

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Doctor of Ministry  
Emphasis in Leadership

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

**TITLE: A STRATEGY TO REDUCE MARITAL CONFLICTS IN LINGADZI SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES IN THE CENTRAL MALAWI CONFERENCE**

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Date Completed: August 2016

In response to the unresolved marital conflicts in Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I developed a comprehensive marital conflicts reduction intervention program that would assist married couples in handling marital conflicts that they encounter. One significant and unique stressor in marriage life is the unresolved marital conflicts. The program I developed for this Doctor of Ministry project was based on the modules from *Model Marriage*, a marriage counseling handbook. This course is entitled *Marital Conflict Reduction*. The seminars were conducted for four weeks in each of the three churches of study: Mvama, Area 49 and Gulliver.

The seminars, family life focused home visitations, and retreats were comprehensively fashioned into a synergistically coordinated marriage enhancement and marital conflict reduction program for Christian married couples. It is a proactive,

intentional and well-planned program that seeks to assist in the reduction of marital conflicts and equip married couples of Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on how to handle marital conflicts including those unique to daily life such as money and sex related problems. The program consists of thirteen modules: the beloveds, the fundamentals of marriage, the marriage relationship, the duties of spouses, understanding the temperaments, the problems and solution, the master key of acceptance, the sexual relationship, the principles of sex, more on temperaments, the improved sexual life, parenting and what it involves, new dimensions.

The core of the Marital Conflict Reduction program was a four-week seminar. During these four weeks, couples met weekly for two hours to learn the biblical foundations of marriage and how to deal with marital conflicts. The program culminated with a family life focused home visitation and a couples' retreat weekend to Lake Malawi in which Seventh-day Adventist and non-Adventist couples from diverse denominations met and celebrated the sanctity of their marriages.

The initial goal of the project was to assist couples in reducing marital conflicts and equipping the married couples with the skills to handle marital conflicts. Recommendations are made to conduct further studies on the effects of marital conflicts on the couple's spirituality, causes of infidelity, and the effects of external influences on marriage. In addition, methods of sustaining the program at the local church by leaders should be put in place.

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MALAWI CONFERENCE

A dissertation

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Moffat Wonderson Botolo

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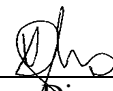
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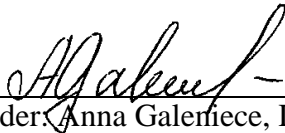
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Dedicated to the glory of God, to my wife, Stella Chado Botolo, and children,

Thokozani Rachel and Joel Alex for supporting me this far.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This ministry project is a culmination of a burning desire placed in me and my wife Stella to help marriages to help marriages reduce the marital conflicts that they are encountering. Both the DMin program and this dissertation has been a journey; it started soon after registering for the program. Certainly, I could not have achieved success without the support and encouragement of so many. I gratefully acknowledge their contribution to my life and journey.

My wife and best friend, Stella, who unconditionally loved me, showed patience, grace and undying faith in me. I am forever grateful for your willingness to sacrifice couple time and finances to ensure that I completed this part of life's race.

My two children, Thokozani, and Joel, for their love and support. My daughter Thokozani, I am very proud of you, and I thank you for keeping me humble and focused. My son, Joel, thank you for being a constant point of joy.

My advisor, Dr. Tom Ogal, thank you for your encouragement, advice, and guidance throughout the program. Your support and guidance made this document possible.

To my God, for His grace and mercy, I humbly acknowledge that all I am and hope to be is vested with your love and grace. It is my deepest desire that the meditation of my heart and the words of mouth be found acceptable in your sight.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Chapter one describes an overview of the dissertation that includes the description of the ministry context, the statement of the problem, statement of the purpose, justification, delimitations, and description of the dissertation process, expectations, and definitions of terms.

#### **Description of the Ministry Context**

Lingadzi District is located in Central Malawi Conference in the western part of Lilongwe, which is the capital city of Malawi. The district has three organized churches known as Area 49, Gulliver, and Mvama. The churches were organized into a district in the year 2000 with a district membership of 1,630.<sup>1</sup>

Many marriages in Lingadzi district of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Central Malawi Conference are experiencing difficulties. The possibility of couples not to understand themselves has been a potential source of conflict in the Lingadzi District. The parishioners' social status ranges from high to middle class. Having worked in the district for about four years, the researcher has noticed difficulties among the couples resulting in spiritual lethargy and general family life problems. Conflicts in marriage within Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are inevitable because there is no program that has been developed to address the problem for years.

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<sup>1</sup> Central Malawi Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Statistical Report* (Lilongwe, Malawi: Central Malawi Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2013).

Out of many marital differences between husbands and wives, disagreements have erupted, and from the disagreements, conflicts have erupted that have resulted in highly emotional conditions of frustration and anger. Many marital conflicts in the Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church have taken a long time without being addressed, and have brought a drift between the couples.

The words of prophet Hosea, "my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6), reflect the reality of many families in Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church hence they are missing the fulfillment that is meant for them in marriage. It is pathetic to note, therefore, that this suffering is the result of lack of sensitization or knowledge as to the cause of their marital problem.

The fact of the matter is that every family in Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not have the same problem areas. Samuel Bacchiochi alludes to this fact thus: "When a married couple tells me that they have never had an argument or conflict during their 30 or 40 years of marriage, I assume that one of the two things must be true of them: they are not telling the truth, or their relationship must be rather superficial and boring."<sup>2</sup>

The Bible admonishes married couples to avoid pretense in matters of marital conflicts. The reality of their family problems is God's concern hence it affects their relationship with Him. The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel did not mince their words in condemning the false prophets who derailed God's people from the truth by giving them false hopes that there was peace with God and one another when in an actual sense things were not well with their souls. God noted the spirit of self-centeredness and open disobedience in them no wonder the prophets wrote: "They have healed the

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<sup>2</sup> Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Marriage Covenant, Biblical Perspective* (Berrien Springs, MI: Review and Herald, 1991), 92.

wound of my people lightly, saying peace, peace when there is no peace” (Jer 6:14,cf. 8: 11;Ezek 13:10-11,14-16).

God does not accept anything less than a genuine repentance and a true self of individuals because true healing comes when a person has admitted and confessed his trespasses and has received an assurance of forgiveness from the Lord. Any form of pretense on the side of God turns to hinder the light of truth. This applies to the conflicts in the marriages of the members of Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventists as well. However, there is hope for the hopeless marital relationships; God can bring healing, joy, and strength in such marriages. Health marriages are not determined by a condition of marital conflict-free status but how marital conflicts are perceived and handled by the partners.If marriages are to remain healthy and exciting, they need to embrace the skills of dealing with marital conflicts throughout their married life. This is the remedy of reinforcing the healthy status of marriage.

Out of many pastoral duties, the researcher has struggled with in Lingadzi District of Seventh-day Adventists for the past four years, mediating and giving counsel relating to solving problems in marriages took the upper hand. There are times when the researcher has spent long hours trying to assist a couple in solving a marital problem and would receive encouraging and discouraging feedbacks such as the following:

Thanks for everything you did in trying to save our marriage but unfortunately, it just cannot work, I guess. Things have reached an irreconcilable point now. Let me state though that we have had the best two or so weeks of a happy marriage since you came, until just some 30 minutes ago. A normal love filled day has turned into a nightmare. She found an old feisty message on my phone. Of course, it is not a good message, but it is from the past, not something I am doing now. She has resolved to return to her former plan even telling our only seven-year-old son ‘we should move here.’ Very civil and sober discussion no arguments though. Good night.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Short Text Message, 05:30 PM, April 4, 2013.

I came to your house twice to update you on the same. Luckily yesterday I met your wife, so I have explained everything to her. Pastor our marriage is over. We have divorced. Thank you so much for your prayers and words of encouragement and inspirations. I have suffered enough.<sup>4</sup>

Pastor I was waiting to hear from you, my wife told you regarding these issues: (1) why she left for Mwazo and lied to me that she is in Lungo, (2) Her reaction to the fact that I had an encounter with a man based in Mwazo the night she came home, (3) The various encounters with the same man at different places.<sup>5</sup>

“This thing is stealing away my peace and sleep pastor. Do you any feedback from the pastor in Mwazo?”<sup>6</sup>

“Pastor I want to thank God for you, I can feel that I am married from that day you came to our house. Peter is a changed husband and a real father. I have seen God through you Pastor, am so happy.”<sup>7</sup>

For your own information, I note there is low interest from the church on this matter. I guess it is because I no longer produce and submit my tithe transfer slips to the church treasurer. I stand to be corrected though. Besides, I have resolved to find someone who can take me for what I am and not for what I have. I will formally approach the church with details once successful. Experience with sickness has taught me that I need someone to be with me on my death bed.<sup>8</sup>

In case you are surprised that I sent a short text message to the first Elder, over my case after I had promised not to do so again, please note the first elder comes from the same district with my wife. Coincidentally he chose to meet her in the absence of the head deacon. To date, he has not told me what they discussed. I can see tribalism at play. I have lost trust. This is not spiritual counseling. Can he continue this matter in truth? Following my discovery through our daughter that I was being cheated by my wife for three months living in hiding at the place where her secret lover lives, I made up my mind to find another wife and I will tell the church when I am successful. I am yet to know whether running away from matrimonial home and hiding from your

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<sup>4</sup> Short Text Message, 13:19 PM, August 30, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Short Text Message, 16:53 PM, July 5, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Short Text Message, 22:33 PM, May 19, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Short Text Message, 16:45 PM, April 28, 2013. All the names of people and places in the short text messages are pseudo names.

<sup>8</sup> Short Text Message, 17:00 PM, July 08, 2013.

partner for three months cannot be infidelity in the Holy Scriptures especially when it is clear that one went to stay where a secret lover stays.<sup>9</sup>

It has been observed by the researcher that some couples of Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church have shunned away conflicts and assumed that addressing marital conflicts is a challenge that threatens their well-being in the marriage life and jeopardizes their relationship. This mindset has led many married couples to avoid marital conflicts by denying the fact that their marriage is experiencing a conflict. Instead, they bury them under the carpet by and pretend as if there is nothing taking place physically and emotionally.

However, suppressing marital conflicts is not the best solution for dealing with a marital conflict. No wonder, many marital problems have resulted in separation and divorce because the marital conflicts have time and again generated emotions that were kept up among the married couples and were not exposed.

### **Statement of the Problem**

About 25 percent of marriages among members of the Lingadzi Seventh-day Adventist Churches are characterized by cases of marital conflict leading to marital infidelity, divorce, neglect of parental responsibilities, and spiritual lethargy.<sup>10</sup> This is contrary to the biblical ideal of marriage that Christians are behooved to advocate. There is, therefore, a great need to seek ways to alleviate marital conflict and restore marital bliss among the members of the Lingadzi Seventh-day Adventist Churches.

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<sup>9</sup> Short Text Message, 04:30 AM, July 06, 2013. The names of people and places in the short text messages are pseudo names.

<sup>10</sup> Lingadzi District of Seventh-day Adventists, *Family Life Ministries Department* (Lilongwe, Malawi: Lingadzi District of Seventh-day Adventists, 2013).

### **Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of this dissertation was to develop, implement and evaluate an intervention program, through family life focused home visitation and seminars that could be used in the local churches to address issues of marital conflicts among the couples.

### **Justification for the Dissertation**

Many married couples in Lingadzi District of the Seventh –day Adventist Church have raised serious concerns about the unhealthy status of their marriage relationships. Pastors in the area have always reported cases of marital difficulties among couples which sometimes lead to violence and divorce among members. The increase of these unresolved conflicts sometimes spills over to the wider church family creating further problems among members.

Presently, there are no specific church programs in place to address the issue of marital difficulties among couples in the church. There is an urgent need to provide intervention programs by which the church will train and equip couples and would-be couples in marital relationships to reduce friction in their relationships.

### **Delimitations of the Dissertation**

This exploratory study was confined to three Seventh –day Adventist Churches of Lingadzi District thus, Area 49, Gulliver, and Mvama, so that the implementation of this study could be manageable. Findings from this study can be replicated in other churches that are not part of this study. The data obtained in this study will help further research in addressing marital difficulties.

## **Overview of the Dissertation**

Chapter one introduces the dissertation. It presents the problem addressed by the research, and it supplies a brief summary of the most relevant research and theory pertaining to marital conflicts in Lingadzi Seventh-day Adventist Churches, Central Malawi Conference. The problem statement tells the story behind the research and provides the background to the purpose statement. In addition to the problem statement, this chapter contains the statement of the purpose, the justification for the dissertation or significance of the study, delimitations, description of the study process, and definition of terms.

Chapter two gives the theological reflection of marriage before sin in the Old Testament and marriage after sin and the consequences of marriage after sin. It also expounds the basic biblical marriage characteristics and establishes the biblical foundation for marriage.

Chapter three reviews the pertinent literature related to marital conflicts and development of intervention strategies to reduce marital conflicts. It provides a background for the important variables or concepts in this study.

Chapter four describes in detail how the study was conducted. The researcher decided to use the qualitative type of research because marital conflicts issues are sensitive in nature and therefore, not easy to gain access to. The chapter also reveals the appropriateness of the study hence it generated information on collective views and a rich understanding of participants' experiences and beliefs on marriage. The study also assisted the researcher in the collection of data on marital conflicts and resolution from many participants at once. Chapter four also gives the data collection procedures which include a designed questionnaire of eight main focus group

discussion questions and data analysis. It also explains the designing of the intervention.

Chapter five focuses on a narrative of implementation of the program; visitations focused on family life issues, seminars on conflict resolution in marriage conducted in a modular way and the evaluation of the program through the qualitative method and direct observation.

Chapter six describes what the findings of the study mean and what conclusion the researcher drew from the research questions that guided his study. It gives the details of how the researcher's findings compared with those in the literature and with the researcher's conceptual framework. Included in this chapter are practical implications for professional practice as well as recommendations for further research.

### **Expectations**

This study will create awareness of marital conflicts that have dwarfed the spirituality of most married couples in Lingadzi District of the Seventh –day Adventist Church. The spirituality of Lingadzi Seventh-day Adventist Churches and Central Malawi Conference will be strengthened; hence married couples will have successful Christian marriages built on biblical foundations.

The implementation of the project will help to drastically slow down the rate of the increasing marriage separations and divorce of Seventh-day Adventist members in Lingadzi churches. The project will help Seventh-day Adventist prospective couples to be familiar with issues concerning marriage and the strategies in marital conflict resolutions. The inbuilt flexibility in this study would make it possible to be replicated in other congregations and communities that are not part of this study.

## **Definition of Terms**

**Chimwanamayi:** Temporary arrangements for the men to exchange their wives for a short period among the Lomwe people.

**Christian Marriage:** Is three-way spiritual covenant between the man, the woman, and their Lord.

**Conference:** An organized body of the churches in a state, province, or territory.

**Conflict:** A serious disagreement; an argument: a serious difference of opinions, wishes, etc.

**District:** An organized body of churches in a town, or location.

**Family:** A group consisting of one or two parents and their children.

**Lethargy:** A lazy spiritual state

**Parishioner:** An inhabitant of a parish, especially one who attends church regularly.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF MARITAL RELATIONSHIP

In the beginning, God designed, ordained and ordered the marriage institution (Gen. 2:24) that was established before sin came into the world.<sup>1</sup> Right from the time of its establishment by the Creator, marriage has maintained its sanctity. The Bible points out that in this Holy Matrimony, God joined together a man and a woman both created in His own image and likeness (Gen.1:27).

This was a method of establishing a new way of living on this planet: male and female, thus from loneliness. This chapter will explore this unique institution that God established as the climax of creation and discover God's purpose for marriage. This chapter will also dwell on the concept of marital conflicts in the Bible after the creation of marriage and family. This chapter will further examine counsels on marriage and family in the writings of Ellen G White.

#### **Marriage Before Sin in the Old Testament**

It is a known factor from the biblical annals that the marriage institution has existed from creation to date. It was divinely established in Eden (Gen.2:18) and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman (Matt.19:56) in

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Ash, *Marriage: Sex in the Service of God* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 66.

loving companionship.<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White comments that the institution has for its originator the Creator of the universe.<sup>3</sup>

The main statement of how God created a man and a woman is well elaborated in Genesis 1:31, “And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.” Wayne opines that this created order is beautiful. God took delight in it and thought it was “very good” when it is functioning in the way God intended. God’s created order for marriage is beautiful because it is His way to bring amazing unity of people who are so different as men and women.<sup>4</sup>

God was pleased with the work of His own hands, and indeed He saw that it was very good. Furthermore, He was delighted with the man and woman in their capacity as independent beings and was joyful with their intimacy relationship. Everything in them was perfect, no sin and its elements were present in their lives and this new relationship. The image of God was portrayed in their physical, mental and spiritual buildup hence they were full of vigor and strength from above. (Gen.1:26).

### **Male and Female in the Image of God**

In Genesis 1:26,27 Moses gives a picture of how God created the first human beings who were to occupy the earth: “Then God said let us make man in our image, according to our likeness... so God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female.” God portrayed His image in the man and woman. There is an idea of inclusiveness. Doss points out that the text makes it clear that it was not a case of the male being created in the image of God and the female in

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<sup>2</sup>Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 329.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1958), 46.

<sup>4</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Biblical Foundations of Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002), 52-53.

the image of man. Instead, He used two people, one male, and one female. The Trinity—three-in-one—created man and woman in the image of God two-in-one. Doss further argues that the male, alone, did not express His image fully.<sup>5</sup> (Gen. 1:26).

Joy opines that the male, alone, did not express His image fully, neither did the female. Together Adam and Eve represented God’s image.<sup>6</sup>

White comments that, clearly the intention of the text is to say that both man and woman share a common humanity and equal worth, (hence, both are “man”), and yet they do so not as identical appear (hence they are distinctively “male and female”).<sup>7</sup> The true essence and true context of the equal status of man and woman are hinged in God alone. It is imperative therefore there can be no way that men should rule women as their own property or women ruling men. Furthermore, the idea of feeling bossy to one another does not exist as far as man and woman are in the image of God.

Peter argues that “Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered (1 Peter 3:7, NKJV). In summary, the text admonishes men to honor their wives as equals and fellow heirs of heaven.

This is an admonition to all husbands that they should abide by the heavenly rule if their prayers are to be heard by God. The Bible, therefore, does not draw a line between a man and a woman in terms of differences and does not condone any exploitation of each other hence they are all equal in the image of God.

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<sup>5</sup> Gordon and Cherry Doss, *Christian Marriage* (Makwasa, Malawi: Malamulo, 1994), 27.

<sup>6</sup> Donald M. Joy, *Bonding: Relationships in the Image of God* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1985), 15.

<sup>7</sup> Ellen G. White, *Education* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1952), 20.

## **The Need for a Mate**

In Genesis 2:18, God observed that man was lonely, and it was not good for the man to be alone. Out of the animate creatures, Adam felt and fathomed about the loneliness condition. Indeed it was not good.

According to the stewardship work given to Adam by God (Gen. 2:19, 20), there was a need to have a companion. Henry opines that there was none of the same nature and rank of beings with himself, none that he could familiarly converse with.<sup>8</sup>

In God's making, the man was supposed to have a partner of his own nature, somebody he could share ideas, feelings love and joy, thus a woman. When God gathered all the animals to His steward, God anticipated that Adam would give names to the animals as a way of arousing an interest of the needed partner (Gen. 2:19).

Mills opines that one biblical reason for marriage is to solve the problem of loneliness.<sup>9</sup> Pfeiffer agrees that help meet for him (*ezerkenegdo*) was needed. The inspired author indirectly reveals man's natural loneliness and lack of full satisfaction.<sup>10</sup>

For as long as man was alone, it indicated that God was not through with the creating activity. To Adam, there was a need to have a mate when he saw the animals of different sexes. God was ready to provide the longings of His steward's heart, somebody who would quench the desires of his passionate needs.

Jamieson comments that created for fellowship and companionship; a man could enter into the full life only as he might share love, trust and in the intimate cycle

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<sup>8</sup>Henry Mathew, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (USA: Hackney, 1914), 3.

<sup>9</sup>Dag Howard Mills, *Model Marriage* (Parchment House, 2005), 15.

<sup>10</sup>Charles Pfeiffer and Harrison, eds. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1990), 5.

of the family relationship. God made it possible for a man to have a helpmeet or, literary, a help answering to him or who answers.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Provision of a Mate**

In Genesis 2:21 God caused Adam to go into deep sleep (*tardema*) in order to build (*bana*) Eve.<sup>12</sup> It is a known fact that surgeons use all sorts of anesthesia to produce sleep. The Bible is silent on the means or method the Creator used to cause Adam to go into such deep sleep so much that he was unaware of what was taking place. Nevertheless, it is beyond any human being's capability that can be comprehended. It was God showing His powers and authority of creating a partner to the first man. Pfeiffer argues that, from a biblical point of view, the Creator was bringing not another individual, but a new one, totally different, with another sex. With Adam awake, he could have painlessly extracted that rib as a basis for Eve's creation.

But beyond the contribution of a rib, Adam was not to have any part in this creative act, not even one passive observation.<sup>13</sup> There was no reason as to why Adam could claim that he testified and took part in Eve's creation; therefore there was no reason to be bossy on Eve. Surely, it was God's creative signature that endorsed Adam's sleep. The Bible says, "And He brought her to man" (Gen. 2:22). There is so much left to the imagination. There stood beautiful Eve beside Adam amazed; overjoyed. There stood God gratified, delighted.

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<sup>11</sup>Robert Jamieson, *A Commentary Critical, Experimental and Practical on the OT and NT* (Grand Rapids, MI: Edmunds, 1989), 44.

<sup>12</sup> Pfeiffer, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

Pfeiffer suggests that woman was not taken from man's head to rule over him, nor from his feet to be trampled upon, but from his side under his arm, to be protected, and closest to his heart, to be loved.<sup>14</sup> From the researcher's perspective, the Bible story of creation portrays a picture of Eve that she could not stand alone without her husband. Parker opines that the word "husband" comes from some Anglo-Saxon words, which mean "house band." This implies a strip of metal (or rope) used to bind the house together. A husband, therefore, binds together the home in terms of its organization and control.<sup>15</sup> Thus how God arranged it.

Just as the woman was built from man's rib, she is attached to her husband and always to be by his side as a helping hand to him. Ellen White comments that God made from the man a woman, to be a companion and helpmeet for him, to cheer, encourage, and bless him, he in his turn to be her strong helper.<sup>16</sup>

The author of Genesis declares that God built (*bana*) the rib that He had taken from the man into a woman. Henry opines that the term is used nowhere else in the creation narrative. The verb is frequently used in the Old Testament for completing an unfinished structure. Therefore, the man was incomplete without his mate.<sup>17</sup> The fact that God used Adam's rib does not in any way mean that Adam took part in creating Eve. It was God's purpose to cause sleep to fulfill His will.

As a known fact, Adam's rib was dust, the same component out of which both male and female came from. Just as Adam owes life to God, it is the same with Eve. Ellen G. White asserts that "the woman should fill the position God originally

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<sup>14</sup> Pfeiffer, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Lana Parker, *Women Making a Difference in Marriage* (Nashville, TN: Lifeway, 2003), 66.

<sup>16</sup> Ellen G. White, *Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2001), 99.

<sup>17</sup> Mathew, 19.

designed for her as her husband's equal. She should feel that she is her husband's equal stand by his side, she faithful at her post of duty and he at his."<sup>18</sup> After God had finished creating the new human being in the name of Eve, the Bible says, "and He brought her to man" (Gen. 2:22, NKJV). According to the researcher's view, God performed the first wedding of the first couple as a way of instituting marriage.

Pfeiffer asserts that as the Creator instituted marriage, it was a sacred relationship of man and woman, with a deep mystery at its center proclaiming its divine origin.<sup>19</sup> God's heart was full of joy and merry as He saw Adam and Eve expressing His image in both of them and partaking of their Heavenly Father's blessings, authority and the activity of populating the earth as equal human beings. Their role was that of being workers together with God in caring the Garden of Eden. (Gen. 2:15;1:27-28).

Therefore, their rulership was only magnifying God's Ownership of all things on earth by virtue of being a Creator. According to the Adult Sabbath School Guide Teacher's Edition Fourth quarter, 1992," there was no competition in their relationship, no struggle for supremacy, no separation from each other in their work. Rather dominion's yoke was stretched across the shoulders of both, making full use of each of their potentials and making their duties light and full of joy."<sup>20</sup> The researcher agrees with this author, that Eve was created with authority of her own over God's creation and her authority was not given to her by Adam, but by God Himself. God did not give Adam dominion over Eve.

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<sup>18</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, 231.

<sup>19</sup>Pfeiffer, 6.

<sup>20</sup>*Adult Sabbath School Quarterly* (Teacher's Edition 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 1992), 95.

According to Genesis 2:23, Adam made the profound statement, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’, for she was taken out of man.” According to the researcher’s point of view, Adam realized and acknowledged that Eve was created as a suitable companion to him, built to fulfill all his passions and needs as he was laboring for God. Pfeiffer opines that woman (*ishah...*) and man (*ish*) are two Hebrew words much alike, even in sound. The only difference between them is that the word for “woman” has a feminine ending.<sup>21</sup> It is not surprising therefore that when Adam woke up from his sleep, he beheld a cute and gorgeous beautiful new partner. Doss argues that at that moment, he realized that she was part of him. In his delight, he said, in effect: “I am man (*ish*) and this is woman (*ishah*).

This is the other half of me! She has my name.” Thus, in name and nature, man and woman belong to each other.<sup>22</sup> The researcher’s imagination is that Adam’s first verbal comment probably was a sighed and rapturous wow!

Ellen White comments that “all who enter into matrimonial relations with a holy purpose husband to obtain the pure affections of a woman’s heart, the wife to soften and improve her husband’s character and give it completeness fulfill God’s purpose for them.”<sup>23</sup>

### **The Essence of the Marriage Covenant**

Biblically, the true essence of marriage is the relationship that is hinged on the cornerstone rules of the marriage covenant which is found in Genesis 2:24,

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<sup>21</sup>Pfeiffer, 6.

<sup>22</sup>Doss and Doss, 47.

<sup>23</sup>E. G White, *Adventist Home*, 99.

