The Christian Home and Family

INTRODUCTION

The Heart, the Home, and the Church – are of special concern to God because these are places where God can manifest Himself in a special way. One of these three places, Home is our focus in this 4-week study. Family (Home) is the basic unit of any human or social organization. Family comes about as a result of marriage, which is, a life-long commitment between a man and a woman to become a husband and a wife. Marriage is the oldest human organisation or institution, instituted by God himself. Being instituted by God Himself, it is expected to be a sacred institution. No wonder, marriage service in the church is described as a ‘holy matrimony’. Unfortunately, marriage as an institution is under siege and is being bedevilled today with myriads of problems. Interestingly, so many called ‘Christian homes’ are not exempted. Why these challenges? What is the way out of these predicaments? The answer and solution are not far-fetched, they are in the Manufacturer’s Handbook (Manual), the Bible - the eternal word of God. This study on Christian Home is necessary to save many marriages that are experiencing turbulent times, to strengthen and preserve stable marriages, and also to promote and provide an example of an ideal marriage to our young ones. Thus for the next 4 weeks, our Bible Study (Sunday School) will focus on the Christian Home and Family.

WEEK 1

UNDERSTANDING MARRIAGE

Many a times we assume we know certain things when actually our understanding is shallow, grossly inadequate or totally wrong. What do you understand by the word marriage?

What are the strength and weakness of some of these definitions we have given?

Many people today see marriage as a contract, we often hear of ‘marriage contract’. What is your view on this? Is marriage just a contract? To those who see it as a contract (a business arrangement for the supply of goods or services at a fixed price - Merriam-Webster) they assume they can just enter and leave whenever they face little challenge or when one partner fails in some measures, thus, if the contract does not work out, the parties involved mutually agree to terminate the agreement and go their separate ways, and a divorce ensues.

Marriage is not just a contract, but a covenant founded on Biblical principles (Prov. 2:17, Malachi 2:14 and Mark 10:8, 9) and as such there is always consequence(s) for breaking it (a covenant). A covenant is a sacred promise, witnessed by God himself. A covenant means, “I will do this no matter what you do.” When a couple stands and makes a public commitment to each other, that’s not a contract. It’s a covenant, a sacred and holy promise. There are three things to note about marriage as a covenant:

First, a covenant establishes a bond between two parties, in this case the husband and wife. At the heart of this bond is a promise, the promise of faithfulness.

Second, a covenant establishes obligations. A primary obligation in marriage is fidelity. The husband is obligated to lead his wife in love, and she is obligated to submit to him in the fear of the Lord.

Third, a covenant is public. It is contracted before witnesses. Someone has defined marriage as ‘A holy covenant initiated by God conditioned on an irrevocable promise of oneness with an imperfect person of the opposite sex for a lifetime to glorify God’. What is your view on this?
SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE
An ideal marriage that will usher in lasting peace and joy starts with correct biblical understanding of marriage. What do the following passages say about marriage?

a. Matthew 19:3-4; cf. Genesis 2:18-24
b. Matthew 19:5
c. Matthew 19:7-9
d. Romans 7:1-4
e. 1 Corinthians 7:5
f. 1 Corinthians 7:10-11

Marriage is a sacred institution initiated by God in the beginning. Since it is neither created nor designed by man or the state, it should not be subjected to alteration, modification, adjustment by man’s desires, societal whims (cultural, ethnic or tribal) or by state’s (government) preferences. In what ways are people redefining marriage today? Considering some of the passages cited above, comment on the following:

Same-sex marriage
Open marriage
Trial marriage
Cohabitation
Polygamy
Polyandry
Polygyny
Polyamory

GOD’S PURPOSE FOR MARRIAGE
Today, men have various reasons for contracting a marriage. What are some of these reasons?

No wonder many are not enjoying their marriages because of wrong reasons for contracting it.

From the following texts, what are the purposes of God for marriage?

a. Genesis 2:18

The need for the woman in the life of a man (or the need for a man in the life of a woman) is not that of incompetence, but incompleteness (loneliness). From these texts, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, 1 Peter 3:7b, Matthew 18:19, what other benefits can we derive from this first purpose of God in marriage? In spite of marriage, why is there so much loneliness in many homes and marriages today?

