (I Samuel 18:20-27). Also David arranged for a publically witnessed marriage of Abigail when Nabal died (I

²¹ Paul Marston, *Christians, Divorce and Remarriage* (Leyland, England: Lifesway Publication, 2006), 28.

Samuel 25:39-42). Other examples are recorded in: Gen 24:12, 58; Exodus 22:16, 17; I Samuel 8:25.

It is interesting to know that most of these cultural rites are reminiscent to the Akan culture. They seem to share things like the payment of dowry and gifts, involvement of parents in marriage negotiations and the celebration of traditional marriage ceremony, in common.

Also culture played a significant role in ensuring continuity of family. In a levirate marriage for instance, widows were protected to perpetuate family and inheritance. A woman whose husband died without children was given to her late husband's brother (next of kin) to marry. Children born out of such marriages are considered off-springs of the dead man and could inherit their dead father's property (Gen 25:5-10).

Another cultural influence on marriage was the deviation from the divine norm of monogamous heterosexual marital relationship to that of a polygamous type. Cases cited apart from Lamech in the Old Testament times included those of Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon, Esau etc. The divine ideal was broken resulting in untold consequences. But these happened after the fall:

The entrance of sin adversely affected marriage. When Adam and Eve sinned, they lost the oneness they had known with God and with each other (Gen 3:6-24). Their relationship became marked with guilt, shame blame and pain. Wherever sin reigns its sad effects on marriage include alienation, unfaithfulness, neglect, abuse, sexual perversion, domination of one partner by the other, violence, separation, desertion and divorce. Marriages involving more than one husband and one wife are also an expression of the effects of sin on the institution of marriage. Such marriages, though practiced in the Old Testament times, are not in harmony with the divine design. God's plan for marriage requires His people to transcend the mores of popular culture that conflict with the biblical views.²²

²²*Church Manual*, 18th ed., 149.

Some of the ancient cultural practices ran through generations and have persisted even into contemporary societies at highly perverted levels.

Perversions and Abuse after Sin

Perversions and abuses that have plagued marriage after sin include: Polygamy - Lamech became the first to take two wives – Adah and Zillah within six generations (Gen. 4 : 19); also Abraham (Gen 16 : 3); Esau (Gen 26 : 34); Jacob (Gen 29 : 30); David (I Sam 2 : 22). Others are incest, homosexuality, adultery/fornication and divorce. These have run down the piety of marriage, making it appear now as only a trivial thing, but full of misery.

These perversions have come to stay because over the years, humanity has rejected the explicit: *Thus saith the Lord*, and have resorted to human opinions, culture and rationalization in handling marital issues. It is unfortunate that many people have resorted to sinful ways of practicing marriage and parenthood. Biblical marriage principles are by and by being ignored. This has resulted to the break down and perversions in marriage and family. Adultery, pornography, abuse of any kind, incest, divorce, homosexuality, lesbianism, and others, are the order of the day. These clearly depicts the brokenness of humanity.²³

In contemporary times, activities of human rights movements' agitations, liberation philosophies and ideologies, human freedom and self-determination of modern societies have resulted in a new paradigm shift in marriage that stresses on contract marriages, marriage by convenience, and arranged marriages. The shift from Judeo-Christian beliefs has further perverted and brought many woes to the marriage institution.

²³Ibid., 145.

This has resulted in the rise of divorce cases, sex outside marriage, homosexuality, sodomy, child sex and spousal abuse, confusion in gender roles in marriage and family.²⁴

Marriage in the New Testament

The New Testament teachings espouse the sanctity and harmony of marriage. The gospel writers uplift marriage to an honorable platform and emphasize its preservation as a heterosexual, monogamous relationship (I Cor 7:2-5; 11:11-12; Eph 5:1, 2; Eph 5:25-29).

In Matthew 19:4-5 (cf Gen 1:27, 2:24), and Mark 10:2-12, references are made to what obtained at the beginning. God made them male and female, independent to establish a new family. Marriage is seen as a divine establishment, declaring a divine purpose. It must be nurtured and cared for and subordinated to God's larger salvation purpose. The monogamous relationship as mentioned above, "reflects most clearly the relationship between Christ and His church, and between the individual and God".²⁵

Also, according to Matthew 22:10 marriage is placed under the overall context of the kingdom of God. Interestingly, in Matthew 22:30, it is indicated that there will not be marriage in the resurrection. Nevertheless, marriage is placed in its proper perspective reflecting God's original plan--(Matt 19:3-8; Matt 5:32; Matt 19:9; Mark 10:2-12 and 1Cor 7).

The Jews, Jesus and Marriage

In the New Testament, among the hot issues Jesus clashed with the Jewish leaders on, was marriage. In Mark 10:2-12 and Matthew 19:3-10, Jesus is seen having serious

²⁴Kwabena Donkor, Presentation material on *Marriage in the Bible* (Kumasi, Ghana: July 1 2013).

²⁵Ministerial Association of General Conference of SDA, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 2nd ed. (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 336.

encounter with the Pharisees on marital laws. It was an opportunity for Jesus to straighten up some ill-perceived ideas held by these leaders for a long time. Jesus made references to the Old Testament to confirm the ideal situation. He sent His audience back to Eden and tried to compare the beginning with what was obtaining at His time.

Jesus' encounter with the Jewish leaders ended in the expansion of the laws and principles governing marriage. His constant references to the beginning clearly puts Him on a platform of seriously defending the purity, the permanence and sanctity of marriage. Christ's radical teaching on marriage made the Pharisees and the disciples end up describing marriage as something very hard to partake. (Matt 19: 10). Their encounter with Jesus not only revealed motives, but also educated them on the true meaning of marriage.

Though Jesus never married while on earth, His inclinations towards marriage and family positively affirmed the legitimacy and relevance of the institution. The first miracle of Christ happened at a wedding ceremony he personally attended at Cana of Galilee. His concern for Peter's mother in-law's welfare (Luke 4:38,39) and the constant upholding of God's ideal for family life matters showed his interest in marriage.

His various teachings and discourses in the gospels also go to prove Christ's endorsement of the beauty and sanctity of marriage. It should be stressed that His comment in Matt 19:6, practically affirms the permanence of marriage (cf Gen 1:27; 2:24). There were all events of matrimonial endorsement by Christ.

Jesus points to marital love and intimacy as unconditional for spouses. The understanding is that true marital love, according to the teachings in the gospels, ensures practical mutual growth, physically, spiritually, emotionally, psychologically and emotionally. In displaying His genuine love between Himself and the church, He often used the marriage imagery to illustrate the meaning of His Agape love to his people (Rev

19:7; Eph 5:20-33). God's demonstrated love for humanity can thus be seen in a man and his wife's relationship.

Only agape love, described in the New Testament as a selfless, unconditional and all-for-other-love, can ensure true sustainable love in marriage. What obtains now is a romantic, infatuated, passionate marital love. It was agape, the highest form of love that moved Jesus to save sinful humanity on the cross (John 13:1).²⁶

Jesus could not have demonstrated a better love than this. Since the first Friday, when He(God) performed the first marriage in Eden, Christ has always attached the highest honor to marriage and family.

What the Epistles say about Marriage

In the teachings of Paul, additional dimensions are given to the principles and practice of marriage. He emphasizes love as the currency with which to do business in marital relationship.

In I Corinthians 13:4-8, he speaks of love as the binding force and the overruling factor that ensures peaceful and effective co-existence between a man and his wife. Paul is seen in his epistles revealing the true principles of loyalty, trust, support to each other, levels of exclusiveness and love in marriage.

He discusses roles of husband and wife in marriage. The husband is supposed to demonstrate true practical love in marriage, while it is required of the wife to submit to the husband (Eph. 5:21-33). Submission here should not be misconstrued as subservience in the relationship.

Also Paul sees marriage as part of God's purpose of establishing true human relationships (Eph. 5:21-25). He instructs all Spirit filled believers to walk with

²⁶*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 334.

circumspection. Believers should be aware that even in our family relations and practices, there is always a spiritual warfare. He therefore advises in Ephesians 6:10-18 to put on God's whole armor to deal with this spiritual warfare.

Another dimension espoused by Paul, in spite of his affirmation of marriage, was that, singleness in some situations should be encouraged and not to be condemned. He reiterates in his discussions in 1 Corinthians 7: 1, 2; 7-9, he emphasized that singleness could be acceptable and appropriate in some situations. In other words while affirming marriage as good, he also taught that singleness should not only be tolerated but be accepted and not be condemned.

Jesus in Matthew.19:11-12 also collaborated this by contrasting 'born' and 'made' eunuchs. Paul stresses the need for the married to keep to their marriage vows intact (1Cor 7:10-16), and enjoined the church to seek to reconcile and restore those who have experienced broken marital relationships (II Cor. 5:18, 19).

In the epistles, scripture affirms marriage and also provides solutions to issues that tend to weaken its foundation. (Heb. 13:4; I Pet. 3:1-7; 1Cor 7:33, 34,38). The epistles shed more light on proper Christian marriage and family life. The welfare of all who are involved in family life and marriage is of great concern to the writers of the epistles. Paul cautions that: "But if anyone does not provide not for own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever." (I Tim 5:8).

Divorce in the Old Testament

Divorce, according to the *Encyclopedia Judaica* vol 6, is "the formal dissolution of the marriage bond."²⁷In God's original plan, divorce is alien to marriage. Divorce has

²⁷Cecil, Roth, ed., *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (corrected ed.) (Jerusalem, Israel: Keter Publishing House, 1970), 6:122 & 123.

come as part of the consequence of the fallen human experience. As a means of protecting parties in a marital relationship, various legislations have been formulated over the years in different cultures, including the Old Testament times. (Deut 24:1-4).

Mosaic Context

In the Old Testament times, divorce was a big issue among the Israelites. In fact there were two rabbinic interpretations: (i) That of Shamma (a conservative) and (ii) Hillel (a more liberal interpreter). Commenting on this, Ekkehardt Mueller states in the book *Here We Stand* that Hillel took any reason for divorce. Whatever a husband disliked about his wife; even to burn a meal could be enough reason for divorce. Shamma rather believed that, a husband could divorce his wife only if she had committed a sexual offense. Such sexual offenses could include a wife seen publicly with open hair or bare arms.²⁸

In spite of all these, divorce in the Old Testament mainly links the mosaic stipulations in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. As a background to this, it should be noted that the issues raised by Moses on divorce recognized the reality of the hardness of human hearts (cf Matt 19:7-8

In Deuteronomy 24:1-4, the word “erwat dabar” is commonly translated ‘some indecency’ or literally ‘nakedness of a thing’. When a man finds some ‘indecency’ or ‘uncleanness’ in his wife, a certificate of divorce is issue to her (to put her out) and sent away from his house (Deut 24:1-4):

When she departs from his house and goes and becomes another man’s wife, and if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back as his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and shall not bring sin on the

²⁸ Koranteng-Pipim ed., *Here We Stand*, 512.

land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.

The term ‘indecenty’ referred to here could also mean adultery; but the law did not have adultery in mind because if it did, such offense would be punishable by death, under ancient Israelite laws. A certificate of divorce was rather given in order to protect the wife from capital punishment. She only in this case suffers a release from the marriage.²⁹

²⁹*Andrews Study Bible*, “Footnotes on Deut 24:1-4” (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2010), 246.



Karaite bill of divorcement, Pumbedita, Babylonia, eighth century C.E. Ardmore, Pa., Sigmund Harrison Collection.

The following is a translation of an Ashkenazi *get*, according to the general usage in the Diaspora:

On the ... day of the week, the ... day of the month of ... in the year ... from the creation of the world according to the calendar reckoning we are accustomed to count here, in the city ... (which is also known as ...), which is located on the river ... (and on the river ...), and situated near wells of water, I, ... (also known as ...), the son of ... (also known as ...), who today am present in the city ... (which is also known as ...), which is located on the river ... (and on the river ...), and situated near wells of water, do willingly consent, being under no restraint, to release, to set free, and put aside thee, my wife, ... (also known as ...), daughter of ... (also known as ...), who art today in the city of ... (which is also known as ...), which is located on the river ... (and on the river ...), and situated near wells of water, who has been my wife from before. Thus do I set free, release thee, and put thee aside, in order that thou may have permission and the authority over thyself to go and marry any man thou may desire. No person may hinder thee from this day onward, and thou art permitted to every man. This shall be for thee from me a bill of dismissal, a letter of release, and a document of freedom, in accordance with the laws of Moses and Israel.

... the son of ... witness.
... the son of ... witness.

The bill of divorcement is composed of the *tofes*, i.e., the formula common to all such bills, and the *toref*, i.e., the specific part containing the details of the particular case, concluding with the declaration that the woman is henceforth permitted to any man.^{2,4}

Figure 1. The Karaite version of the Bill of Divorcement and Translation

Source: Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 6 pgs. 124, 131

God's Attitude towards Divorce

Persons who have abused the principles of marriage in Bible times did not take it family lives smoothly. Regardless of the Jewish stipulations on divorce and remarriage, God's reaction towards the abuse of marriage and divorce has always been the same; even though in some instances God would seem to permit some deviations but not necessarily endorse them.

God, in scripture, shows a strong aversion to divorce, and endorses the permanency of the marriage institution. The Genesis model of marriage upholds the indissolubility of marriage. In Genesis, much is said about the intimacy and unity that should exist in marriage. God wants people who go into marriage never to part.

In Amos 3:3 the question: "Can two walk together, unless they agree?", though fundamentally refers to believers avoiding intermarrying unbelievers, an underlying principle is the emphasis of unity that should exist between couples. Those who become one flesh should also learn to walk together in unity and not the break. God abhors divorce.

In Malachi 2:16, God unequivocally shows His strong aversion to "putting away" one's wife. He hates ('Sane' Heb.) divorce He says in Malachi 2: 14, God decries the abuse and treacherous dealings of the husband to the wife and intimates that He is the ever-living witness of what goes on in marriages.

He cautions that husbands should take heed to their spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife in their youth (vs.15)

"For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, "For it covers one's garment with violence," says the Lord of hosts. 'Therefore take heed to your spirit that you do not deal treacherously" (vs.16).

From the book *Marriage: Biblical and Theological Aspects*, Davidson contributes as follows:

Some have argued that the use of the verb *sane* in Malachi 2:16 where *sane* refers to the husband who divorces his wife, and not to Yahweh as the One who hates divorce. However, I point out that the verb *sane* elsewhere in Malachi is used exclusively of Yahweh (Mal 1:3), and the immediate context of Malachi 2:10-16 seems to point to Yahweh, and not a Jewish husband, as the subject of *sane*.³⁰

He also states that; “Nowhere else in the OT do we find such an elevated view of marriage as in Malachi 2:10-16. Nowhere else is divorce condemned in such explicit terms. ... The prophecy of Malachi provides in this respect (with regard to divorce) the ultimate OT revelation.”³¹

From the foregoing, marriage is seen as a permanent covenant that should exist between a man and his wife; with God as a witness. Divorce is not upheld by scripture (Jeremiah 3:8, Isaiah 50:1) God detests His people neglecting His principles and practicing abomination. In very strong terms he disapproves of dissolution of marriage or “putting away” (Mal. 2: 15-16), and marrying from unbelievers.

God shows His own personal attitude toward divorce. Therefore, the man who divorces his lawful wife “covers his garment with violence” (Mal. 2:16, RSV); that is, he inverts himself with iniquity and its consequences, from which he cannot escape. It is evident from our Lord’s attitude that adultery is the only ground for divorce (Matt 5:32).

Divorce in the New Testament

In the New Testament times, Jesus and the early church took a healthy position on divorce. They constantly referred to the beginnings of marriage (before sin) when God established it.

³⁰ Ekkehardt Mueller and Elias Brasil de Souza ed., *Marriage: Biblical and Theological Aspects* (Hagerstown, MD: BRI/ Review and Herald, 2015), 196.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

Background

In spite of the lofty plans God has for marriage, it is regrettable that marriages continue to break. Divorce, just like sin, is an intruder in marriage. The Old Testament (OT) stipulations (Deut 24:1-4) are evidence of how low marriage had sunk.

The New Testament (NT) upholds marriage as the best of relationships for humanity, yet a lot is discussed about the incidence of divorce and remarriage. The New Testament clearly affirms marriage (John 2:1-10; I Cor 7:10-16; Matt 19:3-9; Eph 5:31, 32; 6:1-4), emphasizing God's idea of piety, sanctity and companionship. Couples are urged to stay close unless adultery "porneia" or death part them (Matt 19:3-9). The New Testament affirms the permanence of marriage, as a principle.

Jesus and Divorce

Jesus addresses divorce in the gospels, and distinguishes Deut 24 as *descriptive not prescriptive*. He disapproves of divorce *except for sexual immorality or porneia* (Matt 19:9). Statements made by Jesus in the synoptic gospels on divorce can be cited in: Matt 5:31, 32; 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12 and Luke 16:18. Divorce *except porneia (adultery or fornication)* is an idea acceptable to both conservative and liberal Jewish groups.

Jesus reiterates the fact that divorce is opposed to God's original plan for marriage (Mark 10:2-9; Matt 5:32). Even when the law of Moses permitted divorce, God allowed that some measures be put in place to help ameliorate the severity and damage divorce might bring (Deut 24:1-4).

In His response to the Jewish leaders' question on divorce and remarriage (Mark 10:2-12) Jesus put tradition and scripture in their proper perspectives, stressing rather, the preservation of marriage. He set the parameters straight with a clear explanation of the exception clause to the amazement of the Jewish leaders and His apostles.

The Exception Clause

In Jesus' discourse in Matthew 19:3-10 (cf Mark 5:32) He introduced the idea of the "exception clause" emphasizing *porneia* as the only grounds for divorce. He explains that: (i) Whoever divorces His wife except for *porneia*, and marries another commits adultery" (Matt 19:9) (ii) and whoever marries such a woman also commits adultery. Here Jesus in a way, was stressing the idea of indissolubility of marriage.

A lot has been shared positively and negatively on the matter of the exception clause. Some commentaries on the issue will be further discussed.

Contributing on *Divorce and Remarriage*, in the book, *Here We Stand*, Ekkehardt Mueller discusses that while some commentators have it right, others misunderstood the principles taught by Him. The following are some examples shared by Mueller:

- a) Since Jesus and Moses took very stern positions on divorce, it suggests that divorce even on grounds of adultery is impossible.
- b) The church fathers opined that, even if divorce occurs on the grounds of adultery, remarriage is not acceptable.
- c) It is only unfaithfulness during engagement that divorce is permitted (if it is found out later in marriage).
- d) Divorce and remarriage by the innocent party is allowed only on the grounds of adultery. Adventist, Reformers, Evangelicals and Erasmus of Rotterdam believe in this.
- e) Apart from adultery, divorce can be granted on the grounds of the abandonment by a spouse, spousal abuse, and violence. Remarriage in any of these cases is granted.
- f) Others also believe that the exception clause is found only in Matthew and not in Luke and Mark. The early church

under the Holy Spirit probably added and actualized this test in Matthew.