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

Moses closely analyses the first couple’s married life and captures three fundamental important rules of marriage: leaving, cleaving and becoming one flesh or weaving. According to Milton, this is the only fundamental statement in the Bible relating to marriage that is mentioned four times: once in the Old Testament-Genesis 2:24; and three times in the New Testament-Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:18 and Ephesians 5:31. Milton further points out that, it can, therefore, be reasonably concluded that this statement contains God’s marital purpose for a sinless man as well as for the fallen man. Leaving is the principle of severance, cleaving is the principle of permanence and one flesh is the principle of intimacy.<sup>24</sup>

### **Leaving**

God made the marriage relationship so strong that it supersedes the ties between parents and children. However, to gain a proper understanding of the marriage relation is a work of a lifetime. Those who marry enter a school from which they are never to graduate in this life God also intended that he who would marry must leave (*azabh*) father and mother.<sup>25</sup> Dennis and Barbara Rainer suggest that some ways of leaving in this contemporary life include: [a] physically (location), [b] economically or financially, [c] influence-direction , counsel of parents and other members of the extended family, and [d] leaving close friends, especially of the opposite sex.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Walker Robert Milton, *Building a Strong and Healthy One-flesh Marriage Program* (Ann Arbor, MI: Regent University, 2006), 55.

<sup>25</sup> Don Mears. *Family Building: Blue Print of Marriage* (Marboro, 2000) Audio Tapes Series.

<sup>26</sup> Dennis and Barbara Rainer, *Starting your Marriage Right* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 19.

Leaving as a Hebrew verb suggests the termination of loyalty.<sup>27</sup> It means changing the dependence that one had and focus on the new marital relationship. Doss opines that the new marriage relationship becomes their primary relationship.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the fifth commandment with its admonition to “Honor your father and mother” (Exodus 20:12) is to be adhered to throughout marriage without interrupting the marriage relationship.

Mears argues that it is important to reiterate the fact that the command to leave is made to both the man and the woman who are ultimately responsible for the marriage. He also adds that the requirement to leave means that the man and woman are to subjugate all other earthly relationships. They are expected to break their dependence on others.<sup>29</sup>

It is, therefore, more important to realize that leaving mostly deals with an attitude, unlike a geographical change. There could be a possibility that a man can be right next door and successfully leave or can be hundreds of kilometers away and still be dependent on parents or other close relatives. The essence of it all is that the couple’s relationship with the parents changes from obedience to honoring. This, therefore, calls for the husband and wife to get concerned of one another in all areas of life than about parents, siblings and other close relationships.

## **Cleaving**

Right from the beginning, God intended that man must cleave (*dabhaq*) to his wife. Thus, by using this word, Moses suggests that marriage is a covenant between

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<sup>27</sup> James E. Smith, *Pentateuch* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1993), 18.

<sup>28</sup> Doss and Doss, 28.

<sup>29</sup> Don Mears. *Family Building: Blue Prints of Marriage* (Marboro, 2000), Audio Tapes Series.

man and woman. The life of the man and the woman are woven together in marriage. Cleaving suggests being joined together, to glue or stick to. Furthermore, the same Hebrew word (*dabhaq*) is used elsewhere in the Old Testament. Job 41:16-17 speaks of the sea creatures that are "joined together." 2 Samuel 23:10 says that the hand of David's warrior was stuck to his sword in battle. In Psalms 119:31 the Psalmist wrote; "I hold fast (cleave) to your testimonies." Daniel 2:43 says that the iron and clay "shall not cleave" to each other. Deuteronomy 10:20 says men should "hold fast" to God. When Genesis 2:24 says husband and wife shall cleave to each other, it is speaking about a very strong inseparable union.

The entire person -body, mind, and soul, is involved. Their union is celebrated and reaffirmed in sexual intercourse. Christ (Matt. 19:5) explained this verse as teaching the indissoluble character of marriage. The Creator had established the full basis for monogamous marriage. The Hebrew commentator Pfeiffer asserts that these words are a specific comment by the Holy Spirit. The final commentary on the union of man and wife was given by our Lord, when He said "for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Mark 10:7-9).<sup>30</sup> God planned that the marriage bond should be forever indissoluble. Ellen White opines that then marriage, instead of being the end of love, will be as it were the very beginning of love. The warmth of true friendship, the love that binds heart to heart, is a foretaste of the joys of heaven.<sup>31</sup>

Cleaving requires the husband to ask himself: if my wife changes and she gains 95 kilograms or she somehow becomes scared or loses good looks and charms,

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<sup>30</sup>Pfeiffer, 6.

<sup>31</sup> Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), 360.

can I still remain faithful? Can I still keep my commitment? Cleaving does not depend on the conditions of things. Rather, it is a matter of how much one is willing to work to maintain the marriage.

### **One Flesh or Weaving**

Leaving and covenanting to cleave results in a union that is a mystery for any human being to comprehend. It portrays oneness in the full sense where married couples walk together, stand together, and share a deep intimacy. This oneness is both a physical and intimate bonding of mind and emotions that Donald Joy describes as the mystery of human attachment between two persons. It is so profound that it cannot be understood merely in physiological terms. It includes biological, psychological, spiritual, even ethical dimensions.

Pair bonding refers to that exclusive, lifelong, mutually attaching relationship in which a woman and a man form one new entity, a sort of composite, corporate identity and personality. Bonding brings a fusing of two persons, their vocations, their dreams, their futures, their property, everything.<sup>32</sup>

Whenever Jesus discussed marriage, He always referred back to the beginning of creation. He said, "But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh, so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together let no man separate" (Mark 10:6-9). Thus, to fully grasp God's standard regarding marriage and the idea of "one flesh," Christians must return to the beginning.

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<sup>32</sup>Donald M. Joy, *Re-binding: Preventing and Restoring Damaged Relationships* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1986), 5.

**Walking together.** Just as God is asking of His relationship with His people, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3. KJV), that query is also appropriate of those who would become one flesh. God instructed the Israelites not to intermarry with the neighboring nations, “for they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve their gods” (Deut. 7:4; cf. Joshua 23:11-13). Upon ignoring these instructions, the Israelites met with disastrous consequences (Judges 14-16; 1Kings 11:1-10; Ezra9; 10).

No wonder Paul reiterated this principle in broad terms:

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of the living God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God (2 Cor. 6:14-16; cf. vss. 17, 18).

Scripture intends that believers should marry only believers. But I believe that the principle extends even beyond this. True oneness demands an agreement as to beliefs and practices.

Ellen White agrees that differences in religious experience lead to differences in lifestyle that can create deep tensions and rifts in marriage. To achieve the oneness Scripture speaks of, then, people should marry others within their own union.<sup>33</sup>

**Standing together.** To fulfill the “one flesh” idea, two people must become completely loyal to each other. Thus, those who marry proclaim their willingness to share their mates’ accountability, to stand with their mates against anything. Marriage requires an active, persevering love that will not give up.

The authors of the *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* assert that “two persons share everything they have, not only their bodies, not only their material possessions

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<sup>33</sup> Ellen G. White, *T4*, 503

but also their thinking and their feeling, their joy and their suffering, their hopes and their fears, their successes and their failures. ‘To become one flesh’ means that two persons become completely one with body, soul, and spirit, and yet they remain two different persons.”<sup>34</sup>

**Intimacy.** Becoming one flesh also involves sexual union which was given to seal and enhances the union of mind and soul. The researcher believes that animals reproduce but only a man and woman are united as one flesh. The biblical annals testify that: “Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived” (Gen. 4:1). The sexual relationship was intended only for the marriage relationship. The authors of the *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* opine that in their drive to be joined together, a drive that men and women have felt since the days of Adam and Eve, each couple reenacts the first love story.<sup>35</sup>

The act of sexual intimacy is the nearest thing to a physical union possible for them; it represents the closeness the couple can know emotionally and spiritually as well. Wheat asserts that the scriptures tell us clearly that the joyous sexual expression of love between husband and wife is God’s plan.

It is, as the writer of Hebrews emphasizes (Heb. 13:14), undefiled, not sinful, not soiled. It is a place of great honor in marriage, the holy of holies where husband and wife meet privately to celebrate their love for each other. It is a time meant to be both holy and intensely enjoyable.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 333.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ed. Wheat, *Love Life for Every Married Couple* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 72.

## Marriage After Sin

God made marriage a beautiful relationship. The woman was to be the helper, supporting the man. Davidson points out that helper is a relational term describing a beneficial relationship, but in itself does not specify position or rank, either superiority or inferiority.<sup>37</sup>

The woman's submission was willing, the man's love dominated his actions and their union was beautiful. But something terrible happened in Genesis 3. Ellen White points out that when mankind sinned, Satan set about to spoil every good thing given by God to man. In particular, he attacked the two great gifts of Creation: marriage and the Sabbath.<sup>38</sup>

This resulted in the loss of their beautiful home in the Garden of Eden. Apart from maladies, sufferings of different forms and loss of their loved ones through death, the first couple also lost their beautiful marital relationship. Doss argues that when man sinned, the delicately balanced relationship between husband and wife was upset by sin.<sup>39</sup>

No wonder the outcomes of sin on marriage have a very big impact on marriages today including wrong marriage beliefs that create fights and infidelity. Where harmony and unity were reigning, the struggle for worldly wealth and power has become the order of the day. This was the genesis of war between the sexes through our first parents. It is not surprising then to note that from this pathetic

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<sup>37</sup>Richard M. Davidson, "The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 1-2," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 26 (No 1): 15.

<sup>38</sup> White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 338.

<sup>39</sup>Doss and Doss, 29.

scenario, husbands and wives whose marriages are not under Christ's rule have waged a continuance war of marital conflicts

Sin has perverted marriage in many ways. It has led to polygamy, adultery, incest, rape, prostitution, divorce, violence, abuse, homosexuality, and bestiality. The delicate balance of the marriage was broken, Ellen White comments that "It was Satan's studied effort to pervert the marriage institution, to weaken its obligations 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."<sup>40</sup>

### **The Corruption of Satan**

Just as marriage began in Eden, Omeonu asserts that it was also here that sin began.<sup>41</sup> It was in Eden where marital conflicts began. The first recorded disagreement in the family was when Adam blamed God for giving him Eve his wife (Gen. 3:12). The sin of disobeying God led to disagreement and blame between husband and wife and between man and God. Actually many marital disagreements arise out of one spouse indulging in sin either secretly or openly. According to Genesis 3, the Bible narrates that as soon as sin entered the world, Satan began to attack marriage.

Karen and Ron opine that henceforth, where sin reigned, marriage would suffer from selfishness, the quest for personal gratification, and the tendency to exploit or dominate another.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Doss and Doss, 29.

<sup>41</sup> Chimezie A. Omeonu, *Before You Say, I Do* (Babcock, Nigeria: Babcock University Press, 2007), 1.

<sup>42</sup> Karen and Ron Flowers, *Love Aflame* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1992), 79.

He tried to dissolve and crush marriage in the best way he could because he knew it was the only hope of right human relationship. He wanted to devastate the world by destroying relationships at their most important level-- in the home. So immediately after the fall in Genesis 3, Satan tried to corrupt marriage in the following ways:

**Polygamy.** Genesis 4:19, narrates that Lameck had married two wives. Biblically, this was the first time that the law of monogamous marriage was ever transgressed by man, no wonder the practice of having many wives, similarly, polygamy has been a source of breaching God's institutions including marriage and has been a source of corruption and misery.

Feinberg mentions that marriage in Israel was often polygamous (cf. Gen. 29:21-30; 2 Sam 5:13-16; 1 Kings 11:1,3). However, it was not God's intention, as far as the creation was concerned. God only made one woman for one man. The practice of having additional women (concubines) became the generating factor of marital problems that led to marital conflicts. For example, Abraham's marital relationship was affected:

Now Sarah, Abram's wife had borne him no children. And Sarah said to Abram, see now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go into my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children from her. And Abram heeded the voice of Sarah. Then Sarah, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. So he went into Hagar, and she conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes (Gen 16:1-4; 30:1-13).<sup>43</sup>

God foresaw the evil effects of polygamy including husband's favoritism in marriage. Moses reminds polygamous husbands that, "if a man has two wives, and he loves one but not the other, and both bear him sons but the firstborn is the son of the

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<sup>43</sup> Feinberg, Jones and Paul, Ethics for Brave New World (Wheaton, IL: Good News, 1993), 160.

wife he does not love, when he wills his property to his sons, he must give rights of the firstborn to the son of the wife he does not love” (Deut. 21:15-17). He must acknowledge the son of the unloved wife as the firstborn by giving him a double share of all he has. That son is the sign of his father’s strength. The right of the firstborn belongs to him.

Jacob turned out to be a victim of favoritism. He loved Rachael more than Leah (Gen 29:30). This bore undesired fruits in the polygamous marriage. (Gen. 30:15). Elkanah loved Hannah more than Peninnah (1 Sam 1:5). Rehoboam loved Maacah daughter of Absalom more than any of his other wives and concubines (1Chr. 11:21).

Domestic infelicity is another evil effect of polygamy. Abraham’s family was affected by the evils of polygamy (Gen. 16:2). Jacob did not escape the effects of this evil either (Gen 29:30-34; 30:1-23). Elkanah got entangled too (1 Sam 1:4-7), Solomon followed suit (1 Kings 11:4-8). Mention must be made that while monogamy was so fundamental in the Israelite marriages, cases of polygamy were rampant even among prominent people.

Consequently the rich, and especially princes, are mentioned as having a large number of wives (cf. in the case of Gideon, Judges 8:30; of David, 2 Sam. 3: 2- 5; 5: 13; and Solomon, 1 Kings 11: 1- 4). Ellen White alludes to the fact that polygamy was practiced.” 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 obligations, and lessen its sacredness;

for in no surer way could he deface the image of God in man, and open the door to vice.”<sup>44</sup>

**Evil sexual thoughts and words.** While Satan’s initial attack on God’s supreme creation corrupted the family, sin also ushered in widespread alien, divisive influences. The evil sexual thought made David commit adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:2-5). The watching of nakedness (pornography) wrecked the spiritual life of David just as it is wrecking many marriages today. In the New Testament, Jesus expanded the meaning of adultery to include sexual thought. He said, “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5:27-28).

**Adultery.** The Greek word for adultery is *moicheia*!<sup>45</sup> Adultery, in the scripture, is extramarital sex, or sex by a married person with a person other than his / her spouse. Malachi, the prophet who foretold a family revival in the Last Days, speaks frankly about adultery.

He says,

You ask, ‘why?’ It is because the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit, they are his. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. I hate divorce, says the Lord God of Israel, and I hate a man’s covering himself with violence as well as with his garment, says the Lord Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith” (Malachi 2:14-16).

According to the Old Testament adultery (Heb. *naap*) is described as intercourse between married or betrothed woman and a man other than her husband.

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<sup>44</sup> White, *Patriarch and Prophets*, 338.

<sup>45</sup>James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek* (New Testament, 2001).

(Ex 22:16-17; Deut 22:28-29)<sup>46</sup> Scripture, therefore, recognizes adultery and fornication (Matthew 5:32) and abandonment by an unbelieving partner (1 Cor. 7:10-15) as grounds for divorce.

In Matthew 5:27-28, Jesus made it clear that wrong thoughts are as bad as wrong actions: “you have heard it was said, do not commit adultery. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart”. In this passage, Jesus refers to planning wrong actions and engaging in them by means of the imagination. Recognizing the beauty and attractiveness of a member of the opposite sex is not a sin. Planning and imagining wrong actions is a sin.

In the Old Testament, prescriptions regarding cases of adultery between men and women were markedly different. The segregation and unequal justice meted out to adulterous men and women were a result of sin. For men, they were lax, for women, strict. According to Exodus 20: 14; and Deuteronomy 5: 17, the prohibition of the seventh commandment is indeed general.

But it leaves open the question of what constitutes adultery for a man and woman. The strictness of the prescriptions relating to the virginity of the woman who was sought in marriage (Deut. 22: 13 -21, 23 ff) portrays a picture that a chaste life on the part of the woman before marriage was to be the order of the day. Jacobus comments that since the woman was obtained by the man as his wife under fixed regulations, it is understood that absolute fidelity was to be expected of her. If she was convicted of guilty conduct in earlier times she was burned (Gen. 38: 24). In later times she was brought out naked (Hosea 2: 5) before the assembled people of the

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<sup>46</sup> Richards, Lawrence, *The Bible Reader's Companion* (London, England: Scripture Press, 1990), 42.

locality and was stoned to death (Ezek. 16:38–40; 23:45–47; cf. Deut. 22:20f; John 8:5).

The same punishment was given out to the man who had seduced the wife of another man (Deut. 22:22; Lev 20:10). On the other hand, intercourse with a concubine of another was not viewed as adultery, but probably as an injury to his property (Lev. 19: 20). That wives were jealously watched by their husbands is proven, not only from Deuteronomy 22:13–19, but also from the law regarding the drinking of the bitter curse – water (“water of jealousy” Num 5:11–31), whereby the guilt or innocence of the suspected wife was supposed to be established.<sup>47</sup>

According to the law in Exodus 22: 15 and Deuteronomy 22: 28, the husband was granted much more liberty. Although he also was forbidden to commit adultery with another man’s wife, he was allowed to increase the number of his own wives and concubines. What a wife was entitled to demand from a husband is narrated in Exodus 21: 10, “If he takes another wife he shall not diminish her food, clothing, and her marriage rights (NKJV).

**Fornication.** The devil has perverted marriage even by engaging the youths into fornication, translated from the Greek word by which usually mean premarital sex. The word pornography also comes from *porneia* and refers to printed pictures and stories, or films and videos that are immoral.<sup>48</sup> The New Testament uses the word

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<sup>47</sup>Melencthon W. Jacobus, *New Standard Bible Dictionary* (Funk and Wagnalls Company, New York: USA, 1992), 55.

<sup>48</sup>*Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries*,  
[www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/Pornography](http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/Pornography).

more broadly than to mean simply, premarital sex. *Porneia* usually refers to “any kind of illegitimate sexual intercourse.”<sup>49</sup>

**Homosexuality.** In the Old Testament, homosexuality is unequivocally condemned. Homosexuality is prohibited in the law and other passages of Scripture (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1; 26, 27; 1 Cor. 6:9) and is called an abomination. The word of God stipulates that sexual intimacy belongs only within marital relationship of a man and woman hence in the beginning “male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27). This was the design established by God at creation. The scripture declares: “for this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Gen 2:24) throughout scripture this heterosexual arrangement is affirmed.

**Incest.** Incest (Hebrew. *tebel, zimma*) refers to sexual relations between close blood relatives<sup>50</sup> and is another marriage perversion that began after sin. The first known incident of incest in the Old Testament is recorded in Genesis 38:13-18, where Judah had sexual relations with his own daughter-in-law. According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:1 ff, it appears a man had sexual relations with his father’s wife. These practices were forbidden (Lev 18:6-18) and a penalty of death was prescribed (20:11-12). It is clear that the Bible forbids union between close blood relatives (Lev. 18: 6 – 20), and in certain cases, between persons who are connected by marriage.

Some relationships have not been specifically mentioned and may strike us as being strange, e.g. there is no mention of the union between a father and a daughter.

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<sup>49</sup> Brown, Collin, ed., *Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 1: 500.

<sup>50</sup> Andrew Knowels, *Bible Guide* (Oxford, England: Lion, 2001), 62.

However, this is to be inferred from the prohibition on the union between grandfather and granddaughter (v. 10).

There is no warning against a union between an uncle and a niece, but that too is to be inferred because a union between a nephew and an aunt is mentioned in verse 14.<sup>51</sup> Gabelein gives two reasons for forbidding these relationships. Extensive intermarriage results in tragic abnormalities and destroys the freedom of the family, which ought to be able to have normal love and intimacy without sexual overtones.<sup>52</sup> Incest was common in antiquity under certain circumstances.

For three generations up to Moses, it is said that the kings of Egypt had married their half – sisters to maintain the kingship in the royal family. Despite the fact that the laws of incest as given in this chapter are those recognized in civilized society, it does not mean that it was a good practice.

**Prostitution.** The sacredness of marriage has been corrupted by prostitution. Genesis 38:24 portrays a picture of how long harlotry has existed. Tamar, a daughter-in-law to Judah played a harlot and fooled her father-in-law. This is enough evidence to conclude that prostitution was present even among the Israelites. Rehab was a prostitute or harlot, according to Joshua 2: 1. The apostle Paul includes her on the list of the heroes of faith and did not perish with those who did not believe when she had received the spies with peace in Jericho (Heb 11:31).

This, therefore, is a true testimony that God will save the repentant sinner and use him or her to God's glory. Prostitution was forbidden as an evil practice (Lev 19:29, Deut 23:1), and a punishment of the death by fire was prescribed (Lev 21:9).

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<sup>51</sup> Leander E. Keck. *The New Interpreters Bible volume* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 1:1126.

<sup>52</sup> Frank E. Gabelein. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Press, 1990), 2: 599.

**Seduction.** Satan has tried to destroy marriage after sin by using seductive ways. The Old Testament in Genesis 39:7-12, gives an example of how women or men have seduced people of the opposite sex, married or unmarried. Commenting on Genesis 39:7-12, Ellen White observes; “His master’s wife endeavored to entice the young man to transgress the law of God... But this temptation, so sudden, so strong, so seductive, how should it be met? Joseph knew well what would be the consequences of resistance.”<sup>53</sup>

### **Consequences of Marriage after Sin**

God made marriage a beautiful relationship. The woman was to be the helper, supporting the man, and the man was to be the head, loving the woman. Their union was beautiful but something terrible happened in Genesis 3 with devastating consequences on marriage.

Genesis 3:16-19 describes the curse of sin, where the most basic elements of human life including marriage are involved. Doss opines that this is an important point because some people understand this curse to be God’s angry reaction to sin. The hardships outlined by God do not reflect his original plan or His will for mankind. God did not give pain and suffering to mankind because He was angry. Doss, however, points out that in the curse God was telling Adam and Eve what to expect now that the image of God had been damaged.

Their relationship would change. Instead of living in peace and harmony they would struggle with each other for the resources and power. They would blame each other for misfortune and feel jealous and resentful of each other.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ellen G .White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 217.

<sup>54</sup>Doss, 30.

Karen and Ron agree that marriage would suffer from selfishness, the quest for personal gratification, and the tendency to exploit or dominate another. In the sinless state, neither of the sexes ruled the other. But now sin distorted their masculinity and femininity and adversely affected their delicate alignment in marriage

### **The Elements and Effects that Cause Marital Conflict**

There are several elements and effects that cause marital conflicts. Since the entry of sin, human suffering has never ebbed away. This includes marital issues including marital conflicts. This section explores some of the curses' effects and causes of marital conflict.

#### **Pain in Childbearing (Gen 3: 16a)**

“With pain you will give birth to children.” In the perfect life of Eden, there would have been no pain associated with childbirth. After sin, Eve would suffer great pain as she delivered her children. God’s prediction has come true.

#### **Female Attention Focused on the Male**

“Your desire will be for your husband.” From the time of the fall, the woman would feel a “fervent desire (Hebrew, *Tesugah*), a deep, perhaps inordinate hunger for bonds of attachment in order to give meaning to life.”<sup>55</sup> The Hebrew rendering of the word “you will desire” in Genesis 3:16 and 4:7, according to LXX (285 B.C) means “turning.” Flowers, argues that under the curse of sin women would see themselves as worthy and of valuable only because of their relationship to men.

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<sup>55</sup> Flowers, Karen and Ron, *Love Aflame* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1992), 79.

Their sense of value as human beings, created by God in His own image, would be diminished. They would not be able to imagine a happy life without being married to a man.<sup>56</sup>

According to *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, the Hebrew word *shuq*, “desire” means to run after or to have a violent craving for a thing, which indicates the strongest possible desire for it. The commentators further suggest that, though oppressed by man and tortured by the pains of childbirth, the woman would still feel an intense desire for her husband.<sup>57</sup> However, commentators have been divided in their opinion as to whether this is the part of the punishment.

Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that this “desire” was given to alleviate the sorrow of womanhood and to bind the hearts of husband and wife ever more closely together.<sup>58</sup> The tragic damage of sin is sometimes visible in the way men and women, apart from the grace of Christ, sometimes display affection. Instead of remaining faithful to their loving spouse, men and women have used their God-given physical bodies to manipulate other people besides their spouse.

God’s prediction was correct. Millions of women are locked into dead-end marriages to men who beat them, keep multiple girlfriends, provide little support for them, and make their lives a misery. These women stay married only because they see no alternative.

Ellen White gives a positive outcome of this effect: “Had the principles enjoined in the law of God been cherished by the fallen race, this sentence, though growing out of the results of sin, would have proved a blessing to them; but man’s

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<sup>56</sup>Flowers, 80.

<sup>57</sup> *SDABC*, 1:234.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

abuse of the supremacy thus given him has too often rendered the lot of women very bitter and made her life a burden.”<sup>59</sup> Who could doubt that God’s prediction was right when He said to Eve that Adam” shall rule over you?”

### **Focus on Fertility**

God’s command in Eden was: “Be fruitful and multiply. “ When He gave this command there were only two people on earth. Adam and Eve were to participate with God in creating more people to populate the earth. The desire to bear children was implanted into the heart of mankind by God Himself.

A far-reaching result of the curse of sin would be an exaggerated emphasis on fertility. Under the brilliant manipulation of Satan, mankind would twist the sacred gift of procreation into something profane. Eve and her daughters would be measured by a single standard--their ability to bear children. Men would feel free to divorce wives who bore them no children and to multiply wives to have more children. Even women themselves would feel totally worthless if they were barren. In their quest for children, they would sometimes turn to adultery if their husbands didn’t make them pregnant.

The stories of the Old Testament patriarchs include many accounts of husbands who departed from God’s plan by taking multiple wives or concubines when their wives were barren. The most prominent example is Abraham, who took Hagar because Sarah was barren.<sup>60</sup> His faith was too weak to believe God’s promise. He valued fertility more than faithfulness.

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<sup>59</sup> White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 58 – 59.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

## The War Between Sexes

When God asked Adam why he had eaten from the tree, he replied, “The woman made me do it” (Gen 3:12). At that time the good relationship of the first couple was upset. From that time until now, husbands and wives have cast blame upon each other for problems and argued over resources and power. Doss suggests that this supersedes the international world wars of this century and as ancient as Adam and Eve.<sup>61</sup> The result of this war between husband and wife is frustration and misery for both. Doss asserts that:

Marriage ends up giving much less pleasure and much more pain than expected. For both men and women, the relationship of marriage is deformed and crippled. The war between sexes makes it impossible for either partner to know the marriage God intended for them. God was right. Sin has spoiled marriage until it hardly resembles what it was like in Eden.<sup>62</sup>

When Sarah convinced Abraham to take Hagar as a wife, the offspring of this relationship was a thorn in the flesh of Sarah when God favored her with a son of her own womb. Genesis 21:9-21 narrates one of the Old Testament marital conflicts. Sarah stood her ground that Hagar and her son Ishmael should leave. Abraham reacted to this decision but God intervened in the conflict. Nichol comments that:

From a human point of view, it seems strange that God should approve of Sarah’s somewhat selfish request. Although God was ready to bless Ishmael and did not directly censure Abraham on account of Hagar, yet He never recognized Abraham’s marriage to her. To God, she was ever the “bondwoman,” not his wife. Ishmael’s incessant “mocking (verse 9) made it apparent that he would continue to disturb the peace and harmony of the household during Abraham’s lifetime.<sup>63</sup>

Wenham argues that God endorsed Sarah’s demand. The length of time elapsed between Sarah’s demand and the divine endorsement is not stated. The last

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<sup>61</sup>Doss and Doss, 36.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>63</sup> “Marital Conflicts,” *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed., Francis Nichol (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1978), 1: 345.

time Abraham obeyed Sarah was (Gen. 6:2) was a great mistake, so this command answers yet another objection that Abraham raised to the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael.<sup>64</sup> There was no peace in the house at this particular time. It was a marital conflict that God intervened by speaking to Abraham.