How will you describe your marriage? Is there loneliness and incompleteness in your marriage? What are the causes? What do you need to do to solve the problem? Fellowship and companionship are authentic goals of marriage; don’t allow anything (work, business, friends, career) or anyone to rob your marriage of them.

b. 1 Corinthians 7:1-2

The only proper relationship for sexual intimacy (intercourse) is marriage – (Hebrew. 13:4) and it should not be before the wedding, during courtship, but only after the wedding. Sex outside marriage (before or after wedding) is fornication and adultery Hebrews 13:4. This includes pre-marital, extra-marital, or same-sex relations. Such conduct can keep one out of the kingdom of
God (1Corinthians 6:9-10). Pre-marital sex endangers having a successful marriage. Note that marriage is not only for sexual intercourse.
c. Malachi 2:15…………………………………………………………………………………...
Raising godly offspring who will live lives of obedience to the total counsel of God including propagating God’s kingdom on earth.

LAYING PROPER FOUNDATION FOR A LASTING, PEACEFUL AND JOYFUL MARRIAGE GENESIS 2:18-20

1. **Spiritual Readiness** - Let God speak to you about the particular person you intend to get married to and let Him prepare you, it is not about age (years), money, status or pressure from parents or peer pressure. Why is this very important? Since marriage is God’s idea and was instituted before any culture was established, it is important for the couples or intending couples to allow God to prepare them and guide them by His word. Never put customs above the word of God.

2. **Emotional Readiness** – Are you matured enough to be the head of a home or a helpmate? What are the necessary ingredients for being the head of a home or a helpmate?

3. **Economic and Financial Readiness** – What is the role of finance in being the head of a home or a good helpmate? What should we describe as enough economic strength for a man to go into marriage and for a woman to be a wonderful helpmate and support?

4. **Trust in the Lord** – Trust (sleep) and let Him work on you to make you the head of a home or a suitable helpmate. Also trust Him to lead you to make the right choice. Genesis 24:48, Proverbs 18:22, 20:6, 19:14, 31:30.

5. **Do not be unequally yoked** – 1 Corinthians 6:14-16, be careful of ‘living creatures’ ‘beasts’, ‘fowls’ and ‘cattle’. Though, Adam related with these living creatures, yet none of them was found worthy to be a helpmate to him. Not all ‘Brothers’ or ‘Sisters’ are suitable for you.

6. **Be Contented** – Be satisfied with whomever God has given you or would give you. Though God leads, when God leads us it’s our responsibility to accept and choose, hence we become responsible for our decisions and choices. What do you call him or her that God has given you? Do you call or see him/her as a mistake, unfortunate, second-hand etc? Adam was happy and satisfied with Eve, he called her, ‘bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh, she shall be called woman’.

7. **Seek godly counsel** - in the multitude of counsel there is safety.

8. **Have a meaningful courtship** - Courtship is the time to build respect and trust which will strengthen your marriage – pray together, study the word of God together, plan for your future and look out for ‘red flag signs’ eg: is he/she genuinely born again? What is his/her attitude to the word of God – irreverence, disobedience? Is he/she guilty of Prayerlessness? Etc. What are the pitfalls to avoid in courtship? How long should courtship last?

9. **Carry your parents along and seek the consent of your in-laws.** (Genesis 24:49-52 and 28:5-7)

10. **Pray and pray.** (Genesis 24:12-14)
WEEK 2

NECESSARY INGREDIENTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE (GENESIS 2:18-24)
“Marriage is like a house. If it is to last, it needs a solid foundation. The bedrock upon which the foundation of marriage must rest is an unconditional, mutual covenant that allows no external or internal circumstances to ‘put asunder’ the marital union that God Himself has established.” Though, marriages may be made in heaven, but man is responsible for the maintenance work here on the earth! The following ingredients are necessary to maintain and sustain our marriages.

1. **There must be leaving.** What does it mean to ‘leave’? Why did God instruct the man (and not the wife) to leave his parents? What are the dimensions of leaving? What are the hindrances to ‘leaving’ in marriages today? What can be done to eliminate this? What are the implications of this for a successful marriage? What happens when a man refuses to ‘leave’?

