

GOD IS THE MATCH-MAKER

Pastor Bankie

PREFACE

The complete edition of this book was released in print as a single volume titled '*SHOULD I SAY YES,*' with the subtitle '*Choosing a spouse, and preparing for a great marriage.*' For understandable reasons many thought the book was only for single people who were preparing for or looking forward to marriage, but that impression is only *half* of the whole picture. The book actually has two main sections; the first section is captioned GOD IS THE MATCH-MAKER and was written with the Christian seeking a marriage partner in mind, even though the married can also learn a lot from it (the word of God is full of life). The second section is captioned FUNDAMENTALS OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE and is for everybody who wants success in marriage, whether they are already married or not.

Now, so as to help people avoid this confusion which has made many married people miss out so much, the free electronic edition has been broken up into two separate books and given the original section titles. My wish is that many married people will still take the time out to read GOD IS THE MATCH-MAKER as the word of God cannot be put in a box. The key to the release of God's power that we are looking for may be somewhere apart from where we think. Also we do not only learn for ourselves but so as to be able to help other people. We have been saved to save and have been helped to help; we are indeed blessed to be a blessing. The Lord has commanded that we should teach the next generation (Dr 6:6) and turn many to righteousness (Prov 11:30; Dan 11:33).

So please take the two e-books, read and feel free to share with loved ones. The print version may be re-released later in two parts but is currently available as a single volume. It will make a perfect gift for both the single and married. To order print copies please contact us through bezalelenlite@gmail.com.

Also please let me know how much this book blesses you; write me through the same address above.

God bless you.

Pastor Bankie

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SHOULD I SAY YES?

Choosing a spouse, and preparing for a great marriage

Pastor Bankie

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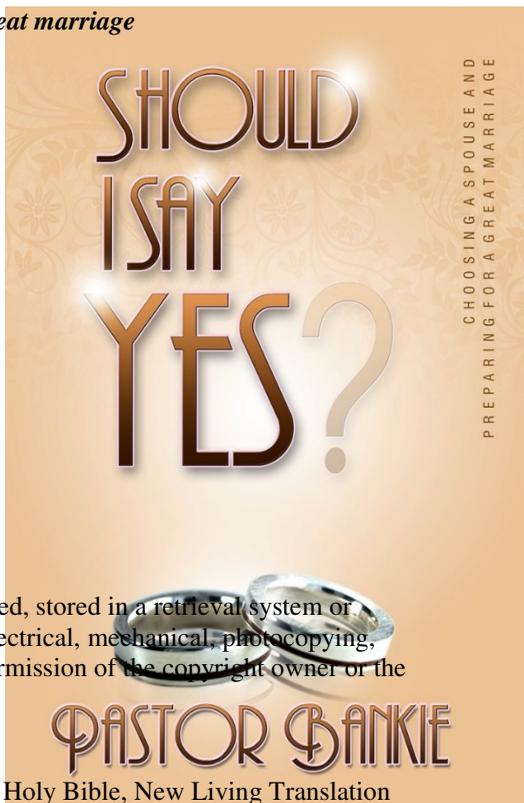
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Preface (print edition of SHOULD I SAY YES?)

This book was finally written after much reluctance. I never considered myself a marriage expert and so for a long time avoided writing on the subject. However, often while teaching I would expound some things on the subject of marriage. I even taught a 3-part seminar once on the matter. My co-workers and students of the word therefore kept requesting that I put the things down I have been saying here and there together in a book. It took a long time but I finally accepted to do it, and that is why you have the book in your hands now.

There is just one aim I have in writing this book, and that is to lay a doctrinal foundation on the subject. The book is not anything like an exhaustive look at the subject matter and I am therefore aware that I will not touch many of the day to day issues; I leave that to the experts on marriage. I hope to, all the same, lay a solid foundation so that those who are eager to follow the way of the Lord will both have a reference and a foundation to build upon.

This book is directed to believers. I know the subject of the marriage is very popular with both believers and non-believers, but I did not make any allowance for those who are not believers in this book. It is not a romantic treatise designed to be appealing to the senses. It is simply an exposition of the word of God on marriage. I trust your life will be touched as you read this book.

