

*Marriage is  
Wonderful and Work*



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# **Marriage is Wonderful & Work**

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***Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain:  
but a woman that fears the LORD  
she shall be praised.  
Proverbs 31:30***

## **Table of Contents**

Chapter 1: IS GOD INTERESTED IN MARRIAGE?

Chapter 2: WISDOM

Chapter 3: FAITHFULNESS

Chapter 4: STRENGTH

Chapter 5: DIGNITY

Chapter 6: SENSE OF HUMOUR

Chapter 7: A WOMAN IN HER MARITAL HOME

Chapter 8: FINANCES

Chapter 9: IN-LAWS

Chapter 10: CONCLUSION

## Chapter 1: IS GOD INTERESTED IN MARRIAGE?

Once I heard a person say that it is not important for a marriage to be blessed in church, reasoning that marriage is a responsibility of the government. However, in the Bible we learn that marriage is a God-ordained institution which is entrusted to a man and a woman by God. Genesis 2:18 says, *“And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’”*

I have been married for over 10 years, and each day it is re-affirmed to me that marriage is close to God’s heart. When a man and a woman say ‘I DO’ to each other whether in church or in a civic institution, the couple is accountable to God for that marriage (cf. Romans 1:18-24).

Therefore, marriage is no longer an experience one had once longed for, but a ministry ordained by God, making one accountable to both God and the spouse. Because marriage is an institution that has been blessed by God, one would expect it to be an easy task, yet it is not. It does require one’s attention and God’s guidance to ensure that it runs as God initially planned.

When God created a woman, the tag given to her was – *helper*. The world today is redefining the tag of the woman so as to accommodate the interests of the modern woman. In turn, this is negatively affecting the young married Christian woman’s outlook and expectations from the institution of marriage. In order to guide the young married Christian woman to be true to God and to her husband and enjoy her marriage, there is a need to go back to the Bible which sets the standard for the children of God.

Basing on the Bible’s teaching, there are five key aspects of marriage that I would like to share, namely: *Wisdom, Faithfulness, Strength, Dignity, and Sense of Humor*.

## Chapter 2: WISDOM

***James 1:5: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, Who gives to all men liberally, and reproaches not; and shall be given him."***

Wisdom is the ability to discern or judge what is true, right and lasting; some regard it as synonymous with insight.

A new young bride has a lot to learn about marriage, especially about her spouse, her new family and her in-laws. In such a situation, it is wise for one to seek guidance from God.

A married woman gifted with wisdom:-

- Leans on the Word of God for guidance in her life and is prayerful.

Marriage brings together two different people from different backgrounds with different outlooks on life and they are expected to live in harmony. It is therefore wise for them to have the Word of God in their heart for guidance. Prayer is a mighty weapon to use in marriage. When one is faced with a challenging situation, instead of going up in arms with the husband or sharing it with friends who will pass it on to other friends, it pays to bring it to God for He answers prayer. As one married woman said, "I have learnt not to argue with my husband; instead my battles are fought and won on my knees through prayer."

It is also equally important for a married couple to pray together, for that makes it a threesome, with God in their midst. It is said that a family that prays together stays together. I know someone who told me she had married an introvert who was not comfortable to share his frustrations from work; and it was a challenge, for she did not know how to pray for him or encourage him when he was down. She prayed about it and today they have grown into the

practice of praying together as a couple; and it is during their prayer times - she added - that they open up and talk about the challenging issues in their different lives. This had enabled her as his wife to encourage her husband during difficult moments and this has cemented their friendship and commitment to each other.

- Is submissive to her husband (Ephesians 5:21-22). Submission is an act of the will.

The submission of a wife is a glorious thing that enables her and her husband to share a contented life together. A submissive wife inclines her heart towards being led by her husband, to accept his authority and to be his helper in the broad biblical sense of that word.

Submission is a gift that one person chooses to give to another person. I have learnt that to be submissive does not mean to be a doormat; but as a wife I purpose to create a relaxed atmosphere in my home. When a woman is submissive to her husband it is not an act of weakness, but rather one of strength within her character; and she earns the respect of her husband and the community.

The Bible teaches wives to submit to their husbands in **everything**. However, women should not use – *in everything* – as a justification to agree with their husband to sin against God, for the wages of sin is death as we see in the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10).

In an article entitled “Is My Husband My Priest?” Sandra Glahn notes that when people read the Bible especially in regard to the relationship between a man and his wife, the interpretation is that the husband is the head of the wife. Many wives have used this as an excuse to shirk their responsibility of a personal walk with Christ and blame it on the husband with excuses like “You see, my husband does not go to church, so we all do not go to church.” But, in fact, every woman who is “in Christ” is a priest who will stand before God and give account of herself. So, we have a responsibility over our own spiritual lives.

A married woman should yearn and pray for the spiritual gift of Wisdom. In the Bible, Abigail the wife of Nabal demonstrated wisdom in her relationship to Nabal her husband, to David (then her husband's enemy), and to her servants (1 Samuel 25: 3 - 5, 9 -12, 14 – 25, 33).

The Bible describes Abigail as a woman of good understanding, approachable to her servants. When Nabal insulted David, she was advised by her servants to remedy the situation so as to avoid an attack from David. Her willingness to listen to the advice from a servant is a notable gesture which shows her regard and respect for her servants in her homestead. She is also seen to be a woman of action who quickly responded to correct an offence to David, thus saving the entire male membership of her household.

In this story we learn that although a husband is the head of a home, the wife is his helper. Marriage puts two people together; and the two have to look out for each other. In case an error is made by the husband, the wife does not merely shrug it off with an attitude of – *it is not me; or he should know better* – for the consequences will affect everyone in the family. Therefore, the wife plays an essential role as an able assistant to her husband.