2. **Cleaving.** What does it mean to cleave? Why is this necessary for a successful marriage? What are the processes of cleaving? What are the dimensions of cleaving? What are the hindrances to cleaving in marriage (today)? How can we overcome these hindrances? How much cleaving is taking place in your marriage or what is the extent of cleaving in your marriage? How do you intend to improve on it?

3. **Oneness.** What do you understand by the word ‘oneness’? Is oneness the same as ‘sameness’? Is it possible to have ‘oneness’ in spite of individual differences? How can we promote oneness in our marriages? What is the implication of this for a successful marriage?

4. **Nakedness.** What does it mean to be ‘naked’? How much ‘nakedness’ is necessary in a marriage? How can we promote ‘nakedness’ in our marriages? What are the hindrances to ‘nakedness’ in marriages? How much ‘nakedness’ is in your marriage? How can you improve on it?

5. **Commitment or devotion.** Read Ruth 1:16-18 What is commitment or devotion? What affects commitment in marriages today? How can we ensure that our commitment to our spouse and marriage lasts and stands the test of time? “When Christian couples enter into a marriage covenant, they are committing themselves to maintaining their marital union, no matter what. This total commitment is set forth in the marriage vows: ‘for better and for worse, for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health.’ Unfortunately, some churches are modifying this today. Whether you said it at your wedding or not, it still stands! No separation or divorce (Malachi 2:13-16). The concept of commitment only works if it is a continuing commitment. “A continuing commitment to our marriage partners is not accomplished once and for all. It must be reaffirmed each day, whether we are healthy or sick, wealthy or poor, happy or sad, successful or failing. In all the changing moods of life, we must determine by God’s grace to reaffirm our marriage commitments until death doth us part.” Take some time today and practice telling your spouse that you are committed to making your marriage last.

6. **Communication** *(Ephesians 4:29 & Proverbs 12:18)* - What is communication? What is the difference between communication and speaking? What are the hindrances to effective communication in marriage (today)? How can we promote effective communication in our marriage? What are the implications of the presence or absence of effective communication in marriage (today)?
7. **Prayer** – Why is prayer necessary for a successful marriage? How can we establish and improve effective prayer life in our marriages?

8. **The Word of God** - Why is the word of God necessary for a successful marriage? How can we encourage effective use of God’s word in our marriages?

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**THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE**

Judge Joseph Sabbath has framed (with some modifications) ten commandments of a successful marriage which, he predicted, could prevent at least ninety percent of marital smash-ups

1. Bear and forbear.
2. Work together, play together, and grow up together.
3. Avoid the little quarrels, and the big ones will take care of themselves.
4. Compromise (give and take). It is the anti-toxin of divorce.
5. Practice sympathy, good humour and mutual understanding.
6. Don’t grumble before breakfast or after it.
7. Respect your “in-laws,” but don’t criticize them or take criticism from them.
8. Establish your own home, even in a one room accommodation.
9. Fight for each other, but not with each other.
10. Build your home on trust in and obedience to Christ, with love and forgiveness as the watchword.

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**WEEK 3**

**THE RESPONSIBILITIES/DUTIES OF A HUSBAND**

From Ephesians 5:25-27&29 what are the responsibilities or duties of a husband? Note these responsibilities are not status, cultural or tribal based, but are God assigned duties or responsibilities based on the infallible word of God.

1. **Husbands are to love their wives.** Why does God expect husbands to love their wives and to what extent? How did Jesus love the Church? What is the implication of this for relationship in marriage? From the following passages - 1Corinthians 13:4-8, Ephesians 5:25; 29 & 31, 6:4; 1Thessalonians 2:7 and 1Corinthians 7:2-5. What are the dimensions of love that husbands should have for their wives? There are three kinds of love namely. There’s “I love you if,” “I love you because” and “I love you in spite of.” The first two are conditional—"I love you if you lose weight.” “I love you because you are so smart.” They are examples of contract love. The third one is an example of covenant love. “I love you in spite of your weaknesses. I love you in spite of your faults. I love you in spite of the fact that you don’t always love me.” That’s the only kind of love that will last for a lifetime. Why is it difficult for many husbands to love their wives? With all the reasons given above, what should we do in line with God’s instruction that husbands should love their wives? Do you love your wife? On the Scale of 1-5, rate your husband’s love for you and as a husband rate your love for your wife? What do you need to do to improve on this? Couples should always remember that God’s love is a covenant love. It doesn’t depend on us. Likewise, the covenant love that holds a marriage together is love that doesn’t depend on the other person.