- g) That Matthew 5:30 should be figuratively understood, since divorce and remarriage issue was not a commandment from Jesus in His sermon on the mount.
- h) Divorce, though could be granted only if incest is committed, yet prohibited marriages that is between a believer and unbeliever can also be considered. Spouses who physically and verbally abuse a partner in this case are also treated as an unbelievers.
- i) Divorce is possible only if a marriage exist in the first place³²

Mueller also summarizes that, Jesus' statement on divorce is connected to the seventh commandment. This commandment is binding and is independent of changing times and cultures. He further states:

There are slight differences between the exception clauses in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9, although the basic message is the same. In some sense the two exception clauses are even complementary. In any case the exception clause does not require divorce, but allows for it. Whoever divorces his wife, except for the reason of porneia, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery (Matt 5:32).

People who share the view that even the innocent spouse should not remarry, sometimes make reference to the church fathers as the yardstick. But in religious practice the church fathers had not stood more faithful to scripture than today's Christians.³³

Jesus stresses the exception clause and tells how very uncompromising the issues are in Christian marriage. The Seventh-day Adventist Church manual comments thus:

³²Koranteng-Pipim, ed., *Here We Stand*, 512-514.

³³Koranteng-Pipim, ed., *Here We Stand*, 525-526.

When Jesus said, ‘Let no man put asunder’, He established a rule of conduct for the church, under the dispensation of grace, that must transcend all civil enactment that would go beyond His interpretation of the divine law governing the marriage relation. He gives a rule to which His followers should adhere even if the prevailing customs allows larger liberty. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared plainly that there could be no dissolution of the marriage tie, except for unfaithfulness to the marriage vow.³⁴

Christ in various discourses in the NT emphasizes the need for couples to stay in marriage without breaking (Matthew 5:32, Matthew 19:6,9; Mark 10:9-12; Luke 16:18). Jesus thus demonstrates His strong aversion to the dissolution of marriage.

Divorce in the Epistles

So far enough biblical sources, in this chapter, have revealed that divorce, except for scripturally endorsed reasons, is completely abhorred by God. He registers his displeasure on divorce to the extent of not accepting any excuse for engaging in it (Mal. 2:14-16).

However, in the event of serious misunderstanding between man and wife, separation seems to be recommended by Paul (1 Cor 7:11). Separation would mean allowing couples in conflict to stay apart from each other, while working on them for a truce. During such situations, none of them is permitted to remarry. They are to stay clean (not to remarry or engage in extra marital affairs) until they come back again one day. If one of them defaults by marrying another man or woman, that one commits adultery.

In such situations, even though reconciliation is ideally recommended, the innocent spouse always has the right to remarry.

Commenting on Matthew 5:32, the SDA Bible commentary states thus:

³⁴*Church Manual*, 18th ed., 152.

From Jesus' teachings here it may be inferred that the innocent party is free to choose whether the marriage relationship shall be continued. Reconciliation is ever the ideal, especially if children are involved. Here and in Jesus' parallel discussion in Matthew 5:32 it seems to be implied, even though not specially stated, that the innocent party to a divorce is at liberty to marry again. This has been the understanding of the great majority of commentators through the years.³⁵

Therefore, when a man and wife face problems and fall apart, it is only biblically seen as a separation between the two. The church or the society is expected to work on them spiritually, psychologically and emotionally to reconcile the two. Spousal Separation is unfortunately equated to divorce in most cultures and religious groups. But biblically the two are not the same. Divorce is only permitted, according to the Jesus' discourse, when the innocent spouse is unable to re-bind to the other partner who commits adultery.

Also in 1 Corinthians 7:11 a mention is made about the case of the unbelieving spouse who is permitted to leave if she so desires. In the text, the clause "if she departs" also translated "if she separates herself" means or implies that:

"There would be cases of matrimonial differences that would not be overcome by affection and Christian forbearance, and separation would result. In such cases the rejected or separated wife should not marry another person, but she should seek reconciliation with her husband."³⁶

Paul is here seen not to be expressing views different from the general NT teachings on this subject. The reference made in vs.13 to the word Gr'aphiēmi' (Put away) also meaning 'to dismiss' or "to divorce", is normally used of the wife who is being dismissed or divorced. This idea of putting away by the husband traces back to the Jewish tradition. Some, "Jewish laws recognize the right of the wife under certain

³⁵F. D. Nichol, *SDA Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1876- 1980), 5:454.

³⁶Nichol, *SDABC*, 5:708.

circumstances to divorce her husband”. It should be stressed that this was permissible only under such special Jewish law.

It is, from the foregoing, clear that whereas divorce, except for ‘porneia’, is not biblically allowed. Spousal separation rather, may be permitted for a time with the understanding that, the disputing parties would eventually return to the marriage tie.

The Seventh Day Adventist Church manual has the following to say on the above subject:

A spouse who has violated the marriage vow and who is divorced does not have the moral right to marry another while the spouse who has been faithful to the marriage vow still lives and remains unmarried and chaste. The person who does so shall be removed from membership. The person whom he or she marries, if a member, also shall be removed from membership....

Husbands and wives are therefore strongly admonished not to seek the path of divorce even if they do they should persevere to work a reconciliation: and not to resort to remarriage.³⁷

In 1 Peter 3:7, the apostle admonishes husbands to live with their spouses with understanding and honor, because wives (women) are considered weaker vessels. If this advice is heeded to it will help minimize divorce cases.

Also in Hebrews 13:4, Paul seems to highlight the need for couples to honor their intimate relationships in marriage to forestall continues happy union. Paul and Jesus therefore agree on the permanence of marriage as against divorce.

Counsels from Ellen White on Marriage and Divorce

The teachings of Ellen White stand to agree on the biblical principles of marriage and divorce. She only sheds more light on what is already there in scripture. Much work is done on this subject, and she very clearly affirms marriage and detest divorce, except as

³⁷*Church Manual*, 153.

the bible puts it, on the grounds of porneia. In her book *Adventist Home*, She comments on some misconceptions of marriage corrected by Jesus:

Among the Jews, a man was permitted to put away his wife for the most trivial offenses, and the woman was then at liberty to marry again. This practice led to great wretchedness and sin. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus declared plainly that there could be no dissolution of the marriage tie except for unfaithfulness to the marriage vow. “Everyone,” He said, “that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulterous: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committed adultery.”³⁸

Jesus, according to E.G. White, emphasized the unlawfulness of divorce and points his audience (the Pharisees) back to Eden. Jesus sought to change the mindset of the Jewish leaders regarding the morality of marriage. According to Jesus, these Jewish teachers for a long time had harbored wrong views about marriage. The sanctity of marriage had been treated lightly by them. Out of their hardened hearts they assigned trivial excuses to seek divorce. Children and mothers consequently suffered neglect and humiliation. To restore the honor and sanctity of marriage Christ in His first miracle at a wedding affirmed marriage and also in His teachings corrected the evils that had been done by the Jewish leaders to marriage.³⁹

On divorce based on cultural and legal requirements, Ellen White states that:

A woman may be legally divorced from her husband by the laws of the land and yet not divorced in the sight of God and according to the higher law. There is only one sin, which is adultery, which can place the husband or wife in a position where they can be free from the marriage vow in the sight of God. Although the laws of the land may grant a divorce, yet they are husband and wife still in the Bible light, according to the laws of God.⁴⁰

³⁸White, *Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1952), 340.

³⁹White, *Adventist Home*, 341.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 344.

In 1 Corinthians 7, Ellen White adds another dimension to the issue. She explains that a husband on the grounds of his wife being an unbeliever, cannot divorce her. But if the unbelieving wife, for instance, decides to leave the matrimonial home then the husband will be justified. He should not act from emotions to take decisions that are not based on biblical principles, but should rather rely on God to provide the necessary wisdom to choose the right path.⁴¹

The above statements by Ellen White is in consonance with Pauline teachings. Jesus rather seems be quite silent on this issue, as he passes no tangible comment on it.

God instituted marriage in the beginning, when sin was not known to humanity. Many perversions and abuse have characterized this noble institution with the onset of sin. One of the major results – divorce, has been a disaster to human relationships. But if the foregoing biblical teachings are adhered to the rate of this unfortunate canker will be reduced.

In spite of the cultural influence on marriage, both the Old Testament and New Testament teachings agree that divorce is not permissible, except for ‘porneia’ (fornication and adultery). The Genesis model of marriage stresses its permanence; and in the sermon of the mount, “Jesus declared plainly that there could be no dissolution of the marriage tie, except for unfaithfulness to the marriage vow.”⁴² However, “In the event that reconciliation is not effected, the spouse who violated the marriage vow has no biblical right to secure a divorce and also to remarry.”⁴³

Marriage is at its best, if it is followed the Bible way. Christian marriage is supposed to be a one man- one woman in a loving relationship that lasts till death parts

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²*Church Manual*, 152.

⁴³Ibid., 152.

them. But the Church is by and large confronted with some cultural pressures that militate against this principle, which consequently influence divorce among members.

These pressures might include: the payment of highly priced dowries, the insistence of the use of alcoholic drinks for dowries, just as the payment of dowries signify acceptance of marriages the return of dowries to husbands indicating proof of divorce, incessant in-law interferences with unbiblical traditions to create problems for Christian couples etc. These have become contemporary cultural challenges for the Church. In spite of all these, the sanctity of marriage should be maintained at all cost regardless of all the pressures culture presents.

Having looked at the biblical backgrounds and foundations on marriage and divorce, the next chapter will be handling various literature and the views of others on this matter.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter looks at appropriate literature that discuss issues relating to marriage and divorce. An extensive consultation is made to clearly bring out the principles that could contribute to reducing the impact of cultural pressures on divorce. The issues raised by authors would be summarized, evaluated, and the relevance of the writer's views to the project would be looked at. The content of this chapter is structured along the following sources of literature collections:

- Selected Protestant Literature
- Selected African traditional views
- Some Jewish views
- Some Adventist works

The issue of marriage and divorce is one of the widest subjects treated in socio-religious and cultural circles. The four sources above provide some necessary information and contributions that will help find solutions to the problem under discussion. Where necessary, some primary sources will be consulted for more information to enhance the discussion.

According to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica Volume 6*, Divorce is defined as, “the formal dissolution of the marriage bond.”⁴⁴ But just like in the Mesopotamian statutes the Bible did not have detailed law codes on divorce.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Cecil Roth, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 6:122.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 123.

It is clearly deduced from the two definitions above that divorce can occur legally or customary. This also suggests that, marriage can be both contracted or dissolved legally or customary.

Meanwhile, Peter O. Akalamudo explains marriage as God – designed institution that is to help check the abuses and excesses of the nature of men. God intended it for fellowship and companionship. Such a union between a man and his wife will ensure procreation and also protect against immorality. This will result in children raised in a milieu of love, with parents servicing as models.⁴⁶

It is however, in the understanding of the Researcher that biblical marriage is rather a covenant relationship between a man and a woman to ensure a living, loving unconditional companionship. In such covenant relationships, there is always a genuine commitment on the part of both of them. Love, sacrifice and attachment are deeper and long lasting.

But when marriage is viewed as a contract, partners consider it like a business agreement between them. It is always seen as you scratch my back and I scratch yours arrangement. Partners normally eye benefits from the relationship and not sacrifices. The level of commitment in such a relationship is low and usually short-lived.

Principles and Teachings of Marriage and Divorce

In practice, society has in contemporary times gone beyond certain levels to embrace diverse concepts and orientations that tend to bring sharp differences socially, legally and culturally. Contemporary sex orientations have given rise to freedom of choice of any gender as marriage partner. Marriage is now seen as any two people cohabiting, or two partners in a romantic relationship. Also in contemporary

⁴⁶Peter O. Akalamudo, *The Journey before Marriage* (Lagos, Nigeria: Soloj Resources, 2007), vi.

times marriage is generally seen as a contract. Marriage, however, is a covenant shared between two people in a loving companionship.

Contributing on a relationship between a man and his wife, Olatudun A. Orebiyi explains that the issue of bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh in the Bible can equally be interpreted as Eve being part of Adam. The woman also shared equality with the husband, and according to the purpose of God, she was indispensable to the man in marriage. She, therefore cannot be treated inferior.⁴⁷

In spite of these challenges, it is generally known that, in human societies, no relationship or communion can equate a good marriage in terms of love, affection and cordiality. The disregard to the sanctity of marriage has unfortunately changed the story today.

There is too much perversion and abuse in marriage. The marital rights of women, in particular, have sometimes been seriously damaged on the altar of culture and religion. Some of these abuses include harsh widowhood rites, unfair polygamous practices, wife battering, property sharing, service in the matrimonial home etc.

Contributing on this, Esther Lasebikan in the book, *African Culture and the Quest for Women's Rights*, remarks that women in most African cultures are thought of as property for the convenient of men. This has made wife battering carried out by men with impunity. The assumption in most African cultures is that biblically, the woman was developed out of the bone taken from the rib of the man and can be treated anyhow by him.⁴⁸

⁴⁷Dorcas Olu Akintunde, ed. *African Culture and Quest for Women's Rights* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Sefer Books, 2001), 72.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 15.

The continuous rise in the incidence and the high rate of divorce has become a disturbing phenomenon to various cultures and societies. Established customs may not always provide right answers to human problems. Culture should not be static but dynamic, and open-ended phenomenon which is continuous and transformative.⁴⁹ It is beneficial therefore to this project to share diverse views with other authors to have a broader perspective of the subject under discussion.

The Romans had an interesting view towards marriage – *matrimonia debent esse libera*, meaning - *marriage ought to be free*. By this, one could opt out of marriage whenever he or she desires. In contrast to this, is the view shared by *Victorian England*. This view stresses that couples must live together *for better or for worse*. Both views are upheld globally depending largely on one's culture and the society of upbringing.⁵⁰

But in the beginning of human history it was not so; much emphasis was placed on the permanence and sanctity of marriage. It is important that people contemplating going into marriage and those already in it, attach some seriousness and decorum to it.

In Ghana, divorce is frowned upon and seen as an element of cultural confusion. And most cultures around the world seldom favor the dissolution of marriage. Commenting on Divorce, Mohammed Mustapha states that:

The seven-letter word [DIVORCE] was almost unheard of among couples 50 to 40 years back in most parts of Africa, especially in Ghana. In the 50's, 60's and 70's, the sanctity of the institution of marriage had not been corrupted; it was still very much intact and respected as a sacred institution. If a couple got married then, it was for better, for worse, till death did them

⁴⁹Dorcas Olu Akintunde, ed., *African Culture and Quest for Women's Rights*, 73.

⁵⁰Jack, *Matrimonia debent esse libera*, 3rd June 2008, accessed 10th June 2014, www.1001rabbits.blogspot.co.uk.

part. Marriage was a worthwhile venture then, especially in Africa.⁵¹

“However, with the advent of the western culture, the marital institution began to suffer setbacks. Pressures of life and western way of life has made divorce, a hitherto foreign word in the lexicon of couples, a reality in contemporary times. Such word was a taboo in some communities in Ghana.”⁵²

Selected Protestant Literature

Protestants have widely written on this subject. According to a published report by Brian Orchard:

First marriages stand 45 percent chance of breaking up; and second marriages, a 60 percent chance. But those numbers just confirm what we already know: Divorce has increased not only in frequency but also in acceptance. And even if we don't focus on figures, per se, we know that today far more marriages end in divorce than a couple of decades ago.⁵³

Over and over again, people generally assign a lot of factors that influence marriage and divorce. These factors, though not captured by Furtado et al, but other authors according to their article, range from issues that are socio-economic, whether marriages are first, second or third. Others include, premarital childbearing, marital shocks, including untimed pregnancies, cohabitation before marriage etc. Furtado et al, also from their studies believed that: “All in all, we view our results as evidence in favor of the role of culture but believe that a more thorough examination of the mechanisms through which culture operates is an interesting question for future research.

⁵¹Mohammed Mustapha, *Divorce*, accessed 4th Dec 2015, www.modernghana.com.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Brian Orchard, *A Culture of Divorce* (Fall, 2001), accessed 15th Dec 2015, <http://www.vision.org/visionmedia/article.aspx?Id=472>.

Furtado et al further explain that, “divorce culture has a stronger impact on the divorce decisions of females than of males pointing to a potentially gendered nature of divorce taboos ... therefore looking at “the importance of divorce as a determinant of later outcomes in life ... : culture should be taken into consideration when formulating family policies.”⁵⁴

A probe into Brian Orchard’s statement proves that he was right. The statement helps to elucidate the causes of the prevailing problems in marriage and divorce. This is beneficial to this research because it helps to focus on ways to solve the problems.

So far, the discussions from the writers above tend to suggest the fact that culture and tradition need to be given some attention in order to reduce the tide of divorce; and this makes sense to the researcher.

Brian and Furtado’s ideas discussed above, strengthen the issue under discussion the more. And that not only should culture be factored into family issues, but also in church and national policies.

Charles H. Kraft, in his admonition to church leaders on how to deal with spiritual problems facing the church, points to divorce among other spiritual problems as a matter which the devil is behind!⁵⁵

It is in the opinion of the researcher that since all evil can be attributed to the devil, Kraft’s point is well made. However, if men and women will always choose the

⁵⁴ Furtado et al, *Does Culture affect Divorce Decision?* (IZA, Discussion paper No.5960 Sept. 2011), accessed 22nd Mar 2015, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23322379>.

⁵⁵ Charles H. Kraft, *The Evangelical Guide to Spiritual Warfare: Scriptural Insights and Practical Information facing the Enemy* (Minneapolis, MN: Baker, 2015), 35.

right parts and follow the dictates of God, then by His power He will assist to overcome all problems including divorce.

In her book, *The Everything Guide to Divorce*, Milinda Reed explains: When people marry for the first time, they rarely think about the possibility of divorce. They make a commitment *till death do us part* and they intend to honor that commitment. Why, then, do so many marriages end in divorce? Milinda adds that the hopes, dreams, aspirations and goals of couples change and tilt in different directions as they grow.

The introduction of children might bring positive or negative change sometimes. But when children mature and move to join new associations, “parents realize they have grown too far to have a marriage.”⁵⁶

The stress, disappointments and frustrations that characterize marriage make it hard to manage. But “instead of gritting their teeth and hanging in there, many people put themselves first and think more in terms of what they should be getting from marriage. If their expectations aren’t met, they choose divorce.”⁵⁷

People will opt for divorce for any reason, without much knowledge of what lies ahead, most times. Milinda therefore admonishes that, “A successful marriage often requires work and effort. Sometimes the problems of the marriage make divorce look like a good choice, but surviving a divorce is difficult as well”⁵⁸

Reiterating on the same point, Michelle Weiner-Davis states: ‘ Gradually, I have come to the conclusion that divorce is not the answer. It doesn’t necessarily solve the problem it purports to solve. Most marriages are worth saving’.