Pastor Bankie

2011

Book Summary (SHOULD I SAY YES)

God has a specific will concerning the man or woman you should marry.

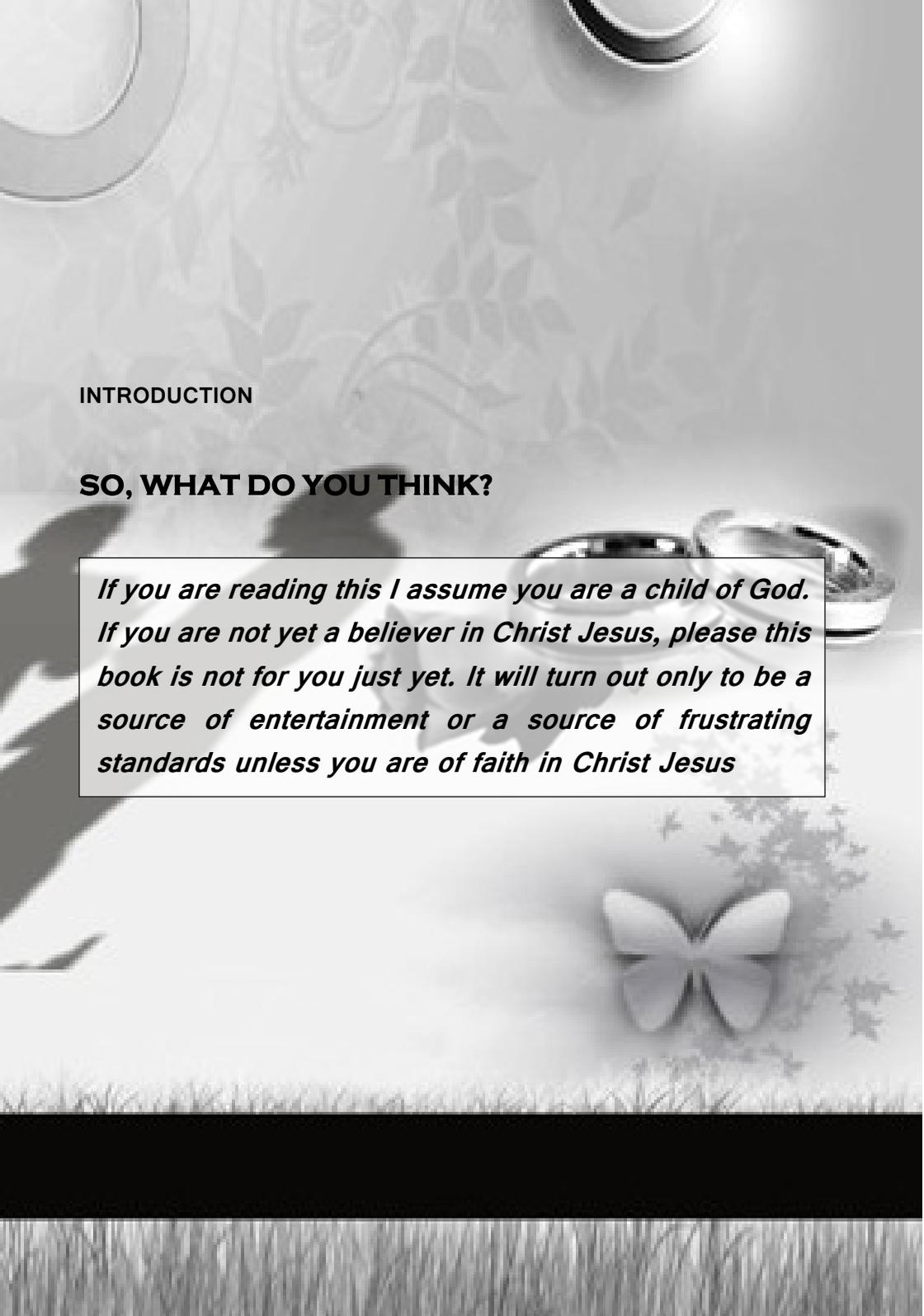
Discovering that will is not hard if you follow His ways routinely. God created marriage and placed the manual where we can all grab it and use it.

In this book, Pastor Bankie expounds the Biblical principles of making the right choice concerning a husband or wife and also teaches the foundational principles that should be employed to set the marriage up for true victory.