2. **Respect their Wives**–What does it mean to respect and how should husbands respect their wives? (1Peter 3:7). How do you view your wife? How does your husband view you? Does the
way you view your wife show that you respect her? Why do husbands find it difficult to respect their wives? How you treat your wife (and others) has a bearing on your prayers! (Mark 11:26 and Proverbs 21:13). What happens when we disrespect and mistreat our wives? Malachi 2:13-16.

**Note**: Bible teaches unconditional respect! (1 Peter 2:17).

3. **Support your wives! Provide for their household** - The husband (and father) has the duty to provide for his family. Failure to do so is to deny the faith (the doctrine of Christ!) What happens when a man fails in this regard? 1 Timothy 5:8.

The wife as a helpmate and as a virtuous woman is expected to contribute meaningfully and significantly. 1. The virtuous woman contributed much to the support of the family - Proverbs 31:16-19, 24 and 31 2. A wise husband lets her contribute, and to be praised for it! A man should not take a wife unless he is willing and able to provide for her and support his wife. How should husbands support their wives? To achieve God’s purpose for their lives as individuals – in the use of their gifts/talents/abilities, in their godly hearts desires. The husband is to support his wife in every legitimate way – spiritually, intellectually, financially, emotionally etc. Ephesians 5:25-28.

4. **He is expected to be a priest of his home**. What are the functions or duties of a priest? What is the implication of this for husbands in their homes? According to Deuteronomy 6:4-7, what are husbands supposed to do? How much of this is commonly done in today's family? What about your family? What are the priestly duties of husbands in Job 1:5, Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4 and 1 Timothy 2:8? Are you faithful in discharging these duties? How can these be brought back into your family life today? God is also concerned about the lifestyles of husbands as priests. What kind of lifestyle does He expect them to have? Read Titus 2:2. What implication does this have for husbands before old age and in old age?

5. **He is expected to be a visionary leader in the home**. What are the functions of a visionary leader? What is the implications of this for husbands in their homes? According to Hab. 2:1-2, what are husbands supposed to do? As a husband are you faithful in clearly communicating the vision to your spouse and children so they can run with you? According to Exo. 25:9, how are husbands supposed to build their homes? Why is it important to build according to God’s revelation for you? Are there circumstances or situations that challenges the man’s role as a visionary leader in the home? What are the implications when the man fails to provide visionary leadership for the home?

**THE RESPONSIBILITIES/DUTIES OF A WIFE**

1. **Submit to your husband!**
What does it mean to submit? John 6:38.


Does submission has anything to do with respect? No! It must be clearly stated clearly that Husbands should not abuse their authority (1Peter 3:7 and Ephesians 5:25-27).

2. **Love your husband!** - How does a woman love her husband? To what extend should a woman love her husband? Why is it difficult for many wives to love their husbands? With all the

4. Manage the home – From proverbs 14:1, Titus 2:5 and 1Timothy 5:14 what is the duty of a wife to her husband as a homemaker? What do you consider as your roles as a homemaker? Are you playing these roles effectively? What are your excuse/hindrance for not playing the role (or playing it well) What do you need to do to correct this? ............................................................

The Christian wife is a woman who... a. Submits to her husband with respect b. Loves her husband with affection c. Manages her home and her children.
2. This is because the Christian wife is a woman who... a. Is a Christian first, and a wife second b. Gladly accepts the Biblical injunctions given her as a wife c. Looks to the Word of God and prays for the strength she needs to fulfill her duties.
3. When a woman is a Christian wife... a. She is more likely to be loved and respected by her husband b. She is more likely to be the sort of wife she should be c. The children are more likely to be as they should be.