⁵⁶Milinda J. Reed, *The Everything Guide to Divorce*, 2nd ed. (Avon, MA: Adams Media, 2009), ix.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, xi.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 2.

She explains that countless divorcees continue to battle with issues they believed to be leaving behind during divorce, only to learn too late that divorce does not free them from the emotions of their former spouse.

Blame games played by spouses during divorce make them lose sight of the role played by each of them in the deterioration of their relationship. And according to Michelle, “this may partly account for the saddening statistic that sixty percent (60%) of second marriages also end in divorce.”⁵⁹

Even though Kraft tangibly points to the devil as the cause of divorce, Milinda and Michelle encourage that it is always possible to fix things back. I also agree with these thought: they contribute positively to the project task.

Commenting on the avoidance of playing the blame game in the family during crisis times, William B. Berman et al, state: “The time comes when, as adults, we must decide to take responsibility for our own actions and stop blaming the past for making us the way we are. Then we can choose to examine the past to discover what needs to change in our own lives.”⁶⁰

To prevent most of the crisis in relationships, marriage needs to be worked on at all times. “It is not enough to declare your love on your wedding day and assume that your partner still feels the same way 30 years later just because you haven’t revoked it.”⁶¹

⁵⁹Michelle Weiner-Davis, *Divorce Busting* (New York City, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 15.

⁶⁰William B. Berman et al., *Shaking The Family Tree* (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1991), 55.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 55.

Unless relationships are jealously guarded, separation and divorce are usually the inevitable outcome. Couples usually find escape routes through divorce. Collins comments that:

Divorce may be viewed as the legal termination of a once promising, hope-filled and satisfying relationship that has been coming apart socially, spiritually, and emotionally. Even though it is common, divorce is never a happy solution to marital problems. Apparently as common, among Christian couples as among non-believers, divorce is used too often and too quickly as a way to escape marital difficulties. Even so, there are times when divorce may seem to be the feasible alternative to a problem-plagued marriage". Welcome route to freedom or a convenient escape hatch from the difficulties of marriage.⁶²

Time heals eventually. Many people are living in divorce conditions now, who if had exercised some little patience, would have had a story different. Men and women have often used divorce too quickly as the escape route. But,

Even when a couple agrees to terminate their marriage, it hurts to separate. Guilt, anger, resentment, fear, and disappointment often dominate the divorced person's thinking, and frequently there is loneliness, confusion, lowered self-esteem, insecurity, a sense of rejection, and the haunting concern about who was at fault.⁶³

The principle of embracing the divorce problem instead of blaming it on others, as espoused by Berman and Collins, is laudable and should form part of the project suggestions package.

The world has come to accept divorce so much that it is gradually ceasing to be a social problem. People now do it with impunity. The traditional systems tend to endorse this more. But the untold associated harm, including: economical, psychological, emotional, physical, spiritual, and some social behavior, especially on the children, cannot be quantified.

⁶²Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed. (Dallas, TX: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007), 608.

⁶³Ibid.

Collins depicts that:

Stable marriages more often build on persisting commitment, knowledge, sensitivity, interpersonal skills and willingness to live in accordance with Biblical teaching. The Christian counselor, like others in the local congregation, can help to ensure that good marriages are built, cared for, and repaired when there are signs of breakdown. Backed by prayer and support from others, marriages can grow, broken relationships can be restored and divorce can be prevented.⁶⁴

African Traditional Views

The emerging global permissiveness in our societies has over the years affected some African cultural practices. The African traditional marriage which has been predominantly polygamous is experiencing some transformation by and large.

In their contribution to this issue, Gbola Aderibigbe and Deji Ayegboyin explain that even in cultures where polygamy is not tolerated, men's innate lower passions and appetite for other women has resulted in a hundred other ways of meeting their insatiable appetite. This has resulted in perversions like homosexuality, lesbianism, rape etc., causing more damage than even the abuse of polygamy.⁶⁵

Many writers will agree that, looking at the fundamentals and processes involved in the establishment of marriage; the institution was actually purposed to be loving, pure, and not intended to break.

The typical African traditionalist usually believe that customary marriages are preferred to western wedding ceremony. These weddings have come to Africa as a result of westernization and transfer of culture. But it is believe that customary marriage devoid of unbiblical traditions, is most suitable to the African setting. Once such is done couples might not need any formal weddings again.

⁶⁴Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 608.

⁶⁵Gbola Aderibigbe and Deji Ayegboyin ed., *Nigeria Association for the Study of Religions and Education* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Olu-Akin Press, 1999), 39.

If solid foundations are laid and the relationships properly oiled from time to time, divorce will seriously be minimized. Different cultures have different ways of establishing marriages. But it is generally seen that the principles underlying its establishment share some commonalities.

Traditional Marriage Rites among the Akan

Mira May gives a vivid summary of how traditional marriages among the Akans, and in most cultures in Ghana, take place. Marriages usually take place between two families- the bride's and the groom's. A traditional rite is performed for a man and a woman to be publicly recognized as a couple. The groom assisted by his family, especially the parents, goes to seek the hand of the bride from her parents and relatives.

The ceremony is witnessed by friends, church members (if any), family members and some invited guests. It is so widely publicized that it should always take a similar publicity to end it. On the set date, the groom and his family along with the guests show up early morning in the bride's house. The rite is performed by elders and parents of the would-be couple. A prayer is said or a libation poured, followed by the presentation of money, the dowry, gifts and drinks to the bride by the groom and his family.

After a careful check of the bridal gifts and dowry, the bride is invited by the father, and three times she is asked to register her consent for the marriage publicly, before they (dowry and presents) are collected by the parents and relatives. The groom is also made to confirm the relationship and endorse the bride in the process. The marriage, after this, is formally and legitimately declared accepted by the families

and elders. Specially selected people from each side of the families become the main caretakers for the couple and the marriage.⁶⁶

Things are so well arranged and proper safeguards are also put in place. The marriage is not expected to break easily.

In Ghana, divorce is frowned upon and seen as an element of cultural confusion. And most cultures around the world seldom favor the dissolution of marriage.

In the event of dissolution of the marriage, a similar public gathering of the family representatives and the couple should take place to witness and approve the rite of divorce. Cases that qualify for divorce in marriage include: adultery, misconduct, denial of sex, infertility, insanity, chronic deadly disease, disrespect for spouse and relatives, etc. In a divorce rite, the wife is expected to return the dowry drink, while the husband is normally expected to grant some compensation to an innocent wife leaving the marriage.

Among the Akans of Ghana, divorce does not happen at the spur of a moment. Traditionally, before a husband and wife divorce, series of meetings involving elders, the couple, and family members take place. Sometimes, ailing marriages are worked on for several months to years before they finally break. Even where the cracks in the relationship are quite adverse, elders are sometimes able to patch things up to restore peace.

During final divorce arbitrations, parties are allowed to comprehensively present their cases. When it is clear that, success is unable to be achieved, then a

⁶⁶ Mira May, ed., "How Marriages are Contracted," *Ghana General News*, Nov. 21, 2011.

formal divorce is granted. Even after this, elders are appointed to monitor the two to explore the possibilities of a come-back.

Actually among the Akans, couples do not have the sole legitimate authority to dissolve their own marriages. It is only the courts or the traditional families and elders that have the legitimacy to publicly declare the marriage between a man and wife formally dissolved.

Generally in Africa, when divorce is thus declared, it is realized most times that the woman is usually the one at the receiving end.⁶⁷ This by implication means that the wife may suffer and lose a lot. And in some cultures where inheritance is patrilineal, property and even children usually go to the father.

The commonest permissible grounds for divorce have been adultery throughout most cultures of the world. Mira's vivid description of the marriage rite gives an additional scope to the project discussions. This will help our discussants to appreciate why some of the cultural things happen the way they do.

Divorce, as Mbiti puts it, "is a delicate accident in a marital relationship."⁶⁸ He explains further that in Africa, divorce must be seen against the background that marriage is not an event but a process. Therefore: "once the full contract of marriage has been fully executed, it is extremely hard to dissolve it. If dissolution does come about, then it creates a great scar in the community concerned."⁶⁹

In Africa, the commonest phenomenon that happens more often than divorce is a temporary separation between the husband and wife. This usually comes as a

⁶⁷Ayo Kehinde, ed., *Gender and Development* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Hope Publications, 2009), 138.

⁶⁸John S. Mbiti, *African Religious and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Gaborne, Botswana: Heinemann Education (Pty), 1990), 141.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

result of a quarrel between the couple or one of the spouses, and his or her partner's relatives. In situations like this, the wife usually retires to her parents' home until reconciliation is secured. Sometimes, a prolonged separation may give rise to a permanent divorce.

Mbiti also assigns infertility, impotence; break of virginity (in some societies), long desertions, cruelty, practice of magic and witchcraft, unfaithfulness and others as causes of divorce. There may be times when due to work in distant places, couples live apart for long periods. "Such long inevitable separations have their detrimental effects on the marriage"; which might lead to a permanent separation. It should be reiterated that usually it is the wife and children that suffer most during divorce situations.

Where there are children of a separated or divorced couple, these naturally reap a heavy blow. It needs to be pointed out, however, that in the traditional system where kinship plays an important role in the lives of the individuals, such children are not severely affected by divorce and separation as would be the case otherwise. In modern family situations, divorce and separation pose a greater danger to the children involved than in the traditional setup. In either case, the children go with their mother normally.⁷⁰

In the Akan traditional system, most of the issues stated above, (like children following mothers during divorce) are influenced by their matrilineal inheritance and other accepted customary rites. However, it has been proven that the gravity or severity of the effects of divorce on children in both traditional and Christian family situations might not necessarily differ.

Marriages in African societies continue even beyond the grave, there is no *till death do us part*, according to Kirwen. He explains further that, marriage is a community affair; therefore elders and relatives must agree on the would-be wife and

⁷⁰Mbiti, *African Religious and Philosophy*, 142.

husband. Newly-weds are often put under the guidance and protection of elders and older couples. This ensures the continuation of the union.

Kirwen continues that the marriage institution cements kinship ties, preserve human race and ensures continuity of life. It is God's way of uniting humanity and ensuring continuity of life. It is a sacramental bond that is lifelong.

Therefore he states: "Divorce, especially among patrilineal peoples, is rare as there has been careful preparation to ensure that the bride and groom are compatible and come from well-respected families."⁷¹

The traditional Akan society, until recently, enjoyed highly protected and preserved marriages just as described above. Its lineage and inheritance has been matrilineal in nature. Dowries paid by the groom do not go to the bride's father only but also to the mother and relatives. Usually strong bonding is established between the two families as a result of the marriage. From typical African perspectives Mbiti and Kirwin are seen to oppose divorce strongly. Their position will buttress the spirit behind this project.

Divorce Rites among the Akans

Traditionally, when a marriage is to dissolve, it follows some particular processes and rites. Among the Akans, as described by Nkansah K. Kyeremateng,

A couple is at liberty to seek divorce, provided tangible reasons can be provided for such. The acceptable reasons may include: barrenness, impotence, unfaithfulness, laziness, indebtedness, murderous intentions, sexual denial/excuses, desertion for one year and above, witchcraft, stealing, and disrespect to husband or in-law⁷²

⁷¹Michael C. Kirwen, ed. *African Cultural Knowledge- Themes and Embedded Beliefs* (Nairobi, Kenya: Mias Books, 2011), 134-139.

⁷²K. Nkansah Kyeremateng, *The Akans of Ghana: Their Customs, History and Institutions* (Kumasi, Ghana: Sebewie De Ventures, 2010), 77.

In the event of any of the above causes preferred against a partner, representatives from both families are put together as an arbitration team. They work very hard to ensure that peace and unity prevail. All their meetings with the couple usually seek to patch up and forestall permanent reconciliation. However, in the unfortunate situation where the two are unable to come together, the initial request for divorce is granted. Further traditional processes continue from here.

In the process:

Financial issues are gone into and the necessary balances are worked out for refunds to be made. Usually, it was the woman who had to balance the man. If it could not be paid at all, it could be allowed to “hang” over the woman for her next husband to settle. The chief evidence of divorce is the powder (HYIRE) the husband’s sister /cousin puts on the back of the neck of the woman, from an “ODWEN” leaf.⁷³

Meanwhile, in contemporary times the society has modified some of these compensatory rites. Depending on who owed who and who has suffered the more, commensurate and adequate compensations are given to forestall equity and peace.

The divorce rites in the Akan system tend to skew in favor of the husband in most cases. Many privileges including financial balances tend to go in favor of men. This suggests elements of inequity and unfairness. And it is a lesson for the project analysis.

On this matter, Sotunsa observes elsewhere that, the general society seems to be insensitive and careless to the suffering of women in marriage.... Women face a lot of critical issues in marriage which call for serious and urgent attention. Existing repressive cultural practices coupled with men’s selfish, egoistic attitudes that tend to militate against women need urgent redress.⁷⁴

⁷³Ibid., 77.

⁷⁴Mobolane Sotunsa, *Feminism and Gender Discourse: The African Experience* (Sagamu, Nigeria: Ashaba Publications, 2008), 88 & 89.

Some Jewish Views

Culturally, just as it prevailed in the near East, Divorce was an acceptable custom in ancient Israel. In fact, references in the Old Testament showed that a Hebrew could divorce his wife at will and send her away from his home. (Lev. 21:7, 14; 22:13; Num. 30:10; Deut. 22:19, 29)

Commenting on this, Orebiyi informs that the Jewish culture did not portray women in a proper light, either in social or religious circles. They were treated with contempt, discrimination, and demeaning treatments. It is said that Rabbis did not teach (Luke 10:39), nor speak to women. (John 4:27)⁷⁵

This is alluded to in the use of such terms as Shelle'ah (Deut. 21:14; 24:1,3), garesh (Lev. 21:7; Ezek. 44:22) and hozi' (Ezra 10:3; Deut. 24:2). Men could send wives out from their homes only if it so pleases them. In that case the husband was required to write her "a bill of divorce" (sefer keritut) or a bill of divorcement; sometimes also called "the get".

When it happens like that, sometimes, "a woman was entitled to some kind of financial settlement in the event of an arbitrary divorce action", according to the same material quoted above.

But, "there were instances, however, when living together must have been unbearable, and women did abandon their husbands (Judges 19:1-3; Jeremiah 3:20)", it adds.

In later Jewish law, Divorce was distinguished from 'Nullity of Marriage'. In this situation, courts declared, "That no marriage ever came into existence so that all rights and duties flowing therefrom- personal or pecuniary are rendered

⁷⁵Dorcas Olu, Akintunde, ed., *African Culture and Quest for Women's Rights*, 72, 73.

inoperative.”⁷⁶Example of such is prohibition on account of incest. This is different from an annulment of marriage.

Instances of Permitted Divorces

The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (vol. 6) also gives instances where divorce could be permitted among the Jews:

- Divorce by Mutual Consent: this is where the two parties consent to dissolve the marriage. The will of both must be sought.
- Divorce other than by consent: these are situations where the courts decide whether there are grounds to permit divorce.
- Rights for spousal demand for Divorce: a wife or husband would normally demand divorce customarily if any of the following applied:
 - i. Physical Defects- this is where a spouse suffers from a contagious and dangerous disease. Example; where a woman suffers from epilepsy.
 - ii. The wife has the right to divorce if the husband is impotent or incapable of impregnating her. But in the latter case, she has to prove this by waiting for at least ten years.
 - iii. Unacceptable conduct by a spouse, e.g. refusal of conjugal rights.
 - iv. A man can also seek for divorce when the wife cannot bear children within a period of ten years.

Execution of the Divorce: the presentation of the bill of Divorcement to a wife sends her away from her matrimonial home. This document is usually prepared by a

⁷⁶Cecil Roth, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 6:122 &123.

scribe in Aramaic and given to the husband to sign and deliver to his wife. It can sometimes be a conditional ‘get’.⁷⁷

Below is a translated version of an Ashkenazi Get (Bill of Divorcement):

On the...day of the week, the...day of the month of..., in the year... from the creation of the world according to the calendar reckoning we are accustomed to count here, in the city... (Which is also known as...), which is located on the river... (and on river...), and situated near wells of water, I,...(also known as...), the son of...(also known as...), who today am present in the city...(which is also known as...), which is located on the river...(and on the river...), and situated near wells of water, do willingly consent, being under no restraint, to release, to set free, and put aside thee, my wife,...(also known as...), daughter of...(also known as...), who art today in the city of...(which is also known as...), which is located on the river...(and on the river...), and situated near wells of water, who has been my wife from before. Thus do I set free, release thee, and put thee aside, in order that thou may have permission and authority over thyself to go and marry any man thou may desire. No person may hinder thee from this day onward, and thou art permitted to every man. This shall be for thee from me a bill of dismissal, a letter of release, and a document of freedom, in accordance with the laws of Moses and Israel.

...the son of..., witness.

...the son of..., witness.

“The bill of divorcement is composed of the *tofes*, i.e., the formula common to all such bills, and the *toref*, i.e., the specific part containing the details of the particular case, concluding with the declaration that the woman is henceforth permitted to any man.”⁷⁸Sometimes Agents of Divorce may be appointed to facilitate the process. In any case, once the ‘get’ process is completed, the parties are generally free to remarry, except as may be prohibited by Jewish laws.

Prohibited marriages, according to *Encyclopaedia Judaica* Vol. 11, are those that suffer legal impediments between the particular parties. Such prohibitions usually

⁷⁷Cecil Roth, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 6:124 -130.

⁷⁸Cecil Roth, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 6:131.

render the marriage either: (i) ab initio (null and void) or (ii) though prohibited, does not invalidate the marriage but provides grounds for termination by divorce.⁷⁹

Prohibited and Void Marriages: These include those which are gillui arayot those punishable by death (karet), per pentateuchal laws. Examples are: (1) a marriage between a man and his mother, daughter, sister or other relatives. (Lev. 18:6ff); (2) a marriage between a man and the sister of his wife (such woman's marriage will, for her lifetime, remain void); (3) marriage between a man his brother's wife: the only exceptions are normally divorced wives and Levirate marriages; (4) marriage with adulteress wife; (5) Mixed marriages- marriage with a non-Jewish partner.

Prohibited but Valid Marriages: these are marriages which though prohibited, are not punishable by death (gillui arayot). They are valid and can only terminate by death or divorce. Examples include: (1) "A woman who has sexual relations with anyone but her husband becomes prohibited to the latter as well, and also to her lover even after her divorce from her husband."⁸⁰ (2) A raped woman (she is prohibited to her husband only if he is a priest). She is rather permitted to remarry, if the man concerned is an ordinary Israelite; (3) a normal divorcee whose second marriage terminates by divorce or death, though prohibited to her former husband can validly remarry. A special guideline, according to Jewish laws; are given regarding remarriage and prohibited but valid marriages.