- Nurtures her family - Proverbs 31:16, 27

A Christian married woman should be responsible as a wife and a mother who watches over the affairs of her household and maintains a good home for her family. The home should be a place of rest, assurance and comfort; and the wife should purposefully contribute towards the building of her home. A mother of daughters is a teacher to her daughters in the lessons of being a wife and a mother. Whenever one meets a young woman of good character, one is always interested to know the mother who first made the mark in the girl's life.

### **Attributes**

Some of the attributes that make up the character of a wise Christian woman are that:-

- She is God-fearing and seeks and honours the will of God



- Her actions and thought processes reflect:-
  - Maturity
  - Sensible decisions
  - Truthfulness
  - Insight
  - Respect for knowledge and a quest for sound, informed judgment
  - A spirit of understanding
  - Strength and stamina

**POINT TO NOTE:**

***Proverbs 14:1 says, "Every wise woman builds her house: but the foolish plucks it down with her hands." A Christian married woman has a responsibility to build her house, or "her marriage"; and is accountable to God in this.***

***At the time I left my job and relocated to join my husband, the decision I had made was hard, and I was wondering whether I was doing the right thing or not, but God reaches out to us through people to help us stay on course. One of my bosses reassured me that I had made a wise choice, for as a Christian woman I am accountable to God; and eventually when I meet my God, he will not ask me about my role and successes in the corporate world, but rather about the husband and child he entrusted me with - that enabled me to trust God for my life and my career.***

## Chapter 3: FAITHFULNESS

Faithfulness is a rare quality. The quality of being faithful in the life of a married Christian woman can be seen in four different aspects:-

### a) Faithful Christian

We were created by God for a number of reasons, the most important one being to have fellowship with Him (Matthew 6:33). The right attitude of a Christian should be that Christ takes the first place in his or her life (Galatians 2:20). We learn a lesson from Abraham that when God asked him to sacrifice his son Isaac, he did not debate with God; but he trusted God and went ahead to do as asked. We learn eventually that Abraham did not have to sacrifice his son as God provided the sacrifice. Likewise, just as Abraham's faithfulness to God was put to the test, your faithfulness will also be put to the test by God.

### b) Faithful Servant

God places us in communities to serve people, especially those in need; and in serving people we are serving God. In the Bible we are given the example of Tabitha who was noted for her good works, alms and deeds in ministering to the widows (Act 9: 36). She is commended as a faithful servant of God. God created each person in this world with an intended ministry; and it is important for each one to know his or her ministry so as to fulfill their God-ordained purpose.

One person asked how she could identify her ministry and was told that one's ministry lies in one's strength, which could be an ability to help or give generously, to teach, to organize events, to give counsel, to encourage ... and so on.

### c) Faithful Helper

God's intention in creating woman was for her to be a helper suitable to man (Gen 2:18). The Bible says that God made for man a suitable helper, and the word "suitable" is important. If one was to take a sample of the married couples one knows, it would be noted that God puts together for marriage two individuals of different personality, strengths and weaknesses, thus creating an opportunity for complementing each other.

There are some marriages where a wife expects her husband to meet all the expenses within the home. When we put this expectation into the light of being a *suitable helper*, it means that the man is cheated, for he does not have a helper in his home. On the other hand, there is a situation when the woman is of a stronger personality and decides to 'put on the pants and the jacket' in her home, leaving the husband with only a 'tie' for ceremonial purposes. This is also wrong, for God intended the woman to be a helper in her home, and not the leader. However, when a woman is an able assistant in her home she manifests the qualities of a virtuous woman (Proverbs 31), which is a credit to herself and a crown to her husband.

A story was told of a young Christian couple who attended a wedding function with their baby; and when it was time for dinner the wife went ahead, served herself and ate at leisure, not minding that her husband who was holding the baby also needed to eat. Being a helper is demonstrated in numerous ways in a marriage, and it is put to the test in as many ways.

#### d) Faithful Wife

- True to our marriage vows (Hebrew 13:4)

God looks at the heart of man, for out of the heart flows issues of life. Many times when a woman is asked whether she is faithful to her husband, she will promptly confirm her faithfulness. However, God does not judge sin basing only on one's actions, but also on the thoughts and desires of a person. A faithful wife is taught to respect her marital bed and not to engage in adultery. However, if a woman entertains sexual thoughts about a man who is not

her husband, before God she is guilty of adultery. We serve a God who sees all and purity in marriage is essential.

In the Bible, we come across women who were faced with difficult situations and hard decisions. However, because of their stand in the face of their personal challenges, they have passed down as faithful. Some of the noteworthy women are:-

- Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ was identified as one faithful woman who was faced with a challenge that no woman on earth had ever encountered. She was a virgin chosen to carry in her womb the Son of God, Jesus Christ who is the redeemer of mankind. Despite her young age she revered God and had strong trust in God's will for her life.
- Hannah, the mother of Samuel was noted for her faithfulness. In her time of need for a child she persevered in crying to God until she received an answer to her prayer. In her desperation she made a hard promise to God, and without any assurance that she would ever get another child, she promised to dedicate Samuel to God for the rest of his life. And as a young lad, she took him to the House of God.
- Ruth steps out in faith by purposing to stay with Naomi her mother-in-law and in turn God brings love and happiness into her life.

In every marriage there are diverse challenges and these may differ in magnitude. In the event of a disagreement within a home, the wife is encouraged to seek God's counsel and guidance. The solution to marital problems is not being violent (physical or abusive) nor divorce but, rather, praying and trusting in God's intervention.

**POINT TO NOTE:**

***We learn from the biblical women that God rewards faithfulness.***

***The word faithfulness implies dedication, loyalty, dependability, and responsibility. The characteristic of a Christian married woman is primarily reflected in her life as a wife and a mother.***

## Chapter 4: STRENGTH

- “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”  
Isaiah 40:31:
- “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” Nehemiah 8:10:
- The first commandment for all Christians is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” Mark 12:30-31

Society regards woman as the weaker sex and this could be true if one was basing it only on the physical attributes. However, God created woman with a potential for an inner strength which many times acts as an ‘anchor’ for the family in moments of difficulty.