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OF HUSBANDS
1. Your highest allegiance is to God; you shall be the spiritual leader of your home ensuring that the family altar is faithfully tended (Genesis 18:19). Your next allegiance after God shall be to your wife, not relatives or friends (Genesis 2:24).
2. You shall not take your wife for granted, but will honour and respect her as your equal. (1Peter 3:7)
3. You shall frequently tell her how important & valuable she is to you. (Philippians 2:3; Proverbs 31:10-11)
4. You shall hold your wife’s love by the same means that you won it. (Song of Solomon 4)
5. You shall actively establish family discipline with your wife's help. (Ephesians 6:4)
6. Remember to do all the little things for your wife when you say you will. (Matthew 5:37)
7. Keep your eyes on your own wife, not your neighbour’s. Support her to be fulfilled in every legitimate way. (Proverbs 5:15-20; Job 31:1; Jeremiah 5:8)
8. You shall make every effort to see things from your wife’s point of view and to lovingly correct her when she is wrong. (Genesis 21:12)
9. You shall not fail to demonstrate to your wife every day that you love her. (Song of Solomon 8:1)
10. You shall not be stingy with your wife when it comes to money. (Esther 5:3)

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OF WIVES
1. Be content with whatever your husband is able to afford. He may not be able to give as many luxuries as your father has given you after many years of hard labour. (Philippians 4:11; Amos 4:1)
2. You shall work hard to build your house with the husband that you have, not fantasizing about “the one that could have been”. (Proverbs 14:1)
3. You shall not nag...be prayerful, pray for the right words to offer godly advice, after this pray that God will help him to do what is right, be positive. (Proverbs 27:15; 21:19)
4. You shall coddle your husband and be a warm, cheerful wife. (1Corinthians 7:3-5)
5. Remember that the frank approval of your husband is more to you than the side glances of many strangers. (Ezekiel 16:32; 2 Peter 2:14)
6. You shall not yell at your husband but will have a gentle and quiet spirit. (1Peter 3:1-4)
7. Permit no one to assure you that you are having a hard time of it. (1Peter 5:9) (Please clarify)
8. Learn what pleases him in every legitimate way and do them as appropriate. You shall not fail to dress up for your husband with an eye to please him, as you did before marriage. (Song of Solomon 4:9-11)
9. You shall submit to your husband from your heart and allow him to be head of the household. (Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:6; Ephesians 5:33)
10. You shall sincerely encourage your husband – praise him about his strengths. Pray about his weaknesses and gently support him to overcome them (Philippians 2:3; Song of Solomon 5:9-16)

Blessed are the homes in which... Fathers fulfil their duties as Christian men and Mothers fulfil their duties as Christian women.

WEEK 4

RESOLVING FAMILY CONFLICT
Someone once observed that ‘All human conflict is based upon differing expectations’. Much misery in life is due to dysfunctional family relationships. (But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.1 Corinthians 7:28b). As mentioned in our first lesson, the family as an institution today is struggling... Husbands and wives often suffer strained relationships; parents and children are frequently at odds with one another. Conflicts should not break our homes; they can strengthen and make them more enjoyable, if properly handled. Much of family turmoil can and will be resolved and our homes will enjoy peace and God’s blessings when we:
- all resolve to follow God’s instruction and make His word the rule and guide for our homes;
- understand the areas and reasons for conflicts,
- are willing to take simple but profound actions.

First, we need to identify causes or sources of conflicts in our homes.

CAUSES OF FAMILY CONFLICT
1. MONEY/FINANCE... Most couples argue over bills, debt, spending, and other financial issues. Parents and children argue over allowances, or the lack thereof. Issues of common purse is another potential source of family conflict.
2. CHILDREN... Discipline, diet, and other parenting issues can be sources of disagreement. Presence or absence of children could cause conflict. Having children can heighten differences in beliefs on issues like how to discipline, who is responsible for most of the child care or what educational options to choose.
3. INTIMACY/SEX... For spouses, frequency, quality, and infidelity, lack of fulfilment by husband or wife are all common sources of disharmony. Parents struggle in guiding children to adhere to godly principles in this sex- pervasive world.
4. LACK OF / POOR COMMUNICATION… Inadequate time to talk, to share thoughts, joys, challenges, indeed, everything sincerely.
5. CHORES... Many couples argue over equitable distribution of household work, and how to do it. Instead of dividing household chores fairly they quibble over who did or didn’t do what.
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6. FRIENDS... Not all friends are helpful to relationships, some of them are toxic. What friends will be considered acceptable for spouses and children?