Marriages with a divorcee or widow is prohibited before the lapse of 90days from the date of her acquiring her new status; in order to avoid doubt concerning the descent of her offspring; similarly, for the good of her child, it is forbidden to marry a pregnant woman or nursing mother until the child has reached the age of 24 months.⁸¹

⁷⁹Ibid., 11:1051.

⁸⁰Cecil Roth, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 11:1052.

⁸¹Ibid.

These Jewish prohibitions of divorce are also discussed by Richard M. Davidson in the book, *Marriage: Biblical and Theological Aspects*. In his contribution, he refers to 1) Deuteronomy 22:13 -19 and collaborates that divorce could be prohibited if it involves faking virginity and seducing or raping a virgin. 2) Prohibition against Priests marrying divorcees (Lev 21:7, 14).

He also makes mention of some rights of divorced women in Leviticus 22:12, 13; and also the right of women to divorce (Exod 21:26, 27). Some of these laws, according to him, were also found in the Middle Assyrian statutes and parts of the oriental world.⁸²

It is interesting to observe that most of the issues discussed above occur almost precisely in the Akans traditional system. Prohibitions and considerations regarding divorce tend to protect and safeguard the sanctity of marriage. These prohibitions even affected the Priests of the land.

The Priest and Divorce

According to the Pentateuchal law, the priest is expressly prohibited to remarry a divorcee (a zonah or a halalah). Today's Jewish priests are still bound by this prohibition. Priests are also not permitted to marry divorcees who end up widows after their second marriages.

Again, “a priest is forbidden to remarry even his own former wife (Resp. Ribash no. 348)”⁸³Jewish stipulations on the priest's prohibitions on divorce and

⁸²Ekkehardt Mueller and Elias Brasil de Souza, ed., *Marriage: Biblical and Theological Aspect* (Hagerstown, MD: Bible Research Institute, Review & Herald Publishing Association, 2015), 185, 186.

⁸³Cecil Roth, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 11:1053.

remarriage may not apply in today's religious and cultural milieu of the Adventist Church in Ghana.

Some Adventist Works

A lot has been written by Adventist authors on this subject. Some controversial issues linked with marriage and divorce have attracted diverse opinions from them over the years.

Samuelle Bacchiochi, commenting on the subject states: "Divorce was not instituted by Moses, nor was it approved as an intrinsic right of the husband. In Deuteronomy 24:1-4, it is indicated that Moses sought to curb the evil of divorce by requiring the husband to give a bill of divorcement to his wife to protect her after her marriage to another man."⁸⁴

It is indicated further that a major factor that affects the continuous rise in divorce cases in the Church is the fact that society now sees marriage as a social contract.⁸⁵ He continues that:

No one knows how divorce began. The Biblical record shows that unlike marriage, divorce was not instituted by God. There is no indication in the Bible supporting that God introduced and institutionalized divorce after the fall as part of His order for human society. Divorce is "man-made", not divinely ordained. It represents human rejection of God's original plan for the indissolubility of the marriage bond.⁸⁶

Jeffrey and P. Brown, contrasting marriage as being a contract or a covenant, defines the word *covenant* as a promise of commitment binding two parties to one another unconditionally. They add that ...rather the nature of a *contract* is something for something, the nature of a covenant is an unconditional commitment. Covenant

⁸⁴Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Marriage Covenant: A Biblical Study on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 2001), 133.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 129.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*

marriage aims to restore God's original purpose for family, no longer exclusive and inward-looking but inclusive...⁸⁷

People in contemporary times marry on a pre-marital agreement that after giving birth to say two children, the husband and wife share these two children one each and end the marriage. This is purely a marriage on contract terms.

Confusion arising from inter-cultural relationships has contributed seriously to dissolution of marriages, especially in Africa. Quoting K.D. Djan's article, 'Till London Do Us Part' in the 'New African', J & P Brown reiterate: 40 % of UK marriages will end in divorce...Christians of African descent in the West are affected by this trend. And that, marriage was once said to be for life. Not anymore. The more Africans abroad absorb western ideas, the more their marriages break up. Divorce, is a tragic departure from God's ideal, they conclude.⁸⁸

Marriage in the Western culture, it is argued, is patterned along the ancient Greeks; while that of Africans follows the ancient Hebrews. Meanwhile, industrialization, western life influences, education, urbanization, and the impact of western culture on Christianity have drifted families in Africa away from the biblical model.⁸⁹

Again, describing the beauty and dynamics of marriage, Jeffrey and Pattiejean, referred to Tertullian describing marriage as something beautiful between two Christians in one hope, one desire, follow the same way of life and practice the same

⁸⁷Jeffrey and Pattiejean Brown, *The Total Marriage: A Guide to Successful Marriage* (Gratham, England: Autumn House Publishing, 1999), 17.

⁸⁸Brown, *The Total Marriage*, 127-129.

⁸⁹Ibid., 13.

religion.⁹⁰ Marriage is not a conditional alliance but rather “an in-spite-of, anyhow, regardless, nevertheless relationship.”⁹¹

Jeffery and Pattiejean Brown, in a different twist, however, shares the idea that sometimes some divorce or second marriages could be a blessing. It might release people from their pain and revive their faith. Such people who might have lived in pain and unkindness in life might have a respite in a new lease of life ⁹²

This is not a statement justifying divorce necessarily. The understanding here is that, due to the brokenness of humanity, perversions and abuses in marriage unfortunately might result in a bitter or pleasant end as the case may be; and this explains Jeffrey and Pattiejean’s assertion.

Commenting on Divorce and Remarriage, Sakae Kubo in his book: *Theology and Ethics of Sex*, shares the following:

He explains that, the western world, over the years, held the view that the best way to prevent marriage breakdown or divorce is to punish perpetrators. This idea is held by some protestant churches that frown upon divorce.

The Catholic Church, according to Kubo, rather maintains that marriage is indissoluble, that is, it is forever. Remarriage is never tolerated, and that even adultery cannot be grounds for divorce. Referring to Tertullian, Kubo adds that not even death could free a surviving spouse to remarry. The researcher holds a divergent view from Tertullian. Biblical foundations so far espoused in this work teach that an innocent spouse in divorce situation has the right to remarry.

⁹⁰Brown, *The Total Marriage*, 168.

⁹¹Ibid., 18.

⁹²Ibid., 131.

He continues that this teaching is shared partly by the Anglicans. Kubo also refers to K.E. Kirk, and quoting Matthew 19:3-9, affirms that marriage is indissoluble, and that, Jesus condemned remarriage after divorce in all cases. And that in divorce neither the innocent nor the guilty party may remarry. These positions, to the researcher, re inconsistent with biblical teachings.

Kubo explains that the guilty party in the dissolution of marriage has no right to remarry. In contravention to this rule, the church disfellowships the guilty; and can only be readmitted into fellowship through rebaptism. In the event of physical abuse on a partner however, separation is recommended. Even if the innocent remarries, the guilty is still tied to him until death. The only option is celibacy.

Probably, this seems to be a suitable recommendation for a guilty party whose innocent mate decides to remain unmarried after divorce. Kubo, concludes with assertions from John Murray that: (a) apart from adultery affirmed as the only grounds for divorce, discordant marital relationship between a Christian (believer) and a non-Christian (non-believer) can also be reason for divorce (1 Cor. 7:15) (b) the desertion of the unbelieving spouse should be a willful one. (c) That, the indissolubility of marriage can be stretched to mean that adultery itself cannot even terminate the marriage. He however seems to disagree with the idea that even the innocent or guilty party in divorce cannot marry, as held by Catholics.⁹³

Richard Davidson espousing on some interpretation on divorce among other things in the book, *Marriage: Biblical and Theological* and other things, intimates that:

Divorce in the Old Testament is tolerated, but never commanded, commanded or approved by divine legislation. In fact, nowhere in the

⁹³Sakae Kubo, *Theology & Ethics of Sex* (Nashville, TN: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 57-86.

Old Testament is divorce officially legislated. God did not command divorce even in the case of Abraham and Hagar (Gen 21) and the mixed marriages with pagan idolaters in the time of Ezra. (Ezra 9, 10).⁹⁴

God in His wisdom and grace permitted and tolerated some of these abuses in marriage in this ancient times. This probably in God's estimation was considered according to the level of spiritual growth of these fathers. But it is establish that none of them had it smooth.

That is how much seriously divorce is viewed by scripture. In His discourse in Matt 5 and 9, "Jesus stood out from all other groups within Judaism...only Jesus declared that 'any matter' divorces were invalid."⁹⁵

He explains among other views that; divorce is only permissible by adultery. Only the innocent may be allowed to marry. Reconciliation is advocated in such cases. And this is the position held by Adventists, the major reformers, evangelicals and Erasmus of Rotterdam⁹⁶.

The Abandonment Clause

The 18th Edition of the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* states:

Scripture recognizes adultery and fornication (Matt 5:32) and abandonment by an unbelieving partner (1 Cor. 7:10-15) as grounds for divorce. There is no direct teaching in scripture regarding remarriage after divorce. However, there is a strong implication in Jesus' words in Matthew 19:9 that would allow remarriage of one who has remained faithful but whose spouse had been unfaithful to the marriage vow.⁹⁷

The introduction of this additional cause for divorce – "abandonment of the unbelieving spouse" (1 Cor. 7:10-15) by Paul, tends to raise a lot of hermeneutical

⁹⁴Ekkehardt Mueller and Elias Brasil de Souza, ed., *Marriage: Biblical and Theological Aspect*, 199.

⁹⁵Ibid., 214.

⁹⁶Ekkehardt Mueller and Elias Brasil de Souza, ed., *Marriage: Biblical and Theological Aspect*, 209.

⁹⁷*Church Manual*, 151.

and doctrinal challenges. Jesus' express command on divorce (Matt 5:32; 19:9) seems to suggest some contrast to Paul's position on this clause.

Commenting on the above, Koranteng-Pipim in *Here We Stand* explains that the "Abandonment" clause which was voted into the Church Manual during 2000 Toronto General Conference Session of the SDA Church tend to raise a contradiction. Even though, (according to Pipim) the two reasons raised are accepted grounds for divorce, "only adultery and/or fornication by the other partner allows one to remarry."⁹⁸ He questions that, "How can the grounds for remarriage logically be different from the grounds for divorce? The fact that one is not free to remarry implies that one is not really divorced."⁹⁹

The foregoing raises issues on: (i) the true interpretation of the "Abandonment" clause. (ii) Who an unbelieving partner is. (iii) Why an abandoned believer is not explicitly permitted to remarry. (iv) How different is Paul from Jesus on their positions on divorce and remarriage?

On 1 Corinthians 7:15, the *SDA Bible Commentary Vol. 6*, explains that, the unbelieving partner who wishes to leave his companion shall not be prevented from so doing. The Christian is under no obligation to attempt to live with a heathen companion against the will of the latter.¹⁰⁰

In the book, *Here We Stand*, edited by Koranteng-Pipim, Ekkehardt Mueller contributes on Divorce and remarriage that:

The two exceptions for divorce, Porneia, and divorce by an unbelieving spouse as discussed in 1 Corinthians 7 is different. Only in the first case can the spouse who was not involved in adultery request a divorce. In the other case, the believing partner is passive and does not take the initiative

⁹⁸Koranteng-Pipim, ed., *Here We Stand*, 503.

⁹⁹Ibid., 503.

¹⁰⁰Nichol, ed., *SDABC*, 6:709.

to get a divorce. Therefore, the only reason for which a church member can divorce his or her spouse is fornication.¹⁰¹

The foregoing raises some interpretations difficulties which call for more investigation and study. It seems like various Adventists authors differ in thought on this matter.

View from Ellen White

Ellen White has spoken severally on the issue of divorce. In the book, *The Adventist Home*, she counsels the married that, “Nothing but the violation of the marriage bed can either break or annul the marriage vow.”¹⁰² She reiterates that even if divorce is permitted by legal considerations of state courts, it is still unacceptable in the sight of God.¹⁰³

But she also adds that, “... if the injured party can obtain divorce without making their own cases and that of their children, if they have them worse by so doing, they should be free”... if they would be liable to place themselves and their children in worse condition by a divorce, we know of no scripture that would make the innocent party guilty by remaining.¹⁰⁴

The positions stated above are in agreement with scripture. And I support them too, since they provide a basis for the protection of marriage. And they refer to separation in circumstances like that.

It is very clearly, therefore, seen that the sanctity of marriage is highly upheld by Scripture and even in some secular cultures. God consistently stresses on the

¹⁰¹Koranteng-Pipim, ed., *Here We Stand*, 529.

¹⁰²White, *The Adventist Home*, 341.

¹⁰³White, *The Adventist Home*, 344.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 341.

permanence of marriage. Divorce is rather seen as a reverse of marriage, and has brought untold harm to families, children and the society at large.

Fornication/Adultery (porneia) seems to be the most agreeable grounds for divorce by many commentators, including Jesus. The innocent party in such situations usually may be permitted to remarry. In the case of divorce due to the ‘abandonment of the unbelieving spouse’, commentators differ in opinions regarding remarriage of the innocent.

It is surprising to note that Jesus was silent, while Ellen White did not say much on the remarriage of the innocent in the case of divorce due to the ‘abandonment of the unbelieving spouse’.¹⁰⁵ Divorce is a painful, tragic intruder in the society. The church is to relook at the attitude of members towards marriage, divorce and remarriage. ; It is admonished that:

When a marriage falls apart and distorts the divine ideal portrayed in Scripture, the Church carries responsibility for her members. Therefore, the Church must apply preventive care in order to help spouses renounce divorce as an option to solve their problems. Furthermore, the Church must react in a balanced and Biblical way if a marriage is threatened or a couple got divorced. Not to react at all may be irresponsible. It befits the Church to help, heal and assist... this may include Church discipline...personal attention, love and counseling...¹⁰⁶

This statement collaborates Ellen White’s previous counsel on this subject.

And the researcher agree with it, since it will appropriately fit into the project

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Ekkehardt Mueller and and Brasil de Souza, ed., *Marriage*, 247.

interventional plan.

To sum up, it is clear that enough has been written on this subject.

Interestingly, it is realized that religion, the society and the traditional systems tend to agree on one thing – divorce has been an unacceptable intruder in the marriage institution, and should not be tolerated. The divergent views expressed by the authors and commentators have all enriched the discussions on ways to reduce the incidence of divorce.

It has also emerged that culture and tradition have had a remarkable impact on marriage, divorce and remarriage. The church needs to unravel the confusion between what the society and culture say and what scripture approves, regarding divorce.

It might be less difficult entering marriage than to quit it. Marriage is not intended to get dissolved. The woes associated with divorce is incalculable. Couples are therefore admonished to do all they can to ensure that they stay in marriage.

Chapter four focuses on strategies and interventional designs to address this problem.

CHAPTER 4

A STRATEGY TO REDUCE INCIDENCE OF CULTURALLY INFLUENCED DIVORCE

This chapter deals with the main project strategy, with the view to reducing culturally induced incidence of divorce among Adventists in the ANTS of Kumasi, Ghana. It serves as a roadmap, for the whole project development. It is the general forecast of events and activities that will take place within the project period. A pre-research information gathered has unearthed the magnitude of divorce cases within the focus area - so alarming that it has become necessary to craft a strategy to reduce the divorce the incidence levels within the area under review. This study will also be useful in other geographical areas outside the purview of this project. The major parts of this chapter are: presentation of the content, state of affairs of ANTS, research design, data analysis, and the designing of the intervention.

Presentation of Project Context

In order to design appropriate project strategy, there will be the need to revisit the site or the setting where the project will take place. The following Districts form the sector: Asante New Town, New Tafo, Asawase, Airport, Yenyawso, Aboabo and parts of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology area.

Residents in these areas are predominantly, civil servants, farmers; academicians, business people, artisans and groups of skilled and unskilled unemployed youth— a mixture of Christians and Muslims. To get conversant with

people's socio-cultural and religious backgrounds in the sector, a careful familiarization tour was made to the area.

The research is basically a qualitative type. Information will be generally collected from and through focus groups interviews and discussions as well as other primary sources.

A systematic survey will be followed to gather the necessary data, to design appropriate interventions to arrive at informed conclusions. The nature of the study will require extensive consultations and discussions with church members, focus groups and a few opinion leaders outside the Church. Findings from various groups and individuals would be carefully analyzed. This would help in determining the kind of activities that would address the problem at stake.

Context

The project site is Asante New Town Sector (ANTS) of SCGC. The SCGC is now in the Northern Ghana Union Mission territory of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is one of the ten Conferences (Fields) in the Union. The project site (ANTS) is one of the five sectors in the Conference. The headquarters of SCGC is in Kumasi, the capital city of Ashanti Region of Ghana. Other regions in Ghana include, Greater Accra, Brong- Ahafo, Western, Volta, Northern, Upper East, Upper West, Eastern and Central.



Figure 2. Ghana Map Showing Ashanti and Other Nine Regions

The Adventists presence in Ghana is highly concentrated in Ashanti, Greater Accra, Brong- Ahafo, Eastern, Central and Western regions. With the exception of Greater Accra Region, most of the inhabitants of these areas, like people in ANTS, are predominantly Akans. ANTS, according to SCGC secretariat report 2015, has an estimated population of 850,000.

Kumasi metropolis, where ANTS is situated, is the most populous area and also with 30 Administrative Districts in Ashanti region. Kumasi, and by extension ANTS, is located between latitude 6.35° N and 6.40° S, then longitude 1.30° W and

1.50° E with an elevation of 250 – 300 meters above sea level. There are about 280 Adventist churches in this area alone. ANTS covers a central area of Kumasi metropolis and has a mixed inhabitants from all parts of Ghana.