I believe that a wife has a special place in the heart of God, for He entrusts her with the responsibility to make a home for her husband and children. (These could be her own biological children or other children God brings in her life). Still, the role of a wife and mother is not an easy one and she needs to rely on God for guidance and strength.

When a young woman is being prepared for marriage, she is often advised that happiness and success in marriage can be attained if she is a good woman. The institution of marriage is up against all sorts of odds such as the temptation to unfaithfulness and adultery, the increase of broken homes, the lure of witchcraft, the threat of curses, the possibility of poverty, illness, difficult in-laws – and the list goes on. So, in the face of such challenges, if one is to rely on one’s own strength to make a marriage work, it is unattainable.

A married woman has to take on the role of a 'watchman' for her home. The strength of a Christian woman is God; and one has to purpose to pray and seek God on behalf of her home. We do not get married for the mere sake of being married; it would be good to have happiness in a marriage and spread the happiness around us.

Still, it would be wrong for one to assume that "if I draw close to God, I will not have problems knocking on my door". As long as we are in this world, it is for a fact that various trials will come up against one's marriage; but the inner strength and wisdom that God gives those who seek him enables one to 'swim in a storm' and to overcome. As a woman of strength not only will that inner strength sustain you, but your immediate family will benefit, plus a number of individuals within your community.

In the Bible we have some wonderful examples of ladies who used their strength to serve God. Here are some examples:

- In Luke 2:37, Anna the widow purposed to make prayer her lifestyle. Prayer and fasting are weapons which are needed by every Christian married woman. These two weapons enable one to intercede for the wellbeing and protection of one's marriage and family. Indeed this is testified to by numerous women who clung to these weapons during a 'storm' in their marriages, leading to the return of sanity in their lives and marriages. However, one does not need to wait for problems to erupt in one's marriage before one starts praying for one's home, for to do so leads to heartaches and other serious consequences.
- In Joshua 6:22, 23, 25, we read the story of Rahab the harlot, a unique story. In the Bible, she is counted amongst the women of strength because of her actions. The character of strength in Rahab is noted when she reached out to help God's people, thus taking a risk for God. In turn God saved her entire household from destruction; and

eventually Rahab got to learn more about God and to serve him. God places us in our respective homes and families for a purpose. When we reach out to God to have him work out his way in our lives, we in turn are made to be blessings to many.

**POINT TO NOTE:**

***A Christian woman who has strength in her character will manifest as:-***

- ***A godly woman: It takes strength for one to purposely seek God; and this is done through cultivating a prayerful attitude, reading and meditating in a disciplined way upon the Word of God, and allowing a relationship to grow between oneself and God. And this sets a standard for one's lifestyle.***
- ***A God-dependant woman: She recognizes that God is the source of her strength. This strength flows from within her and manifests in her outward actions.***
- ***A woman of her word: Once a promise is made to either God or man, it is fulfilled, as witnessed in the case of Hannah.***
- ***A woman of daring faith: Trust in God and his word irrespective of the circumstances in one's life. Rahab did not know the God of Israel, but decided to trust him and God proved himself true to her.***



## Chapter 5: DIGNITY

*“Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come” (Proverbs 31:25)*

A Christian’s body is the temple of the living God (1 Cor. 6:19-20). The God we serve is holy, and our actions should project the purity of God’s temple. In light of this, dignity is something that should characterize a woman’s relationship with her God and her husband.

The character and behavior of a Christian woman should exude dignity. A woman of dignity commands respect from people without saying a word; she communicates her values to those around her in a purposeful manner.

### Aspects of Dignity

**Dressing well** projects and boosts one’s sense of self-worth and self-esteem to the public, which generally appreciates a well-groomed yet modest person.

When a young lady is single, her dress code is influenced largely by the wave of fashions and her desire to fit in a social group. At this stage a young lady will be comfortably attired in short dresses, tight jeans, low-hipped jeans, tight tops – the list goes on. Although her dress code may draw frowns from the public, most often the young ladies get away with this ‘fashionable’ dressing.

However, when that young lady is ready to settle down and get married, it is critical for her to pay close attention to her wardrobe. Due to the change of status from a single woman to a married woman, the ‘fashionable dressing’ leads to more than just getting raised eyebrows or frowns: She will be setting herself up for open rebuke and disdain from the community, which is a discredit to her husband.

A mother cautions her daughters about dressing stylishly, which at times is close to indecency - for example a dress flowing to the floor with a low neckline exposing her bosom; a mini dress exposing the thighs; a tight dress or pants detailing the woman's body to the observer. She reasons that there should be a marked difference between women whose priority is to please God and those who live to please self. A woman's dress code is a loud and clear statement about herself saying, for example:- *I am decent; I am respectable; or I am seeking attention; I am on a prowl for a man.*

By now, one may be wondering whether when one gets married she loses her sense of fashion. No, she doesn't. When a woman gets married, silently she is tasked to project the image of a respectable woman. A woman does not look great only when she goes for the sexy look; she can still look "stylish" when decently attired.

Now, there is also another category of women who once they get married, they become too comfortable and cease to mind about their appearance. *There is a proverb in **Luganda** (one of the languages in Uganda) which when translated says, "In a banana plantation there are always enough good banana leaves";* which means that in the world there are very many beautiful women and no one can exhaust them. This is to caution the married women to be keen on their appearance and not to 'let themselves go to waste', as my mother loves to put it.

It is dangerous to think that when a man has put a ring on a woman's finger, she has 'arrived' or has 'won the battle'. That kind of thinking is suicidal to one's marriage. The reality is that a man appreciates a woman who is beautiful, sweet-smelling and pleasing to look at; so the task of maintaining the interest of a husband cannot be taken lightly.

One bishop while conducting a marriage ceremony advised the bride to maintain the look that attracted the groom to pick her from so many women and desist from giving in to the temptation of dressing carelessly. When one relaxes about her appearance, it is very easy to be mistaken for a maid in her own home; and it should not be a surprise when the husband starts to treat her like one. .