7. ENTERTAINMENT... What should we do with our spare time? Where should we go? Different interests can threaten family relationships.

8. RELIGION... What should we believe? How should we raise the children? Which church should we attend or belong? What holidays should we observe? Doctrinal differences in faith/religion can create much conflict in the family.

9. RELATIVES AND IN-LAWS... To what degree do we allow them to impact our family? In-laws, grandparents, siblings, step-children, etc., can all create stress within a family.

10. EXPECTATIONS... We all go into marriage and family with certain expectations - we expect spouses to be perfect or to be as mature as our parents, we expect our standard of living equal to our parents. Unmet expectations are a major source of conflict in marriages and families.

11. PERSONALITIES... There are personality traits and personal habits that can doom marriages and families; even adults can suffer from “childhood arrests”, and behave like selfish children.

12. CRICES .... It could be mid-life crises such as health/sickness, accident, loss of job, loss of fortune and so on.

13. SATAN OR POWER OF DARKNESS

‘Men hear criticism as contempt, women feel silence as hostility’. Is this statement true? How do we handle it?

RESOLVING FAMILY CONFLICT

1. Consider the word of God. What does it say concerning each source of conflict? Obey it, know it, study it, practice it and live by its truth!

2. Pray. Pray together on any disagreement or conflict. Pray individually – pray for your spouse. Pray and cast all your fears and anxiety to the Lord (1 Peter 5:7). Through prayer, invite God into the situation, with God on your side you will have His blessing and providential aid! Ignore Him, and you face your troubles on your own!


4. It takes two to fight, so be the bigger person. If one person does the right thing, differences quickly diffuse - cf. Proverbs 15:1. Be easy to be entreated James 3:17. Proper conduct more likely encourages the other person to do likewise. Seek to change your attitude and character and not that of your spouse. In your marriage, be the first to ‘seek peace and pursue it’. 1 Peter 3:11.

5. Communicate, talk about your differences and the source of the conflict at the right time.


CONCLUSION

Christian marriage, to be stable and permanent, needs to be built upon the foundation of an unconditional, mutual covenant commitment that will not allow anything or anyone "to put asunder" the marital union established by God. As a couple (as a husband and as a wife) consider how your family has fallen or is falling short of God’s expectation for you as a Christian couple; confess your shortcomings and seek His power and aid in becoming more of the family He would have you to be. No home is perfect or has reached a state of perfection, and as fathers and
mothers we often fall short... but with God’s grace and mercy, let’s submit to him and allow Him work on us as individuals and as couples so that our homes can become the heavens on the earth, where we daily enjoy His presence and manifestations. Let us be a model of an ideal Christian home and give our children the guidance they need so that they may succeed where we have failed.

The fact that your marriage was solemnised in a church and an Archbishop preached and pronounced blessing on you on your wedding day does not necessarily mean that your home is a Christian home and that you will enjoy the blessing of the presence of God in your home! To have a Christian home and enjoy God’s presence and blessings, you must first of all, be a Christian. Perhaps the absence of peace, joy, love and God’s presence in your home is because they are not in your life! If God is not at the centre of your heart and life, He cannot be at the centre of your home neither can He be the head of your home. Nevertheless, He is much interested in your home, He wants His eternal purpose for establishing marriage to be fulfilled in your home. This will be possible and come to pass as you invite Him into your life and make Him the head and owner of your life, then He will be willing to be the Lord and head of your home and you will continually enjoy His presence and blessings. Are you willing to do that now? Bow your head and heart as you talk to Him and invite Him to your life and home.

Keep God at the centre of your home, then He will gladly be the head of your home, He will make it His place and be in charge of it.

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