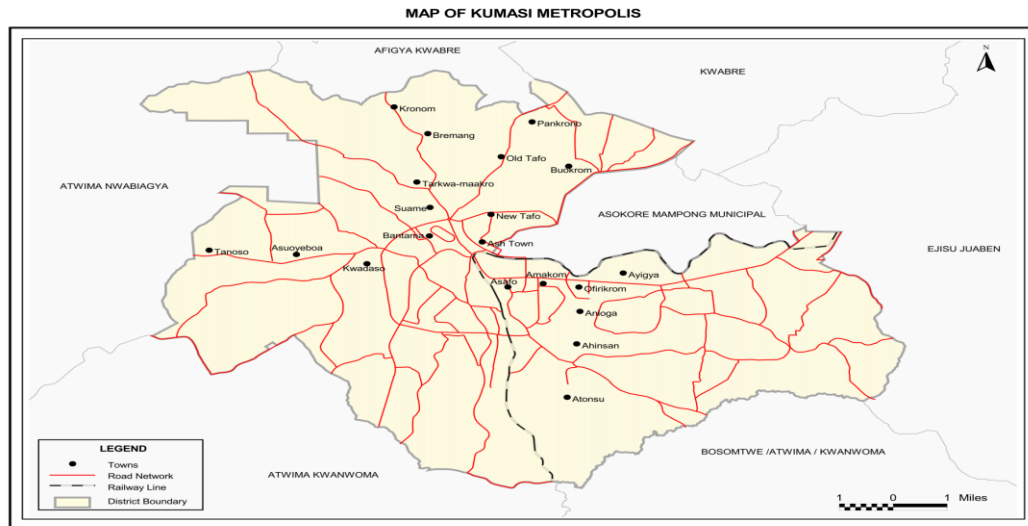


Figure 3. Kumasi Metropolis where ANTS (marked) is centrally situated

Source: Ghana Information Service

Geographical Landscape and Climate

According to Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) report in October 2014, Kumasi and by extension ANTS falls within the wet sub-equatorial climate. The average daily minimum temperature is about 21.5 degrees Celsius and maximum of 30.7 degrees Celsius. The average daily humidity is around 84.16% at sunrise and 60% at sunset.

Many people from every part of the country are attracted to Kumasi and environs due to its favorable climatic conditions. There are two major seasons, the wet and dry seasons in the area. The area is typically a rain forest where cash crops like cocoa, cola nuts, citrus are grown.

The place is endowed with trees and evergreen foliage. It is also endowed with minerals and rocks. There are lakes, forest reserves, waterfalls, scarp, parks scattered

all over the region. The two major rivers that serve the people in Kumasi city are Subin and Owabe

Demography

Whereas the Ashanti region population according GSS is about 4,780,308 (19.4 % of national figure), Kumasi metropolis population of which ANTS is part, is 1,730,249 representing 36.2% of Ashanti region population. “In 1931 population of Kumasi was 36,000”¹⁰⁷, a huge leap within a period of 83 years. The GSS had predicted in 2007 that Kumasi population would 2,750,000 and Ashanti 5,000,000 by 2015. Kumasi’s population by breakdown is made up of 826,479 (47%) males and 903,779 (52%) females.

Economy

Generally the people in ANTS are low middle income earners. They thrived predominantly in crafts like pottery, caving, weaving, basketry, mining, sand winning, trading, farming, a small scare manufacturing and stone quarrying, among others. But generally unemployment is a problem in the area.¹⁰⁸

Socio-cultural Information

Culture in ANTS and Ashanti are deep rooted. There is a strong extended family system with the nucleus families serving as basic units of the communities. Marriage forms a very vital part of the *Abusua* (extended family) system. The family line of the Akans in this area is matrilineal. This means that property inheritance

¹⁰⁷Daniel Miles McFarland, *Historical Dictionary of Ghana* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1985), 110, 111.

¹⁰⁸Ghana Statistical Service, October 2014.

normally flows from the mother to her children. A child therefore traces heredity from the father's soul, *ntoro* and receives flesh and blood, *mogya* from the mother.

When Akan women go into marriage, they are advised by relatives to return home with riches, property and booties; and rather leave financial indebtedness and family problems with the husband.

Marriage is a very important cultural institution of the people. Every matured man or woman would like to marry. The Akans are generally polygamous, and would want to have large families. The Ashanti women normally seek the consent of parents before they marry. Parents of both size usually see it as a duty to keep the marriage of their children going. They jealously guard the marriages of their wards to avert possible divorce.

In many cultures, marriage is seen as a matter involving the ancestors, clan gods, and spirits. Some religions treat it as a sacrament, and that marriages endorsed on earth here are also approved in heaven. Divorce therefore breaks both social bonds and the cosmic order. It evokes the anger of the gods and brings disaster upon its culprits.¹⁰⁹

According to April West (Africa.guide.com), there is only one king (the Asantehene) who rules the Asante Kingdom in which ANTS is situated, through his paramount chiefs, minor chiefs and the *odikoros* (village heads). The Akans in ANTS also celebrate festivals like *Akwasi Dae*, *Odwira*, *Bragoro*, *Mmoaninko*, and others.

The people also attach strong passion to marriage and funeral ceremonies. They are unique in their dress, language, food and customs. Chiefs and elders see to the maintenance of these traditional customs.

¹⁰⁹Paul G. Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 101, 102.

Religious Beliefs and Affiliation

Lots of Orthodox and Pentecostal churches are scattered all over the area. The people in Kumasi are generally very religious. According to GSS – startghana.gov.gh, about 77.8% from the 2010 census, are Christians. 15.3% Muslims, 0.7% traditionalist, and people with no religious affiliation 5.4%. They believe in the only one and omnipotent creator who according to them was born on Saturday, hence the name *Onyame Kwame*. They also believe this *Onyankopon* or *Onyameworks* through smaller gods or *abosom* to attend to the needs of the people. The priests of these gods (*akomfo*) are generally revered by the people.

Apart from this the Akans in ANTS also believe in spirits, supernatural powers, plant and animal and deities. They believe that these bodies have souls and can bring bad omen upon their disobedient subjects.

State of Affairs in ANTS

Before the project started the researcher was attracted to the extent of the impact of culture on divorce in ANTS. The consistent rise in figures of the incidence of divorce in the sector gave a cause to worry about.

Description of ANTS before Project

A brief background story is provided to describe further the state of ANTS before the project. An existing information on divorce in ANTS as the pre-project data showed was 114 divorce cases per year conference-wide. Out of this number, 42 came from ANTS alone.

It was observed that a new worrying trend of increased incidence of divorce was developing among Adventists in Ghana, especially within the churches in ANTS.

A closer observation of this problem revealed that cultural antecedents influence the rising cases of divorce in the church.

In spite of the church's clear teachings from the Bible, Ellen White and the church manual on marriage and divorce, this problem is still gradually gaining grounds. The return of the bridal dowry to the husband, for instance, is becoming enough reason for divorce in some churches, and some leaders seem to accept it.

Surprisingly, in some cases, when married people divorce this way, they may or may not attract church discipline. Even if they are disciplined, some quickly plan and arrange for rebaptism to regain their membership status.

The need to embark on this project to establish the causes and solutions to the problem can, therefore, not be overemphasized. Strategies are outlined in this chapter to show how to reduce the impact of culture on divorce in the church.

Project Problem Statement

Since the year 2009, the Adventist Church in Ghana, observed a trend of high incidence of divorce in the churches. In the South Central Ghana Conference it was realized that the situation was quite alarming especially in churches in Asante New Town Sector (ANTS) of Kumasi.

To expatiate further, it is observed that for the past six years or more a minimum of 47 conference-wide divorce cases were sat upon by the Family Life Committee every six months, with at least 17 coming from ANTS. What compounded the already existing problem was the fact that some members have now resorted to some unbiblical cultural practices as justification for divorce. This called for the urgent need to give this matter a study and offer appropriate ways to resolve them.

Research Design

Having given the background to the project setting, and having described the problem that necessitated the undertaking of the project, there was the need to design a strategy to get the problem solved.

Type of Research

The research is a qualitative type. It will involve interviews, consultations and discussions with focus groups and selected individuals to gather the necessary information for the project intervention.

Rationale for the Selection of ANTS

Divorce cases for the past five to six years have been the highest in the South Central Ghana Conference and ANTS. Some members and leaders of the church continue to ask why some Adventist churches, especially those in Akan-speaking areas, are seemingly endorsing divorce linked with cultural practices. The church felt if nothing was done about this problem it will affect the image of the church and our evangelistical thrust in the area. Also most parts of ANTS is Muslim dominated, so the church should not be seen to lowering standards. ANTS therefore was strategically chosen for the project.

Appropriateness to this Study

The choice of ANTS is much appropriate to this project. The presence of a large Akan population in the area and the fact that the divorce problem is much prevalent there, will assist gathering the right information for the study. Also the problem under discussion has some link to the cultural background of the people living there. The place will help provide the needed data as basis for the project intervention.

Population and Sample/Participants

Some 168 participants were selected for the survey. These comprised: nine focus groups (six in each group), twenty-three District and Church Pastors, seven nucleus team members, three teachers, one senior staff at the Asante King's palace, seventy-two church elders and family life leaders, one retired pastor, five chiefs, one Catholic Priest and a linguist.

Criteria for Sampling Procedure and Selection

Since the project involves culture and tradition, there was the need to involve traditional leaders in the survey. The implementation and sustenance of the program would finally need the hands of Pastors and church leaders to continue with the project. Some other opinion leaders in the vicinity became very useful in provision of diverse ideas. The selected participants were purposely Akans or people who share similar Akan cultural practices in marriage. This is because the inhabitants of ANTS are predominantly Akans. They fell into the ages 25 years above. They were categorized as follows:

- a. The first seven groups comprise mainly married people.
- b. The eighth group were divorcees, widows and widowers.
- c. The ninth were selected opinion leaders and traditional men.
- d. The last group were Pastors, Elders and Family Life Leaders who assisted as facilitators.

The above were the reasons that informed the sampling procedure and selection.

Instrumentation

In order to carry out the strategies successfully, survey tools were developed and acquired for the pre-interventional survey. The first was the focus group

discussion and interview guide. This was meant for the researcher, the nucleus project team and the selected pastors who served as facilitators. They used the guide for the discussions and to elucidate some necessary information from the participants. Apart from this, other instrument acquired for the project included a camera, a computer, a recorder and appropriate stationery. These helped to get pictures, recorded materials and took notes.

Data Analysis

After the development of the focus groups interview and discussion guide, procedures and steps regarding data collection were followed.

Data Collection Procedures

A nucleus team of seven was selected and trained to be conversant with the dynamics of the pre-project survey. The training sections included interpretation and recording, techniques in questioning and interviewing, data management and issues of confidentiality. Nine different focus groups of six in a group were organized. The pre-project team assisted in pre-testing the instrument at Gyinyaase (see Appendix K). This helped to modify a few issues in the guide afterward. The team also had interaction with participants in a bid to establishing an initial rapport with them.

There were discussions and interviews with the focus groups and also the opinion leaders to elucidate views on the impact of tradition and culture on divorce.

Description of Focus Groups and Key Informants Findings

About 162 of our participants were involved in oral groups discussions and interviews. Only about 6 chose to offer written responses during the interviews, for

personal reasons. One hundred of these were Akans. Only 8 were from other related tribes.

The cursory check on the background of the participants revealed that a larger number (101) as compared with 67 males were engaged. They were thirty years or above in ages, with their levels of education from non-formal to tertiary. They were also 53 divorcees, 16 widows/widowers and 99 married for at least fifteen years. Majority of them indicated paying or receiving dowers during their first marriages. The following were responses and views gathered from the focus groups and key informants discussions and interviews:

a) What is the Biblical Primary Purpose for Marriage?

- For Companionship
- To perpetuate life
- For physical and social complimentary roles

b) When is marriage said to be publicly accepted and legitimate?

- When dowry is paid
- When parents and relatives become formally aware
- When all traditional rites are performed
- When it is consummated by sex
- When the church accepts it

c) Causes of dissolution of most first marriages :

- Childlessness and other health incompatibilities
- Unfaithfulness/Adultery
- In – law Interferences
- Religious & Tribal incompatibilities
- Poor communication

- Dishonesty – lying, stealing etc.
- d) When do we say divorce is completely and publicly accepted?
- When the dowry is returned to the husband and relatives.
 - When the courts decide so.
 - When a case of adultery is established against one of them.
 - When the two parties themselves agree to part.
- e) Some triggers of Divorce
- When there is a total breakdown of Communication for more than 2 months
 - When there is neglect of gender roles and responsibilities
 - When there is incessant quarreling
 - When there is continuous denial of sex
 - When the couple sleep in separate rooms
 - When there is neglect of family upkeep and welfare
 - When children begin to go wayward all of a sudden
 - When partners ridicule and embarrass each other in public
 - When the couple is seen engaging in blame game in most cases
 - When the spirituality of the family keeps deteriorating
- f) Acceptable cultural reasons for Divorce
- Disrespect for husband and/or In-laws or to spouse's tribe
 - Adultery/fornication
 - Illicit touch or play with the opposite sex (especially with the wife by another man): for example, the touch of the wife at the waist, buttocks, breast or thigh by a man rather than the real husband.
 - Impotence, barrenness or infertility (low sperm count) of husband.

- The return of bridal dowry to the husband and relatives to register intent to divorce
- Stealing, fraud and dubious engagements
- Use of profane languages, especially to the husband
- Incest, rape or homosexual practices

g) Meaning of Divorce by the “abandonment of the unbelieving spouse”

- Most respondents understood this to mean, when one’s spouse lives apart from one for a long time by distance or space, especially between an Adventist and a Non-Adventist.
- Others hold the view that, this only referred to the case where the unbeliever persistently decides to leave the believer and the matrimonial home permanently.
- Interestingly, a large number (112) opined that in such situations, the believer (partner) should only stay in separation and not remarry.

h) Major culprits of marital instability:

- Highest : In-laws(49% = 82 respondents)
- Next: Men (21% = 36 respondents)
- Least: Women(30% = 50 respondents)

i) What the Church is not doing to prevent Divorce:

- Not providing Pre marital and post marital counseling
- Not exposing the youth to early interaction and discussion in marital issues
- Lack of continuous marriage and Family Life Education, as well as special programs to reignite spousal relationships.

- Triggers of divorce not quickly nipped in the bud.
- Special prayer programs for would-be and existing Couples.
- Lack of proper sex education.
- Lack of pastoral visitation and care.

j) Asked when given second chance of marriage what would be the most important issue(s) to consider? The following were answers:

- To marry from same faith.
- Look for a God fearing person.
- To ensure the partner has a reliable job and is hard-working.
- Would undertake all necessary laboratory investigations.
- Would stay chaste before marriage.
- Marry from within tribe and culture.
- Would involve church and parents well.
- Would be very careful and wait on the Lord.
- Would never again use alcoholic beverage to perform marriage rites.

Apart from the above, the following were some general observations made by some church members and opinion leaders in the area:

- Couples complain of unfaithfulness and untrustworthiness by partners.
- Inter-cultural relationships have posed serious post marital challenges to some couples.
- Young people do not pay much attention to spiritual matters when contemplating marriage.

- Incompatible risky relationships, especially on health matters, are taken lightly by prospective couples.

There were other views collected from some opinion leaders as follows:

On the significance of the payment of the bridal dowry. A senior staff at the Asante King's Palace had the following to say:

- It is a symbolic gesture that testifies to relatives and the public that a marriage has formally been contracted.
- It is a token of appreciation shown by the groom and his relatives to the bride's parents.
- During divorce, the dowry must be returned to the husband by the wife as a sign of formal dissolution of marriage.
- In the Akan system, religion and culture are inseparable. Therefore, if dowries are accepted to render a marriage legitimate, the same should be accorded divorce seekers in the church if dowries are formally returned to the husband and relatives.
- The dowry is also a sign of commitment, value and recognition.

The above responses were collaborated by one Nana Opoku Ware Tromoo Akwasihene of Ahenema Kokoben – a sub chief in the Otumfour's Palace.

There were also other responses on how culture impacts divorce. Four chiefs, a Catholic Priest and three teachers, who insisted on anonymity, provided paraphrased written responses as follows:

- Culturally, it is shameful for a woman to leave her matrimonial home. Many wives are prepared to cope with pain and bizarre circumstances, suffer in silence and stay.

This is because women in Africa accept that they derive their social status for their two roles – being a wife and being a mother. This helps them function as a primary custodians of society’s cherished values.¹¹⁰

- Respectable men may also want to stay away from divorce in order to avoid stigmatization of their families as people who treat women badly.
- The Catholic Priest in his comment observed that the return of dowry should be permitted to terminate marriages.
- The teachers also supported this idea by remarking that they saw nothing wrong with the practice, according to them is not in conflict with the Bible.

The linguist of the Paramount Chief of the area(ANTS), in an interview stated the following as the traditional stages of divorce:

- a) Physical/Contact Divorce (Sleeping in different rooms)
- b) Emotional Divorce (No feeling or sympathies for each other)
- c) Sexual Divorce (stoppage of sex intercourse)
- d) Permanent Divorce (formal and permanent separation)

He stressed that churches and the traditional society should always look for triggers of stages (a) and (b) and device appropriate interventions to prevent moving into stages (c) and (d). He added that intensive counseling and support must be provided to couples going through such difficult times, since many as from stage (b) cannot help themselves again.

¹¹⁰Amadu Sesayand Adetanwa Odebiyi, ed., *Nigeria Women in Society and Development* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Dokun Publishing House, 1998), 6.

Responding to what tradition has done to Christian marriage, a retired Adventist Minister made an interesting remark. According to him, the Church takes a risky position by allowing tradition, for example the payment of dowry and other rites, to determine the legitimacy of marriage. If this is permitted, then it should be equally acceptable if one wants to exit ones marriage by the return of the dowry.

He suggested that the Church should grant the legitimacy of a marriage, once parents, relatives and the Church are officially informed or are in the agreement. The insistence on the payment of the dowry or the performance of traditional rites as the only grounds to legitimize marriage, needs to re- looked into seriously.

According to him, during his ministry, he learnt that the youth in the church, favored this idea too. They wanted a change in a lot of these cultural demands in marriage. The young couples also expressed demand in relaxing divorce laws in the church.

Analysis of Focus Group Discussions

Responses from the focus groups and some opinion leaders interviewed were analyzed and summed up as follows:

- a. It was realized that lack of spirituality in families has been a major cause of divorce. Families are neglecting personal and cooperate prayer and Bible study, daily devotion, fellowshiping, vesper services and witnessing.
- b. There are lots of conflicts in cultural issues among couples, especially if they come from different cultural backgrounds.
- c. Inadequate pre and post marital visitations and counseling, are issues of concern.

- d. Also there seems to be poor attention given to socialization and social matters generally.
- e. There is a neglect of couples' core marital responsibilities in the family.
- f. There is also lack of marriage enrichment programs by the church, rendering marital relationships stale. This has led to the increase in the incidence of divorce in the churches.

Designing of the Project Intervention

After all the necessary information was gathered from the various focus groups and other opinion leaders a systematic project intervention was designed. In designing the project interventions, a careful review and analysis of the pre-project data and divorce was done to refresh the minds of team members. The following activities were then proposed as an interventional program.

Expected Activities

It is important that having designed the necessary project interventions the following expected activities will be undertaken:

Sermons/revivals on reducing divorce. As part of the interventional programs, church members in the area will be revived through special sermons on marriage and divorce. The cultural threats to marriage will be preached in the churches. This will be done mostly on Sabbaths, unless it becomes very necessary to add one or two Wednesday evenings. Careful attention and records will be taken after each appeal.