As we thrive to look respectable and chic, I would encourage the women not to forget wearing their smiles – I have to add, genuine smiles.

Much as it is important for the married women to present themselves as respectable to the community, it is equally important for a married woman to pay close attention to the wardrobe of her husband. While some men are particular about their dressing, there are some who are carefree. These are men who cling to their clothes, however worn-out they may be; or they purchase attires which fail to enhance their persona.

*There is this well groomed woman who married a young man who was not particular about his dressing. They would be invited to functions and she is all groomed up for the purpose; but the man beside her was casually attired. She was not comfortable and shared this issue with her man. He acknowledged not being a man of fashion and requested her to shop for him for his clothes. Today, his demeanor is that of a man of fashion!*

*Another lady shared with me that her husband was the type who clung to his worn-out clothes and was very much at ease attending a party in an old-looking shirt or overused trousers. So, since dressing was turning out to be an issue in their marriage, she decided to put away their old clothes; and she then used every opportunity to buy her husband different types of shirts and trousers for different occasions. Yes, the husband noted the absence of his old clothes, but since they were replaced by his wife, he kept his peace.*

Lastly, on the issue of dressing, I recall a piece of advice I received from an older woman. That if there is something that catches a woman's attention on a man, for example a good masculine perfume, the wife should simply go ahead and purchase the item for her husband. He will appreciate it. And it will curtail complaints like "Why don't you smell nice like other men?" or "Why don't you look presentable like your friends!" When a man is made by his wife to feel wanting in comparison to other men, it simply brings the worst out of him.

**Personal behaviour** is the second aspect of dignity in the character of a Christian woman. A Queen may be an attractive woman; however, her lasting impact on her guests is the regard she accords them in her home. The regard is not only reserved for people perceived to be of consequence, for example Mother-in-law, but for every person irrespective of their status in life.

In the Bible, Queen Esther is one of the ladies recognized for having had the character of dignity. Her origin was that of a Jewish orphan who was catapulted into a luxurious lifestyle, yet she did not forget the training she had received as a young girl. Esther's personal boundaries didn't collapse under the pressure of conforming to a standard of external beauty, nor did she lose her identity. Instead, she turned out to be a woman of poise and great courage.

When it comes to marriage, the inner beauty outweighs the outer beauty by far. While the outer beauty may have been the bait used to catch the attention of a husband, it is the inner beauty which will determine the success of one's marriage.

All marriages go through serious tests and at times it comes due to changes within people. For example, a person who was once as gentle as a dove can transform and become like a caged tiger. A man may then look at his wife and he is like "I have a stranger in my house that I can't stand and I want her out!" This is sad, for marriage was designed for a man and a woman to enjoy an intimate fellowship with God's blessings. A home should be a place of laughter and happiness.

***One lady confessed that much as she wants to be on her best behaviour as a wife, there is so much provocation within her marriage giving way to anger, arguments and at times fights.***

Anger is a vice in personal behaviour that has destroyed so many good relationships.

Ephesians 4:26: *"In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry".*

The meaning of this **verse** is that when a person gets angry, though the emotion may be unavoidable, one should not allow the sun to set while one is still angry.

An elderly woman told me that anger in a marriage is an indulgence a married woman cannot afford. She reasoned that when a woman holds onto anger, this anger creates a kink in her marriage and this gives the enemy a foothold within her marriage; and once it is not checked, it can become a stronghold which ultimately destroys the love, friendship and romance within the marriage.

In one story, there was a married woman who was a housewife and whenever she got angry at her husband she refused to welcome him back from work and did this by refusing to greet him or receive things the husband had bought and brought home. That was her way of showing her husband that she was really angry at him. Well, a time came when the husband started hanging out with friends to delay his return home and that was how he met another woman – and that was the end of the marriage. Yes, it is normal to get angry; nonetheless anger should not be made a constant companion, for it eventually robs a marriage off happiness.

The remedy for anger is self-control and forgiving one's spouse; and this is attainable when one has a close fellowship with God, is willing to listen to the counsel of God and is prayerful.

*One lady shared with me that she was weak at anger management and at a slight provocation she would turn into a firebrand. She prayed about this weakness. One day when she had a disagreement with her husband, she had to make a choice either to give in to the routine of a firebrand or resist the burst of fire. She says it was hard; however, she switched her mind to a task at home. She purposely disallowed anger to take over even as she prayed for self-control; and thereafter she broke out in a song. Now the husband in the sitting room was waiting for the 'firebrand' to set off, only to hear the wife singing. The husband did not know how to deal with this new occurrence and in his wariness asked her whether it is safe to sleep in the same bed with her! But, that was the beginning of change in this home and the end of bitter spats between the couple.*

One may wonder at the increase of homicides within marriages. Anger in a marriage is fuel used by the devil, who capitalizes and feeds on it, producing disastrous acts within the marriage. God has given woman the ability to forgive and love; and we can add prayer to this strength to 'keep the wall' around one's marriage strong. Still, it is crucial for one to always be prudent and on the alert, especially if married to a man who gives into impulses of violence. The safety of the woman's life as well as that of her children is paramount.

**POINT TO NOTE:**

***There are some traits that reflect a woman of dignity; for example:***

- ***A Christian wife does not seek to flaunt herself or her body. Instead, she dresses tastefully and behaves in a gracious manner.***
- ***She is pleased with her family's accomplishments, but neither boasts nor belittles others.***
- ***She is tactful and calm in trying situations.***
- ***She apologizes. "I am sorry" is as important as "I love you" in a home. In a marriage, it is not as important to be right as it is to be reconciled.***
- ***Her trust in God allows her to remain dignified even in difficult circumstances and to accept both hardship and good fortune with grace.***

## Chapter 6: SENSE OF HUMOUR

Genesis 1:26: *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.....”*

Man loves humour, and if we are made in the likeness of God, then He also has a sense of humour!