Among the subjects discussed are

- The true meaning of the term 'the will of God' as it relates to marriage.
- How to find true love
- The concept of arranged marriages
- The distinctive mark of unity in the Christian marriage
- What true submission is
- How to love your wife
- How to handle money in the home
- The true cure for in-law troubles

This book is for both the single and the married. It will bless anyone who is interested in learning the word of God and obeying divine order.



INTRODUCTION

SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

If you are reading this I assume you are a child of God. If you are not yet a believer in Christ Jesus, please this book is not for you just yet. It will turn out only to be a source of entertainment or a source of frustrating standards unless you are of faith in Christ Jesus

What do mean when you are talking about a wife, or a husband? Once, a young man like I was and who I was visiting told me the kind of girlfriend he wanted. He was a man who always had a girlfriend and had gone through many (he was not a believer). He described so many things about this wanted lady; by the time he was through I said to him, “what you want is what is called a wife. Go and get married!” No girlfriend will ever be able to fulfil the things he wanted. He had his definitions mixed up.

It is important we get our definitions right. As Christians, getting it right means only one thing—aligning it with the thoughts of God revealed in the Scriptures. The power of God to bless us is released when we are on the same thinking frequency with Him. Many of us think that all we need is to utter words in what we call prayer and God will answer, but that is not fully correct. The problem is not with God but with us; we often are asking for things that we really do not know what they mean, and so the Lord just can't grant the request. James and John came to ask for positions from the Lord and He told them in simple language that they did not know what they were talking about (Matt 20:22).

When our thoughts differ from those of the Lord on a matter, we hinder His ability to bless us. The duty we have therefore is to get our definitions right from the word of God. We must align our thoughts with His thoughts. The result is a release of God's power or grace to win in that area, and I call it the power of resonance.¹ When our thoughts are so aligned with God, we start having what is

¹**Resonance.** This is taken from a principle of elementary physics. According to the laws of God in physics, every object has a natural frequency of vibration or oscillation. The amplitude produced by an inciting force in the vibration of that object is greatly increased and amplified when the force matches the natural frequency of the object by its own. This is the application: God has a thought about everything He made and everything conceivable, and this can be likened to its natural frequency. Great power is made available for the release of every increase in life once we are able to align our thoughts with the purpose of God for those things.

called *hope*, otherwise known as an expectation. Before that all we have are wishes and desires.

There is a huge difference between desires and expectations. Desire is something you simply wish for, but an expectation is a *derived* thought. It goes beyond just wanting something; it is born of information and it has tremendous power when the source of that information is the word of God.

This book is not just about marriage, but about creating expectations from the word of God about it. It only has value for those who respect His word.

If you are reading this I assume you are a child of God. I assume you have given your life to Jesus Christ and you are looking to receive the best in the area of marriage, as in every other area of life, from His hands. If you are not yet a believer in Christ Jesus, please this book is not for you just yet. It will turn out only to be a source of entertainment or a source of frustrating standards unless you are of faith in Christ Jesus. Step aside for a while and give your life to Christ Jesus*(go to the end of this chapter).

For those who are believers and who are looking for the best from God, I want to tell you that your expectations are much more powerful than your desires in bringing the right partner and the godly marriage your way. A good marriage or spouse, as the Lord wants it for you in His love, will not come just because you desire it. It will not come just because you prayed for it. It will come because you are expecting something that is derived from the word of God. It is not that the Lord does not answer prayers offered simply; rather it is because if these things are not in place, you will miss the answer even if He were to give it.

We are first to think the way God thinks, and want only that which He promised. When we do this, we will discover that He is indeed able to do exceedingly and abundantly far above all we can ask or by ourselves even imagine.

Most of what is often found in the hearts of people are formed by the society, by fleshly desires and other things apart from the word of God. Anyone who wants the favour of God must first renounce worldly thoughts and accept the thoughts of God. This book is about creating the right imaginations and expectations in the hearts of the people of God.

We must know what God calls a husband, and what He calls a wife. We must know these things!

We must know what marriage is from His viewpoint.