Forum for couples, divorcees, widows/widowers. Another important activity that will be organized will be a forum that will serve as a platform for the above

groups to air their views on marriage and divorce. A group of Pastors and Family Life leaders will assist in that program to share their views on the effects of divorce.

A day's seminar on marriage and divorce will also be organized for church and family life leaders, and also for members in general. Participants will be drawn from all the Districts and Churches.

Guidelines to the church on traditional marital issues. It is anticipated that in course of the program, a guideline to assist church leaders will be developed by pastors and family life leaders. This will assist leaders to know how to handle some of the controversial traditional issues before, during and after marriage. It is hoped that this will also help prevent and reduce the incidence of divorce in the church.

Prayer and counseling sessions. Prayer and counseling services will be provided during the project. Arising from this would be the establishment of church-manned counseling centers at strategic areas in the sector. Consideration will be given to some six centers that are evenly placed in the sub metros in ANTS. These should be areas that are also easily accessible to clients.

Workshops will be organized for selected Pastors and laymen to train them in the principles and practice of Christian Counseling. Trained Pastors and Elders will be selected to man those centers. Records will be taken and monthly reports will be analyzed.

Love feast and marriage festival. There will be a Love Feast and family Festival organized for couples, divorcees, widows and widowers. This will bring together couples, divorcees, widows and widowers and probably some singles at a chosen venue. It will be an occasion for the various groups to express love and enrich their relationships. It is also going to be a platform for broken relationships to be reignited.

During this program there will also be discussions on cultural and traditional issues that affect marriage and divorce. There will be a look at the symbolic representations of the 'dowry' – its significance and relationship to marriage and divorce.

Also to be discussed will be divorce and remarriage in the Akan System. The deliberations will include the extent of change in the Akan cultural practices on marriage and divorce in contemporary times.

The pros and cons on the insistence of the performance of traditional rites as grounds for acceptance of marriage by the Church will also be examined during the discussions.

Project Evaluation Stage

After the project has been systematically followed to the last phase, a six – month period will be allowed for some observation. Meanwhile, random visits will be paid to the churches to monitor the results.

Counseling and prayer services to members in the area will be intermittently conducted. During this time, there will be interactions with couples who may have difficult challenges. The Pre project information on the annual incidence of divorce in both ANTS and the Conference, stood at 42 and 114 respectively.

After the six months period of observance, a post project data will be taken for a comparative analysis. These new figures will come in the form of reports from the fields and ANTS family life leaders.

Examination of Pre-project Data

After the project has been systematically followed to the last phase, a six month period will be allowed for some observation. Meanwhile the pre-project

baseline data on the incidence of divorce in ANTS and the Conference stood at 42 and 114 respectively.

Examination of Post project Data

After the period of the project observation, reports from the churches in ANTS covering the six months period will be gathered for examination. These reports will take care of new divorce incidence figures in ANTS. A comparative analysis of these new figures will be made against the pre-project data to check if there has been any changes.

Project Reporting

After the completion of the project, a final report on the dissertation will be presented to the appropriate quarters. The project budget will also be attached.

The following Adventist Church entities will receive completed copies of the project report:

- a) To the Administration of South Central Ghana Conference of SDA
- b) The family life department of West Central Africa Division of SDA
- c) Then to the Administration of the Northern Ghana Union Mission of SDA and
- d) The leadership of Ashanti New Town Sector of the Conference

Chapter four has given a description of the project strategy to help provide some solution to the problem of culturally influenced divorce in the Church. The success of the plans as will be narrated in the next chapter will largely depend on the effective implementation of the strategy.

Limitations

In designing the above interventional program, consideration was given to certain limitations.

- a. Funding for transportation and other logistics could impede the smooth running of the program.
- b. Team members would not be adequately conversant with traditional protocols.
- c. Unforeseen church and other programs as well as the weather could also be a setback.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT NARRATIVE

In this chapter, a step by step narrative of the project undertaken is carefully recorded. From the preparatory stage of the survey, mobilization of project resources, and organization and implementation, a lot was learnt and achieved. With the cooperation and support from Church leaders, the various focus groups and all the other participants, interesting experiences were gathered and shared.

The project sought to reduce the impact of culture on the incidence of divorce in the church. Divorce is not an alien phenomenon in the church. Unfortunately, of late there is a new trend in its incidence that raises some concerns.

The import of the project had to do with the way some church leaders and members are gradually accepting cases of divorce influenced by some cultural practices, and ways to reduce the trend. The Akan tradition that permits the return of the dowry to the husband as grounds for divorce is gradually creeping into the church.

The project aimed at finding an answer to the problem of culturally influenced divorce in the church. The work depended much on information collected from focus groups, some opinion leaders, Church members as well as solid theological foundations from scripture and the spirit of prophecy. The major parts of this chapter are: project preparation, implementation, evaluation and reporting.

Project Preparation

As part of the needed preparation for the project, a few issues already described in the write up were reviewed. These included the following:

Description of Dissertation Theological Foundations

Scripture projects marriage as a holy and honorable institution that should be accorded all the sanctity it deserves. The first couple (Adam and Eve) without sin was to live in a perpetual harmony that would be a standard for emulation.

Both the Old and New Testaments teachings frown on divorce. In Gen. 1 and 3; Mal. 2:14-16, as well as Matt. 5:32, Matt. 19 and Mark 5, scripture raises strong disapproval of dissolution of marriage. Therefore legal or cultural considerations should never be basis for divorce. According to Jesus, only adultery and fornication can be an exception (Matt. 19:3-10).

Brief Description of Literature Review

In trying to gather information on what others say on the matter, various authors and literature were consulted. Broadly the following literature collections and views were looked at comprehensively:

- Selected Protestants Literature
- Selected African Traditional Views
- Some Jewish Views, and
- Some Adventist Works

A systematic survey was followed in order to gather needed information to design appropriate solution to reduce the divorce problem. For the purpose of our discussion, reference to the 'Church' in the write up mostly point to the Seventh-day Adventist Church or largely to ANTS.

Description of Project Venue

Between 3rd and 28th February 2014, having obtained the necessary permissions from the Conference and leaders of the sector, the leaders of ANTS, were

visited to establish initial acquaintances. This was followed by a comprehensive tour of the territory. It was established during the tour that:

- a. There were 47 Christian denominations in the vicinity
- b. Out of these, there were 61 Adventist Churches
- c. There were five Mosques.
- d. The traditional paramount Chief's palace stood very prominent in the area.
- e. There were 37 first and second cycle schools, as well as one Nursing Training College (NTC) in the area.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana is now divided into two Unions. These are the Southern Ghana Union Conference, made up of 7 fields (territories) and the Northern Ghana Union Mission with 10 fields.

Until very recently, the South Central Ghana Conference, had four sectors, one of which was the Asante New Town Sector, where the project was carried out. Districts and important areas that formed this sector included: Asante New Town district, New Tafo district, Asawase district, Yenyawso district, Aboabo district, parts of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) area, Airport district, 4 Garrison and Komfo Anokye Teaching hospital area.

Key leaders of some of these institutions and organization were visited. All the Adventist, Methodist and Presbyterian Church leaders, the Chief Imam, the Paramount Chief and the Principal of Premiere NTC at Anyarno, were contacted and briefed about the impending project.

Statement on Permissions and Authorizations

On 4th September 2013 a formal permission was obtained from the Conference and the Sector leaders of ANTS. Meanwhile in July 2014, the whole Conference was re-organized which pushed ANTS into a new field called Ashanti Central Ghana

Conference. An updated permission had be sought from the new Conference Administration in 4th February 2014 to continue the project (see appendices A and B).

Apart from the above, other informal/oral authorizations were also sought from the representative of the Traditional head of the area (Asante New Town). This was necessary, since some oral interviews were needed from the traditional sources.

Also Family Life leaders in the various churches in the sector were all specifically informed to solicit their cooperation.

Safeguards

To ensure a well-coordinated and credible work, the following were taken into account as safeguard measures:

- All statements and authorized information were scrutinized to ensure clarity and veracity.
- A step by step strategy with accurate dates was followed.
- Careful handling of materials was ensured so that nothing got lost.
- A high level of confidentiality and ethical considerations to people and issues were maintained.
- In meetings and appointments proper time management was taken seriously.
- All respondents were respectfully handled.
- Most of the interviews were done orally, especially with the focus groups.
- Special permission was however, granted to those who for personal reasons wanted to write.
- By way of monitoring, there were intermittent checks to help minimize needless errors.
- Right persons and institutions were consulted at the right time, right place and in the right spirit.

- In gathering and analyzing data, objectivity and honesty were highly maintained.

Mobilizations

Having selected a project team of seven – 3 Pastors and 4 lay persons, a two-day (Feb 16 and 17, 2014) training was given to them on the dynamics of the project. The members of the mobilized team were: 1) The Assistant to the Conference Family Life Director, 2) Berean Church Pastor 3) KNUST Pastor, Elders and the Family Life leaders of: Asante New Town, Aboabo, Asem, and Yenyawso.

A designed focus group interview and discussion guide (see appendix H) was looked at comprehensively by the team, and specific tasks was offered each member.

Together with the team, nine focus groups (six persons in a group) were mobilized for interview and discussions (see Appendix L). The nine centers were: Asante New Town, Asawase, New Tafo, Airport , Aboabo, 4 Garrison, KNUST area, Asem and Yenyawso Churches. In addition to this, a group of Pastors, Elders and Family life leaders were also organized to serve as additional hands/participants and facilitators.

The total number of participants were grouped as follows;

- a. The first seven groups comprised mainly married people.
- b. The eighth group were divorcees, widows and widowers.
- c. The ninth were selected opinion leaders and traditional men.

The last group were Pastors, Elders and Family Life Leaders who assisted as facilitators. Between March 2-4, 2014, there were some intensive orientation and training programs for the first four groups. And a week later, the remaining five groups were taken through the same exercise. During this exercise, the intention for

undertaking the project as well as the problem, the consent and the current state of affairs were explained.

Participants were also carefully educated not to feel intimidated or play any sycophancy in their response to questions. They were groomed to be objective, truthful and factual in the discussions. Meanwhile they were firmly assured of a high level of confidentiality.

Having gone through this preliminary program, the first four groups, on three consecutive Sabbath afternoons, (15th, 22nd and 29th March 2014) were engaged in very productive discussions on divorce. Two groups were engaged on the 22nd March. There was a break for a week, after which the other groups on the 6th, 12th, 19th and 26th April, 2014 took turns to deliberate on causes and solutions to divorce in the Church. Two groups were invited on the 26th April 2014. The participants consisted of: the married, divorcees, widows and widowers from the Akan orientation. Whereas the first 5 groups were married people, the 6th were mainly divorcees, widows and widowers.

On 4th May, 2014 Pastors, elders and family life leaders group met at the Conference headquarters (Ahinsan) to share their views on the issue under discussion. The discussions sought to sample opinions and deliberate on ways to reduce the impact of Culture on divorce in the Church.

Summary of Findings of Focus Groups and Key Informants

Over 96% of the participants were engaged in oral discussions and interviews. Just a few chose to offer written responses for some personal reasons. The following was the summary of the interviews and discussions of the various groups and selected key informants:

- a) Divorce seems to be generally unacceptable by the society.
- b) Due diligence before marriage is taken lightly.
- c) The Akans have a deep passion for culture.
- d) Tradition greatly influences marriage and divorce.
- e) Heavy cultural demands turn to deter the youth from marrying.
- f) Apart from adultery, other cultural reasons account for divorce.
- g) Spirituality in family was found to be greatly lacking.

Statement on Pre-Project Data

A relook at the pre-project data on divorce showed 114 cases per year Conference-wide; and 42 per year in ANTS.

Description of Sermons, Forums and Seminar Materials

Outlines and details of materials used for sermons, forum and seminars in the project have been described and included in the appendices of this work, (see Appendices D, C and E respectively).

Project Implementation

Having embarked on the preliminary information gathering and some initial data analysis, it became necessary to implement the appropriate interventions with the view to reducing the impact of culture on divorce in the Church. The assistance of Pastors, church and family life leaders was solicited in the implementation process.

Description of Activities Carried Out

Cultural triggers and the general causes of divorce were also critically looked at. It also became useful to review the case study of the Medical Officer who defended his divorce case before the church on cultural grounds. His issue was that if

marriage could be accepted by the church on cultural grounds, it could also be permitted through same, to divorce.

Even though, the Adventist Church's stance on divorce has not changed, there seems to be a gradual creeping influence of culture on divorce and re-marriage in the church today.

Sermons/revivals on reducing the incidence of divorce. The following series of marriage revival programs were embarked upon:

For two months (Mar and April 2014) running, specific sermons on marriage and divorce were preached in nine churches in ANTS. Sermon, forum and seminar as stated above were embarked upon. Appropriate groups were targeted in the churches.

Appeals were made after each sermon and positive responses were achieved. Not less than ten (10) people after each sermon always came out to show signs of repentance and remorse.

As a matter of interest, there was this incident of a married elder who during an appeal in a sermon stood to join the group of widows, widowers and divorcees for prayer. This action was to the amazement of the congregation. He explained to the Pastor after the service that, considering how low his marriage had sunk, he saw himself just like a widower or a divorcee. That is how come he responded to the appeal that way. The church Pastor and Elders followed up to work reform in this Elder's marriage soon after the program.

After a service on 3rd May 2014 at Yenyawso church, a couple came to discuss ways to establish permanent reconciliation, and this was referred to the church Family Life Committee. A marriage seminar was conducted in the afternoon for the church (see appendix E). Many other members joined in this afternoon seminar from other churches in the District.

The above aside, nine Churches were also used for special marriage revivals and relationship enhancement programs the following two weekends. These were:

- * Yenyawso SDA church
- * New Tafo Church
- * Estate Church
- * Aboabo Church
- * Airport (Buokrom) Church
- * Ash Town Church
- * Asawase Church
- * 4 Garrison Church
- * KNUST GNASS Church

These were seven headquarters churches and two others, one in the University (KNUST) and other at the Army Barracks (4 Garrison).

Along the line, six counseling centers were opened at the Conference headquarters, Ashanti New Town Church, New Tafo Church, 4 Garrison Church, KNUST GNASS Church and Aboabo church at the end of these revivals.

The centers opened on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9 am to 2pm. The centers at the Conference and Ash Town were specifically manned by two Pastors in the project team, and the Conference Family Life Director and a lawyer. The rest were taken care of by Church Pastors and some selected Elders. In fact four of the centers are still in operation. During that period, some supervision was also provided at the rest of the centers.

Clients that attended the centers for counseling included: Divorcees, Widows and widowers, newly married couples as well as old couples. Monthly reports were

sent in from all the centers, showing activities that took place. Below is a table showing the number of people who attended counseling at different centers.

Table 4. Report on Activities at the Counseling Centers

Month	Conf. Hq	Ash Town	New Tafo	4 Garrison	KNUST	Aboabo	Total
Feb.	62	51	39	33	40	15	240
March	61	55	37	38	41	19	251
April	59	60	47	38	39	20	263
May	60	58	49	37	41	19	264
June	70	64	51	39	40	18	282
July	69	61	55	30	43	20	278

Divorcees, widows and widowers forum. On the 1st and 2nd August 2014, relationship forums were organized for couples, divorcees, widows and widowers at Asawase and Yenyawso Districts. Over five hundred participants took part. After this program, a major recommendation was made to Church leaders to develop a guide to family life committees on how to handle traditional matters in marriage and divorce.

It was also noted that many of the participants claimed they were ignorant to some of the issues raised at the seminars and discussions. The issue about the return of the dowry as a tradition to end marriages severally showed up and was challenged. A few participants (an estimated 15%) felt it should be accepted by the church to adopt the tradition of ending marriages by the return of the dowry.

Paramount among major issues raised in the discussions at the forums, was also the issue of using alcoholic drinks to perform the rites of Christian marriages. The discussions stirred people's minds on this matter as deliberations progressed. The

focus on biblical teachings helped changed many minds. Some participants testified to this later.

Participants also raised serious concerns about couples shirking their responsibilities at home. This matter variously received suggestions and solutions. Key among this was that families should have monthly meetings to discuss issues on finance, education, feeding, and family general welfare.

Guidelines to the church on traditional marital issues. Following these programs, Church Pastors in ANTS, the Conference Family Life Director and family life leaders met on 24th Aug 2014 at the Conference office for a day seminar on the: Prevention of Divorce. At the end of discussions, a guide on the church's involvement in traditional matters in marriage was developed (see appendix G). This simple tool was to provide some direction for leaders on how to handle customary issues before, during and post marital situations. Plans are far advanced to get a pamphlet of the guidelines published in both Twi and English languages. The guidelines would help to ease out some cultural conflicts in marriages.

Prayer and counseling sessions. For all the mid-week (Wednesday evening) prayer programs in August 2014, it was arranged to have pastors and elders in ANTS conduct special prayer and counseling programs for families in all churches.

About 60% of the time of the last day program was devoted to intensive prayers, fasting and counseling sessions. This was one of the most cherished programs by participants. Participants usually left the meetings revived, satisfied, and relieved. They also felt that their spiritual needs were met, and resolved to continue at home.

Love feasts and marriage festival. On 9th Aug 2014 a special marriage festival and love feast were organized at all the six centers. These programs sought to reignite marital relationships through socialization. This was to address some of their

social and romantic needs. Couples and partners living in separation, and some divorcees who were invited testified very positively at the end of the programs. Some of them gave very inspiring testimonies. The testimonies period lasted for over an hour. Pastors, Counselors and experienced elders spiced the day's program with sermons, counseling, pieces of advice and fraternal interactions with participants.

During family reflections moment in the festival, participants entered into an important discussion on the issue of spirituality at home. This issue attracted a lot of contributions, testimonies and confessions. It was generally accepted that lack of spirituality in families, has contributed largely to a lot of problems in marriage.

Before this session ended, participants resolved that families need to urgently resort to spiritual disciplines including personal and family prayers, morning and evening devotions, fasting, fellowship (regular church attendance), community witnessing etc., as a way forward.

Participants generally felt good about the interactions and demanded for more of such programs. Testimonies of reforms continue to pour in well after the program. One divorcee whose former husband had just died demonstrated a deep sense of remorse and sorrow for not being able to reconcile with him before he died.

A week after the above program, a marriage enhancement program (marriage festival) was organized at the KNUST Botanical gardens for couples and divorcees (see Appendix M). There were presentations, testimonies, refreshments, couples reunion and an open forum platform.