### **Basic Characteristics of Biblical Marriage**

**The Edenic marriage.** The pattern for our marriages is in Eden, before the fall. Without realizing what they are doing, some Christians use the fallen pattern outlined in the curse of sin as their model. God is working to restore His image within individuals and He wants to restore His image within marriage. Part of His redemptive miracle in our lives is to resurrect our marriages to newness of life. Ellen White comments that marriage has been perverted by sin, but it is the purpose of the gospel to restore its purity and beauty.<sup>65</sup>

**Cooperation.** In a truly Christian marriage, there is no war between the sexes. There is little of the competition for power and resources that characterize so many marriages. While there will always be differences of opinion, the partners work together towards goals that they share. Conflicts occur in any marriage, but in a good marriage, the partners remember they are pulling in the same direction.

The Lord has laid down the principle that is to guide in this matter. The husband is to cherish his wife as Christ cherishes the church. And the wife is to respect and love her husband. Both are to cultivate the spirit of kindness, being determined never to grieve or injure the other.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *Marital Conflicts*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed., Gordon Wenham (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson 1994), 2: 83.

<sup>65</sup> White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings*, 64.

<sup>66</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 7: 47.

**Mutual submission.** In Ephesians 5: 21 – 33 Paul instructs Christian marriage partners about how to live with each other as children of light. Most of the times, our attention has been on Ephesians 5: 22, which tells wives to submit to their husbands.

If we look at the whole passage we see that Paul is telling both husbands and wives that their relationship must be characterized by submission, each to the other. Paul also adds that submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ is a remedy to any marital relationship that is in disarray.

He says,

Wives submit to your husband's as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church His body, of which He is the Savior. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her ... In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church – for we are members of His body. For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one – flesh (Ephesians 5: 21- 31).

**Submission.** Each has to submit to the other for Christ's sake. “ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” The submission of Christian marriage is not one sided. Paul is telling both husbands and wives that their relationship must be characterized by submission, each to the other.

Sin has damaged marriage from both sides and both male and female have changes to make at conversion and as they grow in Christ. Both must submit themselves to Christ and to each other. This mutual submission is voluntary, not forced or required by either side. Ellen White comments that

Neither the husband nor the wife should attempt to exercise over the other an arbitrary control. Do not try to compel each other to yield to your wishes. You can't do this and retain each other's love. Be kind, patient, and forbearing, considerate, and courteous. By the grace of God, you can succeed in making each other happy, as in your marriage vow you promised to do.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> White, *Ministry of Healing*, 361.

**Submission: husbands to wives.** “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ ... Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.” Christ once said, “whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant” (Matt. 20: 26). True Christian husbands bow in tender love to the needs and wishes of their wives and children. They voluntarily and humbly submit themselves for the sake of Christ.

***The husband: Christ-like leader.*** “For the husband is the Head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.” It is for reason that Christ’s authority over the church is based upon His sacrifice for the church. According to Paul the husband’s authority over the wife is based upon his self – sacrificing love for her and the children. The apostle envisions no wife beating and child abuse for the Christ-like husband. As the husband assumes the servant leadership role, he will find that his wife responds with true Christian love.

The husband who provides Christ-like leadership to his family does not see his authority as a big issue. He does not need to remind his wife or other people that he is the leader.

**The wife.** Paul expands the fact that the Christian wife is a co – leader of the family, in her own right. She has the legitimate authority of her own in the home. But she happily consults her husband on major issues. Like her husband, she models her own leadership on Christ’s servant – leadership model. This results in the wife who is a Christ-like co – leader not seeing authority in the home as a big issue.

She does not resent her husband’s authority because it is exercised with Christ-like tenderness and love. She does not have to fight at every step because she knows she has her own share of authority in the home, which he respects.

## **The Redemption of Marriage**

Though sin has perverted marriage, the gospel seeks to restore its purity amidst the rampant marital conflicts. Apart from the work of redeeming man from sin bondage, Christ is ready to bring back ruined relationships between Married couples. The best biblical way of resolving a marital conflict, therefore, lies in trusting Christ alone. Flowers points out that faith in Christ abolishes all barriers, whether religious, cultural, or social, that separate people from each other...Paul exalted the cross of Christ as the source of reconciliation. In doing so, he used language that one could easily apply to the separation. “For He, Himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph. 2:14).<sup>68</sup>

Christ started doing it when He was on earth, although He never married, He demonstrated how significant marriage was when He turned water into wine at a wedding in Cana. Many times in His ministry He addressed the issue of the anti-female prejudice. Doss argues that when Christ was talking about marriage directly, He never used Genesis 3 (marriage after sin) as the model for marriage. Instead, Jesus always pointed Genesis 1 and 2 (Eden) as the model (see Matt. 19)

## **Summary of the Chapter**

Marriage is a unique institution that was designed, ordained, and ordered by God from the beginning. Therefore it is sacred. In this institution, God joined man and woman both created in His own image. Marriage was the climax of creation. God established marriage for a purpose.

According to the Bible, God bestowed to man the ultimate responsibility for the well-being of marriage. Something terrible happened, Satan set about to spoil

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<sup>68</sup>Flowers, 39.

every good thing given by God to man. In particular, marriage, a gift of creation was attacked hence God's design for marriage has been defiled ever since. As a result marital conflicts have become the order of the day. However, God has promised a family revival in the last days (Mal. 2:4-6). His special power will be poured out to strengthen the family. Malachi's promise means that Last Day Christian families can be better even in the multitude of conflicts.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In Chapter 2, a discussion of marriage before and after sin both from a socio-cultural and theological-historical context has been presented. Chapter 3 introduces literature that has been written regarding the causes of marital conflicts and perverted marital relationships. This chapter also highlights the solutions that have been proffered to these conflicts.

#### **Causes of Marital Conflicts**

When a couple marries, two different cultures come together. Bacchiocchi states that each brings to marriage different values, habits, temperaments and expectations. The way these differences are handled determines to a large extent the success of marriage.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the fact that married couples are mature and loyal to each other, the fact still remains that a husband and wife are two distinct people, and therefore creates an environment of conflict in the marriage. Mukashema and Sapsford agree that it is increasingly claimed that marital conflict is a phenomenon that is becoming more common and more serious even in Rwanda. Conflict is a current issue that is nowadays observed everywhere, in town, in the countryside, in a young couple, even

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Bacchiocchi, *The Marriage Covenant* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1991), 93.

in old ones.<sup>2</sup> Usually, it has been observed that a couple starts their marriage on a high note of love and excitement, without dreaming of any conflict. Down along the line, the married couples do learn that differences in one way or another generate disagreements. As a result, conflicts arise from these disagreements that can lead to highly emotional states of frustration and anger.

Peter Ndakwe points out that conflict is like dynamite. It can be helpful if used in the right way, but can also be destructive if used in the wrong manner. And when conflict is resolved, the growth that comes about in the couple that is involved is incredible.<sup>3</sup> Conflicts will come in a marriage. Nevertheless, couples must determine in their heart to make them a bonding agent and not a destructive one. However, causes of marital conflicts as well as their solutions vary from family to family and from one community or culture to another. Gitari suggests that the duration of time taken to solve each problem will also depend on the particular couple involved.<sup>4</sup>

### **Religious Differences**

The most difficult area of potential marital conflict is that of spiritual and religious differences between spouses. Hagin calls it the number one problem in marriages.<sup>5</sup> The Bible encourages that a believer should not marry a nonbeliever (2 Cor. 6:14). If the unbeliever chooses to dwell with the Christian, that's okay.

But if the unbeliever is running around committing adultery and is not pleased to dwell with Christian spouse, a conflict arises. Even among non-believers, adultery

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<sup>2</sup>Immaculee Mukashema and Roger Sapsford, "Marital Conflicts in Rwanda: Points of View of Rwandan Psycho-Socio-Medical Professionals," *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, National University of Rwanda, Butare, 2013, 82:149.

<sup>3</sup>Peter Ndakwe, *Resolving Marital Conflicts* (Nairobi, Kenya: Kings Script, 2006), 6.

<sup>4</sup>Sammy Gitari, *Resolving Conflicts in Marriage* (Nairobi, Kenya: Evangel, 2006), 6.

<sup>5</sup>Kenneth E. Hagin, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage* (Tulsa, OK: Faith Library, 2001), 90.

is not accepted as a norm. Another example of a potential problem concerning religion is when one spouse belongs to a different denomination.<sup>6</sup>

For example, if one spouse is a Roman Catholic and the other spouse is a Seventh-day Adventist, it may create serious problems on the doctrinal point of view, for example, differences on the day of worship. If the couple is under the control of Jesus Christ, they will walk in the law of love. Muia however, argues that many people are churchgoers yet they mistreat their partners like nonbelievers, even some non-believers are better by far than them.<sup>7</sup>

The reality is that marital conflict is inevitable even when the couple is of the same denomination. Apart from the doctrinal differences, Bacchiocchi argues that a deeply spiritual wife who enjoys family worship and church services will resent the fact that her husband fails to lead out in the family worship and in the religious instruction of the children. She will be tempted to view her husband as spiritually immature, unable to fulfill his role as the spiritual leader of their home.<sup>8</sup> By assuming the role of her husband as a spiritual leader, she gives him a reason to become antagonistic toward her and her God.

### **Role Conflict**

Role conflict arises when there is an inability or unwillingness on the part of the husband or the wife to fulfill their respective roles. Conflict develops for example, when the husband (“house-band”- an Anglo-Saxon word which implies a strip of metal or rope used to bind the house together), fails to bind together the home in

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<sup>6</sup>Hagin, 92.

<sup>7</sup>Joachim Muia, *How to Experience a Happy and Successful Marriage* (Kitengela, Kenya: Kijabe Printing Press, 2009), 65.

<sup>8</sup>Bacchiocchi, 92.

terms of its organization and control.<sup>9</sup> The man is expected to rule his home spiritually, financially and socially. He is head of the family. The headship connotes (a) authority in bringing up children, (b) leadership in providing direction and guidance and, (c) responsibility decision-making. Hardesty alludes to the fact that the man is held responsible for anything that goes wrong in the home, e.g. divorce, rebellious children, unhappy wife, etc.<sup>10</sup>

Lewis and Hendricks agree that likewise, the wife is involved in a number of roles e.g. loving her husband. It is very important for a wife to love her husband otherwise it will be very difficult to perform the marital responsibilities of submission, sex, etc.<sup>11</sup> Whatever the woman does, her motive must be to help, motivate, uplift and promote her husband. Mukashema and Sapsford add that marital roles are complex but reasonably clearly defined within a given society, and a frequent cause of discord is that one partner or the other is not seen as taking on his or her expected responsibilities. An African wife, for example, may fail to meet the stereotype of the good housewife.<sup>12</sup>

### **Personality Difference**

Most of the times, in dating and courtship, a couple fails to see or chooses to ignore the extent of their differences in taste, habits, values and temperament. Bacchiocchi argues that in their desire to establish real friendship and trust, both man

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<sup>9</sup>Lana Parker, 66.

<sup>10</sup>Margarat Hardisty, *Forever My Love* (Irvine, CA: Harvest House, 1975), 55.

<sup>11</sup>Robert Lewis and William Hendricks, *Relationship Roles* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991), 97.

<sup>12</sup>Mukashema and Sapsford, 154.

and woman tend to show acceptance and tolerance of each other. They put their foot forward and act as though they like those things that in reality, they do not.<sup>13</sup>

There are so many examples, however, where men and women react with intolerance to differences in taste, habits, and values, after marriage relationship. When the honeymoon is over, problems of adjustment become evident. Cecil Osborne writes: “it comes as something of a shock to most young couples to discover that marriages are not consummated, they are worked at, hammered out, prayed through, suffered through.<sup>14</sup> The determining factor of adjustments in marriage depends largely on the depth of difference between the personalities of the spouses.

### **Unrealistic Expectations**

Mukashema and Sapsford opine that what people expect of marriage, contrasted with what they are going through in it, is seen as a major foundation for marital disagreement.<sup>15</sup> It is obvious that people enter into marriage with certain expectations. Gitaari points that expectations may be based on their tradition, family background, and on books, they have read or films they may have watched.<sup>16</sup>

A girl may enter marriage seeking for someone who will protect her and care for her as her father did (or as she thought a father should). A man may be looking for a mother substitute; a wife who will understand that he really is still a little boy and who will see that his needs are met. There is the tendency to expect that the wife he married should be the angel he dreamt about in his youth. Far from it, life is meant to

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<sup>13</sup>Bacchiocchi, 94.

<sup>14</sup>Cecil Osborne, *The Art of Understanding Your Mate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Review and Herald, 1970), 36.

<sup>15</sup>Mukashema and Sapsford, 154.

<sup>16</sup>Sammy Gitaari, 1.

be a reality, not a dream. Indeed some people enter marriage with the hope that they will be able to change their spouses into better people. Gitaari states that this often results in frustrations when the dream is not realized.<sup>17</sup>

However, not all spouses can be changed through the direct effort. For example, a wife may assist a man who does not like taking a bath daily by encouraging him to take a bath even twice a day. A husband too can make his wife dress neatly and smartly by buying her good fancy clothes, but to avoid disappointment those intending to enter marriage should accept their mates as they are.

Gitaari opines that each of the partners should realize that a mate is a unique person with a unique life. They should also realize the need to adjust to reality and not just hold on to their ideal expectations.<sup>18</sup> Many times expectations of what a husband or wife should be like stem directly from the view of the mother or father.

Carolyn and William Self argue that blending backgrounds can sometimes be a traumatic experience. When you doubt about what is making you or your spouse “crazy” do a little digging into his/ her background. It could save a lot of wear and tear on nerves.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, it is really hard not to hold unrealistic expectations for one’s marriage. Marriage must be built on realistic expectations, not on fantasies or dreams. It takes a firm foundation of commitment and trust to weather storms that inevitably blow against any marriage.

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<sup>17</sup>Sammy Gitaari, 2.

<sup>18</sup>Sammy Gitaari, 2.

<sup>19</sup>Carolyn and William L. Self, *Before I Thee Wed* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998), 38.

## **In-law Difficulties**

Relationships with in-laws can affect marital relationships. Ndakwe comments that a study of more than five hundred university student couples in their first years of marriage ranked in-law relationships at the top of difficult areas of adjustment. Statistics show that in-law disagreements affect the early years of marriage more than any other problem.<sup>20</sup>

From the researcher's observation, some married couples still do not know that when they marry a person, they marry him including his background, family situation, financial situation, health situation and all. They forget that their in-law is closely related to their spouse. They are his /her parents or guardians.

Bacchiocchi points out that problems arise when husband and wife do not break away sufficiently from their parental families or when they go to the other extreme by ignoring them altogether.<sup>21</sup> The first step in marriage is leaving. Married couples must be willing therefore to leave their parents and cleave to one another in their marital life. The marital relationship becomes uneasy whenever one member of the marriage focuses on parental ties. No wonder Ndakwe challenges all married couples to clearly understand the importance of pulling away from the parental relationship and seeing marriage as a point in the time when loyalties and authorities change hands.

He argues that keeping this in sight can equip couples to establish a marriage in which our in-laws would have access but not direction and control.<sup>22</sup> The Bible tells the spouse to honor his/her parents or parent figure. However, it is important for

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<sup>20</sup>Ndakwe, 84.

<sup>21</sup>Bacchiocchi, 99

<sup>22</sup>Ndakwe, 67

a couple to recognize that advice and counsel from parents may be helpful, but it is not binding upon them. It is within their right to make their own marital decisions. Furthermore, it is important for the married couples to know and understand that their in-laws are like adopted parents to them.<sup>23</sup>Horsley asserts that your in-laws can pronounce a blessing on you depending on how you treat them. Naomi blessed her daughters-in-law when she had to return to her own people.<sup>24</sup>

Likewise, in many instances, spouses object to the interference of their in-laws in their personal decisions. Bacchiocchi asserts that a conflict can easily arise if spouses feel obligated to follow the advice of their own parents rather than the advice of their mates.<sup>25</sup> From an African perspective, the researcher has observed that in African homes mothers normally, have caused trouble in the marriage of their sons or daughters than fathers. They find it more difficult to let alone and keep still. Studies into the subject of in-law relationships have come up with interesting information.

One research psychologist claims that most in-law problems are predominantly feminine- a wife and her husband's mother in particular.<sup>26</sup>

Although not all families have trouble with their in-laws, it is surprising, therefore, that most in-law problems are predominantly feminine. Ndakwe identifies three reasons: Firstly, the husband's mother probably identifies more closely with her daughter in- law, therefore, she is likely to be very critical of how another woman is performing a role she has successfully filled for years. Secondly, a wife usually feels

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<sup>23</sup> Margaret Hardisty, 114.

<sup>24</sup> Gloria C. Horsley, *In-Laws: A Guide to Extended Family Therapy* (New York: John Weley and Sons, 1996) 59.

<sup>25</sup>Bacchiocchi, 99, 100.

<sup>26</sup>Ndakwe, 73, 74.

insecure as she approaches marriage, and wonders whether she will be considered to be competent by her new in-laws. Thirdly, there is pressure falling upon the ladies that the marriage of the child is far more threatening to a mother than the father.<sup>27</sup> The motherly love and care attitude right from inception to early adulthood are evidence of an inevitable threat.

### **Children Related Problems**

While children are a gift from the Lord and are meant to enrich the marriage relationship, they can also spoil the parent's plan for their own lives. Chafin, a social scientist has said that "rather than children fulfilling a marriage they may be the first point of cleavage which separates husband and wife."<sup>28</sup> Muia agrees that it is a wonder that the "the gift" from God becomes "trouble maker" in the marriage.<sup>29</sup> Indeed it is agreeable that children can cause marriage conflicts in many ways.

**Lack of children.** Mbiti opines that one of the shattering problems in marriage is the failure to have children.<sup>30</sup> A childless family is considered to be an incomplete family in most African cultures. This, therefore, leads to a lot of social pressures on the family. Gitaari asserts that in most cases the blame is put on the childless woman, who is often accused of being barren. Usually, the parents and relatives of the husband put a lot of pressure on her.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Ndakwe, 74, 75.

<sup>28</sup>Kenneth Chafin, *Is There a Family in the House?* (Minneapolis, MN: Worldwide, 1978), 35.

<sup>29</sup>Joachim Muia, *How to Experience a Happy and Successful Marriage* (Kitengele, Kenya: Kijabe Printing Press, 2009), 66.

<sup>30</sup>John Mbiti, *Love and Marriage in Africa* (Longman Group of Companies, London: UK, 1973), 197.

<sup>31</sup>Gitaari, 29.

Muia adds that many couples start blaming one another as the problem for not having children. Some tend to become unfaithful to the other as a way of seeking whether they can have a child; especially women.<sup>32</sup> The researcher agrees that it is the duty of the husband to protect his wife from his relatives' accusations. The childless couple must always remember that their marriage is complete though childless. Children are just an added blessing from God.

There are two options for the childless couple: to be content with their childless state or to try adoption. Gitaari argues that the problem is that our society stigmatizes both childlessness and adoption, but Christians should not be afraid to adopt children. It is one way of becoming a parent for those who cannot be biological parents.<sup>33</sup> After all, we are God's children through adoption- an idea familiar to Christians (Eph.1:5).

**Gender of children.** The gender of children is considered to be very important in Africa hence it is another big cause of marital conflict. There is a belief in my culture that a boy is seen as the one who propagates the family line. Gitaari agrees that the father views a boy as the source of continuation for his family. The mother views her son as security in her old age after all the girls get married and leave home.

Girls are perceived as a source of wealth. The lack of a girl child means no wealth while the lack of a boy means no future.<sup>34</sup> Muia argues that men prefer to have boys and women prefer girls. When each couple's wishes fail in one way or the other, conflicts start to kick off. The couple may spend sleepless nights quarreling and

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<sup>32</sup>Muia, 67.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid, 30.

calling each other names. Even some may fight.<sup>35</sup> The researcher has witnessed tensions and conflicts in some marriages when a couple could not get the gender they desired, and this has resulted in polygamy or even divorce. Gitaari reminds the Christian couple to realize that children are a gift from the Lord and whatever sex He gives them is good. At the same time, they should realize that the days when girls were seen as a source of wealth and boys as a pension in old are disappearing.<sup>36</sup>

**Replacing the spouse with children.** Some spouses love their children to an extent that too much attention is given to the children at the expense of the spouse; consequently, a conflict follows. Gitaari warns that while parenting is important, devoting too much time and money on parenting at the expense of building the marriage relationship is wrong. Children should not be allowed to come between the husband and the wife relationship in any way.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the couple should not show favoritism as a dad or mom to the children but should decide together on what to do as a team. Portraying a picture of mom's boy or dad's girl spirit brings tension and conflict in the marriage relationship.

**The number of children.** Having children in a marriage will mean different things to each couple. However, the number of children that a couple might plan to have is very important. Conflicts have arisen in some marriages over the number of children to have. The pressure has generated within the marriage relationship or outside. Gitaari suggests one external pressure where the issue of naming children after one's parents or relatives becomes important when deciding how many children a couple should have. The in-laws from both ends play a major role here. They either

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<sup>35</sup>Muia, 66.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 31.

cause or reduce tension when in-laws insist on having a child named after them and the couple has only one sex of children or wish to have only two children for example.<sup>38</sup>

**Birth control methods.** While birth control methods or family planning enables a couple to prevent unwanted pregnancies and to space the intervals between their children, it has been a source of conflicts in some marriages. Gitaari opines that some couples, either out of ignorance or superstition, detest all family planning methods. They, therefore, use methods that are inadequate or continue to have more children than they can bring up.<sup>39</sup> The researcher agrees that there is a need for married couples to use common sense in spacing children in order to have the children whom they are able to provide for their physical, financial and other necessary needs.

### **Sex Related Problems**

Hagin suggests that the number two problem in marriages is sex.<sup>40</sup> Indeed the majority of marital problems are related to sex in one way or another. Wrong sex attitudes and practices are a cause of marital conflicts including unbiblical sexual attitudes, the difference in male-female sexual needs, selfish men, use of sex to punish or reward fatigue, poor communication, the amount of time and lack of trust.

**Punitive function.** Out of the many reasons for marriage, fulfilling each other's sexual needs is paramount. Paul underscores this fact in 1 Corinthians 7:3-5,

The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to the husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body but the husband does; likewise, the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a season,

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<sup>38</sup>Muia, 32.

<sup>39</sup>Gitaari, 32.

<sup>40</sup>Hagin, 94.

that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control.

According to Bacchiocchi, this means that Christian couples should seek to meet each other's sexual needs. A satisfactory sexual relationship is very important to the success of the total relationship.<sup>41</sup> The issue of conjugal rights between couples has been a source of tension and conflicts in many marriages.

**Unbiblical sexual attitudes.** Some marriage conflicts are created by Unbiblical sex attitudes. Gitaari argues that there is a general feeling that sex or some aspects of it is sinful among many people. This leaves them with guilt and fear that cause impediments in their sex life.<sup>42</sup>

Hagin explains unbiblical sex attitude by citing tangible examples: Firstly, sometimes a woman gets so "spiritual" that she will not go to bed with her husband. She does not want her husband to touch her. The husband may be saved and even baptized with the Holy Spirit, but he is not spiritual enough in her eyes. Secondly, he was an ordained minister and had two children. But he became so spiritual that he didn't want to sleep with his wife. She was more sexually passionate than he was. She wanted to sleep with him, and ought to have been able to because his body is not just his; it is hers also. Some time later, he came in and found another man in bed with his wife.

**The difference in male-female sexual needs.** It is common for a wife to be uninterested or unwilling to have sex because she is emotionally dissatisfied, tired or sick. On the other hand, the man usually has a stronger sexual desire and wants to have sex more often. This may sometimes be surprising to the woman. This natural

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<sup>41</sup>Bacchiocchi, 100.

<sup>42</sup>Gitaari, 08.

fallout of events has led to breakup of many marriages. Bacchiocchi states that women tend to be stimulated more by the emotional and romantic aspect of the sexual relationship while men are more stimulated by physical aspect. The absence of romantic tenderness can inhibit the sexual response of a woman, but not necessarily that of a man.

This means that when a husband insists on having sex without preparing his wife emotionally for the experience, she may resent “being used” rather than being loved.<sup>43</sup> Understanding these differences can assist the married partners to avoid marital conflicts in their sexual relationships. It should be remembered that some of the older generation men were polygamists. This probably came about because some wives were not willing to have regular sex with their husbands or complained frequently of sickness and so the husband just found other women.

**Selfish men.** While God created sex as something beautiful and pleasurable to be enjoyed by both the husband and wife, some men have proven to be selfish by forgetting that excitement is slower to reach its peak in women. Penner adds that the sexual arousal of a woman can be compared to the heating of an electric iron (it takes the time to build up) whereas that of men can be compared to the switching on of an electric bulb (can be immediately turned on).<sup>44</sup>

These selfish men take sex as a mechanical performance designed only for their pleasure, leaving their wives unfulfilled sexually. Gitaari argues that they hurry the approach to the genital organs without caring for their real needs. In so doing they leave their wives frustrated and at times feeling exploited. This may make her tense

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<sup>43</sup>Clifford and Joyce Penner, *The Gift of Sex* (Nashville: TN, Word, 2003), 31.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

and she may hate the sexual act altogether.<sup>45</sup> To avoid unnecessary marital conflicts, the husband must understand that the wife also has sexual needs. It should, therefore, be in his interest to satisfy her sexually.

**Use of sex to punish or reward.** Some spouses use sex to punish or reward the partner. Gitaari opines that if the partner does not do a certain thing well he or she is not allowed to enjoy sex. Thus, it becomes a reward for doing good or a weapon for fighting back when wronged.<sup>46</sup> The improper use of sex brings tension and indeed damages the marriage relationship.