We must be asking for the right things when asking the Lord for a wife or a husband. We must have the right things in mind when we ask Him about getting married. Once we align the thoughts of our hearts with God's thoughts, then the glory of God will be revealed. The expectation that is guaranteed to the child of God is the one that is based upon the word of God. That is what is called faith.

My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste: So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off. Prov 24:13-14 KJV

Faith is not the stubborn heart that wants what it wants and must get it. Faith is the attitude that wants to know from the word of God what a wife is or what a husband is. It is the attitude that knows that only God has the answer to the questions of the heart and no one else.

That is the victory that overcomes. It is our faith. Whatever is so produced is born of God and it overcomes.

Let us go together in this book and create expectations of marriage from the Word of God.

***How to be a Christian.**

Being a Christian is not hereditary and is not passed on by association. It is a decision one must make deliberately. It means you have chosen to follow the Man Jesus, the Son of God. It means you want to walk with God as the words of Jesus dictate. Space will not allow me explain but we are all sinners by nature and have sinned in life. We need forgiveness so as to have peace with God. In this need for forgiveness, there is no small sin or big sin. Forgiveness for all sins is found only in Christ Jesus; He died for your sin on the cross of Calvary. To become a Christian starts with a simple prayer, asking God for forgiveness and calling on Jesus to come take over your life and become the Master. His Spirit is always near to hear the prayer. This prayer can be said with any words and in any way, but a sample you may wish to use is as follows:

"Lord God I thank you that I am alive today to make this decision.

"I have walked my own way and have been a sinner. I ask you today to forgive me and wash me clean from sin so I can follow you.

"Dear Jesus, I have heard of you and I want to follow you from today. I heard you died for me, and I choose to believe it.

"Make me one of your own and fill me with your life and your joy.

"Make me know you for myself and lead me forever in your way.

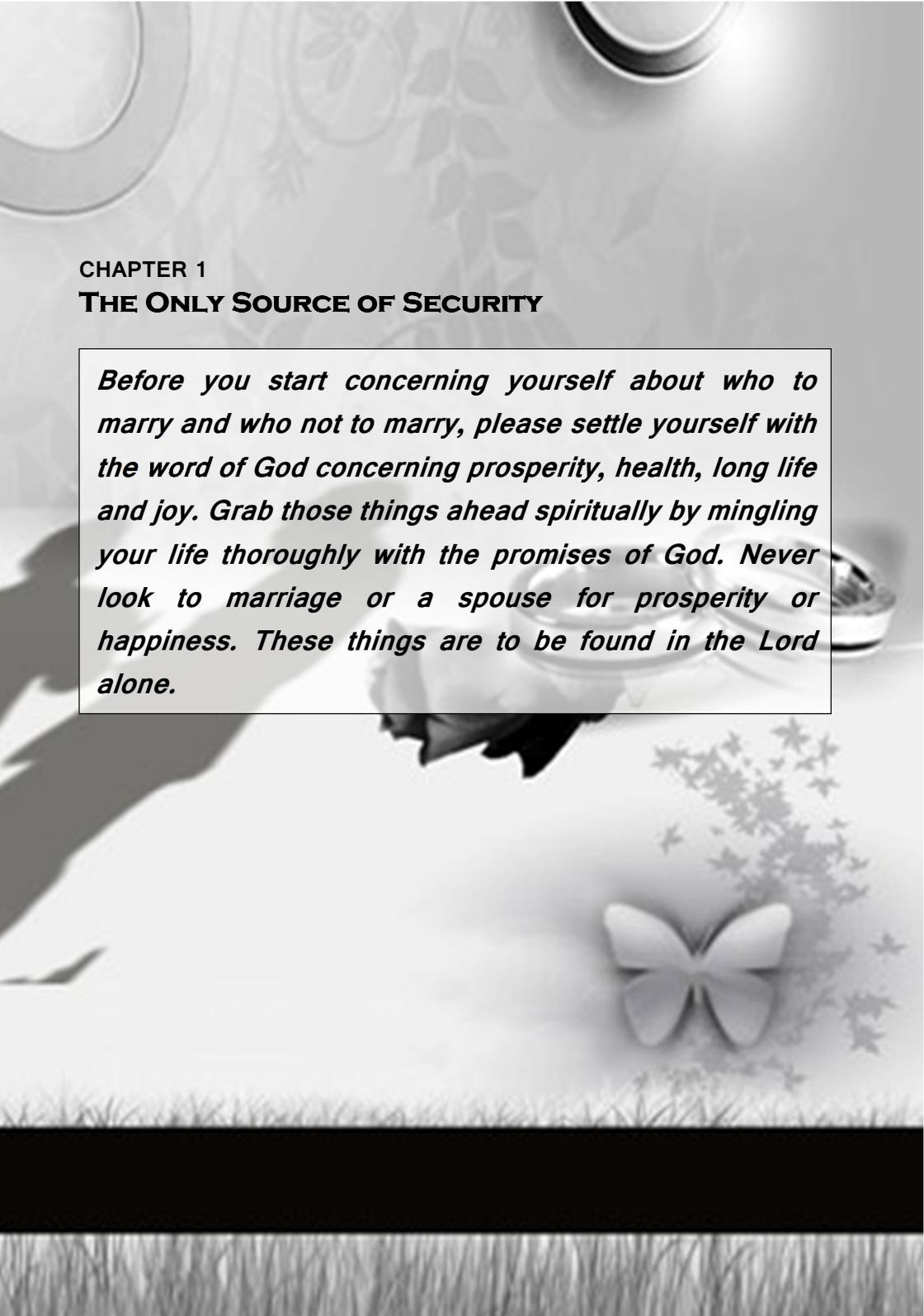
"Thank you for a new life.