Society has led many to believe that a person who has a sense of humour or enjoys a good laugh is not one to be taken seriously. However, having a sense of humour and being able to laugh at self is an appealing characteristic in a person. A woman with a sense of humour can easily glide through the day even in the midst of troubles.

One day, I was sharing an interesting conversation with two women friends. The conversation was revolving around one of the women whose husband was always complaining to her that she is always sulky and never smiles; yet her friends are always wearing smiles in and out of their homes! As we discussed this to a conclusion, we asked ourselves, *“Who would not want to be near a person who is light and takes life in their stride”*? This was insightful. When one’s husband leaves a stressful day’s job or a bad environment at work and comes back home, he is in need of a relaxing atmosphere at home. A woman who is welcoming, approachable and light in her countenance is nice and soothing to have around and a big beckon to come back home to! This characteristic does wonders for a marriage.

Yes, it is true that one may be facing hardship and there may not be anything to smile or laugh about! It is in such moments that one would purpose to pray for joy and peace of mind in one’s life. One married woman told me a story whereby in the beginning of her marriage, her husband was hard to live with and was always looking for faults in whatever she did. In her bewilderment she turned to God in prayer. She did not retaliate with indifference, but instead told off the devil – *Devil, you will not steal my joy* – and she prayed for joy and peace in her

marriage. After a while the husband noted a change in her; the moody and crying woman was replaced by a happy, serene woman. When he tried to pick a fight with her, her ready response was always - I am sorry - quickly putting out the fire from the fight. The outcome of the change in the woman's attitude brought a remarkable change in her husband.

In a marriage, a woman needs this characteristic of humour, for it alleviates stress and makes a person feel lighter and freer. In this state of mind, one is likely to get to solutions faster than when one is downhearted or wallowing in self-pity. In case anyone does not have a sense of humour, I would encourage that person to ask it of our Father in heaven who answers our prayers.



## **Chapter 7: A WOMAN IN HER MARITAL HOME**

One day while still a young girl I watched a romantic cartoon movie, and in this movie a boy meets a girl, boy proposes to girl, girl says yes with all her heart, the two get married – and they lived happily ever after! The flow of that story was impressed upon my mind and with great anticipation I waited for such an experience to happen in my life.

What I have just described is a scenario that is so true in the lives of most young women. Marriage is a stage in life which most young women look forward to with much anticipation. This is because of the love and happiness expected within a marriage; and also it is a mark of maturing in a young woman's life when she begins to define herself as a prospective wife and mother.

When it was my time to enter marriage, I was prepared by my Mother and Auntie (Senga) with words of wisdom to guide me in my new role as a wife; and eventually a mother. Their words of wisdom were focused on three key areas in a married woman's home namely:-

### **(i) The Sitting Room**

A married woman is a queen in her sitting room. The imagery of the queen projects a woman who:

- Is confident as she rules her 'kingdom', which is her marital home. The confidence springs from the knowledge she has of her marital home.
- Is well-mannered towards the guests in the home, irrespective of whether they are relatives and friends of her husband or her own. She is consistent in her courtesy. The courtesy includes ensuring that a visitor is served with refreshment; and in case there is nothing to eat in the house, at least there will be some water to drink.

- Is welcoming in her home and a smile is the sign of her welcome. A genuine smile reflected in one's eyes makes the recipient comfortable.

I recall that when I was still a bride, very newly married, I received 5 visitors for Sunday lunch without an advance notice. It was a panicky moment for me, wondering how to organize the food prepared for 3 people to satisfy 8 people. That was a testing moment for me to be courteous while quietly and quickly looking for a solution to my dilemma. Oh! Yes, lunch was served; and it was not a matter of improvising with a snack of bread or something like that. It was lunch!

A husband delights in his wife when she is hospitable to visitors in their home. Whenever we have entertained visitors at home and they have expressed their appreciation for a wonderful time spent in our home, my husband's delight has been tangible – I actually see him swelling with pride for the compliments he receives about his wife and hospitality.

While it is a good feeling to take on the role of a queen, in my discussion with a number of young ladies, there is always a quiet discomfort over one's husband being treated or regarded as a 'King'. This is to assure you that the analogy of King is not based on servitude, but on the respect given to a husband.

When a young woman gets married, the way she treats her husband will be picked up easily by her relatives, who will follow suit. So when a woman treats her husband like a houseboy to run her errands - that is the standard she will have set for her husband before her people. Likewise, a husband learns about her wife's relatives through what she says about her people. This is where one lady was reprimanded by her sister's husband and told to stop stressing his wife with their family's endless demands for money and assistance!

A woman who fails to respect her husband earns herself heartache and shame. There are many instances where a wife disrespects her husband, for example when she disparages him by

talking and putting him down due to either his financial status or a wrong done to her. In one extreme story, a wife used to request her husband to 'help wash her undies' in the hearing of the maid in the home. Respect for a husband is one of the key foundations for a marriage. When a man is treated shabbily by his wife, it slowly erodes at one's marriage, leading to numerous consequences, the common one being a man opting to look for another woman who will treat him with respect.

In a home, visitors will always take note of the relationship between a wife and her husband; and when it is a beautiful relationship it does set a good example for the young ones to emulate once married. Also, it is noted when a couple is living on the edge in their home. When one has a stomachache, the entire body is in discomfort – this also applies to a 'sickening' relationship, for it negatively affects the couple in every aspect of their life. In such a situation, the home ceases to be an environment to relax and revive one's energies to face the world; instead it takes on the semblance of a war zone – and in a war there will always be casualties.

## **(ii) The Kitchen**

One evening while visiting my fiancé, his sisters with kids came over with three kids for a short visit. This was my opportunity to show my in-laws that I was excellent in the kitchen department. So, I quickly offered to prepare tea. Now, I encountered a difficulty that I had not envisioned; and that was while I was anticipating to use a charcoal stove to make tea, there was no charcoal; however, there was a paraffin stove. It was turning into a quiet nightmare for me as I was never comfortable with cooking on a paraffin stove, so I had never got to learn how to use it! The long story short is that the preparation of tea which should have been for only 15 minutes took close to 1 hour due to all my fidgeting! Well, to ensure that I do not lose ground, I made a quick recovery with an impressive home-made fruit punch.