God never intended that sex must be used as a weapon or reward. Each spouse is duty bound to satisfy a partner sexually. The Bible admonishes a mutual consent to spouses as far as sex is concern

**Fatigue.** It is one factor that can cause problems in sexual relationships. The fatigue can be in form of overworking. Bacchiocchi asserts that a young mother who is exhausted after caring for young children the whole day may not have energy or desire left for a sexual relationship.<sup>47</sup> The same may be true of young spouses working and studying hard to finish their education.

The stress of their studies and work can adversely affect their sexual functioning. When one of the spouses is always too tired to engage in sex, conflicts arise.

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<sup>45</sup>Gitaari, 09.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Bacchiocchi, 103.

## **Poor Communication**

The failure to communicate is another source of frustration and conflicts in marriage relationships. It is obvious that without being told, one partner can't be able to detect what is pleasing or annoying. Bacchiocchi argues that if a husband and wife want to have a satisfying sexual life, they need to discuss their needs and desires openly.

Unless expectations such as these are properly communicated, one or both partners will most likely not be sexually responsive.<sup>48</sup> Open and honest communication in sexual relationships reduces frustration and conflicts and increases satisfaction and intimacy.

## **Money Related Issues**

Money is the medium of exchange and as long as we live in this world, it is difficult to live without money. However, Lloyd Saxton in a recent research, says, "All recent studies indicate that married couples quarrel over money more than anything else; that economic factors are closely related to marital stability and critical to marital failure."<sup>49</sup> Gichinga asserts that conflict over money management in the home is the number seven marriage stressor in Kenya today.<sup>50</sup> Instead of being a symbol of security, money has put a great deal of pressure on the marriage, especially in the early years.

According to Bacchiocchi, in the average family, there is never enough money left after the bills are paid to supply all desires of the husband and wife. The result is

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<sup>48</sup>Bacchiocchi, 103.

<sup>49</sup>Lloyd Saxton, *The Individual Marriage and Family* (Belmont: California, 1980), 547.

<sup>50</sup>Emmy M. Gichinga. *Premarital Counseling: A Counseling Guide* (GEM Counseling Services, Nairobi: Kenya, 2003), 97.

that many couples spend restless nights arguing over financial matters.<sup>51</sup> Besides the fact that money is never enough, there are some factors concerning money that can cause conflicts in a marriage. These are the loss of employment, money as power, money as status, money as love and money as independence.

**Insufficient money.** The general economic decline has always resulted in not having enough money in some marriages. Gitaari explains that “we have great dreams and imaginations about our future as families and individuals. But economic changes have driven out fire and enthusiasm from many homes.”<sup>52</sup> This condition has led to dissatisfaction in the wife/husband, unreasonable demands being made, murmuring and borrowing to maintain a certain lifestyle. Mbiti alludes that many African couples fall into the habit of borrowing money, and this has become one of the most serious financial problems in African marriages.<sup>53</sup>

**Loss of employment.** It is a known fact that losing one’s job, either through dismissal or retrenchment is not uncommon these days. This is the result of the poor state of the economy in most African countries. Loss of employment can cause tension and disharmony in the home. The trauma of losing a job is a very painful experience. Again retrenchment brings shock and conflict in the family.

Gitaari argues that you may remain optimistic while your savings last, but when they get exhausted and prospects of a new source of income are not promising, you may start feeling stagnant. With more struggles and with hope declining your

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<sup>51</sup>Bacchiocchi, 101.

<sup>52</sup>Gitaari, 33-38.

<sup>53</sup> John Mbiti, 201.

spirit becomes bitter and broken.<sup>54</sup> The couple may feel demoralized and dehumanized. Their lifestyle may drastically change and thereby conflicts may arise.

**Money power.** Most marital conflicts over money are not over dollars and cents but who takes the upper hand in controlling the spending. Bacchiocchi argues that a couple may fight over certain expenditures, not so much because they really care about the money that was spent, but because the money was spent without previous approval of one of the partners.

The balance of power in a family is often tipped in favor of the partner earning more money. In most cases, it is the husband who exercises the right to make decisions because of his greater income. On the other hand, as the wife's income and contribution to the family budget increases, so her share of influence in the major decisions in the family is likely to increase. Changes in the balance of earning power are likely to cause tensions and conflicts.<sup>55</sup>

Only when money is seen as a shared resource and not as a source of power does it cease to be a cause of problems. Measures should be put in place to address the use of money as a tool to control the other partner. Gender should not be the basis of competence in choosing who should handle the money. There is a mindset that man will lose their masculinity if they allow their wives to manage family finances. If the husband or wife spends money carelessly, it is prudent to let the most responsible partner manage the purse.

**Money as status.** It is normal to judge someone by how much money he makes. However, the things that one purchases will reveal his financial status.

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<sup>54</sup>Gitari, 43.

<sup>55</sup>Bacchiocchi, 103 -104.

Bacchiocchi calls them status symbols. They include such items as cars, clothes, club membership, exotic vacations, and homes.

Disagreement over the purchase of items such as these may, in fact, be disagreements over status. The attempt to “shore up one’s ego” by purchasing expensive items causes conflicts when a husband and wife desire different status symbols.<sup>56</sup>

**Money as love.** Giving presents to someone is always believed to be an expression of love. It is a normal trend to see a man and woman giving presents to each other, especially when dating and later when married. These presents cost money or consist of money and may be taken to be expressions of love. When the husband and wife stop giving presents, it may be assumed that there is the withholding of love. Bacchiocchi believes that such a feeling can cause frustration, resentment, and conflict.

The reason a husband may temporarily suspend the practice of bringing presents to his wife may not necessarily stem from a lack of love for her, but from a tight financial situation which does not allow extra money for presents.<sup>57</sup> The Bible admonishes us that “the love of money is the root of all evil; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs.”<sup>58</sup> (1Tim. 4:10). Indeed a marital love based on money or things money can purchase is a dangerous and selfish relationship. Husbands and wives must always remember not to condition their love upon the economic or material benefits. In a

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 106.

normal circumstance, it is difficult to satisfy a partner who always craves for money and goods.

**Money as independence.** It is always assumed that a good income offers a sense of security and independence. Contrary to this idea, the real security is to be found not in the uncertainty of riches but in the assurance of God's promise to provide for our daily needs (Matthew 6:25-34). The sense of financial independence can harm a marriage relationship when an independent income by the husband or the wife produces an independent spirit.

There are working couples who wish to maintain their economic independence by controlling their respective income. Bacchiocchi makes an emphasis that such an independent spirit can harm a marriage relationship since the husband and wife will often argue about who is responsible for what.<sup>59</sup>

An independent income may indeed produce an independent spirit in the wife.

Bacchiocchi quotes Tim LaHaye saying,

I am convinced that one of the reasons young married couples divorce so readily today is because the wife is not economically dependent upon her husband; whenever difficulties and pressures arise, she can say, as a young lady said to me , I don't have to take this kind of thing; I can live by myself.<sup>60</sup>

According to what we have seen, money is not only a medium of exchange that enables us to meet our various needs but it also represents power, status love, and independence. Not having enough money due to a low income or loss of employment, can add to the list of factors that can bring marital conflicts.

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<sup>59</sup>Bacchiocchi, 106.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 106.

## Communication-Related Problems

Communication is the means by which we relate to one another. Self, says good communicators have the ability to transmit and receive meanings.<sup>61</sup> In his book, *"I Don't Want to Marry Delilah I Want You,"* Long states that any relationship that begins to decline is usually one in which there is little or no communication.<sup>62</sup> Gitaari asserts that communication breakdown is a major reason for many marital problems.

It affects almost all the other areas of marriage.<sup>63</sup> The number one problem in marriages today, many specialists in family relations say, is not sex, money or children, but the lack of communication between husband and wife. One might assume that married couples who live, eat and sleep together just automatically learn to communicate well. But this is not always the case. A lot of couples only talk about the most trivial matters of life. They rarely discuss their concerns, feelings, hopes, aspirations, or fears. When they have conflicts many partners are simply unable to work through the issues intelligently.

Doss argues that poor communication can create marital conflict between partners of good will who have every other reason to have peace in homes.<sup>64</sup> The known factor in life is that at any single moment, marriage partners are always communicating, whether verbally or non-verbally. The problem comes in when the communication is misunderstood or ineffective or even lacking altogether. However, the negative parts of communication in a marriage relationship are over expressive and under express.

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<sup>61</sup>Self, 73.

<sup>62</sup>Eddie L. Long, *I Don't Want to Marry Delilah I Want You* (Tulsa, OK: Albury, 1998), 176.

<sup>63</sup>Gitaari, 51.

<sup>64</sup>Doss and Doss, 127.

Causes of poor or wrong communication are many. Differing cultures is a big cause. Gitaari cites an example of intertribal or racial marriages or marriages between a person who has been brought up in the city. Whenever a couple attempts to communicate these differences should be taken into account.<sup>65</sup>

To avoid conflicts that arise from communication in marriages, the following should be avoided: (i) shouting, (ii) insulting, (iii) arguing to win, (iv) always bursting into tears, (v) doing all the talking without listening to the other side, (vi) always keeping quite and refusing to communicate, (vii) avoid words like “never” and “always” which confer a permanent negative verdict on other person.<sup>66</sup> The truth of the matter is that each person needs to understand that the other person cannot be expected to know what she/he is thinking if words are not spoken clearly and heard accurately.

The researcher has observed in his marriage experience that the goal of true marital communication is not of necessity total agreement. The goal should be to understand each other. Communicating well does not always ensure a peaceful, conflict-free marriage.

It takes a lot of control and a real desire to communicate without getting into situations that hurt one or both marriage partners. Self, reminds couples that they may be able to win an argument but may lose their partner.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Gitaari, 52.

<sup>66</sup>Gary and Barbara Rosberg, *Improving Communication in Your Marriage* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2000), 123.

<sup>67</sup>Self, 75.

## **External Pressure**

Not all marital problems originate from within the marriage; some originate from factors outside the marriage. Gitaari argues that these can be referred to as external pressure. These are factors that closely affect the couple and can sometimes, if not handled well, create marital conflicts.<sup>68</sup> These factors could be: (a) extended family, (b) the mother-in-law, (c) careers, (d) and separation by employment

**Extended family.** In an African setting, the extended family can sometimes be a major cause of marriage conflicts. There is a tendency for relatives to want to put up with a couple as a part of the couple's family due to death of their parents, poverty, and lack of security. They may even want to have a say in the family's private life and finances. Gitaari asserts that this usually creates tension.<sup>69</sup>

Living with relatives means more expenditure for the couple. According to Gitaari, this may result in strain when the couple's monetary power does not allow for extra expenditure.<sup>70</sup> Again there is the tendency of visiting relatives to reason out that what they are spending belongs to their brother, if they are from the husband's side, and therefore the wife has no say in what they spend. Gitaari cites an example where one man's brother threatened to beat his sister-in-law for refusing to allow him to use her husband's clothes.<sup>71</sup>

**The mother-in-law.** The mother-in-law is always blamed for many marital conflicts. Bacchiocchi alludes that she has been a victim of more jokes than has any

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<sup>68</sup>Gitaari, 10.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 11.

other kinship member.<sup>72</sup> One woman who complained about her husband, said, “I believe he loves me but I know that he is very close to his mother and anytime his mother comes down hard on me, he says nothing. I am confused.”<sup>73</sup>

It is a reality in life that some domineering mothers who have always made decisions for their daughters may try to make them for them even after marriage. According to Bacchiocchi, either of the spouses may object to their in-law's interference in their own personal decisions. A conflict can easily arise if spouses feel obligated to follow their own parents rather than the advice of their mates.<sup>74</sup>

### **Handling Marital Conflict**

The home is a garden. Just as weeds keep cropping up in a garden, married couples must realize that every marriage has its own problems and challenges that need to be addressed. Sande and Raabe argue that “happy families are all alike, but every family is unhappy in its own way. But as the reach of almost all generalizations exceeds their grasp, this one has holes. For unhappiness within families almost always has the same root problem: unresolved conflict.”<sup>75</sup>

### **Be Committed to Preserving Your Marriage**

Bacchiocchi suggests that “the first rule in handling marital conflicts is to be totally committed to preserving your marriage covenant. It is only within the context of a loving and irrevocable commitment that marital conflicts can be successfully

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<sup>72</sup>Bacchiocchi, 99.

<sup>73</sup>Gitaari, 13.

<sup>74</sup>Bacchiocchi, 99-100.

<sup>75</sup> Ken Sande and Tom Raabe, *Peacemaking for Families: A Biblical Guide to Managing Conflict in Your Home* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2002), 149.

resolved.”<sup>76</sup> Indeed when couples are determined not to let anything or anyone put asunder marital unions established by God (Matthew 19:6), they can risk being honest and open in discussing their differences. Bob and Jan Horner give four ways to be transparent: (a) historically e.g. past relationships, children (b) financially e.g. debts, income, assets, obligations (c) physically e.g. naked at home, sexual liberty (d) spiritually e.g. aspirations in future, personal sins.<sup>77</sup>

Couples that are deeply committed to preserving their marriage covenants will not allow any issue to divide them. No argument will be allowed to generate into a hostile confrontation. No time will be wasted in quarreling over things that cannot be changed.

Mention must be made that there are many differences in a marriage that by God’s grace can be overcome, but there are also some inherited or acquired characteristics which the couple cannot change. Being committed to preserving the marriage covenant means to ask God to make the couple willing to accept that which they cannot change, to give them the courage to change what needs to be changed, and to give them the wisdom to know the difference.

A total commitment is only possible by divine grace. Paul says, “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Phil 4:13). God does not only join the couple’s lives together, but He always helps them to stay together when conflicts arise. Couples must take God as their partner into their marriage relationships by keeping the fire ever burning on the altar of their daily worship. Surely, a couple that prays together stays together.

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<sup>76</sup>Bacchiocchi, 107.

<sup>77</sup>Bob and Jan Harner, *Resolving Conflict in Your Marriage* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2000), 28-31.

## **Be Honest and Fair in Handling the Conflict**

Couples who are committed to marriage covenants and have taken their problem to God will not be engaged in fighting or lying to win the argument. Paul alludes to this principle in Ephesians 4:25 where he says “Therefore, putting away falsehood, let everyone speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.” The particular tense used in Greek for “putting away falsehood” (aorist participle) conveys the idea of something already done at a specific point in time. Thus, a literal translation would read: Having put away falsehood, let everyone speak truthfully with his neighbor.”

Bacchiocchi applies this text to a marriage relation and challenges husbands and wives who have laid aside falsehood from their lives and relationships to speak truthfully to one another when conflicts arise. He believes that it is essential for a couple to commit themselves to an honest relationship so that when conflicts develop, they will not fall into the trap of lying to each other just to win the argument.”<sup>78</sup>

From the very beginning of their relationship, a couple should, therefore, commit themselves to being totally honest with each other. When a problem occurs, the goal should not be to determine who is right and who is wrong but to find a satisfactory solution. “The attitude of partners,” As Stephen Grunlan puts it, “should be a win/win approach. The couple faces the problem together and when a solution is found, they both win”<sup>79</sup> Carter alludes that there is no winner or loser in marriage—the married couple is one flesh.<sup>80</sup> When there is a genuine disagreement, the spouse’s

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<sup>78</sup>Bacchiocchi, 109.

<sup>79</sup>Stephen Grunlan, *Marriage and the Family: A Christian Perspective* (Grand rapids, 1984), 209.

<sup>80</sup> Les Carter, *The Push-Pull Marriage: Learning and Living the Art of Give and Take* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 67.

decision must stand and the partner must support it. However, Rainey warns that the husband must not be domineering. He must not be a dictator in his house.<sup>81</sup>

Bacchiocchi opines that when the concern of each spouse is to win the argument, ultimately, they both become losers; first, because they will often resort to unfair tactics to win; and second, because the outcome of the conflict will be a weaker relationship where feelings of resentment and bitterness remain and eventually lead to new confrontation.<sup>82</sup> This, therefore, calls for careful attention in handling conflicts by the couple. It should be done with honesty and fairness, seeking the best solution to a problem, regardless of whose idea it is.

### **Keep Your Anger Under Control**

Besides being committed to honesty and fairness in handling conflicts in marriage, the fourth way is to keep anger under control. Paul alludes to this principle in Ephesians 4:26 where he says “Be angry but do not sin.” In the preceding verse, the apostle Paul reminds the reader to speak truthfully to one another. This does not mean that a Christian should never feel or express anger. Rather it means that truthful persons will not allow their anger to become undisciplined and uncontrolled.

A marriage covenant for sure would lose its meaning if for example spouses would not become angry at infidelity of their partners. This verse tells us that there is a place in the Christian life for righteous indignation. God says: “I permit you to be angry but don't let your anger lead you into sin.” Uncontrolled anger can become a deadly weapon that must be banished from the Christian life. Bacchiocchi notes that

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<sup>81</sup>Rainer and Rainer, 48.

<sup>82</sup>Bacchiocchi, 109.

the anger that is disciplined, selfless, and pure can be a great moral force in the world.<sup>83</sup>

It is a known fact that angry words, once spoken even unintentionally, can be deadly weapons that can wound and crush our mates permanently. If a conflict gets out of control in our marriage, the only way to still the storm is for the more spiritually mature to break the cycle of mutual attack by refusing to retaliate for the hurt received.

### **Keep on One Issue**

Solomon in Proverbs 20:3 says, “It is to a man's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.”Ndakwe agrees that to avoid quarrels one should make sure to know exactly what is bothering him/her and keep to that one issue. Do not bring up other problems especially from the past. If a partner brings up a conflict, avoid bringing up one or two of your own in self-defense.<sup>84</sup> Self, in *Before I Thee Wed*, reminds couples to stick to the subject at hand. He admonishes them not to take up old problems or deliberately try to wound each other.<sup>85</sup>

When more than one issue is thrown in the whole process breaks down into a hopeless quarrel. The known fact is that the more the problems that are brought up at one time, the less the likelihood that any of them will be solved. This should help the couples to make a rule that additional problems should not be brought up until the first one has been dealt with. Ndakwe suggests that when a conflict arises within your marriage, write it down if you can, what is troubling you—in one or two sentences if

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<sup>83</sup>Bacchiocchi, 110.

<sup>84</sup>Ndakwe, 27-28.

<sup>85</sup> Self, 80.

possible as this will help clarify the heart of the matter. He points out that the more narrowly and precisely a problem is defined, the easier it will be to find the solution.”<sup>86</sup>

Marriage counselors emphasize the importance of sticking to the issue at hand. Dragging past grievances into the matter under discussion will hinder the resolution of the immediate conflict. It may also open old wounds and thus aggravate the situation. Bacchiocchi agrees that sticking to the issue also involves avoiding sweeping generalization and accusation.<sup>87</sup>

### **Listen Carefully and Speak Tactfully**

Closely related to a responsible attitude of sticking to one issue at a time is to listen carefully to the words of one's mate and speaking tactfully. People expect that conflicts in marriage should serve to improve communication by helping partners to know better how each feels and thinks about an issue.

Nevertheless, communication presupposes listening. Bacchiocchi explains that learning to listen carefully to the words of a mate is essential in handling conflicts. He, however, understands that effective listening is difficult to implement because in a conflict situation when a person is talking the other is not listening but is thinking about how to respond.<sup>88</sup>

Indeed the louder our voices and the uglier our words, the less our spouses will listen carefully to understand what the real issue is. When a couple argues and fights, they need to make sure that they understand what they are really fighting

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<sup>86</sup>Ndakwe, 28.

<sup>87</sup>Bacchiocchi, 114.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

about. Bacchiocchi agrees that this is possible only by learning to listen to each other and ask questions that may help uncover those hidden feelings which are the cause of the conflict.<sup>89</sup>

Mills adds to this fact that wives feel happy when they are listened to. He believes that listening is a sign of love. It is the duty of a husband to make his wife feel happy. One of the ways to achieve this result is to listen to her talk.<sup>90</sup>

Understanding the issue through careful listening and questioning is the first important step. Paul expresses this principle in Ephesians 4:29: “Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear.”

A Christian is called upon to refrain from harsh, evil speaking and to engage instead in edifying speech, which imparts grace and encouragement to others. This requires learning to be courteous and tactful in our speaking. According to Bacchiocchi, tact involves being sincere and open and at the same time showing respect for the other person's feeling, and being careful not to hurt them unnecessarily. Christ is our perfect example of tactfulness and courtesy even toward his persecutors. As His followers, we should manifest the same attitude, especially toward our family members.<sup>91</sup>

### **Be Willing to Forgive and Grant Forgiveness**

The success of resolving marital conflicts is largely dependent upon the willingness to forgive and grant forgiveness and forget the wrongs of your mate.

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<sup>89</sup>Bacchiocchi, 114.

<sup>90</sup>Mills, 289.

<sup>91</sup>Bacchiocchi, 115.

Horner points out that forgiveness is essential for the survival of the marriage.<sup>92</sup>

Asking your partner's forgiveness for your own involvement in a marital conflict is one of the most humbling but yet one of the most gratifying things you can experience.

More than any other people, Christian couples have the capacity to forgive since they are in Christ and thus are enabled to forgive others. Christ said, "Your heavenly Father will forgive you if you forgive those who sin against you; but if you refuse to forgive them, He will not forgive you" (Matt 6:14-25, TLB). What the scripture is teaching here is this: if we refuse to forgive the person who has wronged us, we have failed to realize the full effect of God's forgiveness in our own lives. In every marriage, there are times when conflicts become uncontrolled and irrational aggravated by situations such as fatigue, pride, selfishness, anxiety, etc. The ugly side of our nature breaks out in angry outbursts, cutting remarks, abusive language, or irrational accusations.

Ndakwe notes that one of the best ways to discover what forgiveness is is to consider what it is not. Forgiveness is not forgetting.<sup>93</sup> Anatomically whatever has happened to us is stored in our memory. The remembrance will always be with us. Two different ways of remembering will take place. The first one is to recall the offense or hurt in such a way that it continues to affect the married couple and their relationship with one another. It continues to devour away and bother them so much that the hurt remains. Another way is just a fact of history that it happened; however, it has no emotional significance or effect. It is present in the marriage relationship but it doesn't hinder their relationship. They are progressing onward at this time.

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<sup>92</sup>Horner, 70.

<sup>93</sup>Ndakwe, 49.

Ndakwe opines that all the details of the offense live on in our memory, but the feelings of bitterness and resentment that surround those details are siphoned off in the act of forgiveness.<sup>94</sup> The only way to bring a conflict which has gotten out of control to satisfactory end is for one partner to break the retaliation cycle by forgiving the partner for the hurt received; forgetting the wrong the partner has suffered. The Scripture reassures us that God's forgiveness involves forgetting our sinful actions: "I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, I will not remember your sins" (Isa. 43:25). "As far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:17).

Bacchiocchi comments that forgiveness in a marriage covenant involves forgetting the wrongs a mate has committed and choosing not to recount them later.<sup>95</sup> Indeed if we continue to remember and to bring up past grievances every time a conflict breaks out, then we have not truly forgiven our mate because genuine forgiveness means blotting out past wrongs from memory (Acts 3:19).

Ndakwe outlines four wrong concepts of forgiveness.<sup>96</sup> Firstly, forgiveness is not pretending. Secondly, forgiveness is not a feeling. Thirdly forgiveness is not demanding change before we forgive and lastly, forgiveness is not bringing up the past, which is destructive because there is nothing you can do to change it. This will take you away from giving your energy to the present and future. It will make you responsible at this point for jeopardizing the marriage. Even if you were severely offended, by dwelling on the offense, you place a continuing burden on your

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<sup>94</sup>Ndakwe, 49.

<sup>95</sup>Bacchiocchi.

<sup>96</sup>Ndakwe, 49-50.

marriage. Therefore, it denies your partner the opportunity to change for the better; and it does little to elevate you in the eyes of others.

Genuine forgiveness, therefore, makes us free to love, to trust, and to grow with our mates. Bacchiocchi argues that it enables us to break the cycle of retaliatory attacks. If we have been wounded by the words or actions of our mates we refuse to retaliate by returning words or actions in kindness. Such an attitude can calm tensions and create a pleasant atmosphere conducive to a rational discussion of the problem.<sup>97</sup>

### **Choose an Appropriate Time to Discuss a Problem**

According to the wise man Solomon, there is “a time to keep silence and a time to speak...a time for war and a time for peace” (Eccl 3:7-8). This also applies to marital conflicts. Marriage counselors agree that timing is crucial to the constructive resolution of conflicts. Bach and Wyden argue that many fights become needlessly aggravated because the complainant opens fire when the partner really is in an inappropriate frame of mind or is trying to dash off to work or trying to concentrate on some long-delayed chore that he has finally buckled down to. Indeed there are times when failure to delay or to advance the timing of a fight can have cataclysmic consequences.<sup>98</sup>

There are instances when an issue needs to be resolved there and then. However, conflicts develop over a period of time and can be temporarily put off until an appropriate time. Bacchiocchi suggests that a basic rule to remember regarding the

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<sup>97</sup>Bacchiocchi, 116.

<sup>98</sup>George R. Bach and Peter Wyden, *The Intimate Enemy: How to Fight Fair in Love and Marriage* (New York, 2003), 70.

timing for discussing problems is to avoid raising them just before anything that will not provide adequate time to satisfactorily deal with them.

For example, the time just before a meal, just before going to bed, just before making love, just before going to work, just before going to church, is inappropriate for dealing with unpleasant disagreements. The best time to discuss sensitive issues or serious differences is when both husband and wife are well rested, wide awake and feeling at ease.<sup>99</sup>

Paul emphasizes another important rule regarding timing in Ephesians 4: 26-27. He says: "Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil." The discussion should not be prolonged unduly. Anger, conflicts, and negative feelings must be resolved as soon as possible because the longer a couple postpones resolving a conflict the more difficult it will be to resolve it later. Bacchiocchi avers that couples must never go to bed with bitter feelings or thoughts against their partner. If there has been a conflict during the day or evening, they must make peace and banish any lingering negative feelings before they go to sleep. The longer they allow bitter feelings to flourish, the more difficult it will be to eradicate them later.<sup>100</sup>

### **Negative Ways of Dealing with Marital Conflicts**

It has been assumed by couples that a conflict can be avoided by attempting to ignore or bury differences. Sooner or later they realize that when their differences are buried, they are buried alive and sooner or later they resurrect themselves.

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<sup>99</sup>Bacchiocchi, 112.

<sup>100</sup>Bacchiocchi, 112.

**Suppressing conflict.** Suppressing a conflict is one of the traditional ways couples have learned to deal with marital conflicts - trying to forget it or sweep it under the carpet.