Participants in course of the program were broken into groups to discuss various issues bothering on marriage and family and also the effects of divorce (see Appendix N). They came up with the following:

- That no marriage really gets broken forever, in spite of the brokenness of humanity
- Since “cleaving” (d’baq) is compared with the carpenter’s glue that binds two sheets of wood together, the couple leaves part of their beings to each other for good.
- Children suffer the most in divorce situations. They are faced with difficulties including: the absent parent’s visitation, dual loyalties, and frequently torn apart by two families (if a parent remarries). Children are usually unprepared for such separation when it occurs. Although they are almost always aware of tension at home, children do not usually have the benefit of discussions and explanations before the separation.¹¹¹
- Culture and tradition are impacting seriously on Christian marriage. This is influencing the rise in divorce cases in the church.
- The family, community and societies suffer directly or indirectly when people divorce.
- Permanent scars and hatred are in most cases left between and among the couple and relatives.
- Their spirituality becomes seriously dented in such situations.
- In most cases they suffer material and social losses.

Patronage was not as expected at the program; only 485 out of the projected 700 attended.

¹¹¹John Carlson and Judith Lewis, *Family Counseling Strategies and Issues* (Denver, CO: Love Publishing Company, 1991), 158, 160.

Project Evaluation

As already indicated, the pre-project baseline data for ANTS and the Conference were 42 and 114 respectively.

After the implementation of the program had been completed, a six-month resting period (Aug 24, 2014-- Jan 23, 2015) was allowed to collect and analyze the results. During these six months, the team intermittently visited a few churches to provide sermons, prayers and counseling sessions to members.

After the six months, it was requested from the Churches in ANTS to submit monthly reports on the incidence of divorce which happened during the six - month period for assessment. In those reports it was emphasized that the churches indicate whether each of the divorce cases being sent was as a result of adultery or a culturally influenced matter.

Pre-project Figures

As already stated, the annual incidence of divorce at the beginning of the project in ANTS stood at 42, while the overall Conference figure was 114.

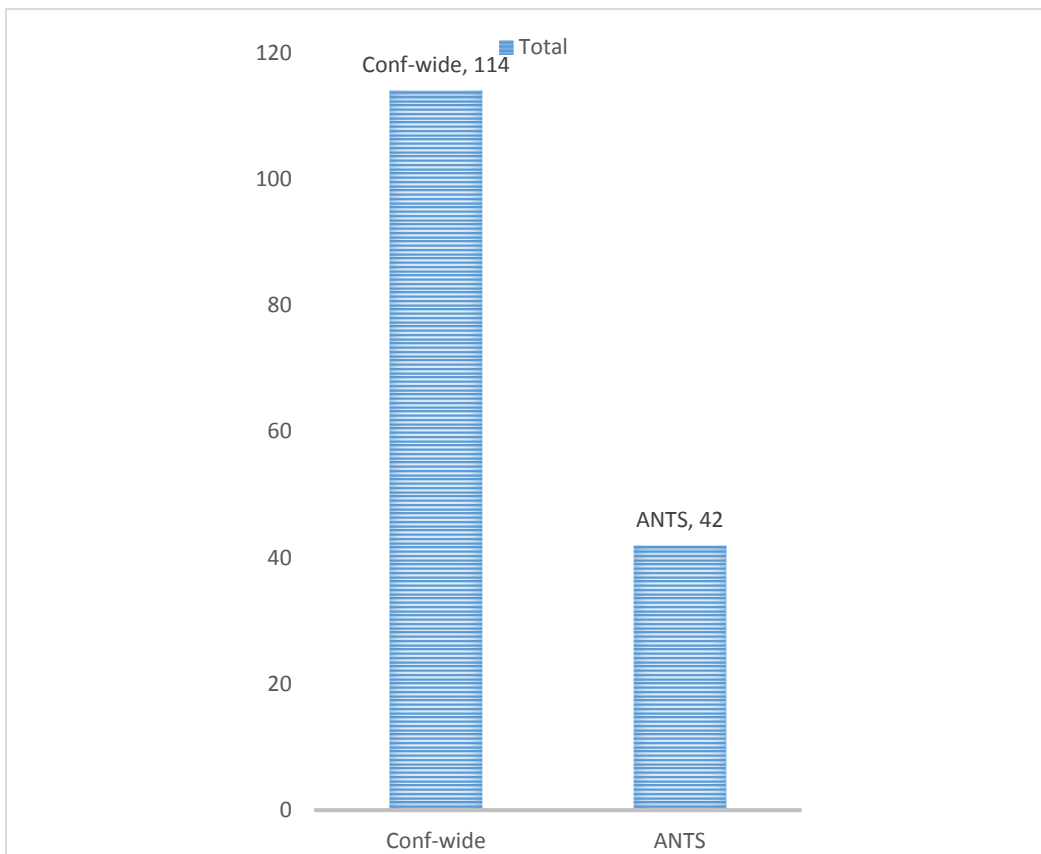


Figure 4. Pre-project Figures for the Conference and ANTS

Post-project Data

It was gratifying to learn at the end of the six-month that there had been some changes in the pre project figures. The incidence of divorce in the sector now stood at 11 in ANTS, while the Conference figure changed to 39 from the six month's report.

See below the table and figures:

Table 5. Post-project Divorce Figures. August 2014 – January 2015

Month	Conf-wide	ANTS
August 2014	6	2
Sept. 2014	7	3
Oct. 2014	8	2
Nov. 2014	7	1
Dec. 2014	6	2
Jan. 2015	5	1
Total	39	11

Figure 5. Post-project Figures from August 2014 to January 2015—ANTS

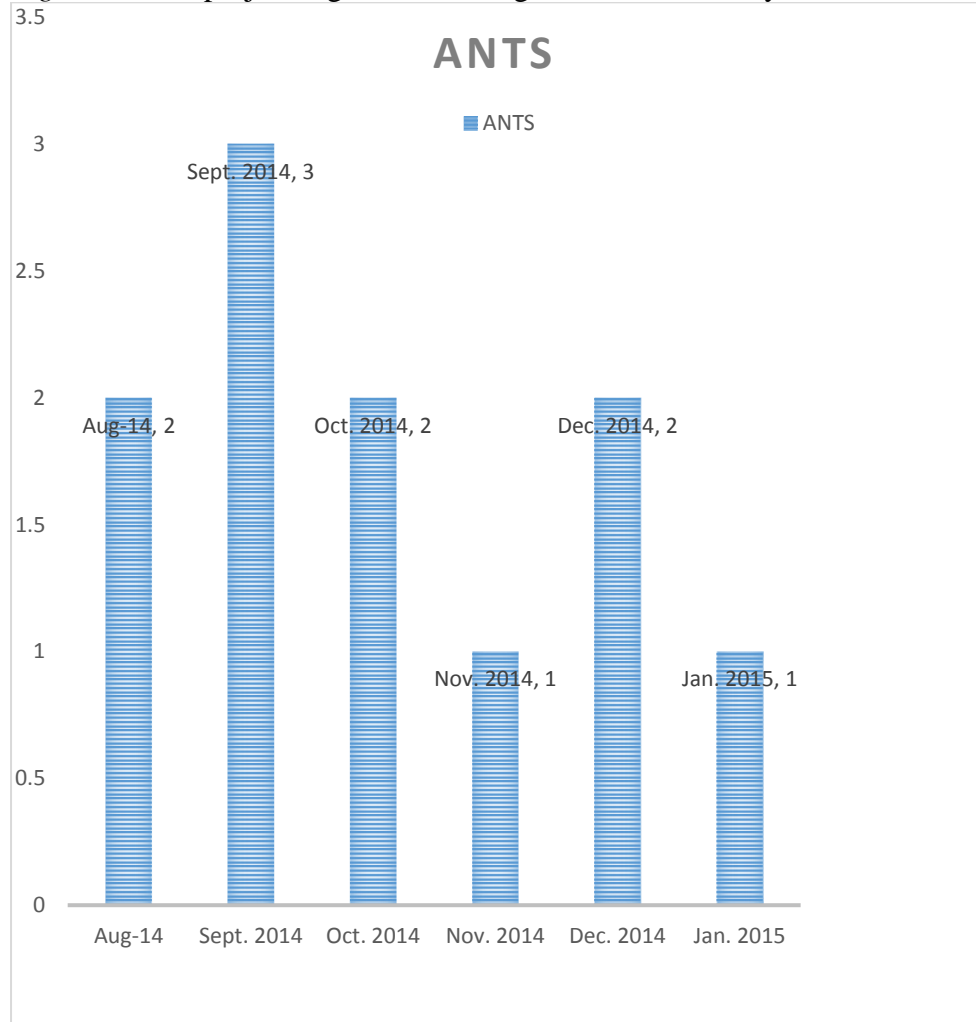
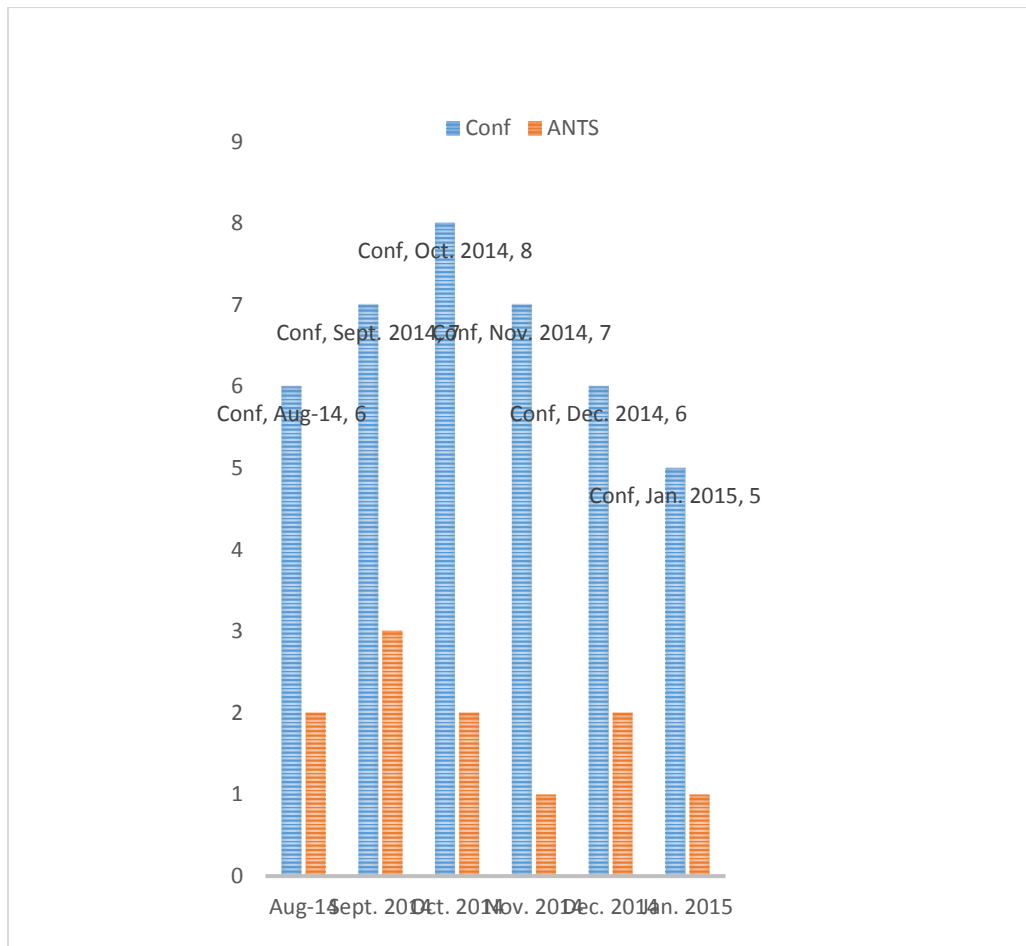


Figure 6. Post project figures from Aug. 2014 to Jan. 2015 – Conf.-wide (Total 39)



Summary

The above figures by projection put the Conference figure at about 78 for the year; and that of ANTS, about 22 at the end of the year. Also apart from two reported adultery cases, the rest were all culturally influenced divorce cases.

Project Reporting

Copies of the final report of the dissertation would be submitted to appropriate Church organizations. The project budgetary estimates would also be attached to the

report (see appendix F). The following church entities would receive completed project reports:

- a) SCGC Administration
- b) ANTS Leadership
- c) NGUM Administration
- d) WAD Family Life Department

In the next chapter, the lessons learnt from this project and relevant suggestions made, would be discussed.

To sum up, it is realized that, the results obtained after the implementation of the project suggest among other things that any time the spirituality in the home is stepped up the stability of the marriage and the family as a whole usually improves.

It is also clear from the information collected that culture seems to have a huge impact on divorce in the Church and even in the society at large. And the fact that some church leaders have demonstrated sentiments of endorsing the return of the dowry (in most cases Schnapps drinks) as legitimate grounds for divorce really complicates the problem.

Even though scripture stands at variance to this cultural norm, some church members have also expressed views during this survey which tend to lend credence to tradition instead of scripture in matters on divorce.

But it is refreshing to learn that, when people are in tune with God they get transformed. Habits, attitudes and character change. The church needs to constantly take issues about marriage and family very seriously.

When the spirituality of church members is high, positive attitudes to life is always the result. For instance it is believed that couples draw closer when they

worship together. It also helps in their physical and spiritual bonding. When this happens it promotes humility, sharing, compassion and intimacy.¹¹²

Church leaders need to constantly organize spiritual family life programs for members. When members are revived they forgive and love their fellow humans genuinely. The spiritual programs undertaken during the project worked a lot of transformation.

¹¹²Nancy L. Van Pelt, *Highly Effective Marriage* (Accra, Ghana: Advent Press, 2000), 165.

CHAPTER 6

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having brought the project to a conclusive end there was the need to summarize all that transpired. This chapter looks at lessons learnt so far, challenges, recommendations made, summary and conclusions. Also the challenges faced during the implementation of the project interventions are recorded. Much experience and information was gathered during the program.

Very many issues were discussed and analyzed. In reviewing most of the literature, various ideas or discussions shared, sought to explain the causes, effects and ways to reduce divorce incidence. Also discussed was how much culture had influenced marriage and divorce; as well as how and when the dissolution of a marriage could be declared legitimate.

Lessons Learnt

Below is a summary of lessons learnt, and also some challenges met during the execution of this project:

- It is true that Christians need to contextualize the gospel we proclaim as it reaches different cultures; yet in our practice there is the need to observe that no culture in this world is perfect. God's culture as found in the Bible stands out the only perfect one.
- It was realized that the views expressed were much influenced by the people's culture

It is observed that:

As human beings, we are products of our environment, of our culture. These greatly shape our values, beliefs, and attitudes. . . .

Unfortunately, to some degree, most of our environments and cultures work against the principles of God's kingdom. The world, after all, is a fallen world, and its values, morals, and customs often reflect that fallen state. What else would they reflect? It's just so hard for us to see because we are so immersed in our culture and environment.¹¹³

- Many marriages begin on wrong footings and weak foundations.
- Divorce is generally destructive and cannot by any flimsy excuse be endorsed. Some commentators, however, think that in some hostile conditions, divorce can be recommended.
- The position of scripture on divorce in most cases stand at variance to society and culture. But the Bible should override all cultural matters.
- Moses in dealing with the Jews permitted divorce and not commanded it, because of the people's obstinacy.
- Jesus teachings radically endorsed divorce only on condition of marital unfaithfulness. And that marriage is not intended to break.
- That culture and tradition have had considerable impact on divorce, especially among the Akan Adventists.
- That among the Akans, it seems cultural practices significantly control the regulation of marriage. For instance the payment of the dowry to initiate a marriage and the return of it to end the relationship has a lot of religious implications. The insistence on traditional rites by the church as legitimate grounds to initiate a

¹¹³ Andy Nash, *SDA Adult Sabbath Bible Study Guide, 2nd Quarter 2016: Introduction to Lesson 9* (Silver Springs, MD: General Conference of SDA, 2016).

marriage can have some future repercussions, especially when people cite the same tradition for divorce.

- Too little work is done to prevent divorce in the Church.
- Children and the separated spouses are not well catered for in the aftershocks of divorce. And “...except for severe cases of abuse or mental illness, divorce does not mean a better life for children”.¹¹⁴
- There seems to be a confusion gap between how people culturally enter and exit marriage in the church. Tradition is accepted when the Christian is entering the marital relationship; but the church frowns upon spouses wanting to exit marriage by resorting to the same tradition. However, it should be stressed that, biblically, the mode of entry into marriage may not necessarily be the same as how it is exited.
- Adventist believers need to distinguish between acceptable biblical teachings and what the society endorses on culture generally.
- Ignorance in biblical principles of marriage has over the years played a key role in the dissolution of most marriages.
- Marriage in a real sense does not actually get broken. The physical and emotional aspect of each of the spouse’s personhood is left on each other for good. They keep referring to and remembering moments of their ex- lives.
- God never intended that marriage will ever get dissolved – couples are therefore to depend on God to have their marriages work.

¹¹⁴Archibald D. Hart, *Healing Adult Children of Divorce* (Berrien Springs, MI: Servant Publications, 1991), 53.

Apart from the above highlighted lessons learnt, the following were a few unanticipated challenges met during the execution of the project that would need a better attention in future:

- During the information gathering process, most of the interviews were done orally. A lot of the data could not be retrieved from available literature, since most Akan traditional issues are not documented.
- Interviewees mostly do not reveal total information and facts. This is because traditionally, issues on marriage especially on sexuality are usually considered confidential, secret or private among Akans.
- Culture is so deep-seated among the Akans. Traditional practices therefore tend to influence practices in Christianity to the extent that some religious decisions are marred by the people's culture. This was manifested at various levels during the project work.
- Financial support for the research was seriously lacking.
- Some issues related to marriage and divorce which were not completely dealt with, will have to be further worked on by future researchers. One of such issues had to do with, whether the abandoned spouse in 1 Cor 7: 15 by the unbelieving partner can remarry and when.

Recommendations

Arising from the foregoing findings, interventions, discussions and lessons learnt from the project work, the following recommendations are made to the Church, individuals and the society at large.

Recommendations to the Church

- That the principles of Christian marriage including education in human sexuality be part of the curriculum of church schools, Sabbath classes, from the cradle, kindergarten, primary, the youth up to adult classes. But this should be professionally handled.

The Family Life and the Youth Departments should promote this, to help disabuse the minds of the youth from some societal misconceptions. It will also help prepare would-be couples maturely towards marriage and forestall post marital problems.

For instance the presence of the hymen in females, according to Winship et al, was believed to be a sign of virginity. But now the hymen does not necessarily prove a woman's virginity. It is medically known that some girls are born without one or have broken theirs through some physical manipulations of the sex organ by themselves.¹¹⁵

- That since the home and family form the foundation of the church and society, once a quarter, teaching of sound, biblical doctrines on marriage, divorce and remarriage be organized by the Family Life

¹¹⁵Elizabeth Windship, Frank Caparulo, and Vivian K. Harlin, *Human Sexuality* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 25.

Departments , as well as regular prayer and visitation programs, for the church members, especially the newly married and divorcees.