I was raised in a culture where a married woman with self-respect is in charge of her kitchen. Unlike in some cultures where a woman can call her darling to give her a hand in making the

sauce; to others irrespective of modernity, it is not acceptable for the husband to appear in the kitchen. A married woman is expected to be the Chief Cook in her kitchen and preparing delicious meals for her family is something to be proud of.

Some of the points Mother and Auntie shared with me were:

- One way to get to a man's heart is through his stomach, and this was stressed with the plain saying that *a hungry man is an angry man*. Therefore, to ensure that there is peace in the home, it is important for a married woman to be keen about the meals served in her home.
- When a new bride first cooks for her husband, whatever she has cooked will be heavenly! Still, in the process of learning about one another, the wife should take heed of the comments made by her husband about his food preferences. For example, if as a young woman one was raised to appreciate spiced or fried sauce but learns that her husband prefers "boiled" sauce, then she should be flexible and learn to make excellent "boiled" sauce.
- In our modern times, management of homes is made easier by the presence of a maid in the home; this is especially the case where a woman leads a very busy life. Today, married women are caught up working long hours and at times longer than the husband; nonetheless, a prudent wife ensures that she does not hand over her home to the maid.

In the beginning of a marriage, the wife delights in sharing a meal with her husband; and even when he is staying out late, the wife still has his meal hot and ready for his return. However, when one becomes a mother, there is always the temptation to shift the attention from the husband to the baby. This is one of the first testing moments for a new couple. Although, there is a new, fragile and demanding member in a home, the husband is still thrown off balance when he realizes that he is no longer number 1 in his wife's life.

This is not easy, especially for a man who has enjoyed a close relationship with his wife. Therefore, the new mother should purpose to reassure the husband of her affection. For example, in a trying situation like a husband returning home in the night from work, although the new mother is fatigued, she should avoid the temptation of either serving and leaving his food on the dining table or leaving him to fend for self in the kitchen.

There are moments in a marriage when emphasis is placed on non-verbal communication. In this case, a wife who ensures that her husband does not feel like an intruder in their home will be sending out a very strong message of 'I care for you'. It is during trying moments that the cord known as "care" firmly binds a couple to each other.

### **(iii) The Dynamics of the Bedroom**

***The bedroom is the headquarters for the married couple.*** When two people from different backgrounds become one person, there will be an element of friction between them. It should not come as a surprise that although a couple genuinely loves each other, comments like – *I simply do not understand how she/he reasons* - will be thought or said about each other. Therefore, it is important from the outset to learn to make use of the bedroom as a place to discuss issues. A 'marriage spat' with an audience is a no-go zone. This necessitates the wife exercising self-control so as to discuss the issues later in private; and they are better discussed when she is calm. The exercise of self-control keeps one's marriage private; and at the same time when the children come along, self-control protects them from being drawn into the stress and drama of parents.

The bedroom of a married couple should be treated as a private domain by the wife.

The woman of today is busy with numerous tasks to accomplish outside her home or has pressing deadlines to meet at her workplace; thus she easily finds herself delegating most of

the management of her home to the maid. However, one should be cautious about the degree of delegation, for marriages which are often taken over by the maids is a result of the wife allowing the maid into the personal space of the couple, like asking her to make the couple's bed, clean their bedroom or private bathroom, take meals/refreshments to the husband in the bedroom, etc.

***A married woman has to be free-spirited in her bedroom.***

- The meaning behind this word of wisdom is that when a married couple is in the privacy of their bedroom, they should be free with one another and thus share and enjoy an open sexual encounter leading to a satisfactory experience.
- It was stressed that the success of one's marriage is, to a large extent, based on how husband and wife treat each other in their bedroom. When the relationship of the couple is thriving in the bedroom, the public will see a happy and contented couple. A little bit of bickering in public is an indication of the lack of contentment in the bedroom, leaving one or both of them unfulfilled and unhappy.
- It is important for a man to be sure that he satisfies his woman in the bedroom. Therefore, it is good and rewarding for the woman to appreciate the husband's love. This could be done for example by sending him an intimate SMS message. This will definitely hurry him back home for more!

This will lead to the question *What if I am not satisfied by my spouse, what do I do?* It is important for one to know from the outset that love-making is not just a performance. It is an act of intimacy between a couple which strengthens the cords of marriage.

So, in the event of one not being happy in the bedroom, instead of discussing the issue with 'confidants', note that:-

- It normally takes time and familiarity for a couple to be free with each other and learn what pleases one. In the beginning, the lady is normally shy and in such a state one may fail to attain fulfillment. However, as learning about one another sets in, it leads to openness, which in turn leads to an enjoyable sexual experience.
- It is important to learn the moods of one's husband so that while he is in a listening mood, one can lovingly share with him about the need for a prolonged foreplay to adequately prepare one for the intimacy.
- When you get to experience a wonderful moment, let your spouse know how wonderful and fulfilling an experience it was – he will take note and that helps him to know what pleases you.

In a case where as a couple you need help from a third party to sort out issues, bring up the suggestion to him in a loving manner – and the approach should not be that he is failing to satisfy you; rather that there is something missing which is denying you both the desired satisfaction; and thus the need for assistance. It is advisable to protect the ego of your husband and your privacy as a couple in a marriage. Therefore, it is recommended that as a couple you meet a marriage counselor, preferably one who has a Christian background.

### **Seasons in Marriage**

Marriage goes through seasons...seasons which impact on women in diverse ways. There are women who greatly love their husbands, however because of various reasons they experience low libido ...and the thrill to enjoy the Gift of Sex in a marriage eludes them. Thus they

constantly refuse lovemaking. A man wonders ...does my woman love me; or is she interested in another?