Ndakwe argues that this means giving in order to get along. A person reasons, "I don't like this situation but I'll swallow my own opinions in order to get along."<sup>101</sup>

While suppressing a conflict may appear on the surface as wanting to preserve a relationship, but it does so at the expense of being open and honest about one's feelings. David and Sara Mace comment that:

If couples continue to confront each other in a state of disagreement, frustration is stirred in both and a state of emotional heat develops. This is conflict. They are moving into a clash of wills, a quarrel, a fight. What they do next is critical. If they can't tolerate conflict, they will disengage and go back to where they started. The difference remains unsolved. The disagreement is recognized but avoided in future, and the feelings of frustration suppressed. The attempt to become more deeply involved with each other in that particular area of their relationship is abandoned.<sup>102</sup>

**Don't wage war.** Another negative way couples use in handling a conflict commonly assumed to be right is expressing their feelings unreservedly. Ndakwe believes that<sup>103</sup> this approach resembles a war for some couples. Wave after wave of attack seems to mount, and intensity increases. In time, verbal garbage is thrown, computer memories are activated, and total frustration is the end result.<sup>103</sup> In this scenario, each assumes the role of a legal expert, eager to see the other convicted or hung.

**Don't just back-off.** If a couple has a tendency to view conflict as a hopeless inevitability and one that they can do little to control, they may not even bother trying.

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<sup>101</sup>Ndakwe, 9.

<sup>102</sup>David and Vera Mace, *We can Have Better Marriages if we Really Want Them* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1974), 89.

<sup>103</sup>Ndakwe, 10.

Ndakwe adds that they may withdraw physically by removing themselves from the room or environment, or may withdraw psychologically by not speaking, ignoring, or insulting themselves so much that what is said or suggested has no penetrating power.<sup>104</sup> Many couples use the backing-off approach to protect themselves. Withdrawing means losing an opportunity to utilize the conflict, for spiritual and psychological growth.

**Winning.** This method of dealing with conflict says, in effect, relationship are secondary, the important thing is to win an argument. Ndakwe agrees that if your self-concept is threatened, you may find yourself resulting in this method.<sup>105</sup> One might think of an individual who has a position of authority and it (position) becomes threatened, for sure, winning is a counterattack. No matter what the cost, winning is the goal.

### Summary of Chapter

The literature sources that have been reviewed in this chapter all have two common strands. First, reasons or causes of marital conflicts will always be there, as long as a couple marries and their two cultures come together. The way these differences are handled determines to a large extent the success of the marriage.

Second, solutions addressing these conflicts are a way of nurturing the marriage. No matter how dynamite the marital conflicts might be there is a probability of handling and resolving the conflicts. Unless the couple avoids the negative ways of dealing with a conflict, then love, joy, and peace in marriages will grow.

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<sup>104</sup> Ndakwe, 10.

<sup>105</sup> Ndakwe, 11.

## CHAPTER 4

### INTERVENTION ANALYSIS

The previous chapter has introduced literature that has been written regarding causes of marital conflicts as one result of perverted marital relationships; and solutions addressing these conflicts. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the ministry project.

The desire to develop a comprehensive marital conflict and intervention strategy for Lingadzi Seventh-day Adventist Churches' couples is a result of a deep-rooted drive to reduce marital conflicts strengthen and nurture marriages. This ministry project was designed to develop an innovatively designed marital conflicts resolution program that can equip the couples with skills of handling marital conflicts; help and strengthen the Lingadzi Seventh-day Adventist Churches' couples, from newlywed to older couple as they deal with marital conflicts.

Many marriages in Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventists Church in Central Malawi Conference are experiencing difficulties. Having worked in the district for about four years, the researcher noticed that these difficulties have resulted in spiritual lethargy and general marital life problems. Due to lack of marital conflict resolution skills and many unresolved marital conflicts, it is evident that marital conflicts within Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist are inevitable.

Out of many differences between husbands and wives, disagreements have arisen and from the disagreements, conflicts have arisen that have resulted in states of frustration, bitterness, and anger. In some cases, conflicts that are long overdue, have

kept the couples apart in some way or led in a divorce. The outcomes of marital conflicts have spilled over to the children of these couples. Members, including children who come from marital conflict homes, are psychologically and education wise affected in one way or another.

Out of many pastoral duties, the researcher has struggled with in Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventists Church for the past four years, mediating and giving counsel in problem-solving in marriages took the upper hand. The results of the mediation and counseling sessions were sometimes rewarding but not very often. Wherever marital emotions were covered and not released, serious results such as separation and divorce have emerged. To establish the basis of the ministry context, the researcher studied the cultural, social -political, historical and religious life of Malawi since Lingadzi District is not an island, but a part of the nation.

### **Description of Macro-Context**

Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is in the tiny nation of Malawi which is part of Sub-Sahara of Africa and is a landlocked country in the southeastern part of the continent. Malawi is bordered in the north and east by Tanzania, to the east, south, and southwest by Mozambique, and to the west by the nation of Zambia. Composed of 45,747 miles, the country is about the size of Pennsylvania or the European nation of Portugal.<sup>1</sup>

Malawi achieved independence from the British in 1964 and was ruled as a one-party state by Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda for 30 years. Bakili Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF) won the country's first free election in May 1994, ending Banda's 30-year rule. In 1999 Muluzi was reelected. In May 2004, Bingu wa

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<sup>1</sup>[www.malawiproject.org/about-malawi/geography/](http://www.malawiproject.org/about-malawi/geography/).

Mutharika, an economist, was elected president elections widely considered irregular. President Mutharika was reelected in May 2009 with a landslide victory. After his sudden death in 2012, he was succeeded by his vice Joyce Banda. In 2014 Peter Mutharika, a brother to late Bingu was elected president.

Malawi is one of Africa's most densely populated countries with a population of 17,473,734.<sup>2</sup> More than half of the population lives below the poverty line, and over 85 percent depend on subsistence agriculture. There are fifteen major ethnic groups in Malawi. Most observers, however, agree that currently, the major ethnic groups and regions where most of them are found are as follows: Tumbuka, and Tonga in the northern region, the Ngoni in the Northern and Central regions, the Chewa in the Central region, and the Yao, Lomwe, the Sena, and the Mang'anja in the Southern region. It has been observed that since the African population of Malawi comprises Bantus, almost all of them share similar marriage customs and traditions.<sup>3</sup>

There are several cultural practices which are related to marriage in Malawi. The first one is polygamy, a practice by which a man marries more than one wife with or without the consent of the first wife. This is common among all ethnic groups in Malawi. According to the study that was conducted by the Human Rights Commission, people opt for polygamy or are found in such unions because of many reasons: The first wife might fail to bear children, yet the husband desperately wants children.

The husband marries another woman or other women as a form of punishment to the first wife for her unruly behavior. In other words, marital problems such as miscommunication, and problems due to the husband feeling that the wife no longer

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<sup>2</sup>[www.countrymeters.info/en/malawi](http://www.countrymeters.info/en/malawi).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

looks beautiful, and / or is cunning, nagging, lazy, may force the man to marry other wives so that he has peace of mind.<sup>4</sup>

Culture dictates that men should have many wives, that is, some men are merely following what has been the norm since time in memorial. Women who are barren are found in polygamy as a way of maintaining their marriages, by going to the extent of wooing another woman to join them in the polygamous union. From the researcher's observation, some religions such as Islam and some Christian denominations permit polygamy.

The second one is polyandry, the practice by which a woman marries more than one man or gets married to more than one. The researcher has observed that culturally, a Malawian woman does not marry but gets married. Culture does not permit women to get married to more than one man. What takes place cannot be regarded as marriage but as a type of behavior bordering on prostitution by which women secretly engage in extramarital affairs.

The third marriage cultural practice is widow inheritance. This is a practice whereby when a husband dies, his brother, cousin or nephew inherits the surviving wife.

The fourth marriage practice is wife- swapping. Very close friends make temporary arrangements for the men to exchange their wives for a short period in this practice. It is called Chimwanamayi among the Lomwe people.

The fifth marriage practice is marriage by abduction or elopement. In this practice of marriage, a boy/man marries a girl/ woman by elopement. The two begin to live together without following proper procedures of contracting a marriage. In

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<sup>4</sup> Jolex Malikhoya, mhrc@sdpn.org.mw, "Malawi Human Rights Commission Cultural Practices and their Impact on the Enjoyment of Human Rights."

most case though, the man's family or relatives would later undertake to inform the woman's family about their daughter's whereabouts through a go-between. From the researcher's observation point of view, abduction or elopement is done for one or more of the following reasons: it is done out of sheer childishness, to avoid payments that are associated with marriages such as bride price or other payments associated with marriage rites.

Marriage through pregnancy is a practice where a girl found pregnant is taken by her relatives to the responsible boy's family to force them into a marriage. The boy is forced to pay a certain payment as a punishment. From the researcher's observations, Marriages in Malawian society are formalized through some form of payment or transfer of gifts from the man's family to the woman's family.

Residence in marriage practice determines where the two will live. There are two systems of residence marriage. The first one is a practice by which a man marries and settles in the wife's home village, also known as matrilineal. The second one is when a man pays dowry, the residence of marriage compels the woman to live in the husband's home village. Bonus wife marriage is another practice whereby the husband is given a younger sister or niece of his wife to take as a second wife. Often, this is done as a way of expressing their gratitude to their son-in-law.

According to a Blantyre-based lawyer and chair of the Malawi Law Society, "modern Malawian marriages are now or more-less diluted because society is changing. He opines that evolving views on marital relationships, divorce and cohabitation are still swayed by popular opinion."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Philippa Croome, [www.jhr.ca/blog/2010/10/love-and-marriage-in-modern-malawi](http://www.jhr.ca/blog/2010/10/love-and-marriage-in-modern-malawi).

In a study that was conducted in selected sites in Malawi, Uganda, and Tanzania, about half of the married respondents in Linthipe, Dedza district, Malawi (51% of women and 48% of men) reported conflicts with their spouse. The one major area of conflict reported by both men and women was financial decision-making and decision-making in general. It was women only who reported conflicts over extra-marital affairs by men. The study revealed that other conflict areas include non-performance of conjugal roles and personality conflicts.<sup>6</sup>

The true picture of marital conflicts in a Malawian context can be evidenced through a study that was conducted in the three regions of the country by Malawi Diffusion and Ideational Project 2 ( MDICP2). Respondents especially women approved various justifications for divorce after a long period of marital conflicts and the reasons were: infidelity of husbands, wife beating, failure to support the family, forbidding family planning.<sup>7</sup> From the researcher's general knowledge, divorce is becoming common among Malawians and it is difficult to the wife to go back to her family. This is just but one impact of marital conflicts.

According to Africa Guide (Malawi People and Culture), the Chewa people who form the largest part of the population predominantly are Christian/Protestant and the Yao are mainly the Muslim.

The Religious groups in Malawi can be broken down to approximately as follows: Protestant 55%, Muslim 20%, Roman Catholic 20%, for traditional indigenous beliefs and other minor religions 5%.<sup>8</sup> The percentages are a proof that many Malawians are Christians, although others just go to church just for the sake of

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<sup>6</sup><http://ciat-library.cgiar.org/articulos-ciat/op41-livelihoods.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup>Georges Reiniers, [www.researchonline.ishtm.ac.uk/375647/1/dem-45-0417.pdf](http://www.researchonline.ishtm.ac.uk/375647/1/dem-45-0417.pdf).

<sup>8</sup>[www.Africaguide.com/country/malawi/culture.htm](http://www.Africaguide.com/country/malawi/culture.htm).

seeking religious affiliation. Despite their affiliation as members of the Seventh-day Adventist, the Lingadzi District members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church have a bearing of the cultural marriage practices just mentioned in the previous paragraphs.

### **Description of Micro-Context**

Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is in Central Malawi Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is located in the western part of Lilongwe which is the capital city of Malawi. The district was organized into a district in 2000. The district has 2008 members as compared to 48,734 people who live in this area.<sup>9</sup>

The mission of Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to preach the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ and prepare men and women for His second coming. Unless this preparation begins with the marriages and families in the district, then the preparation will be in vain. One way of nurturing members is focusing on the health of the member's marriages.

During his five years tenure as a district pastor, the researcher has observed an increase of marriage divorce, separations, family unrest, and bitterness and anger towards spouses. These were the results of the unresolved marital conflicts that impacted the church negatively; both spiritually and physically.

### **Research Design**

#### **Type of Research**

The researcher decided to use the qualitative research method because it has a capability of an investigation that: gave solutions to the problem at hand, and helped in gathering evidence of the existing problem in Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day

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<sup>9</sup>Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Statistical Records, 2006-2010.

Adventist. The qualitative research method systematically utilized a predefined means of procedures in the question. It also ventured into understanding the causes of marital conflicts in Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from the member's perspective culture which involved: information about opinions, values, behaviors, and social context. Because of the nature of the study, the researcher chose to use the focus group discussion method as a self-contained method.<sup>10</sup> From the preparation period to the designing of the intervention program took eighteen weeks, October 2014 to the second week of February 2015.

### **Rationale for the Research**

From the researcher's observation, marital conflicts in Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are difficult to observe, not easy to gain access to due to the issue's and population's sensitivity hence it was suitable for examining this topic.<sup>11</sup>

It is for this reason, therefore, that the researcher decided to do the study through the focus group method. The method assisted the researcher to collect a concentrated set of observation in a short time span and at the same time ascertained perspectives and experiences of Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist couples on marital conflicts, specifically the marginalized in the church.<sup>12</sup> The focus group method of study provided access to comparisons that the focus group participants made between their experiences, and provided access to the consensus of experiences on the problem of marital conflicts. Additionally, the data directly

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<sup>10</sup> D. L Morgan, *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1997).

<sup>11</sup>R. M. Dishad and M. I. Latif, "Focus Group Interview as a Tool for Qualitative Research: An Analysis," *Pakistani Journal of Social Sciences*, volume 33, 2013, 191-198.

<sup>12</sup>D. W. Stewart and P. N. Shamdasani, *Focus Groups: Theory and Practices* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990), 140.

targeted the researcher's topic. The focus group method also created a more natural environment than that of the individual interview because participants were influencing and influenced others just as they were in real life.<sup>13</sup>

### **Appropriateness of the Study**

The study was appropriate in at least three ways. Firstly, it generated information on collective views and the meanings behind those views. Secondly, it generated a rich understanding of the participants' experiences and beliefs on marriage. Lastly, it assisted the researcher in collecting similar data on marital conflicts and resolution from many participants at once.<sup>14</sup>

The aim was to collect high-quality data on the marital conflict in a social context. The focus group method was valuable since the researcher did not lack substantial information about marital conflicts and solutions.<sup>15</sup>

### **Population and Sample of Participants**

According to family life department statistical records, 55% of the couples in Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist are those who have been in a marriage for not more than fifteen years and 45% are couples who have been in a marriage for sixteen years and above.<sup>16</sup> The researcher chose one focus group for each church. In total, the study had three focus groups. Each focus group was comprised of four members representing the 55% of the young couples (two men and two women), and

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<sup>13</sup> M. A. Casey and R. A. Krueger, *Focus Groups: A Practical guide for Applied Research*, 3 ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000), 11.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> M .Q. Patton, *Evaluation and Research Methods*, third ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002),

<sup>16</sup>Lingadzi Family Life Records, 2014.

four members representing 45% of the older couples (two men and two women). Each focus group discussion was scheduled on a Sunday for two hours (9 a.m. to 11 a.m.). The meetings were taking place at Area 49 Seventh-day Adventist Church pastor's office which is more central than the other two churches.

### **Criteria for Sampling Process and Selection**

The researcher limited his recruiting accordingly by selecting individuals whom he thought would provide the best information about marital conflicts and similar types of people. The participants were recruited through face-to-face contact six weeks before the focus group discussion day. The researcher created a favorable environment for the focus group members by choosing a venue that was neutral to the participants, a venue that was free from distractions, an easy location for the participants, a place to foster an appropriate disposition of the participants, and arranging the participants in a circle seating plan.

### **Instrumentation**

The researcher designed a questionnaire of eight main questions and follow-up probing questions (appendices fig. 3) as an instrument of the study. The questions were short and to the point, focused on one dimension each and unambiguously worded. Some of the questions were open-ended or sentence completion types to ease the participants. The questions were worded in such a way that they could not be answered with a "yes" or "no" answer. There were no threatening or embarrassing questions.

The focus group discussions were moderated by the researcher. There was an assistant who took notes, and a video cameraman who assisted in the process of data collection both verbal and non-verbal. The video was helpful for identifying who was speaking. There was a multi-directional external microphone for the recording in all

the three focus group discussion meetings. Two days before every focus group discussion, the researcher would send out a reminder to the participants regarding the time and venue of the meetings.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Data Collection Procedure**

On the day of the focus group discussion, a prayer was offered by the assistant moderator. The moderator welcomed the participants and thanked the participants for coming. He then introduced the assistant moderator and introduced the topic of discussion “Causes of Marital Conflicts and How to handle them.” The Moderator reviewed the purpose of the group and the goals of the meeting.

The facilitator told the participants that the result of the discussion groups will be used to design an intervention program to reduce marital conflicts in the Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and beyond. He gave reasons why the participants were selected out of many. The reasons included: he believed that the participants would do a good work in answering the questions and the participants had some things in common that would make the interaction and discussion possible.

Then the moderator gave the guidelines as follows:” no right or answers, only differing points of view. We are tape recording and video shooting, one person speaking at a time. You do not need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully as others share their views. Rules for cellular phones and pagers if applicable; we ask that you turn off your phones or pages. If you cannot and if you must respond to a call please do quietly as possible and rejoin us as quickly as you can. My role as a moderator will be to guide the discussion. Talk to each other.”

The qualitative data analysis revealed four overarching themes across the three focus groups that address causes of marital conflicts and how to handle them. The

qualitative data analyses are a presentation based on eight questions. The presentation is the summary of the three focus group interviews that were done. The first question was, “People in this church have talked to me about marital conflicts. Could you tell me how you know that there is a marital conflict?” According to the participants of the three focus groups, there was a consensus that indeed there are marital conflicts in their churches and to a certain degree, signs of the conflicts are observable and unobservable.

On the observable signs across the three groups, five signs were discussed as follows: Couples do not come to church together when they are of the same church. Out of 24 participants in the three focus groups, eighteen agreed that they have observed this sign among the couples in their churches and 6 did not agree either by verbal or non-verbal.

The second observable sign of marital conflicts is when there is a short time of separation by the couples for no apparent reason. The groups observed that instances of a spouse leaving his or her house to a neighbor’s or relative’s house within the same location or a far distance are an indication that there is a marital conflict and eight participants out of the 24 participants had a different point of view. The third observable sign of marital conflicts that the focus groups agreed was when couples speak bad or ill of each other publicly or to other people. There was a consensus agreement across the three groups through verbal acknowledgment and nodding of heads in agreement to this sign.

The groups observed that when a couple argues during a church business meeting or any church discussion, the assumption is always that there is a marital conflict in that marriage. However, five participants did not agree. They argued that the assumption could be wrong. Across the three groups, it was discussed that not

doing things together, for example driving in the same vehicle(for those who are economically better off), seating together in church, and moving together for shopping.

The unobservable signs of marital conflicts were discussed too. The groups discussed that sometimes they heard about the marital conflicts from the couple involved in the marital conflict when one of the spouses reported to the deacons or church leadership. Across the three groups, it was agreed that children, maids or house assistants, and dependence of a couple involved in the marital conflicts have told friends, neighbors and relatives about the marital conflicts that are taking place in their families.

Across the three groups, the participants discussed many unobservable signs of marital conflict that take the time to be proved. The moderator noted and concluded that in all the three groups many participants were discussing their own experiences because of the nature of the signs of the marital conflicts. The participants discussed the following as unobservable signs that can only be noted by the family members or relatives and close friends: couples not speaking to each other. Comments were made that they may choose to speak to each other in public to cover up their condition. Secondly, there is a spiritual lethargy. Participants commented that a couple that was spiritually active would change as unobservable marital conflict. People may try to inquire from the couple, but they would choose to hide the truth.

Thirdly, when there is a physical fight in the marriage. The moderator asked a follow-up question “how do you know that couples fight when the fighting is in an enclosure?” The participants responded that it might be a secret for a short time but sooner or later it will no longer be a secret. Obviously, the neighbors and children or dependents of the family might know of the fights. Another unobservable sign of

marital conflict that was discussed across the three groups was when a spouse is denied his or her conjugal right. The moderator asked for more elaboration on this point since the issue of the conjugal right is more private. The participants responded that though it is a private issue, news of such issues is heard. When a spouse whispers it to a friend, it no longer remains a secret.

The participants across the three groups observed that when a couple is keeping secrets from each other, it becomes unobservable sign on a marital conflict. However, when the secret is discovered a marital conflict arises. Some commented that the tendency of keeping the secrets from each other is hypocrisy at its highest degree. One participant said that many couples have divorced as a result of this unobservable sign of marital conflict.

Across the three groups, the participants agreed that when there is a disagreement on some doctrinal or spiritual matters, the probability of a marital conflict is high. When the moderator asked the participants to cite examples, the responses were: a disagreement on tithes and offerings, a disagreement on wearing of jewel and a disagreement on working on Sabbath day.

Another unobservable sign of marital conflicts that was discussed across the three groups was; when it is rumored that one of the spouses has a marital affair. Participants discussed that the atmosphere of a marital relationship changes because of this rumor. The spouse may not ask of the rumor but might be watching and observing the partner grudgingly.

Across the three groups, the participants agreed that when a daughter of the family has been impregnated by a man, there is blaming between the couple. However, the participants observed that it can also apply to a boy who has impregnated a girl. Most of the female participants said that women a girl is

impregnated the husbands would be furious with the wife blaming her that she did not counsel her daughter. According to the participants across the three groups, this has been unobservable marital conflict sign in most old marriages their churches.

Across the three groups, participants discussed that unobservable signs of marital conflicts can be visible in other family members. Consequently, children are psychologically affected. In one group a participant cited an example of a child who was not doing well in class because of a marital conflict. His teacher made an inquiry and discovered the bright student was affected. Therefore, there was a consensus agreement across the three groups that some unobservable signs of marital conflicts can be on the other family members apart from the wife and husband.

The participants of two groups discussed a factor that was not discussed in the other group. Groups one and two discovered that when a spouse is not looking happy and sometimes is asked by friends or relatives, that is an unobservable sign of marital conflict. Participants of the two groups commented that it has been discovered that spouses who have been jovial all the time; but are no longer wearing their usual happy face, about 50% of these couples might be the victims of the unobservable sign of marital conflicts.

The second question was “What are the common causes of marital conflicts in the church? On this question, the moderator probed for a list of causes and an understanding of their nature. Across the three groups, money related issues were top ranked with the following examples: a spouse does not know how much the partner earns. The participants commented that most housewives do not know how much their husbands earn, yet husbands would do all they can to know their wives’ wages. Because the wife does not know how much the husband earns; there is a probability that the wife would spend all the money for the needs and wants of the family

assuming that there is more money left for the month. When an emergency need for money arises, the wife is told that there is no money. This creates a conflict.

The second money issue that was discussed across the three groups was; a spouse does not leave any money for the day's food. Participants agreed that this normally in marriages where a husband and wife do not budget together. Because there is no food for the day; the spouse feels bad is bitter about it hence a conflict arises. Most women participants commented that this may push the wife into prostitution as a solution to the food. Again, when the husband finds food on the table he would be bitter about it.

The third money issue is when a spouse borrows money or takes things on credit without telling the partner. Most male participants complained about this practice and attributed it to wives. On the other hand, wives blamed husbands for not telling them how much they earn. Consequently, a conflict that would have been avoided arises.

The fourth money issue that was discussed across the three groups was that a spouse supports his or her relatives only. Most of the female participants commented with emotions. They observed that many men only support their relatives financially. This makes many women to their own way of supporting their relatives. The ways could be: stealing money from the husband, cheating the husband about the prices of commodities and engaging in prostitution. As a result of all these, a conflict develops.

The fifth money issue that was discussed across the three groups was that a spouse lies to a partner that he or she has a loan at the office but in the true sense he or she shares the money with other people; relatives, girlfriends or boyfriends. When it is discovered by the partner, a conflict arises.

Across the three groups, sex related matters were second ranked. When the moderator probed for more elaboration, the participants listed the following reasons: denial of conjugal rights.

The participants said that many marital conflicts have erupted due to this factor. The male participants leveled this towards wives. All twelve male participants agreed. However, the twelve female participants were still defending themselves arguing that some men take their wives as sex machines. On the other hand, the female participants justified themselves saying that they do this for valid reasons such as sicknesses, fatigue, and pregnancy related problems.

Another sex related matter that was discussed across the three groups was unfaithfulness of one spouse or infidelity. The participants agreed that cases of unfaithfulness among spouses are rampant in their church. Most female participants argued that men are the victims of this malpractice. Eight of the male participants across the groups agreed but expressed their concern that they are some wives who retaliate by having affairs with other. Consequently, the marital conflict becomes more complicated.

The participants across the three groups agreed that unsatisfactory sexual performance of the spouse can cause a marital conflict. Sixteen of the participants across the three groups strongly believed that many marriages are affected by this factor, yet they pretend as if all is well. Most of the male participants lamented that women who do not sexually satisfy their husbands have been the cause of the infidelity. Four female participants argued that in some marriages, wives are the complainants of this practice.

Another sex related matter that was discussed across the three groups was that a wife goes to her home village for farming and stays with the husband for a few

months of the year. The groups discovered that in some instances some husbands go on trekking jobs (for example, truck driving) and stay away from home for months.

It was observed that some men go to South Africa or other countries in search of green pastures and spend years without returning home. Because of this temporary separation, the focus discussion groups observed that the probability of unfaithfulness is high hence it causes a marital conflict.

Across the three groups, the participants discussed that turning down a spouse's sexual advance is another sex-related issue that causes marital conflicts. Fourteen out of 24 participants agreed that many marriages have undergone a chronic marital conflict due to this factor. Most male participants pointed out that women are the perpetrators of this practice. Some female participants argued that there are some men though who does the same.

Communication problems were ranked third across the three groups. When the groups were asked to elaborate more, the following points were listed: one spouse doing all the talking without listening to the other partner, always keeping silent and refusing to communicate, shouting and insulting, telling lies, and bursting into tears whenever there is a heated debate. Women participants frowned and men broke into laughter when the last point was mentioned in two groups.

The fourth-ranked common cause of marital conflicts discussed across the three groups was extended family issues. When the moderator probed the participants for more elaboration, the participants gave the following points: mothers-in-law, brothers or sisters-in-law and dependents from man's and woman's side turn to forget that their relative (son, brother or sister) is married. They expect the same ties with him or her before he or she was married to continue. The ladies across the three groups spoke emphatically on mothers-in-law as a source of a marital conflict.