- Outdoor retreats, prayers programs, marriage festivals, love feast, family re-unions etc. be periodically organized by the church to reignite spousal and family relationships.
- That special counseling centers be established at all church levels, where members can visit to share their marital and other problems. This should be part of the work of the Family life Department.
- Trained Counselors should provide pre and post marital counseling. Pastors, Elders and Family Life Leaders should be alert to detect couples showing relational crisis, and design quick intervention to assist them. The church should provide social, emotional and spiritual support for the married and divorcees in particular.
- The issue of payment of dowries or other rites serving as the ultimate grounds to legitimize marriages to be relooked by the church. (This will help prevent cases like the Adventist doctor who divorced citing cultural considerations). The dowry should not necessarily be seen as the marriage itself, but only a partial fulfilment of a major requirement.

The overhyping of these cultural matters be deemphasized; while careful negotiations with families to reach mutual agreements before marriages be followed. This will help tone down strict cultural demands from the families. Biblical standards should always override cultural demands in all such situations.

- The cultural practice of returning the dowry, (in most cases Schnapps drinks) or the wedding ring as grounds of ending

marriages by church members should be discouraged. Biblical principles should not be compromised.

- The Church attitude towards divorcees, couples living in separation and broken relationships should be compassionate, loving and redemptive.

Recommendations to Individuals

- People contemplating marriage should attach high level of carefulness, prudence and honesty to dating courtship on engagements.
- Singles be encouraged to marry partners from their same faith; and also incompatible and inadvisable relationships, as much as practicable, be discouraged.
- Adequate pre- marital counseling and the necessary laboratory investigations be undertaken to help minimize post marriage conflicts.
- Husbands and wives should work towards avoiding divorce, except for reason of adultery. And that during marital conflicts, divorce should not be quickly considered as the first option. Couples should strongly commit themselves to their marriage vows; and instead of changing partners, should rather work towards changing the conditions.

Recommendations to Society

- Community and traditional leaders should consider modifying and relaxing some of the existing controversial marital laws.

- Relatives, families and communities should provide support to singles and the married, trying to be gate keepers and each other's brother's keeper. Child training on family and culture issues should begin at home.
- It is also highly recommended that Schools, Colleges and even Universities of Marriage and Family be established. Exclusive curricula be structured along family and marriage dynamics. Formal and informal practical lessons that aim at making marriage meaningful and prevent divorce in future relationships should be the main focus of study in such institutions.
- Instructors may include: medical doctors, sex therapists, psychologists, pastors, counselors, educationists, caterers etc. Suggested courses of study could be: the theology of marriage, the family, gender roles, sexuality in marriage, in-law interferences, family finance, conflict management, child bearing and training, communication, cooking, hygiene, divorce and remarriage etc.

Conclusion

God's original plan for marriage was to ensure peaceful, loving relationship for a man and his wife forever. Divorce was never in the arrangement of the marriage institution. The sanctity of marriage got marred after the fall and the brokenness of humanity. The project conducted so far has revealed and triggered a lot for further discussions.

The Old Testament times saw a lot of perversion in marriage like, polygamy, homosexuality, incest and divorce. This has resulted in untold consequences in the marriage institution up till today.

During the New Testament era, Jesus and the Apostles preached against such perversions. Jesus in particular spoke against most of the Jewish practices in marriage. He stressed that marriage in the beginning was between a man and a woman, and they were to live in harmony till death separates them. Jesus taught that unless there is an incidence of adultery in marriage, there should be no divorce at all.

Unfortunately, as it was in the time of the Jews, culture has influenced a lot of religious practices today. Prominent among this is the way culture is impacting on marriage and divorce. The Adventist church is no exception in this matter. The Akan Adventists in Ghana, especially those in ANTS are recently falling victim to this problem.

Most cultures in Ghana endorse the payment of the dowry as grounds for legitimizing marriage. The return of the dowry to the husband in times of crisis in the marriage, is also the culturally accepted rite to end the marriage. These approved cultural practices have crept into the Adventist Church, especially among the Akan churches in Ghana. And they have contributed a lot to the rise in divorce cases.

Some members logically reason that if the Adventist church insists on the performance of traditional rites in order to legitimize marriage, then the same culture should be accepted as grounds for divorce. In other cultures, divorce is upheld once it is granted by the courts. But it should be strongly advised that by way of contextualization, the church should engage traditional leaders on how culture and the church can coexist without compromising biblical teachings.

This project has provided some biblical response to this problem. Various interventional activities implemented during this project, assisted in changing the trend positively. It should be emphasized that no matter how much pressure culture

brings to bear on marriage, only Biblical principles can be upheld as the truth and grounds for divorce.

In other words, the counsel of Jesus, as expatiated by Ellen White, should be the church's standard in deciding all matters regarding divorce:

A woman may be legally divorced from her husband by the laws of the land yet not divorced in the sight of God and according to the higher law. There is only one sin, which is adultery, which can place the husband and wife in a position where they can be free from the marriage vow in the sight of God. Although the laws of the land may grant a divorce, yet they are husband and wife still in the Bible light, according to the laws of God.¹¹⁶

Finally it should be strongly emphasized that never has divorce been a solution; if anything at all it has ever been a dissolution of marriage, carrying with a baggage of disseminating of its problems.¹¹⁷

Also the payment of the dowry should only be seen as a partial requirement for marriage and NOT the main dependent factor to legitimize it. The dowry is not the marriage itself. Therefore the Church should not be seen as bound by some of these traditions to determine the acceptability or legitimacy of marriage.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, therefore believes that: 'Because marriage is a divine institution, the church has a unique and solemn responsibility both to prevent divorce and, should divorce occur, to heal as far as possible the wounds it causes'¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶White, *The Adventist Home*, 344.

¹¹⁷*Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Commentary Reference Series (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 12:694.

¹¹⁸*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 338.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A
ACGC PERMISSION LETTER

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH



4th February, 2014

PR. KWABENA ANNOR BOAFO
PRESIDENT
SOUTH CENTRAL GHANA CONF.
OF SDA - KUMASI

Dear Pr. Annor Boafo,

RE: PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE PROJECT

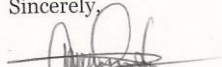
Following your request to run a survey in our conference, I am authorized by Conference Administration to respond as follows;

- a. That on behalf of the Conference and the leadership of Ashanti New Town Sector (ANTS), we grant you permission to undertake your project in ANTS.
- b. That in the course of your work with regards to the project, do not hesitate to contact us for any assistance, should you encounter any challenge.
- c. That after your project completion, we would appreciate greatly if a copy of your theses is sent to us for our perusal.

May our good Lord guide you throughout your project.

Thank you for choosing Ashanti Central Ghana Conference.

Sincerely,



Pr. John Antwi Baafi
(Executive Secretary)

Xc: The Officers, ASCG

P.O.BOX 8410
Adum – Kumasi
Ghana- West Africa
Tel: 0208209749, 0204397332
Email: ashcentralghadventists@gmail.com

APPENDIX B

SCGC PERMISSION LETTER



APPENDIX C

FORUM ORGANIZED FOR COUPLES, WIDOWS/WIDOWERS AND DIVORCEES ON 1ST AUGUST 2014

Discussion Topics

1. What is God's purpose for marriage?
 - i) For Sex or Procreation?
 - ii) For Companionship?
 - iii) For Social benefits?
 - iv) Others

2. What is the state of Divorce in the church today? And what are the spiritual and social triggers of Divorce?

3. How much influence has culture had on Christian Marriage and Divorce?

4. What is it that the Church is not doing right?

5. Moving forward, what can the Church do to improve upon the situation?

APPENDIX D
OUTLINE OF SERMON PRESENTED DURING
IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT

Topic: 'CHANGING CONDITIONS INSTEAD OF PARTNERS'

Key Bible Text: Eph 5:21-31

Introduction

Marriage was instituted as a sacred institution at creation. It was pure, full of joy and meant to stay peaceful.

Its primary purpose was to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship.(SDA Believe, 329)

Sin however destroyed and marred the beauty of it. Humanity was then introduced to perversions like polygamy, incest, homosexuality and divorce in marriage. Divorce has been a major cause of human suffering. But some cultural antidote have aggravated its incidence.

Body

- I. Sins effects on Marriage (Gen 3:14-17).
 - a) Marriage in the beginning (Gen 1:26, 27)
 - b) Moses and the Old Testament Times
 - c) Bill of Divorcement (Deut 24:1-5)
 - d) The Jews and Divorce (Deut 24; Deut 22:27)
 - e) God's resentment and disapproval (Mal 2:14-16)

- II. Jesus and Divorce
 - a) Encounter with the Jews (Matt 5:32)
 - b) Matt 19:1-10
 - c) The Exception Clause (Matt19:9)

- III. Today's situation – some statistics
 - a) The influence of culture on Divorce (marriage and divorce rites)
 - b) What can be done in crises time?
 - c) Changing the Conditions instead of Partners. God is able
 - d) The role of the Church in changing condition

- e) The role of the Holy Spirit in changing the condition. (Ps 127:1)

Conclusion

- I. Culture is not to override Biblical principles of marriage. AH 344
- II. No matter what happens in marriage, divorce should not be considered as the first option.
- III. The Church should always stand firm and not bow to culture in matters of marriage and divorce.
- IV. In the of divorce occurs, the Church's appeal to couple should be that of compassion and love (SDA Believe, 338)

APPENDIX E

PRESENTATION ON MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

VENUE: YENYAWSO ADVENTIST CHURCH, KUMASI- GHANA.

DATE: 1ST AUGUST, 2014

Marriage in the Old Testament

1. Marriage is rooted in creation (Gen 1-3)

Account reveals 3 key ideas

- a) God created the pair, both in His image (Gen 1:27)

Meaning of the image often associated with intelligence, but the context suggests representative rule (cf. Ps 8:6-8)

- b) Both invested with worth, dignity, significance.
- c) Both exercised stewardship (subdue the earth (Gen 1:28)

2. The Fall has had consequences

Subordination after fall? “He (husband) shall rule over you” Gen. 3: 16

- a) Clearly in the marriage relation after the fall the man has an authoritative role; the statement above follows after the one about the woman’s desire for the man.
- b) But the man’s “ruling” of the woman (masal) is distinguished from his ruling of the rest of the animal(rdh)

3. Confusion in Culture over Marriage and Family

A basic paradigm shift: Judeo-Christian foundation being overtaken by a libertarian ideology that elevates human rights, human freedom, and self-

determination.

- Skyrocketing Divorce Rates
- Gender -role confusion
- Effects of Culture on Marriage and Divorce

4. **Adultery**

- Again Gen 2:24 implies fidelity “hold fast”
- 7th Commandment forbids it (Ex 20:14; Deut 5:18)

Examples

David (2 Sam 11)

The Levites concubine (Judges 19:1-2)

Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phinehas (1 Sam2:22)

Marriage in the New Testament

5. **Jesus and Marriage**

- Marriage permanence affirmed (Gen1:27; 2:24; cf Matt 19:6) Marriage not asocial contract but a “divine yoke” declaring a divine purpose
- Jesus places marriage in the overall context of the kingdom of God (Matt 22:10)
- Marriage though to be nurtured and cared for should also be subordinated to God’s salvation purposes

6. **Paul and Marriage**

- Marriage is part of God’s purposes (Eph 1:10)
- Marriage instructions are to spirit filled believers (Eph 5:18)
- Wives to submit (Eph 5:21-33)
- Men to love (Eph 5:21-33)

- Spiritual warfare – bearing the armor of God (Eph 6:10-18)
- Marriage runs on mutual respect and love

7. Divorce

- Permanence and “one-fleshness” (Gen 2:24)
- Divorce used analogously for apostasy (Isa 50:1; Jer 3:8)
- God disapproves divorce (Mal 2:16)

8. Jesus quotes an Old Testament law and discusses true meaning of divorce
(Deut 24:1-4; Matt 19:3-10)

9. Jesus and Divorce

- Moses permitted divorce and not commanded it due to the hardness of the hearts, of the Jews (Matt 19:7, 8)
- The Exception Clause (Matt 19:9; 5:32)

10. **The Church’s Position** (Church Manual 2010 Edition) pg. 151

- Scripture recognizes adultery and fornication (Matt 5:32) and abandonment by an unbelieving partner (1 Cor 7:10-15) as grounds for divorce
- Admonition (see 1 Cor 7:1-16)
- In times of crises let us change bad conditions instead of changing partners

APPENDIX F

PROJECT BUDGETARY ESTIMATES

Item	Description	Amt	Remarks
1. Tools	Camera, Pen drives, Recorder and interview guides	\$650	SCGC Support
2. Stationery	Duplicating papers, pens, pencils, ruler cell tapes, glue	\$180	Personal
3. Mobilization	Team members Focus group	\$300	Personal
4. Transportation	To churches, Focus groups meetings, workshops counseling, sermons, visits to Advisor in Accra	\$700	Personal
5. Finishing	Corrections, tiding-up of scripts, biding	\$150	A friend assisted
6. Misc.	Incidentals, tips feeding, books for chiefs etc.	\$220	Personal
Total		\$2200.00	

APPENDIX G

GUIDELINES TO THE CHURCH ON TRADITIONAL MARITAL ISSUES

Introduction

As part of the project work on the influence of culture on divorce, a guide was developed for the South Central Ghana Conference.

Pastors and Family Life leaders saw this need because of the confusion that sometimes arises between the church and families on what rites are acceptable during traditional marriage. Also the rise in the incidence of culturally influenced divorce in the church gives a cause to worry.

This document therefore serves as a guide to the church in deciding on matters relating to cultural practices and Christian marriage. The following are the summarized form of the guidelines in the document:

1. The Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy and the Church Manual should be the guide for the church in all family life matters.
2. Culture will ever remain an integral part of the Church. It cannot be grossed over in our Christian life pursuits. But it should be appropriately contextualized in religion.
3. Since no one culture can stand perfect, Christians cannot depend on any one culture completely in dealing with society.
4. The Bible is the only perfect standard to measure all good things. Therefore any cultural practice that stand at variance to Scripture should be shunned.
5. In marriage, the church only witnesses the ceremony but does not directly contract it.

6. The marriage between an Adventist and a Non-Adventist, though cannot be blessed by the church, should be attended and lovingly graced by members.
7. Before the traditional ceremony of a marriage, there should be pre negotiation meeting with concerned families. This meeting is to establish a mutual agreement that grants the families' satisfaction without compromising the church's faith.
8. There should be less emphasis on strict cultural demands during the traditional rites.
9. Alcoholic drinks should not be used to perform the traditional rites.
10. Would-be couples should not only involve their families but also the church. This will help avoid any conflict with the people's traditional festivals.
11. The church should counsel the bride and groom in the fixing of dates and venues.
12. The couple to-be should be encouraged to do a proper due diligence; and also undergo comprehensive laboratory investigations. This will forestall post marital conflicts.
13. Pre and post marital counseling should be taken seriously by pastors and church leaders. Parents should always be seriously involved in this.
14. Marriage between an Adventist and a Non-Adventist should as much as it is possible be discouraged.
15. It is not advisable to encourage a marital relationship between two people whose cultural backgrounds are irreconcilable, and can be a potentially dangerous source of post marital crises.
16. Prompt, wise action should always be taken on marriage, divorce and remarriage cases, by the church and relatives. But in doing so careful, loving, forgiving, redemptive and reformatory approach should be adopted.
17. The church should advise against any marriage (traditional or ordinance) that places too much emphasis on the secular rather the spiritual matters.

APPENDIX H

DISCUSSIONS AND INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What is the Biblical Primary Purpose for Marriage?
2. When is marriage said to be publicly accepted and legitimate?
3. What are the causes of dissolution of most first marriages?
4. When do we say divorce is completely and publicly accepted?
5. What are some triggers of Divorce?
6. What are the acceptable cultural reasons for Divorce?
7. What is the meaning of Divorce by the “abandonment of the unbelieving spouse”?
8. Who are the major culprits of marital instability: In-laws or Men or Women
9. What the Church is not doing to prevent Divorce:
10. If you are given the second chance of marriage what would be the most important issue(s) to consider?

APPENDIX I

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION – SCGC

P. O. Bo RY 337
Railways
Kumasi

28th August 2013

The Executive Secretary
South Central Ghana Conference
Kumasi

Dear Pastor,

**AUTHORITY TO UNDERTAKE A PROJECT
IN ASANTE NEW TOWN SECTOR**

As part of our research ethical considerations I write to seek permission to undertake my project work in Asante New Town Sector (ANTS).

I should also be grateful if you could grant me the needed help for this exercise.

Kindly keep the leadership of the ANTS officially informed on my behalf.

Sincerely,



Pastor K. Annor Boafo

APPENDIX J

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION – ACGC

P. O. Bo RY 337
Railways
Kumasi

24th January 2014

The Secretary
Ashanti Central Ghana Conference
Kumasi

Dear Pastor,

**PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE PROJECT
IN YOUR CONFERENCE**

I am currently pursuing a Doctor in Ministry program under Adventist University of Africa, Kenya.

I have chosen Asante New Town Sector in your Conference for my project work.

I should be grateful if I could be granted permission to undertake this task there.

Sincerely,



Pastor K. Annor Boafo

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VITA

Personal Identification

Name: Kwabena Annor Boafo
Birth date: 14th March 1959
Birthplace: Namong- Offinso, Ghana (Adventist by birth)
Parents: M K Annor and Yaa Badu (mother)
Spouse: Akosua Tiwaa Boafo (27th Feb.1971); Marriage Blessed: 31st Jan 2014
Children: Anto (1st May 1987), Antwiwaa (25th Dec 1989), Annor-Boafo (14th Sept 1992), Gyapomaa (30th Jan 1998)

Education

1964-70: Namong Methodist Primary School
1970-74: Namong L/A Continuation School
1974-79: Bekwai Adventist Secondary School (Ghana)
1979-82: Wesley College, Kumasi (Teacher Education)
1986-89: Andrews University, ASWA Campus (BA degree)
1995-99: Andrews University, ASWA Campus (MA-Pastoral)
2006-08: Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Tech, Ksi., Ghana (MPH)

Baptism 18th Nov 1972. By Pr. D. K. Amponsah

Ordination 9th Jan 1993

Work Experience

1982-86: Ibadan and Ifetedo, Nigeria - Secondary School Teacher
1989-91: Chaplain, CGC Assoc. Health Dir., and Teacher, Bekwai SDA Sec.
1991-97: CGC Health Director, District and Church Pastor, Kumasi - Ghana
1997-2003: Sec-South Cent. Gh Adm Unit, Kumasi (1997-1999) Health/
Chap/Comn Dir. (1999-2001) SCGC Secretary (2001-2003)
2003-2011: Ghana Union Conference Health Ministries Director
2011-2014: SCGC Ministerial Secretary and Yenyawso-Ksi. Church Pastor
Since 2011: Chairman, Board of Governors, Namong Senior High Sch.
2014-date: President and Chairman of Hosp. and School Boards in SCGC, Kumasi