“Lovemaking is a crucial part in a marriage and we go through it in seasons such as:-

- (i) The spring of a marriage is the happiest season for a new couple who have been abstaining...the door is finally open and can enjoy each other. Yes, even in such a season the little foxes can emerge like overwhelming shyness, discomfort in love making; but time puts this to right.
- (ii) The summer of a marriage is a season of fruitfulness ... couples are normally blessed with young ones. Life at this stage does take a lot of energy ...taking care of a child or children, keeping house or spending a day away at work only to return to mother the young ones... it does affect the libido of a woman. To remain upbeat, one would need to program their day more carefully. The moments of rest and a helpful husband around the house ensures a rewarding time with the husband. Still, apart from pregnancy, children and work there are other little foxes one needs to watch out for such as infertility, postpartum depression which cause low libido within a marriage.
- (iii) The Autumn of a marriage is a phase in marriage when one perhaps gets to enjoy the greatest fruitfulness. At this point the financial position of a couple could be established and the marriage has perhaps weather several storms. Still at this point, little foxes can materialize in form of lack of privacy, boredom and sexual dysfunctional.
- (iv) The Winter of a marriage is when children have left home and perhaps you are tempted to think that the best part of your sexual life is over. But this is the time where you reap the benefits of the good things that you have invested during the earlier years of your marriage. No longer do you have listening ears at the bedroom door. You know what pleases the other. Perhaps work is no longer as demanding, or you are retired. Let these winter years be ones of bringing pleasure to your spouse even more expressively. Studies show that an active, loving sex life with a lifetime partner can keep your body and mind healthy and positive. But like all the seasons, this one has some common foxes to catch like Menopause moodiness, Thermostat malfunction, Atrophy of female



sexual organs and function, Lack of desire for sex, Decrease in physical ability". ***Excerpt from the marriage online course: Where God puts two hearts in a home.***

In my conclusion on this topic, I need to mention that love-making in marriage is neither a bargaining chip which a wife uses to get her way or her needs met by the husband nor is it a duty to be done and gotten over with. This is because lovemaking as none other forges a firm and strong foundation for a happy and content marriage.

There are two other key factors which affect the healthy state of a marriage namely **finances** and **in-laws**.

## Chapter 8: FINANCES

### Finances in one's relationship with the spouse

*"One mother advised her daughter not to go in a marriage with a shopping list, but a giving list."*

Finance is one of the delicate issues in a marriage. In these modern times, when a young man is looking for a wife, amongst the top 3 priorities is a financially independent woman who is gainfully employed, or has potential to be gainfully employed. This is because of a need for cost sharing in a home.

I have been approached by a number of young women planning to get married and some of their inquiries about finances are whether one should reveal her earnings to her husband; and whether it is good for a couple to have a joint account; and if so, does a woman need a personal account besides the joint one with her husband?

In a marriage, the ideal in the area of finances is for both the husband and wife to declare to each other their financial position, though men are never comfortable with this especially when they have a substantial earning for fear that the demands of the wife will be both expensive and unending. Nonetheless, when a husband inquires to know the income of a wife it is prudent to be honest for he will find out anyway. When a wife gives in to the temptation of 'under-declaring' her income and the husband learns the correct figure later, it creates a fertile ground for the husband to lose trust in his wife; trust which is not easy to regain!

For a married couple, it would be ideal to have a joint savings account where each one contributes a percentage of their earnings on a monthly basis. The funds on this account would be able to assist a couple to plan for their home as well as invest for the family.

In a situation where it is not feasible or possible for a couple to put their savings together, it is good for the wife to play a role in the management of the home affairs. This will help maintain the harmony in a marriage. For example if the husband is paying rent, then the wife can take on the responsibility of paying either the electricity bills, water bills or things for home use, e.g. food stuff. This gives the husband the assurance that he has a 'helper' in a home. In these modern times men tend to wonder quietly, which later turns into a bitter complaint – *'My wife leaves home every morning to go and work, but I never see a shilling of her money - where does her money go?'* That is a situation which is definitely not good for one's marriage and should be avoided.

A personal bank account for a married woman is equally important. When a woman gets married, it does not mean that she abdicates her responsibility to meet the needs of her parents and siblings. This personal account helps a wife to meet some of her personal needs and obligations. One may have a husband who is generous; nonetheless, you would not want to be in a situation of either having to get money from your husband or the joint account whenever there is need for money at the wife's parental home. In the beginning of a marriage, he may keep his peace, but soon it will give way to contempt, leading to derogatory remarks like – *'If it was not for me, I wonder what would happen to your clan?'* Such remarks are not healthy for any marriage, more especially if the wife has not yet learnt the tact of receiving some remarks 'sitting down'. However, financial management is personal and each couple will end up with what works for them.

A married man commented that he greatly values the idea of a wife being financially independent, more so her openness to assist in meeting some house expenses. He said that there ought to be openness to assist without thinking that the man should be the one providing everything at home. He reasons that this attitude would bring the husband to start seeing his wife as someone who always asks for money; and stressed that this is a bad recipe for love. On the issue of financially supporting the in-laws, he stressed that it is not proper for a wife to demand support for her parents from her husband. He reasoned that when one is married off,

help from the new family should be a favour and not a demand. He noted that such demand from the wife robs the husband of the joy for doing it willingly.

Still, in a situation when a woman is not financially independent, it is prudent to get money from one's husband instead of taking 'soft loans' from friends or loans from money lenders which may be impossible to pay back. When one is going through the phase of financial dependence, I would encourage one to study Proverbs 31:10–31 which enumerates the virtues of a godly woman, or the virtuous woman. This portion in the Bible reflects on the life of a married woman in its totality, including her relationship with God, her husband, children, servants, community; and her financial independence. There are moments in my life when I have lacked words to explicitly express my needs before God and in such times I have prayed the portion of the virtuous woman over my life. This is one of the many portions in the Bible that I would encourage a married woman to use when praying for self in regard to relationships, being a good neighbor, serving God and being financially independent.