Another extended family issue that causes a marital conflict as discussed by three groups was the step home. It was observed that in most step homes, disagreements between the stepchildren and stepparents are inevitable because of different expectations.

The children would expect to receive the motherly love that their biological mother was giving them and the mother would expect to have children of her own whom she would love and cherish. Consequently, a marital conflict may arise between the husband and wife over the stepchildren. In one focus group, a male participant gave an example of a man who had lost a wife and decided to re-marry with an anticipation that the new wife will take of his children. The man was disappointed that the children were being mistreated and he divorced the wife so that he could stay with his children peacefully.

Across the three focus groups, the participants discussed remarriages as part of extended families. Fifteen of the 24 members agreed that in many second marriages spouses compare their spouses with the former spouses. Despite the fact that the former spouse had some weaknesses, the spouse would still get some positive traits in the former spouse in comparison with the new spouse.

This comparison becomes a source of marital conflict. The participants observed that all spouses who have not resisted the temptation of comparing their new spouses to the former spouses in a negative way will always face marital conflicts.

Listening to a parent or relative more than to the spouse is another extended family issue that was discussed by the participants across the three groups. Nineteen out of the 24 participants agreed that many marriages are experiencing marital conflicts due lack of trust in their spouse hence they do not listen to them. In other words, not listening to a spouse indicates a lack of trust on the spouse.

Across the three groups, participants discussed that loving friends and family (extended) more than the spouse is another aspect of the extended family issue. Sixteen out of 24 participants agreed that many spouses care more about their extended families and friends more than their spouses. Consequently, this has generated a lot of unnecessary marital conflicts.

Children related problems were ranked fifth among the common causes of marital conflicts across the three groups. From the probing question, the following factors were discussed in all the three groups: sex of children has been an issue especially when the couple has girls or boys only. It was observed that there have been quarrels between spouses who have been blessed with either male or female children in their marriages. Husbands would blame their wives for the birth of girls only. This has been a bone of contention and a source of marital conflicts in many marriages.

Another children related problem that was discussed across the three groups was the number of children to have (the wife may need more and the husband few). Some participants pointed out that due to different backgrounds of the spouses, one might be coming from a family where the parents had many children and the other spouse from a family where the parents had few children. Another reason that was discussed towards the number of was the economic reason.

One spouse may think that their earnings cannot support many children; yet another spouse might be thinking of the child mortality rate that is in the country and what will happen if the few children will die. According to the participants, such issues have paralyzed many marriages to an extent that couples are always arguing over this issue. Therefore, it is important that this issue must be discussed before the couples are wedded.

Across the three groups, the participants also discussed child birth control or child spacing methods as one of the children related issues. The moderator probed more for elaboration. The participants said that it becomes an issue when the couple cannot agree on the method to use or one spouse avoiding it altogether. In one group, a male participant stated that some Christians believe that it is a sin to use contraceptives because the Bible says, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen 1:28).

Across the three groups, participants discussed that loving the children more than the spouse is another child related issue that causes marital conflict in their church. Eighteen of the participants agreed that some spouses love children more than their spouses. This was leveled towards women. Some female participants argued that this equally applies to some men.

Two groups discussed the topic of favoring a child or some children than other children of the same family. Half of the two groups agreed that a spouse who loves a child or other children in the family than others of the same family can easily call for a marital conflict. Two camps might be created in the family if each spouse will favor his or her own child.

Across the three groups, participants discussed that leaving the counseling of children to one spouse is a child related issue. Seventeen of the participants agreed that most men leave the counseling of children to their wives, yet when something goes wrong women are accused of failing to counsel their children, consequently a marital conflict arises. Three female participants spoke with emotions and emphasis and blamed men for this.

In response to the claims by female participants, half of the male participants accepted the blame, however, attributed this to their upbringing. It was observed that

culturally children are counseled by their mothers, a phenomenon against Christian marriage principles.

Across the three groups, childlessness was discussed as a child related issue that cause marital conflicts. All the 24 participants agreed that childlessness has been the cause of marital conflicts in time memorial among Malawians including Christians. Culturally, it is believed that a childless couple is a disgraces their clan and does not receive its due honor in the community. The couple is not counted in the category of adults because it will not leave any legacy. The participants pointed out that husbands of such marriages would blame their wives for the childlessness condition and the wife at times would also blame the husband for the same condition.

The other common cause of marital conflicts discussed across the three groups was the difference in academic qualifications. Upon inquiring of how this happens, the groups came up with the following responses: eighteen of the 24 participants said that when the gap is wide, the probability of marital conflicts is high. The participants stated that this happens due to the difference in the level of understanding and perceiving of things. Since the couple is not at the same wavelength, the probability of a marital conflict is high.

Twelve of the participants across the three groups agreed that there is an attitude of complex inferiority from the one with a low qualification and the one with a high qualification overlooks the other. However, seven of the participants across the three groups commented the percentage of such couples in the church is very small.

Across the three groups, the participants discussed that many enter marriage without receiving proper premarital counseling, hence they do not know what to do. Sixteen participants across the three groups commented that if they were counseled, the content did not address the deep marital issues. There was a follow-up question

for elaboration,” Out of ten marriages that are wedded in the church, how many are counseled?” The answer across the three groups was very few, to be specific two to three marriages.

The next common cause of marital conflicts that was discussed across the three groups was the religious difference. When the moderator wanted to know how religious difference can cause a marital conflict, the following were the responses: Twenty participants across the three groups observed that the difference in religion brings differences in doctrines and faith which can easily result in a conflict. Several examples were given including; a difference on the day of worship, a difference on the mode of baptism and a difference on the state of the dead.

Across the three groups, fourteen participants out of 24 said that differences in lifestyle and practices are factors of religious differences that cause marital conflicts. Then the moderator asked the participants to cite some examples of differences in lifestyle and practices. The participants across the three groups presented two examples; differences in health practices and differences in dressing (others allow jewelry while others do not).

The participants across the three groups observed that whenever there is a religious difference between the couple, tithes and offering becomes an issue. Nineteen of the 24 participants across the three groups pointed out that most spouses do not allow their wives or husbands to take the family earning for tithing and offerings. If the spouse is to fulfill his or her religious obligations in tithes and offerings, a conflict arises.

Seventeen participants out of 24 across the three groups said that timing of church activities may cause marital conflicts. For example, one is a church board member and comes home late due to a church board. The other spouse will not

continue to tolerate the late comings. This has caused marital conflicts in many marriages.

Fifteen participants across the three groups agreed that the issue of children ordinances, that is; child dedication or child baptism has brought conflicts in marriages. One spouse might decide to take a child for baptism according to his or her belief; while the other spouse will fight for child dedication in line with his or her belief.

Across the three groups, eighteen participants agreed that children are confused about whom to follow as far as religion is concerned. The participants observed that there is a continuous war between the spouses over who takes the children to his or her church. So the children will go to dad's or mom's church depending on who is important to them.

If the children are forced to follow a parent to a church they do not like, the probability is that soon or later they stop going to that church. In the long run, there is a conflict over who takes children to his or her church.

The other common cause of marital conflict that was discussed across the three groups was personality differences. Seventeen participants out of 24 across the three groups agreed that personality differences have played a major role in causing marital conflicts. The following are the factors of personality differences that have caused marital conflicts: Differences in temperaments. The participants pointed out that knowing about the spouse's temperament will show the other spouse what kind of person he or she is marrying. If the spouse does not know the temperament of the other spouse, then a marital conflict will arise.

Across the three groups, fifteen participants agreed that the differences of background and how the couple was brought up is a factor that causes marital

conflicts. However, there were three male participants in one group who did not agree that the differences of background and how one was brought up can be a common cause of marital conflicts.

Across the three groups, fourteen participants agreed that incompatibility usually resulting from inadequate courtship, is another common cause of marital conflicts. The participants observed that couples who have taken more than two years of courtship were likely to know each better than those who had a short period of courtship.

The third question was, “Do marriages have different marital conflicts? What are the most common marital conflicts in (a) new marriages and (b) in old marriages?”

Across the three groups, all participants agreed that marriages have different marital conflicts basing on how long the couple has been in marriage. This led to the second part of the discussion; causes of marital conflicts in new and old marriages.

Across the three groups, participants listed the following as common causes of marital conflicts in new marriages: The top ranking common cause of marital conflicts in new marriages is communication-related problems. The couple is in the process of learning their likes and dislikes, therefore, nineteen out of 24 participants across the three groups agreed that it is inevitable to cause a marital conflict in the new marriage.

Across the three groups, personality differences were ranked second as a common cause of marital conflicts in new marriages. Sixteen of the 24 participants observed that when a couple is wedded, there are high expectations of having similar personalities. However, the opposite is true. Due to personality differences, the new couples are on a trial and error phase where marital conflicts are inevitable.

Nineteen of the 24 participants across the three groups agreed that Unrealistic expectations are the common causes of marital conflicts in new marriages. According to the data collected, unrealistic expectations ranked third as a common cause of marital conflict in new marriages. When couples have just been wedded, they expectations are numerous. As days pass by the couples realize that some of the expectations were like chasing a mirage. Therefore, the participants across the three groups concluded that because of unmet expectations marital conflicts arise.

Seventeen of the 24 participants agreed that money-related issues are the common cause of marital conflicts in new marriages. Because each spouse is coming from a cocoon of individuality, sometimes it is hard to think of money in terms of a couple.

Due to money related issues, the participants agreed that the probability of marital conflicts in new marriages is high. The participants across the three groups observed that couples in new marriages turn to compare themselves with other couples hence they end up borrowing to maintain a certain lifestyle.

Across the three groups, fourteen of the 24 participants agreed that sex-related issues are a common cause of marital conflicts in new marriages. Because the bonding process has just begun, the probability of unfaithfulness especially by the man is high. Temptations of meeting old friends of the opposite sex also poses a danger of infidelity. Consequently, a marital conflict in the new marriage will arise.

In old marriages, money related issues were ranked as number one. Twenty of the 24 participants across the three groups pointed out that as couples grow together in a marital relationship the money related issues, pose challenges that in the long run necessitate a marital conflict. The participants cited several examples of money related issues that are common causes of marital conflicts in old marriages. These

include: borrowing without telling the other spouse, failure to disclose his or her earnings and supporting relatives secretly without notifying the other spouse.

Eighteen of the 24 participants across the three groups, in agreement, ranked sex-related issues as number two common causes of marital conflicts in old marriages. The participants listed a number of sex-related issue examples which include: unfaithfulness from both spouses that may be the result of childlessness, childbirth and failure to develop an interest in sexual activity; unsatisfactory performance in sex (due to old age or menopause in women and incompetence), denial of conjugal rights by both spouses, long separation of the spouses due to trekking jobs and going on long courses abroad.

Nineteen out of 24 participants across the three focus groups agreed that the third ranking common cause of marital conflicts in old marriages was children related problems. As marriages were growing, the participants observed that more children related issues were experienced. Several examples were listed including pregnancy of a daughter, an adopted child or a dependent and a step child. The participants pointed out that as children reach teen years, peer pressure changes many of them beyond the expectations of the parents, hence marital conflicts arise between the children's parents.

The participants across the three groups discussed that extended family problems and the difference in academic qualification are the common causes of marital conflicts in old marriages. Out of the 24 participants, it was interesting to hear two saying that all the common causes can fall in either group.

The fourth question was, "What do you do when you first notice that your marriage has a marital conflict? (Do you discuss it, if so how?)." The question was discussed across the three groups and the participants responded that: twelve of the 24

participants agreed that their first reaction to a marital conflict is to discuss it amicably. Six participants said they discuss it by giving it a time when the tempers are cool. Three participants said they completely do avoid the discussion however, three participants said they also avoid the discussion but they pretend as if there was nothing taking place.

The fifth question was, “Do you get advice from anyone to do this?” The participants across the three groups gave five main answers, and these were: six out of 24 participants stated that sometimes they get advice to react the way they do towards marital conflicts, five out of 24 participants said that when the issue is out of hand they look for advice from other sources, eight out of the 24 participants stated that they hate involving others in their marital issues, three out of 24 participants pointed out that they have never tried to involve other people, and two out of 24 said that they do it themselves without involving anyone.

The sixth question was, “Suppose the marital conflict does not get over, or even get worse; then what do you do?” Across the three groups the participants gave the following responses: three participants responded that they will pray about it and see what the Lord will do, two said they will go for a separation within the house, five responded that they will take the matter to the church leadership, four participants across the group said if the marital conflict has happened for a number of times they will opt for a divorce. Across the three groups, five participants said they will stay because of children (mainly ladies). Interestingly, two participants said they will take it to the spouse’s boss.

The seventh question was, “And still if there was no change?” Across the three groups, participants spoke out their mind on how they will handle a marital conflict if there was no change. The following were the responses: three participants opted for a

divorce as a solution. There were few participants who disagreed and they suggested that the couple should divorce on one ground which is infidelity; one participant said that Christianity is a religion of a second chance hence the other spouse should be accorded forgiveness. There were few heads nodding in agreement to this comment. Five participants across the three groups responded that they will choose to separate until the spouse will come back to his senses of the problem he or she caused.

Ten participants across the three groups responded that they will take it to the Lord in prayer and fasting. Few comments were made that included: patience must be exercised to avoid regrets, this is the best solution that is true Christianity, Christians should make a difference and we must remember that our children are watching and decoding what is taking place. Three participants across the three groups responded that they will seek a court intervention.

The last question was, "Is there anything you can do to reduce marital conflicts?" The participants across the three groups responded to this question as follows: four participants across the three group said they will take any marital conflict to God in prayer because He gives peace to the marriages that have been crushed by the storms of marital conflicts and restores hope to a hopeless marital conflict situation. Five participants across the three groups responded that they will handle a marital conflict by forgiving and forgetting without keeping any grudge. Several comments were made on this point; some said that it will take time for one to forget, others said it is not practical and one commented that it will not be possible to forget.

Six participants across the three groups said they will choose to be open to their spouses to reduce the marital conflicts. One participant in another group shouted "impossible" and apologized for the inconvenience he caused. When he was given the

floor he said that it is not possible to be transparent to our spouses in all matters of life. Few participants frowned and few laughed. Five participants across the three groups chose to discuss all marital conflicts amicably as a way of reducing marital conflicts because communication cultivates intimacy.

Four participants across the three groups responded that spouses that are always facing marital conflicts must copy from couples whose marriages are exemplary in terms of morality and spirituality. Few hands were up across the three groups to make comments. Some paused a question, “How do we measure their spirituality?” Others said they could morally be upright while they are leaving under the spells of marital conflicts. The moderator thought about the points that were the least on the discussion, and yet they were very important for the study; these are: learn to respect one another’s decision as a couple, be what you are and be a best friend to your spouse always.

### **Designing the Intervention**

The intervention design was based on the data gathered through the qualitative method. As a result, the information obtained from the data analyses were employed to create a plan of action to reduce marital conflicts in the Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches. The intervention intended to address marital issues that cause marital conflicts and equip the couples with skills of handling marital conflicts.

The intervention program was comprehensive and synergistically coordinated to meet and nurture the marital needs of the Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches. It was a proactive, intentional and well-planned program that sought to strengthen the marriages of church members and assists them in dealing with the many marital conflicts that affected their spiritual lives negatively. For long

term plan purposes of reducing marital conflicts in the Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches, the program also targeted the single senior youths.

Listed below are the basic topics for fourteen sessions of an intervention program:

1. The Beloveds: Who is the Beloved, The Official Recognition of a Relationship by the Church, Counseling the Beloveds.
2. The Fundamentals of Marriage- Definition of Marriage, Biblical Reasons of Marriage.
3. The Relationship- The God- Type of Marriage, The Christian Home, Love in Marriage.
4. The Duties- Duties of the Husband, Duties of the Wife, The Total Wife, House-keeping and House Helps, Principles of Finance in marriage.
5. Understanding the Temperaments- Introduction to Temperaments, What it Means to Have a Sanguine Husband or Wife, What it Means to Have a Choleric Husband or Wife, What it Means to Have a Melancholic Husband or Wife, What it Means to Have a Phlegmatic Husband or Wife.
6. The Problems and Solutions- Problem-Solving in Marriage, In-laws, The Step Home, What Every Christian Should Know About Divorce.
7. The Master Key of Acceptance- The Key of Acceptance.
8. The Sexual Relationship-Introduction to Sexual Happiness, The Wedding Night, Honeymoon, Pleasurable Sex, Dutiful Sex, Exciting Sex, Orgasm, Common Fears About Sex, Sex for Reproduction, Grey Areas of Sex.
9. The Principles of Sex
10. More on Temperaments- The Temperaments and Sex, Developing Spiritually Mature Temperaments, Tips on Relating to Your Spouse's Temperaments.
11. The Improved Sex Life- How to Improve Your Sexual Life, Sex at an Old Age.
12. Pregnancy, Labor, and Childcare.
13. Parenting and What it Involves.
14. New Dimensions- Children by Adoption, The loss of a spouse.
15. Typical Questions of Married couples and the Answers.

### **Summary of the Chapter**

Chapter four contains a description of the ministry project. The chapter provides a detailed view of the description of macro- context and micro-context as a backup platform of the Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches. In chapter four it was noted that the methodology used to execute this project was the focus group discussions. From the data collection and analysis, it was noted that marital conflicts in the Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches are present Therefore, an intervention program was designed.

The intervention program was designed with the goal of reducing marital conflicts and to equip the Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church couples with skills of handling marital conflicts. The intervention program was proactive, intentional and well planned to run for fourteen weeks.

## CHAPTER 5

### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERVENTION

Chapter five addresses the issues that have come out in chapter four. It gives an overview of the implementation of the intervention to address the reduction of marital conflicts in the Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches. The overview includes the final evaluation, the research instrument used to ascertain the problem statement, which was about the reduction of marital conflicts and how to handle them in the Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches. The analysis of the data collected in chapter four revealed that there were marital conflicts among the couples in the Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches.

This chapter outlines the steps that were followed to address the reduction of the existing and confirmed marital conflicts. Seminars that focused on the reduction of marital conflicts and solutions were conducted in the three churches of study in collaboration with the church boards and the local church family ministries department. The seminar implementation plan was developed according to the findings of chapter four and was adopted per the need of each church. The time frame was February 2015 to the second week of June 2015.

This was followed by an evaluation after the given months of implementation. The evaluation was scheduled after each church had a minimum of three months and a maximum of six months of implementing the marital concepts learned during the seminars.

The seminar topics were specifically addressing the objectives connected with the findings in chapter four. Some topics were intended for an immediate positive change of marital life while the seminars were continuing. Apart from the implementation of the program design, chapter five articulated the data collection procedures for the evaluation; presented and analyzed the data. Chapter five concluded with a reflection of chapter four.

### **Implementation of the Intervention**

The implementation of the designed intervention was done through family life seminars and family life home visitation. Each church had four weeks of family life seminars and family life visitation on daily basis. Mvama church had her seminars and visitations from the third week of February 2015 to the second week of March 2015. Then, it was followed by Area 49 Seventh-day Adventist Church from the third week of March to the second week of April 2015. Gulliver Seventh-day Adventist Church had her seminars and family life home visitations from the third week of April 2015 to the second week of May 2015. The family life seminars were scheduled for one and half hours daily starting from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm.

There was a senior youth single's seminar every Monday from 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm in every church where the seminars were being held. The adult family life seminars were open to all couples, single parents regardless of their age and to the general members of the public. The family life home visitations were conducted concurrently with the family life seminars on Sundays from 2:00 pm. to 4:00 pm. upon the request of the participants.

According to the intervention program plan, the objectives of every family life topic seminar and family life home visitation was to reduce the marital conflicts among the couples in the Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches

and equip the couples with skills of handling marital conflicts. The researcher observed that it was necessary to involve the youths of the three churches as a long term plan of reducing future marital conflicts; by providing premarital counseling sessions within the family life seminars.

### **Planning the Seminars**

Each church chose a committee of five members for the smooth running of the implementation program. The committee was chaired by the local church family life director. Among some of the duties that the committee did were: advertised the seminars on radio and television, made brochures for the seminars, arranged the Sunday family life home visitations and a special outing trip to Lake Malawi; provided handouts for every seminar presentation, prepared certificates for the seminars and sensitized the church to invite the general public to attend the seminars. The committee came up with a budget for the seminars as indicated in tables one to three.

### **Role of the Church**

The implementation of the program depended on the church as a whole. Across the three churches, the church agreed to use the family life ministries department budget and subsidized the transport fare to the lake on the closing day of the seminars. Each member was encouraged to attend and invite a neighbor. The participants were asked to write down any of their marital conflicts without a name and put them in a prayer request box for special prayers two weeks prior to the seminar.

## Seminar Presentations

The seminar presentations were developed in modular form. Each module dealt with a specific family life issue. The modular presentation is normally evidence based. In the ever-advancing world, it is important to provide people with clear evidence for behavior change and topic based modular presentation achieve this.<sup>1</sup> This is because modules are smaller and discrete units. Based on this evidence, the following are the modules formulated for the implementation adopted from *Model Marriage: A Marriage Counseling Handbook* by Dag Heward-Mills. The material has so many issues in common with a Malawian marriage setting as far as marital conflicts are concerned.

### Module One: Beloveds

Module one was intended for the single senior youths across the three churches. The objectives were: to counsel the youths on how to choose marriage partners and how to relate to them and prepare the youths for marriage as a long term plan of reducing marital conflicts. The content of this session had three topics and a questions and answers presentation. These were presented every Mondays for four weeks.

**Session one: who is a beloved?** According to the Bible, a “Beloved” is a person whom one has a relationship with, and the intent of their relationship is to end up in marriage (Song of Solomon 2:16). The synonym of beloved is fiancé (e), boyfriend or girlfriend. Any close relationship between a boy and girl that intends not to end up in marriage is not allowed as it might lead to fornication (1Cor. 7:2). Therefore, there is a need that those who enter in this relationship must do so with

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<sup>1</sup>Franklin Covey, ”Presentation Advantage,” accessed on 18 August 2016, <http://www.franklincovey.com/productivity/presentationadvantage.php>.

only one reason of marriage. It is also advisable that the period of developing the relationship (courtship) should not belong.

While the beloveds are in courtship, they must make sure or ascertain that they want to marry the person of their choice without being forced or out of excitement (1Thess. 5:21; Gen. 24:58). As a conclusion, the presentation addressed eight things that the youth must consider before choosing a beloved. Then the participants were divided into eight groups to discuss one point per group and report on what they discussed. The facilitator drew a summary of the discussion.

**Session two: the official recognition of a relationship by the church.** This part discussed the official recognition of a relationship by the church. Three reasons why a relationship should be registered are: to ascertain if some people are married already, to ensure that all such relationships are not hidden and to get to know the couple better.

**Session three: counseling the beloved.** While in a relationship the couple is expected to practice celibacy. It is important, therefore, that the couple must desist from fornication. The main thrust of this part was the nine “don’ts” in a relationship between beloveds. The participants were divided into nine groups to discuss a single point per group. The facilitator summed up the presentation by admonishing the ladies to consider that it is their fault if any sin of immorality will occur. Although men are usually under a lot of sexual tension in the relationship, the woman must not give in to this pressure.

**Session four: questions and answers.** The last Monday of the youth session was open for any premarital questions and answers were provided. Among the questions were: How can we prepare for a Christian wedding? A wedding preparation

checklist was given as an answer. The facilitator appealed to the youth to consult him whenever they have a burning issue concerning premarital counseling.

## **Module Two: Fundamentals of Marriage**

This module was for the adult section and the objectives were: to define marriage (show the participants the three ways of getting) and to understand why God instituted marriage before sin came into the world. The module contained two parts: definition of marriage and Biblical reasons for marriage.

**Session one: definition of marriage.** “Marriage is an institution ordained and ordered by God.”<sup>2</sup> There are three ways of getting married: Civil marriage (This is in accordance with the civil laws of the land), customary marriage (this is done to involve the families) and spiritual marriage (this is so that the couple vows to obey God’s law in relation to marriage and also to have the marriages sealed by God). We require all couples to fulfill all three forms of marriage to avoid confusion and dispute later on, as to whether they were or have indeed been married.<sup>3</sup>

**Session two: biblical reasons for marriage.** Marriage is not man’s idea, neither was it initiated by him. After God realized man’s need for a companion, He addressed the need. The Bible gives specific answers as to why God instituted marriage for the following reasons: (1) Firstly, to solve the problem of loneliness (Gen. 2:18). Secondly, to be a helpmeet (Gen. 2:18). Helpmeet: Ways the woman can help the man—by prayer, sex, providing food, counsel, encouragement, comfort: by

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<sup>2</sup> Derek and Ruth Prince, *God is a Matchmaker* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2003), 51.

<sup>3</sup> Joshua Adjabeng, *Before You Marry* (Accra, Ghana: Olive, 1999), 63.

showing hospitality; by performing housekeeping duties; by helping financially, socially, etc.<sup>4</sup>

### **Module Three: The Marriage Relationship**

The objectives of this module were: to give the origin marriage pattern as given by God, understand that the Christian home is a place to enjoy; a place to tend and make beautiful; demonstrate that love needs an object towards which it may direct its attention; care and resources, and a husband and wife must be the best friends; share every success, disappointment, joy and pain together, circumstances that will test faithfulness and conditions that are likely to aggravate potential for unfaithfulness.

**Session one: God’s pattern of marriage.** It is a fivefold pattern of marriage. Firstly, One man/One woman.<sup>5</sup> “And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman and brought her unto the man” (Gen. 2:22). Secondly, leaving and cleaving. There are four ways of leaving: physical (location), Economic/financial, influence; direction, counsel of parents and other members of the extended family and close friends, especially of the opposite sex. Thirdly, companionship.<sup>6</sup> The man was alone without a friend. (Gen. 2:18).

Fourthly, openness.<sup>7</sup> Let your spouse know all about you to avoid surprises, mistrust, and suspicion.<sup>8</sup> “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were

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<sup>4</sup> Lana Parker, 13.

<sup>5</sup> Lewis and William Hendricks, *Rocking the Roles* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1991), 41.

<sup>6</sup> Gordon Mac Donald, *Magnificent Marriage* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1982), 6.

<sup>7</sup> Evans A. Laryea, *Joining of Lives* (Accra, Ghana: PAL International, 2002), 67.

<sup>8</sup> Dennis and Barbara Rainer, *Starting Your Marriages Right* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 26.

not ashamed” (Gen 2:21-25). Lastly, sex and reproduction. God’s is for sex and reproduction within the context of marriage.<sup>9</sup> Sex and reproduction outside the context of marriage lead to all kinds of problems—step homes, stepchildren, and sexually transmitted diseases.

**Session two: the christian home.** The most important element of the home is not the building (how large or how beautiful it is) but the relationship existing between the people within. “A foolish son is the calamity the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping (Prov.19:13). The home, therefore, has four importance to the husband and wife: it is a place of relaxation – for the man, a shield, and insulation from the world and its pressures—for the woman, a place of refreshing and strengthening—for both and a place of training for the children.<sup>10</sup>

**Session three: love in marriage.** There are three types of love that must be practiced in marriage.<sup>11</sup> All three types are important for a happy marriage: (1) *Agape*- is normally described as the God-kind of love. It is unconditional. (2) *Phileo*- Let brotherly love continue. (3) *Eros*- is sexual love.

These three types of love must be present and working together all the time. One or two without the other(s) is incomplete and impracticable. They are mutually reinforcing.

**Session four: communication in marriage.** Speaking the truth in love to one another makes individuals grow up in their relationship with God. Similarly, speaking

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<sup>9</sup>Bob and Jan Horner, *Resolving Conflict in Your Marriage* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2000), 28.

<sup>10</sup>Rex Forehand and Nicholas Long, *Parenting the Strong-willed Child* (Chicago, IL: Contemporary Books,1996), 156.

<sup>11</sup>Laryea, 112.

the truth to each other as married people makes us grow closer to each other. “But speaking the truth in love may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph 4:15). Husband and wife must always make the effort to speak to each other (the children, in turn, learn this) because communication results in growth, speaking brings relief and healing and makes one choose to speak life (Prov. 18:21). This truth must be spoken in love by avoiding things like shouting, insulting and arguing to win.

**Session five: faithfulness and unfaithfulness in marriage.** Faithfulness can be defined as *loyalty or ability to be trusted*. It is a requirement of all Christians (1 Cor.4:2). The following are the circumstances that will test faithfulness: sickness, childlessness, childbirth, sudden prosperity, joblessness, long separation, old age (menopause), poverty and impotence. Unfaithfulness or infidelity is a sin. It normally has the end result of adultery, though it starts in seemingly harmless ways like spending more time with someone who is not your spouse. The following may however act as catalysts to this phenomenon, which is more of a problem of the heart:<sup>12</sup> becoming unattractive, not caring about things like one’s weight, looks, and interest in sex; general loss of interest in dressing, hair and indeed the general appearance, infrequent sexual intercourse between the couple, and lack of communication. How to foster faithfulness in marriage is very important.

#### **Module Four: The Duties of Husband and Wife**

The objectives of this module were: to portray the duties of the husband and the wife, the role of a total woman, the excellent home keeper and her house helps;

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<sup>12</sup> Deb Kopp and Heather Kalmbach, *Because I Said Forever* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2001), 162-4.

and how to deal with finances in the marriage. This module was in five lively parts or topics.

**Session one: duties of the husband.** The word “husband” comes from some Anglo-Saxon words which mean “house band”. This implies a strip of metal (or rope) used to bind the house together. A husband, therefore, binds together the home in terms of its organization and control.<sup>13</sup> He does this by heading the family, loving his wife, making her feel happy at home, respecting and honoring her, protecting and caring for her, working hard to provide for the needs of the family and providing for her wife sexually.

**Session two: duties of the wife.** Eve was created to be Adam’s helpmeet. Therefore, whatever the woman does, her motive must be to help, protect, motivate, uplift and promote her husband.<sup>14</sup> The duties of a wife include: Loving her husband, submitting to her husband, keeping the home, providing sexually for her husband, Providing nice food for husband and the family, providing for nice supportive company and friendship for the husband and being a virtuous woman patterned from Proverbs 31:10-30.

**Session three: the total wife.** A wife has specific roles that can be fulfilled by her alone. These roles are as follows: she must be a Christian, a worker/student, a mother, a sex partner, a cook, a home keeper, and a hostess.

This session addressed six principles for a total wife. Firstly, all her roles are equally important. Secondly, she cannot and will not leave out any of these roles. Thirdly, she must plan in advance for all things. Fourthly, she must organize, delegate or get help and use it when she has to. Fifthly, she must have a positive attitude

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<sup>13</sup> Packer, 66.

<sup>14</sup>Lewis and Hendricks, 205.

towards sex. Lastly, she can do all things through Christ who strengthens her (Phil. 4:13).

**Session four: home keeping and house helps.** A wife must make up her mind to be an excellent home keeper. When this is done properly it enhances her image as a wife and mother, and that of her husband.<sup>15</sup> In Titus 2:5, Paul states that “To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of the God is not blasphemed.”

Housekeeping has four components and these are cooking and provision of food, hospitality, keeping the house and house helps. There are seven things that every couple should know about house helps. Firstly, the phenomenon of the house helps is one that many find very difficult to handle. You must learn about it. Secondly, many househelps come untrained and are sometimes unruly. They must, therefore, be trained and even tamed. Thirdly, the wife is the one who will always deal with the help. She must be fair and firm in her dealings in conformity with the Scripture, “Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven (Col. 4:1).

Fourthly, be aware that female house helps may pose a sexual danger in the house for your husband. As such you must take certain precautions and institute some measures: let her dress properly, for example, wear bras, no wearing of sexy shorts, transparent nightdress etc. When the house help is male, the wife must be careful about the things she wears in his presence. The female house help must not replace the wife in any way. Note that a gradual replacement in any form can become a permanent (total) replacement. Sixthly, do not easily dismiss stories of affairs

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<sup>15</sup> Lewis and Hendricks, 92.

between a husband and the maid. These things are real. Seventhly, some maids come into the home with an agenda to take over. This may be physical or spiritual (wizards and witches). You must, therefore, be very spiritual choosing a house help. Lastly, in spite of all the negative things that can be said about househelps, a good one is very helpful for your continued activity in church and in other areas and also to help you fulfill your other roles.<sup>16</sup>

**Session five: principles of finance in marriage.** There are many references in the Bible regarding the importance of money. However, the Bible also warns us about coveting after money, which is the root of all evil.(Eccl. 7:12; 10:19;1 Tim. 6:10).

There are seven principles to consider about money: Firstly, the importance of money. Money is the medium of exchange for everything. As long as we live on earth, it is indispensable. Secondly, attitude to money in the home. Discuss money openly. Aim at transparency/openness in everything especially in matters of money. Avoid selfishness. Thirdly, understand the realities of housekeeping money (chop money). The mode of its operation must be discussed and mutually agreed upon. The husband must not be detached from realities while the wife must also not be prodigal in her spending.

Fourthly understand financial headship. The headship of the home extends to finances as well. Fifthly, avoid lack of money. Lack of money must not be a permanent situation in the home. Sixthly, know the dangers of covetousness.

The condition normally arises when the husbands /wives compare their property or children with those of others. Lastly, know the dangers of comparison. Do not compare yourself with any family. Accept realities.

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<sup>16</sup>Adjabeng, 54-55.

## Module Five: Understanding Temperaments

This module has five sessions and the objectives are: to know that the temperament is God's method of creating variety, strengths and weaknesses of a sanguine husband or wife, strengths and weaknesses of a choleric husband or wife, strengths and weaknesses of a melancholic husband and wife and strengths and weaknesses of a phlegmatic husband and wife. The temperament is the basic template for which you are created. God creates you with certain tendencies, natural strengths, and weaknesses.<sup>17</sup> There is a difference between temperament and character. A character is a product of many controllable variables. Unless a spouse will know and understand that he or she is married to a person of a certain type of temperament, the probability of marital conflicts will be high.

*Session one: Introduction to the temperaments.* The temperament is God's method of creating variety. Some people are born with natural tendencies for leadership or joviality. Others are born with a natural tendency to flow along and to be easy-going. This is the basic structure of your emotional make-up.

1. Melancholic: There is a kind of man ... who curses his father, and does not bless his mother (Prov. 30:11).
2. Phlegmatic: There is a kind ... who is pure in his own eyes, yet is not washed from his filthiness (Prov. 30:12).
3. Sanguine: There is a kind ... oh, how lofty are his eyes, and his eyelids are raised in arrogance (Pro.30:13).
4. Choleric: There is a kind of man ... whose teeth are like swords, and his jaw teeth like knives, devour the afflicted from the earth, and the needy from among men (Prov. 30:14).

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<sup>17</sup> Tim LaHaye, *I Love You but Why Are We So Different?* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1991), 31.

The combination of one's parents' or grandparents' genes and chromosomes at the time of inception determines one's basic temperament. This is what is responsible for his or her actions, reactions, and emotional responses.

**Session two: what it means to have a sanguine husband or wife.** The strengths of a sanguine husband include: emotionally warm, friendly, outgoing, talkative, enthusiastic, stimulating, he is very expressive and rarely says vicious things about others.<sup>18</sup> His weaknesses include: lacks discipline, prone to exaggerate, disorganized, hot-tempered, and prone to unfaithfulness (because of his instability), weak-willed, finances: he is undisciplined with money and spends money anyhow, he is unconstrained and usually overspends and he can be poor, even with good opportunities.

The strengths of a sanguine wife include: is adorable and popular, the easiest personality to spot in the crowd—she talks a great deal, usually laughs loudly, and has many gestures, like waving her arms in the air.

She is always in the middle of the action, mixing and mingling with people, and entertaining them. Other personalities watching her wonder if she ever gets tired. Her weaknesses include: too talkative, tend to exaggerate, permissive, she tends to avoid confrontation, forgetful unreliable, lacks attention to detail, fussy, messy housekeeper, overwhelming and seems phony.

**Session three: what it means to have a choleric husband or wife.** The strengths of a choleric husband include: Firstly, is hot, quick, active, practical, strong-willed temperament type. Secondly, he is self-sufficient and very independent. Thirdly, he tends to be decisive and finds it easy to make decisions for himself and for

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<sup>18</sup>Marita Noon and Chuck Littauer, *Love Extravagantly* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2001), 144.

others, and often needs to be in charge and in control. Fourthly, he is an extrovert but not an intense one. Fifthly, he is a very open and honest person, sometimes to a fault. His weaknesses include: his emotional nature is the least developed part of his temperament. He does not sympathize easily with others and does not naturally show or express compassion. He is often embarrassed or disgusted by the tears of others and is usually insensitive to their needs. He shows little appreciation for music or the fine arts. His most serious weakness is anger. Choleric personalities are extremely hostile.<sup>19</sup>

The strengths of a choleric wife include: Shake things –up, make-things-happen kind of woman. Korkor Choleric is a take-charge-woman—she tells everyone else what to do and is commanding in her style. She is Courageous – believes she can do whatever she sets her mind to. She is bossy, can be overly aggressive and domineering. She is a Crusader—notices wrong and injustice of and feels compelled to solve or challenges to overcome.

Her weaknesses include: Firstly, she is unpopular –may be greatly admired but disliked by people around her. Secondly, she is mean—may appear angry, distant and unapproachable even when she is not moody. Thirdly, she gets angry quickly—she can be mean to her husband, children, and even total strangers. Fourthly, she is self-centered — is interested in just herself. Fifthly, she may have a hot temper. Sixthly, she may be very unforgiving towards her husband. Seventhly, she is a strong woman who tries to dominate and lead her husband in everything, for example, she may not consult him when taking certain major decisions, she naturally tells everybody else what to do. Lastly, she is not tender. She is not good at demonstrating

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<sup>19</sup> Joyce Meyer, *Help Me I'm Married!* (Fenton, MO: Warner Books, 2000), 229.

love and affection; may not show much feeling or be very caring about her husband, workers, and children; she is not very domesticated.<sup>20</sup>

**Session four: what it means to have a melancholic husband or wife.** The strengths of a melancholic husband include: Firstly, he is analytical, self-sacrificing, gifted and a perfectionist. Secondly, he has a very sensitive emotional nature. Thirdly, he is a listener. Fourthly, he has a strong desire to be loved by others. His weaknesses are: his first reaction to anything is negative, he lacks confidence; he may be stiff and calculating and not generous, and he keeps a lot within, which comes out suddenly.<sup>21</sup>

The strengths of a melancholic wife are: she is meticulous housekeeper—she likes to create and maintain the ideal home, careful decision-maker—she is very cautious when making decisions and may be considered slow by others; she is tidy and well-organized, she is intelligent and she is a very loyal and dedicated person.<sup>22</sup> The weaknesses of a melancholic wife include: unforgiving—she remembers details of wrongdoing and the type who says to her husband, “Oh yeah, how about the time on July 9, 1980, when you ...” and goes on to elaborate in accurate detail about the offense.<sup>23</sup>

She is not interested in very frequent sex, although she does not mind occasional good shows. She is also the type of wife who would most likely, reward or punishing the husband with sex because the setting is not perfect, everything is not in place, and so she cannot flow. The wife has extreme mood swings. She can be

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<sup>20</sup>LaHaye, 21, 23.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 44, 46.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>23</sup>Meyer, 227.

exciting and stimulating as anyone else in life or in sex. She can also show absolutely no interest in anyone or anything including love. She is often very guarded with her personal life and her emotions—for fear that if she gets too close her imperfections may show up.

**Session five: what it means to have a phlegmatic husband or wife.** The strength of a phlegmatic husband include: he is the easiest person to get along with and is by nature the most likable of all temperaments, he is the type of individual who can make a crowd of people shake with laughter and yet never smile; he is husband not easy to motivate past his usual daily routine, he is calm, unruffled and never seems agitated no matter the circumstances around him and acts as a natural peacemaker.<sup>24</sup>

His weaknesses include: lacks drive and ambition, rarely exceeds the status quo and he always seems to do the expected, tend to make slow, methodical decisions which can enrage the other temperaments; he is very fearful under the surface and this fear can cause many problems, in marriage, it also becomes very easy for a phlegmatic to give up all decision-making to his more powerful and lively spouse, and he never openly confronts another person or refuses to do something but will somehow manage to do it.

The strengths of a phlegmatic wife include: is comforting—does not draw attention to herself but draws hurting people to herself. This is because hurting people sense that they have found a safe listening ear. Actually feels the pain of others and is a sympathetic listener with genuine concern for others, but may grow discouraged

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<sup>24</sup> LaHaye, 47, 50.

feeling others do not reciprocate in friendship. She has a wonderful ability to see every side of an issue and to help others see the other person's view.<sup>25</sup>

Her weaknesses include: unrealistic—does not get overexcited over achievement and exploits, her goal is to conserve her limited supply of energy hence this lack of enthusiasm can cause a significant conflict in her relationships with family and friends who may interpret it as a lack of love, admiration, concern, interest and can actually result in emotional damage to her loved ones. She is selfish: she cares for, protects and keeps to herself, this is a manifestation of a selfish life of concern about herself and she can cause people around her to resent her for being inward or selfish. She is unconcerned about her dressing, she is stubborn— does not complain or argue but may quietly and unwaveringly stick to her guns, while the other temperaments go berserk over her refusal to co-operate.

She is uninvolved— can hide behind motherhood and use it as justification for non-involvement. Avoids confrontation—she can make it easy for to behave irresponsibly around her because she may condone certain behavior just to please or to avoid confrontation. She turns her attention to her children if there are problems with her husband.<sup>26</sup>

### **Module Six: The Problems and Solutions**

By the end of this module the participants were expected to: be able to know how to solve problems in their marriages, know how to handle in-laws in marriage; know and understand how to leave with a spouse's child or spouse's relative, and understand the complications and predisposing factors of divorce.

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<sup>25</sup> Meyer, 232.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

**Session one: problem-solving in marriage.** Every normal marriage has problems and challenges. It is only when there is a fire that you see which of the sticks around you, is actually a snake. “And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat...”(Acts 28:3). In other words, in times of trouble, the character of a spouse shows clearly. Preventive measures are always better than curative solutions to problems. However, if problems arise in a marriage the approach to solving them must be this:<sup>27</sup>

Firstly, pray about the solution. Secondly, be positive that there is a solution. Thirdly, bring up this issue (in the spirit of meekness—do not be confrontational). Fourthly, identify the causes (sincerely). Get to the root not the tip of the problem. Lastly, if necessary consult your pastor.

While the approach in solving a problem is necessary, the methodology is very important. The methods that were taught were as follows: be ready to compromise, avoid: shouting, sharing marital problems with your relatives or friends, breaking in tears, using sex as a weapon, refusing to eat food, using the word “divorce” in quarrels and the counsel of the ungodly; have a forgiving attitude and spirit, be prepared to talk frankly about the issue, the other party must be willing to accept fault and apologize, and do not let any problem color your future actions.<sup>28</sup>

**Session two: in-laws.** There are many important things that marriage counselors have written on what couples should know about in-laws and how to deal with them. Firstly, know that when you marry a person you marry him/her with his/her background, family situation, financial situation, health situation and all.

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<sup>27</sup>Charles R. Swindoll, *Strike the Original Match* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1980), 106.

<sup>28</sup> Dennis and Barbara Rainey, *Starting Your Marriage Right* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 48-51.

Secondly, your in-law is closely related to your spouse. There are his parents or guardians. Thirdly, the Bible admonishes your spouse to honor his/her parents or parent figures and you must do the same (Eph. 6:2-3). Fourthly, your in-laws are like adopted parents to you.<sup>29</sup>

Fifthly, you must believe God to love them unconditionally as in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, even if you think they do not love you. Sixthly, no spouse should make the home of his parents his real home. The Bible admonishes the couple to leave and cleave to each other.<sup>30</sup> Lastly, remember that your newly created family comes first: He who does not care his own household is worse than an infidel.<sup>31</sup>

**Session three: the step home.** Leaving with a spouse's child or a spouse's relative can cause marital conflicts. However, there are important principles to take note of and these are:

1. Know that it is not an ideal situation. The children in the house are not staying with their real father or mother.
2. Expect some challenges because you have to love a stranger. It may not be easy but it may be worth it.
3. Recognize that the fatherless or motherless have a special place in God's heart and He has said that He will personally fight those who oppress them (Exodus. 22:22,24).
4. You married your spouse with this background. Accept.
5. You must love them unconditionally (agape) without expecting a reward.
6. Recognize that the son or daughter is closely related to your spouse and he/she loves him/her. Consider Abraham's mood when he had to send Hagar and Ishmael away (Gen. 21:9-11).

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<sup>29</sup> Margaret Hardisty, *Forever My Love* (Irvine, CA: Harvest House, 1975), 114.

<sup>30</sup> Gary Chapman, *Towards a Growing Marriage* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1996), 165.

<sup>31</sup> Glori Call Horsley, *In-laws: A Guide to Extended Family Therapy* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1996), 59.

7. Know the reality of a bitter stepchild.<sup>32</sup>

**Session four: what every christian should know about divorce.** The lesson began by defining divorce translated from the New Testament “*apostasion*” which means, “a defection.” Scriptures from both the Old and New Testament speaking about divorce are elaborated. When man fell and God came to the garden, He first called out Adam and placed the responsibility for eating the fruit at his feet. However, there were no questions for the woman. Whatever happens in the home is the man’s responsibility, although it may not be his fault.

God, generally, does not like broken fellowship of any sort. The concept of a broken home or the broken lives hurts God.<sup>33</sup> No wonder divorce has complications that may mar the future physically and spiritually. The complications are as follows: an unending hurt is inflicted, a bitter personality is created, there is a permanent break-up of relationship/fellowship, destruction of happiness.

A broken/wounded spirit and emotions bitterness, (long-standing and degenerate unforgiveness), tremendous pain a permanent scar, you will be handicapped, there are things you cannot do well anymore; distress—similar to the feeling of bereavement that follows the death of someone close to you depression: caused by contrasting how you thought things were going to be for the rest of your life and how they apparently will be following divorce. Depression stems from feelings of rejection which lead to withdrawal from everybody.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Robert Barnes, *Single Parenting* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992), 263.

<sup>33</sup> Charles Swindoll, *Divorce: When It All Comes Tumbling Down* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, n.d), 6.

<sup>34</sup> Prince, 141-4.

Divorce is always accompanied by a predisposing factor. Firstly, adultery—when adultery occurs, it leads to mistrust and eventually a breakdown of the whole marital union. Secondly, unresolved hurts and offenses leading to a state of chronic unhappiness and depression. Thirdly, there is violence in the marriage—where one party resorts to violence and sharp abusive words to resolve conflicts. Fourthly, childlessness—some people allow a situation of childlessness to degenerate into a break-up of the relationship.

Fifthly, long separation—where one spouse travels to live in another country and the other is unable to join due to inability to obtain the necessary visa. Sixthly, interference from relatives and friends: too much parental influence and control and many dependents from the extended family members. Lastly, there is a bad attitude—a persistent and deliberate bad attitude that cannot respond to advice; rebuke, admonishing or entreaties from anyone, including the pastors.<sup>35</sup>

### **Module Seven: The Master Key of Acceptance**

The objective of this module was to demonstrate that couples can choose to be happy in their marriages when they learn to accept what they have. Indeed, God wants His people in marriages to leave happily and intimately with their spouses. Unless acceptance is accompanied by a change of certain things, Spouses will still struggle with conflicts.

There are four things every married couple must accept: Firstly, accept the temperament of your spouse.<sup>36</sup> Do not try to change your spouse's temperament.

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<sup>35</sup>M. G. McLuhan, *Marriage and Divorce: God's Call, God's Compassion* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1991), 43-44.

<sup>36</sup>Florence Littauer, *Personality Plus for Couples* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, n.d), 37.

Rather, pray that he/she will become more spiritually mature. Secondly, accept the “masculinity” or “femininity” of your spouse. Thirdly, accept the negative things in your spouses’ character. Lastly, accept the physical structure or looks of your spouse.

**Other things you must accept.** Because acceptance is the master key to changing things in a marriage, it is important to firstly, accept the peace and decide not to quarrel. Spouses must make up their mind that peace is better than war and that it is better to live in peace than to prosecute every issue and stretch every matter (Rom. 12:18).

Secondly, accept that it is your Christian duty not to provoke another to anger and bitterness (Heb. 10:24). Thirdly, accept that God alone can change and solve complex issues, so commit things to God, to time, to the elements, and to nature. God can deal with many things. Lastly, accept that it is the wisdom of God to choose the path of peace. Horner asserts that in marriage, there are always moments of unhappiness about one issue or another but we must accept that it is the wisdom of God to choose the path of peace rather than to quarrel.<sup>37</sup> Accept to be a peacemaker and not a cantankerous and ill-natured person (Matt. 5:9). (5) Accept that the word of God is Greater than your emotions or personal ideas.

### **Module Eight: The Sexual Relationship**

The objectives of this module were: Firstly, to show that sex is beautiful, sex is holy and God talks about sex.<sup>38</sup> Secondly, to demonstrate that sex was created by God as something pleasurable to be enjoyed by both the husband and wife and not just for procreation. Thirdly, to remind the couples that it is their lawful and spiritual

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<sup>37</sup> Horner, 20.

<sup>38</sup> Adjabeng, 71.

duty to give themselves to each other as often as required. Lastly, to show that exciting sex involves having real fun with your spouse.

**Session one: introduction to sexual happiness.** Adjabeng argues that sex has been so misused and perverted by the devil and the world that, the impression has been created that sex is ugly and sinful; on the contrary, sex is God's wonderful creation. When practiced within the confines of God's will, sex can only lead to more joy and peace in the marriage.<sup>39</sup>

There are about eight reasons for sex in a marriage: pleasure, it's a duty, reproduction, a way of staying close together as a couple, regular sex prevents adultery; a way of expressing your love to your wife or husband, sex can be a happy ending to quarrels and sex can be a way of releasing tension.

**Session two: pleasurable sex.** Pleasurable sex can be defined as sex in which both partners set out to give and derive maximum excitement. Pleasurable sex is not a performance to display sexual prowess. It involves having real fun with your spouse.<sup>40</sup> This session highlighted sixteen steps to pleasurable sex.

**Session three: dutiful sex.** It is common for a wife to be uninterested or unwilling to have sex because she is emotionally dissatisfied, tired or sick. This natural fallout of events has led to the breakup of many marriages. The couples were reminded that each time they abstain from sex it must be by MUTUAL (both of them agreeing) CONSENT (1 Cor. 7:5).

In dutiful sex, the woman has the dos and don'ts. Things not to do: Do not complain, or murmur or pass sarcastic, sharp and cutting remarks like "Don't you get

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<sup>39</sup> Adjabeng, 55.

<sup>40</sup> Dave and Joyce Ames, *Second Honeymoon* (Eastbourne, UK: Kingsway, 1991), 191.

satisfied when you eat?” The Scriptures admonishes all women, “Do all things without murmurings and disputing (Phil. 2:14).

Things to do: A wife who wants to have sex has to be creative. Things to be done by the man in dutiful sex include: be nice to your wife during the day, take a bath often, especially at the end of a hard day’s work.

**Session four: exciting sex.** Trying sex in an adventurous way and creating a variety can achieve exciting sex. Never at any time should one force the other to do anything that he or she does not want to do. Caution should be taken that no party should limit or hinder love play and place restrictions on the different positions, styles, and actions<sup>41</sup>. The unadventurous and unexciting partner will eventually drive away the other.

**Session five: orgasm.** Orgasm is the peak of the climax of sexual excitement.<sup>42</sup> Married couples should make it an objective to bring their partners to this peak during the sex act. The session covered steps that will help on how to build up excitement. However, the couples were reminded that excitement is slower to reach its peak in a woman and lasts longer than in a man. The woman’s build-up of excitement can be compared to the heating of an electric iron, whereas that of the man can be compared to the switching on of an electric bulb. The session was concluded with principles for achieving orgasm and these were: the right attitude in both partners, the right technique, and persistence—sometimes years.

**Sessions six to eight: common fears about sex; sex for reproduction, and grey areas of sex.** These sessions were also covered in this module. The last session was quite interesting since it was scratching where it was itching, for example, sex

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<sup>41</sup> Jimmy Evans, *Marriage on the Rock* (Amarillo, TX: Majestic Media, 2004), 256.

<sup>42</sup> Penner and Penner, 156-64.

during menstruation, sex during and after pregnancy, sex during church activities and sex during fasting.

### **Module Nine: The Principles of Sex**

The objective of this module was to emphasize the assorted biblical principles of sex. The facilitator opted for group discussions as a method of teaching with an intention of involving all the participants. In all, thirty-three assorted principles were covered in three sessions.

### **Module Ten: More on Temperaments**

This module covered more on temperaments: temperaments and sex, developing spiritually mature temperaments and tips on relating to your spouses' temperament. The objectives of this module were: to bring awareness on sex is affected by one's temperament, how to develop a spiritually mature temperament and what to do with your spouse despite his/her temperament.