In the Bible, we meet a character named Ruth. Despite the difficulties in Ruth's life, she purposed to be a comfort to Naomi. We are the Ruth of today and in our lives we have a responsibility to the Naomi's in our lives who are our mothers-in-law, our own mothers, our Aunties, the elderly women within our communities, etc. What did Ruth have to offer? In the beginning, all she could offer was companionship and comfort to Naomi; however, by the end of the story – the life of Ruth had transformed into every woman's wish and dream – to be truly loved and cared for with means to be a blessing to others. I would encourage you to take your position as a Ruth and allow God to use you in the life of a Naomi (elderly person). Yes, it is a responsibility; but what a blessing it eventually leads to!

There are some men who take pride and can afford to cater to each and every whim of their wife. In such a situation, I would encourage one to maximize her savings from her allowances and earnings for a 'rainy' day. Life is about seasons... seasons change due to various circumstances. A prudent woman should always plan for a 'dry season'.

## **Finances in relationship with God**

How about Finances in our relationship with God? How does it impact on our families? The Bible says, Give; but what measures are we to use to give? When we go to the bank, we do understand the prevailing rate of exchange. However, when it comes to giving we tend to shortchange God and thereby allow the devil to play with us.

The Bible says that when we give, we should give a good measure, *“pressed down, shaken together, and running over”*, and our Father in Heaven will give back to us. As Christians we feel a sense of confusion because although we give, instead of increase we experience lack and loss. And the big question is what are we doing wrong?

The teachings of the bible in the area of finances are:-

### **1. Give your tithe**

Malachi 3:11: *“And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast its fruit before the time in the field, said the Lord of Hosts”*.

As Christians, when we do not tithe, it is a deliberate act of disobedience to God. This act of disobedience does not only bring a curse upon our lives and our loved ones; but also the devil can at will destroy the works of our hands. In Malachi 3:11, it is not man who rebukes the devourer; rather, it is God Himself who rebukes and restrains him from our finances. Our responsibility is to be tithers, and God in turn will open doors of blessings in our lives and at the same time protect our finances from the devourer.

When we are not tithers, we act against the interest of God, for funds will not be available in church to do the work of God, such as reaching out to the lost through missions.

## **2. Give your first fruits: Romans 11:16**

The first fruit is a test of our generosity even when talking of finances. An example is that of a situation where someone has been blessed with a promotion, and as an act of thanksgiving to God he returns a portion (as led by God) of that blessing back to God.

This is a one-time giving as a thanksgiving, a gesture which lets God know that you do not love nor worship money; and thus God can trust you with money.

## **3. Alms: Mathew 6: 1-10**

Almsgiving is an act of compassion; however, the key lesson is that when one does a good deed to a person in need, it should not be publicized. For in publicizing it, one denies oneself the opportunity of receiving a blessing from God as one has staged oneself to receive a reward from men, namely their words of praise.

There is something that we need to note about almsgiving, namely that many times, ***we give alms from our tithe***. According to the teaching of the Bible, one will be blessed for the giving of alms; but at the same time the person will have defaulted before God as a tither if he takes the alms from his tithe. Consequently, the overpowering blessings of God are closed off and one's blessings are devoured by the enemy. This is where for the many blessings that come your way, you do not get to enjoy the blessings as the enemy snatches them away. Read again Malachi 3:11

The God we serve will not break His covenant nor break His word. His promises will be fulfilled in our lives according to our obedience to his word, which is reflected in our actions.

#### **4. Seed giver**

A seed offering keeps poverty away from our lives. At any God-given opportunity, sow a seed in God's ministry and in the lives of the needy people around you.

In my conclusion, I will point out that man goes out to work so as to earn and lead a comfortable life in this world. However, there is need for us to permit God's word to guide us in our lives.

## Chapter 9: IN-LAWS

There is a belief amongst the married women that if all is well with one's husband in a marriage, chances of not having good relations with one's in-laws are high. This should not be the standard expectation in marriage.

When one gets married, it is important to realize that her new family, or her in-laws, is part of her husband. It is equally important for one to realize that her in-laws are not only her relatives, but - more crucially – they are or will be her children's relatives. So when one gets into a new home, the intention would be to strengthen the relationship, and not to separate the husband from his parents or relatives. In the Bible, we learn of Ruth who made a vow to Naomi (her mother-in-law) that "your God will be my God, and your relatives will be my relatives." This is total commitment without any conditions.

Of course, many times the in-laws are hard to deal with due to their expectations or belief that an "intruder" has usurped their place in the life of their son, brother, or uncle; and therefore, they will not gain financially from the arrangement (your marriage). In the face of this challenge, one can simply love them, pray for their well-being and ask God for wisdom in one's relationship with them.

It is important for one to know from the outset that if one is to choose to battle with her in-laws, that battle will eventually get into the bedroom, driving out the peace and happiness in her marriage. This is a battle which is won by not engaging. It is wise to let one's spouse deal with his relatives.

One young woman asked, "*What if my husband is the kind who turns a blind eye to the antics of his relatives, shouldn't I defend myself from them?*" In response she was asked how much she valued the friendship of her husband as well as the peace in her marriage. This is indeed a no-win situation! However, as we have learnt through the chapters, it is crucial for a married woman to be prayerful. There are battles like this one which one can never win if they rely on



one's effort or strength; however, is there anything too difficult for God? Bring it to him in prayer!

## **Chapter 10: CONCLUSION**

I will end on the note that marriage can be likened to a battle ground. There is no soldier who goes to a battlefield with the intention to be killed or be taken captive – rather he goes with the determination to fight and win. Likewise in the area of marriage, when one says I DO, the marital vows should never be taken lightly; and one should be ready to fight for her marriage – and prayer is the weapon one should not miss in her weaponry.

My prayer for you is that God will enable you to be the ‘watchman’ God purposed a wife to be in a home; and to enjoy the blessing of a marriage.