**Session one: the temperaments and sex.** Temperaments determine a spouse's attitude and response towards sex. The sanguine husband's response firstly, is so responsive it does not take much to turn him on. Secondly, he is open about everything he does that his wife is always aware of his mood. Thirdly, he has a great appetite for everything including love making. Lastly, he may be more easily unfaithful if not sexually satisfied because the conquest of another woman is important to satisfy his ego and he finds lonely, unfulfilled women easy prey to his charm and he is weak-willed and emotionally excitable and is therefore open to the unscrupulous woman.

On the other hand, the sanguine wife enjoys sex: it is important to her, she is unrestrained, she will do almost anything sexually, if taught, she overcomes most sexual inhibitions and can become aggressive and she is not cadaveric in sex.

Secondly, men feel comfortable in her presence. Thirdly, she has tremendous desire to please her husband and with a reasonable amount of encouragement will usually succeed in this area of marriage provided her partner does not hammer away at her faults in other areas.

A choleric husband's response include: he appears to be a great lover on the surface, unable to lavish affection on spouse, and impatient—this makes adjustment difficult for the wife; learns quickly, is practical and will, therefore, make necessary changes to lovemaking, and he is likely to take his wife into bedroom without the slightest sex education himself.

A choleric wife's response to sex includes: Firstly, she can make her husband very happy or unhappy sexually. If she has had a good upbringing, teaching, and parents, she is exciting and creative. If she has had bad teaching, molestation by a parent/an adult, or other traumatic experiences, she is very difficult sexually (because she is opinionated).<sup>43</sup> Secondly, since choleric wives are not usually given to open affection they may stifle their husband's advances before their own motor rolls into action. Thirdly, if she observed a warm, loving relationship between her parents while growing up, she will enter marriage expecting to enjoy lovemaking and because choleric people usually achieve what they set out to do, she and her husband will not be disappointed. The session covered all temperaments and it was encouraging to hear questions and comments.

**Session two: developing spiritually mature temperaments.** The session covered the ways in which all the temperaments can be developed spiritually. For a sanguine husband and wife, the following were included: Firstly, stick to principles –

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<sup>43</sup> Beverly LaHaye, *The Spirit-controlled Woman* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1995), 192.

one man, one wife. Secondly, walk in the Spirit in your thought life: "...make not provision for the flesh..." (Romans 13:14). If a sanguine indulges in immoral fantasies he will soon fan his passions out of control. Thirdly, encourage your wife to be expressive. Fourthly, his wife must be the sole object of his affection. Sixthly, talk less and listen more—God gave you two ears and one mouth—be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. See the pitfalls of exaggeration, and try not to exaggerate. Lastly, put away self-centeredness. Most sanguine people tend to be self-centered and self-absorbed—they often do not remember people, their names and other details.

Choleric husband and wife can also develop spiritually. The following are some of the ways: ask yourself what makes you want to take control, do not think you know it all—only God does, be humble; realize that you are not naturally a people person and make a conscious decision to work on that weakness, and learn not to force your advice and opinion on people.

This session included the ways on how the melancholic and phlegmatic husbands and wives can be spiritually mature. Marriages are affected by the condition of the spouses' spirituality. There is hope for any temperament personality to be a mature spiritual husband or wife and enjoy marriage though with conflicts.

**Session three: tips on relating to your spouse's temperament.** In a broader sense, husbands and wives can still stay together in marriage despite the fact of their temperaments and yet be able to handle marital conflicts. This can be done only if they can follow and adhere to the tips on relating to their spouses. Many marriages have suffered a lot due to the fact that they did not know how to relate to their spouses.

What to do if you are married to a sanguine husband or wife: Firstly, give attention—sanguine have a burning need to be the center of attention. Secondly, do not constantly criticize them for telling stories or exaggerating too much—it wears

them down and leaves them unhappy. Thirdly, do not push a sanguine too much to get serious and quieted down because they may become negative and depressed, unmotivated and an unavailable workaholic. Lastly, do not be bossy.

What to do if you are married to a Choleric husband or wife: accept their weakness, maintain a sense of obedience, and recognize that your husband has extraordinary instincts and a natural flair for leadership, and the choleric dislikes people who are lazy and not interested in working constantly. What to do if you are married to a melancholic husband or wife: give them stability, give them space, give them silence and be sensitive to the things that concern them—at least try.<sup>44</sup>

### **Module Eleven: The Improved Sex Life**

The objectives of this module were: to show couples how to improve and make their sexual lives more exciting and fulfilling, and show the couples that they do not assume that sexual excitement must die or reduce as couples grow.

**Session one: how to improve your sexual life.** With the passage of time, there is a tendency for the sexual life of a couple to become monotonous, boring and not so exciting. This must not be allowed to happen. The session covered seven steps to improving your sexual life.

**Session two: sex at old age.** With time, as husbands and wives grow older their sex life invariably also changes. It is not acceptable to assume that sexual excitement must die or reduce as couples grow. Sexual excitement is rather experienced and expressed differently with age.

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<sup>44</sup>Stormie Omartian, *The Power of a Praying Wife* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1997), 87-88.

## **Module Twelve: Parenting**

The objective of this module was: parents must understand that what their children become is dependent on the kind of training they have received. The module addressed five principles of child-upbringing, firstly, your priority for your children is to bring them up in the Lord. Know what you are investing in, and put in your best efforts. What your child becomes should reflect you. If you are a pastor for example, and you do not want your child to be a pastor, you are a hypocrite. Teach your child to fear the Lord and to serve Him.<sup>45</sup>

Secondly, your environment trains your children more than you do. The community your children live in and the school they attend influence them even more than their parents. Accept the fact that the environment is training your children for you. Therefore, make the effort to control their environment, and do not just give them a set of rules to follow.

Thirdly, training must be focused. Training is repeated action, which when left alone will be continued. There are six things that you should train your child to do and these are: train your child to attend church regularly, train your child to have his/her quiet time daily, train your child to pray; train your child to believe in a higher authority, train them to work hard all the time at everything they do, train them to be God-conscious at home,<sup>46</sup> ultimately, it is God who will keep your child in the righteousness, develop God-consciousness at home by praying with your children; praying together as a family, praying at meals and praying before you travel.

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<sup>45</sup>Rolf Zettersten, *Train Up a Child* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1994), 17.

<sup>46</sup>Gary Chapman, *The Five Signs of a Loving Family* (Chicago, IL: Northfield, 1997), 131

## **Module Thirteen: New Dimensions**

The objectives of this module were: to demonstrate that an adoption is a beautiful act in which couples accept and receive a child who is not your biological offspring as your very own and to show how the loss of a spouse has been assessed to be the highest of a trauma.

**Session one: children by adoption.** There are two ways to have children—the first way is through natural conception and delivery and the second is through adoption. The session discussed eight advantages of adoption. It also presented the four challenges of adoption. The how to flow of adopting a child are discussed too.

**Session two: the loss of a spouse.** The death of a spouse has been assessed to be the highest trauma. It is followed in second by divorce. The sorrow that grips a spouse on the loss of a partner can drive you to your own death if you do not come out of that sorrowful state quickly.<sup>47</sup> The session discussed the eight stages that a spouse goes through upon losing his/her partner. These are shock, denial, fear, guilt, hurt/pain, anger, acceptance—so be it and healing. The presentation elaborated the do's if a spouse dies.

Factors to consider before remarriage were also addressed in this session.

These include:

1. If you have children, your new spouse is going to “inherit” the children and become the stepmother or stepfather.<sup>48</sup> You may also become a step-parent
2. Step relationships are usually difficult and fraught with temptations, accusations, and counter-accusations. Almost every such relationship becomes bitter and distorted with time.

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<sup>47</sup> Amy Ross, *By Death or Divorce: It Hurts to Lose* (Denve, CO: Accent, 1976), 14-15.

<sup>48</sup> F. Philip Rice, *Intimate Relationships, Marriages and Families* (Mountain view, CA: Mayfield, 1999), 17.

3. You need to evaluate your preparedness to handle step-relationships as you decide to marry. Are you ready to work hard towards a successful merging of two families?
4. Although you will think about your deceased spouse, you must constantly fight the temptation of comparing him/her to the new one in a negative way.

The second loss of a spouse can happen due to divorce. It is important for a divorced person to understand that it is possible to recover from the trauma of a failed marriage. While God's grace is available for a divorced person's emotional healing. He/she is the key to his own recovery. The presentation addressed eight stages that a divorced spouse goes through and these are: shock, fear, guilt, hurt/pain, acceptance, forgiveness, and healing.

### **Final Evaluation**

The final evaluation was carried out in the three churches that participated in the study. The most desirable were ones six months and beyond so that the results of the evaluation may have been observed. Nevertheless, some observable results could be noticed even within the implementation period when the seminars were taking place.

### **Research Instruments**

This section briefly discusses the instruments used for collecting the data for the final evaluation of this study. The focus group instruments have been described in chapter four.

In chapter five, the instruments are not described in details hence, it will be a repetition. The final report was based on the qualitative survey instrument. The researcher also used direct observation by sitting on church boards and visiting couples whom he had visited for marital conflict counseling during the seminars on request.

## **Sample Selection**

A random sample was taken from the church members and the local church leadership of the three churches. The criteria for the church members was that the researcher chose those who were able to give the needed information and whilst that of the local church leadership was by virtue of their position. Each church had one focus group comprised of one church elder, one deacon, one deaconess, one family life departmental member, one female church member and one male church member; six in total. The questions were designed to address four major areas: the relevancy of the contents, content implementation, impact and observable signs of marital conflicts reduction.

## **Data Presentation and Analysis**

**Data presentation.** The data presentation follows the qualitative approach method based on focus group discussions. This, therefore, means that the data presentation was narrative in form. The data presented here reflects the researcher's interactions with the participants, the researcher's observations and focus group discussions. The narrative report reflects on all the aspects of the evaluations though the focus group discussion is the major part of the evaluation report. The conclusion is drawn from the data presented. This too is narrative in nature.

The three focus group discussions met in three different days at Area 49 Seventh-day Adventist Church. The first meeting with the first group was on 12 June 2016 and lasted two hours. The second meeting with the second group was on June 15, 2016, and the third meeting with the third group was on 19 June 2016. There were five questions on an average, each was estimated to take 25 minutes.

The first question was, "How useful or not useful were the contents of the seminars?" Across the three groups, all the fifteen participants appreciated the

contents of the seminar. Seven think that the time for the seminars was not adequate, they wished the seminars had been given a week longer. Eight of the participants believe that the contents of the seminars were within their comprehension. The participants agreed that the usefulness or not of the contents of the seminars varied from person to person. All the participants agreed that they were able to practice the contents of the seminars.

The second question was, "Did the seminars bring any impact on your marriages?" All the fifteen participants across the three groups said they did. Twelve participants said their marriages are no longer the same, they have changed positively. Three participants said that the seminars were timely hence many marriages have been saved from separation or divorce. Two female participants commented that the seminars have helped most husbands to love their wives. One of the female participants was approached by a friend who was attending the seminars and told her that they are now a happily married couple since the seminars took place.

The third question was, "How have the seminars helped the couples who have been in an antagonism of marital conflicts?" Eleven participants agreed that there is a change in many of the known marital conflicts couples. Most of the church officers in focus group discussions agreed that the rate of marital conflicts related issues in the deacon councils have drastically reduced since the seminars were held.

The fourth question was, "Are there observable signs that there is a reduction of marital conflicts?" All the fifteen participants agreed that the signs were indeed being observed. Those who were not doing things together as a couple, are doing most of the things together for example, couples who were not seating together in church, coming to church together, attending special sessions of the church (for example, prayer band) together and even driving in the same vehicle; are now changed couples

who are doing things together as a sign of peace in their marriages. However, some participants observed not all couples have changed. Some small rumors of marital conflicts are still being observed but to a lesser degree.

The participants observed that a number of husbands who were rumored to be fighting their wives have stopped according to the deacons' evidence. One participant testified of a couple who were almost to separate just before the seminars but are still together due to the seminars.

The participants who were local church leaders alluded that cases of marital conflicts have drastically reduced. Several examples were given including deacons are now handling very few marital related issues, church boards are having very few marital conflict related issues as compared to the past before the seminars.

The last question was, "What would you preferred to be included in the seminars?" Participants across the three groups agreed that more of premarital counseling sessions are a must. Some suggested that spouses who are not of the same faith should be given a special invitation in the next seminars. The participants observed that one spouse might do her or his part after learning the skills of handling marital conflicts but still found wanting because of the partner who never attended the seminars.

## **Conclusion**

The result of this implementation and evaluation has revealed that the implementation of marital conflict reduction program is viable or workable in the Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches. It was also demonstrated that the strategies employed worked. The study had achieved its goal—reduction of marital conflicts from 25% of the membership to fifteen percent.

Based on the above evaluation result, it can be confidently concluded that this study was a success and had met its requirement. Therefore, it is possible for a marital conflict reduction program to be adopted and implemented in Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the entire Central Malawi Conference and beyond.

### **Summary of the Chapter**

The chapter discussed the implementation of the intervention program that included: planning of the seminars and family life home visitation; and the role of the church in this program. The execution of the marital conflict reduction program was also discussed. It was noted the program itself consisted of twelve modules supported by the family life home visitation program; one module was for the single senior youth.

Finally, the program was evaluated through the qualitative method (focus group discussion) and direct observation by sitting on the church boards and visiting the couples whom the researcher had visited for marital conflicts counseling during the seminars. The chapter presented a colorful picture of how the marital conflict reduction strategy should look and work in the actual ministry.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides the summary of the entire study. It is an overview of all the work done in this study. This study was to develop strategies to reduce marital conflicts in the Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches. The study focused on three local churches in Central Malawi Conference namely: Mvama, Area 49 and Gulliver. The three churches were targeted because they were chosen as pilot churches in the reduction of marital conflicts program within Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and beyond.

#### **Summary of the Dissertation**

The main findings of this study are presented in chapters four and five respectively. Chapter one discusses the general overview while Chapter two establishes the biblical and theological foundation for this study and chapter three is the literature review. The subsequent paragraphs give a chapter-by-chapter summary of this study.

Chapter one starts with an introduction and a concise and a brief description of the ministry context. It states the problem that many marriages among the members of Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches are taking a dimension that calls for common understanding among couples.

About 25% of marriage relationships are affected spiritually, socially, and psychologically with rampant unresolved marital problems resulting in marital separation, cases of infidelity, neglect of parental responsibilities, divorces, neglect of

marital responsibilities, and spiritual lethargy. The purpose of the study is to develop and implement an intervention program, through seminars and family life focused visitation that could be used in the local church to address issues related to marital conflicts among the couples.

The problem statement is justifiable. Firstly, many married couples in Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church have raised serious concerns about the unhealthy status of their marriage relationships. Secondly, pastors who have served in the area have reported cases of marital difficulties among the couples. Thirdly, there are no specific church programs in place to address the issue of marital difficulties among the couples in the church. Lastly, there is a need to provide intervention programs by which the church will train and equip couples and would-be couples in marital relationships to reduce friction in their relationships.

The delimitations set the parameter of the study because it cannot be done to the churches in the district; therefore three sample churches were chosen as areas of the study. These were randomly selected from a given geographical area. The qualitative method was used in chapters four and five. The expectations were that at the end of the study an awareness of marital conflicts that have dwarfed the spirituality of most of the married couples in Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church will be created. The spirituality of Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches and Central Malawi Conference will be strengthened.

The implementation of the project was expected to help slow down the rate of the increasing marriage separations and divorce of the Seventh-day Adventist members in Lingadzi District churches. The project was also aimed at assisting prospective couples to be familiar with the issues concerning marriage and the strategies in marital conflict resolution.

Chapter two laid a solid biblical foundation for the study. A critical theological discussion of marriage before and after sin both from a social-cultural and theological-historical context is presented. The chapter also explores the unique institution of marriage that God established as the climax of creation, and discovers God's purpose for marriage. This chapter dwells on the concept of marital conflicts in the Bible after the creation of marriage and family. It examines counsels on marriage and family in the writings of Ellen G. White.

Chapter three introduces literature that has been written regarding causes of marital conflicts which is one result of perverted marital relationships: and solutions addressing these conflicts. The chapter starts with the causes of marital conflicts. The most difficult area of potential marital conflict is that of spiritual and religious differences between spouses. Role conflicts, personality differences, unrealistic expectations, in-law difficulties, money related issues and sex-related issues; are among those that the chapter has covered. The literature review further discussed the how to of handling marital conflicts. Unless a spouse is committed to preserving his/her marriage, marital conflicts will still remain in their marital relationship. Included the solutions of handling marital conflicts are: you have a problem take it to God, be honest and fairing handling the conflict, keep your anger under control, keep on one issue; listen carefully and speak tactfully, be willing to forgive and grant forgiveness and choose an appropriate time to discuss a problem.

The various literature reviewed tackled some negative ways of dealing with marital conflicts that are often used by couples which include: suppressing a conflict, waging war, just backing off and choosing to win the conflict. Unless the couple avoids the negative ways of dealing with a marital conflict, the much-needed love, joy, and peace in marriages will grow.

Chapter four begins with an introduction. It is based on chapters two and three. Firstly, it presents the description of the study's initial survey and the intervention design. The methodology used was qualitative with a specific focus on group discussions. The chapter deals with the concise profile of the ministry context. This begins with the macro-context of Malawi historically, economically and culturally. Included in the cultural aspect, is a true picture of indigenous Malawian marriages. Progressing to micro-context, the church members embrace the marriage cultures plus the Seventh-day Adventist beliefs; no wonder there are so many marital conflicts

The research approach was explained in detail with examples. The qualitative method, the sampling of the population and the focus group discussion were all explained. There were three focus groups, one from each of the three chosen churches. Each group was comprised of eight participants; four males and four females. The two males and two females were those who were old in marriage and the two males and females were those who were new in marriage.

The results obtained from the study indicated that indeed, there were rampant marital conflicts among the couples of Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches. This led to the development of the program design, which was based on seminars and family life focused visitations.

In chapter five the plans were transformed into seminars and family life focused visitations that were implemented at different times for each church (four weeks for each church). Each church was to be evaluated after the implementing the program for not less than three months. Twelve modules were presented. The first module (The Beloveds) was intended for the single senior youth. Modules two to twelve were intended for the couples. Module two addressed the fundamentals of

marriage which: definition of marriage and biblical reasons for marriage. Module three was based on relationships and it included: the God-type of marriage, the Christian home; love in marriage, communication in marriage, faithfulness and unfaithfulness in marriage.

Module four was based on the duties of the spouses. The following topics were covered in this module: duties of the husband, duties of the wife, the total wife, housekeeping and househelps and principles of finance in marriage. Module five was based on understanding the temperaments while module six was based on the problems and solution. The following topics were discussed in module six: problem-solving in marriage, in-laws, the step home, what every Christian should know about divorce.

Module eight was based on the master key of acceptance. Module eight addressed the sexual relationship while module nine tackled the principles of sex in marriage. More on temperaments was module ten. Modules eleven to thirteen were based on: the improved sex, parenting and what it involves and new dimensions.

After the implementation, an evaluation was carried out and is also outlined in this chapter. The evaluation used the qualitative method. There were three focus groups from the three churches of study. Each focus group had six participants. Four of these participants were local church leaders and two were regular church members. The method of reporting the evaluation report was the narrative. This is where there are more descriptions in words than there are in statistical numbers. The evaluation showed that the marital conflict reduction program is workable though it needs support from the local church leadership.

Chapter six is a summary of all the five chapters that preceded it. It also provides a comprehensive conclusion to the entire dissertation. Furthermore, it gives

recommendations for further research. Chapter six binds together the thoughts and argument of this dissertation.

### **Conclusion**

The problem identified in this study was that many marriages among members of the Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches were taking a dimension that was calling for common understanding among the couples. About 25% of marriage relationships were affected spiritually, socially, and psychologically with rampant unresolved marital problems resulting in marital separation, cases of infidelity, neglect of parental responsibilities, divorce, neglect of marital responsibilities, and spiritual lethargy. The purpose of this study was to develop and implement an intervention program through seminars and family life home visitation focused that could be used in the local church to address issues of marital conflicts.

After laying a solid biblical foundation for the study the researcher reviewed the literature on the study at hand. Causes of marital conflicts and how to handle them were identified. The review also gave the negative ways of dealing with marital conflicts. The initial study done amongst the three churches of the Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist indeed indicated that there was a need of an intervention program to reduce the marital conflicts among the couples.

The focus of the overall goal was maintained as the activities were implemented. The time frame was managed during the implementation. The qualitative method was used specifically the focus group .The participants across the three groups discussed and agreed that marital conflicts in their church are a reality and order of the day amongst many couples. Observable and unobservable signs of marital conflicts were pointed out and discussed. Over thirteen causes of marital conflicts were discussed and agreed upon. Money related issues topped the list across

the three groups and seconded by sex-related issues. Communication-related issues were third on the list. The least common cause of marital conflict that was discussed by the participants was the difference in academic qualification.

From the study, the researcher observed that the participants gave a true picture of how couples react toward marital conflicts. Some choose to meet the conflict head –on, others said they would rather choose to act if there was nothing taking place; some participants suggested that they discuss their marital conflicts amicably and very few participants said they commit their marital conflicts to the Lord. Conversely, the data revealed that the marital conflicts were affecting the spirituality of the couples and their children and dependents, in some instances.

Marital conflict reduction seminars and home visitation focusing on family life were identified as a means to address the problem. The seminars and family life home visitation were conducted in the three churches for four weeks (28 days per church). Twelve modules were covered with the goal of reducing marital conflicts in the Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches. As a long term plan single senior youth were also targeted for Mondays only during the period of the main seminars for one hour.

The data that was collected through the qualitative method (focus group discussions) six months after the implementation of the intervention, indicated that the marital conflicts reduced from 25% to fifteen percent according to the Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Family Life Department records of 2016, first quarter report.<sup>1</sup>The result indicates that the marital conflict reduction program can work even beyond Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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<sup>1</sup>Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Family Life Department (First Quarter Report, 2016), 2.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the above study, a number of recommendations could be made for further study. Firstly, the effects of marital conflicts on the couples' spirituality can make a study on its own. During the study, the researcher observed that the impact of marital conflicts on the spirituality of the couples is compromised hence there is a need to address this problem. The researcher further noted that a church that is composed of healthy marriages will make a vibrant spiritual church.

Secondly, the researcher recommends that a further study on the causes of unfaithfulness or infidelity should be a must. Based on the focus group discussions, unfaithfulness between couples seems to be taking root. Unless this malpractice is checked and addressed, many marriages will end up in separations and divorce.

Lastly, there is also a need to study the external influences as causes of marital conflicts. From the focus group discussions, it dawned on the researcher that many couples are handicapped as what to do with their extended families hence they are waiting for them as breadwinners. Many couples have compromised their marital relationships in the name of external influences.

The second category of recommendations pertains to this study. From the researcher's experience and observation, many good and effective programs have died a natural death due to non-commitment and negligence. The researcher, therefore, recommends that the leadership of the three churches of study should come up with modalities of reinforcing the program through follow-up and distributing the copies of the seminar modules to all the couples under the auspice of the local church. Central Malawi Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist through the family life ministries department, should adopt the marital conflict reduction program for all her churches as a pilot entity in Malawi. Through the ministerial secretary and family ministries

director, all pastors in Malawi Union Conference should be taught the marital conflict reduction seminars in a ministerial workers' meeting early next year (2017).

For this study, it suffices to say that this study has been a success and challenging to the researcher who learned and grew during the research work. It was a challenge because the researcher was venturing into a project that nobody in Adventist circle in Malawi has ever dared to address through an organized research, and the sensitivity of the topic was worth pausing this challenge.

It was a success because the fruits were visible six months down the line of program implementation. A long work of envisioning the reduction of marital conflicts in Lingadzi District of the Seventh-day Adventist is now the hallmark of the researcher. Therefore, to God be the glory for the great things He has done and still plan to do through the researcher.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

The questions were directed to the three focus group discussions. These were designed to facilitate discussions that will generate data on the observable and unobservable signs of marital conflicts, common causes of marital conflicts, reactions to marital conflicts and how to deal with marital conflicts. These were the questions:

People in this church have talked to me about marital conflicts. Could you tell me how you know that there is a marital conflict?

What are the common causes of marital conflicts in this church? (Probe for a list of causes, that will bring understanding of the consequences).

Do marriages have different marital conflicts? What kind of marital conflicts are most common in (a) new marriages and (b) old marriages?

What do you do when you first notice that your marriage has marital conflict? (Do you discuss it , if so how?)

Do you get advice from anyone to do this?

Suppose the marital conflict does not get over or even gets worse: then what do you do?

And still, if there was no change?

Is there anything you can do to reduce marital conflicts?

## APPENDIX B

### SCHEDULES

<b>TIME ALLOCATED FOR THE SCHEDULE</b>				
Planning	Interviews		Analysis	
week 1	week 2 to 4	week 5 to week 6	week 7 to week 14	week 15 to week 18
to develop the plan				
	to elaborate the questions			
	to identify the participants			
	to define the place of the sessions			
	to recruit			
	First session			
	Feedback of the planning			
	Second session			
	Third session			
			to transcribe	
			to process data	
			to analyze the data	
				to write the report
<b>Schedule of Focus Groups</b>				
Location	Date	Language	Focus Group	
Area 49 Church	November 2, 2014	Chichewa	Mvama church	
Area 49 Church	November 9, 2014	Chichewa	Area 49 Church	
Area 49 Church	November 16, 2014	Chichewa	Gulliver Church	

APPENDIX C

RETREAT EXPENDITURE

**MvamaSenga Bay Marriage Retreat Expenditure**

Item	Unit Cost	Total Cost
Lodging Cost	35 Couples @ 20,000 per Couple	700,000
Meals (dinner, breakfast, lunch)	3 meals	540,000
Room Decorations	35 room	72,000
Conference Room Decoration		35,000
Family Life Covenant	35 @800	28,000
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>1,375,000</b>

**Area 49 Senga Bay Marriage Retreat Expenditure**

Item	Unit Cost	Total Cost
Lodging Cost	76 Couples @ 20,000	1,520,000
Meals (dinner, breakfast, lunch)	3 meals	1,172,571
Room Decorations	76 rooms	156,343
Conference Room Decoration		35,000
Family Life Covenant	76 @ 800	60,800
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,944,714</b>

**Gulliver Senga Bay Marriage Retreat Expenditure**

Item	Unit Cost	Total Cost
Lodging Cost	40 Couples @ 20,000 per Couple	800,000
Meals (dinner, breakfast, lunch)		617,143
Room Decorations	40	82,000
Conference Room Decoration		35,000
Family Life Covenant	40@ 800	32,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,566,143</b>

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