"Amen."

If you prayed this prayer, then a new life has begun. Your new duty is to start learning the ways of the Lord, that is what it means to be a disciple.

GOD IS THE MATCH-MAKER

SECTION 1 of SHOULD I SAY YES



CHAPTER 1

THE ONLY SOURCE OF SECURITY

Before you start concerning yourself about who to marry and who not to marry, please settle yourself with the word of God concerning prosperity, health, long life and joy. Grab those things ahead spiritually by mingling your life thoroughly with the promises of God. Never look to marriage or a spouse for prosperity or happiness. These things are to be found in the Lord alone.

I will like to start handling these matters of choosing a mate and marriage by taking time to answer the question again about what the will of God is.

When we use the expression 'the will of God,' what do we really mean?

As an illustration, if a woman has a marriage proposal from a young man and she is praying about the will of God, there are many things that may be in her mind. She may be wondering about his prospects financially, and the will of God to her will be a revelation that he will eventually make it. It may be that she is wondering whether she will be able to cope with his parents and siblings, and a positive will of God to her inner thoughts will be for God to reveal to her that he is actually from a nice and godly family and that his siblings are sweet angels on assignment. It may also be questions about the matter of child bearing or genotype (this is Africa and Sickle cell disease is an important issue). Any of these things may be the matter in what she is calling the will of God! This is the way most of us think of the matter of the will of God. We are most often just trying to solve the questions that are plaguing our minds!

But you see, as good and important as these things may appear, none of them constitute what the will of God is concerning a marriage proposal. All the issues that we outlined above as questions that may be in the mind of that young woman are only the blessings of God. They are good and necessary things to think of but do not describe the will of God primarily. These matters can be created in *any* marriage relationship through prayer. A marriage decision however is a matter of the specific will of God—does God want this relationship or not? It is not a question of 'will it favour me or not?'

The current circumstances of those other matters and what tomorrow may hold concerning them in the life of the man asking for a woman's hand in marriage are not at all indications of whether that marriage proposal is the will of God or not. Checking whether a man will be rich or poor, whether a woman will bear you children or not

and such matters is what is called *divination*. Divination is wrong even if you are doing it with prayers. I know they are important things to know but that knowledge is not to be sought about a person's life; those are things that are taken care of by the promises of God revealed in the scriptures. Rather than peeping around like evil spirits, we are to take authority over those matters with the word of God and compel them to manifest positively in our lives. Those things are the general will of God for the life of every child of God.

SETTLE IT WITH THE WORD FIRST

Just by the way, before you start concerning yourself about who to marry and who not to marry, please settle yourself with the word of God concerning prosperity, health, long life and joy. Don't look to marriage or a spouse for joy or riches. Grab those things ahead spiritually by mingling your life thoroughly with the promises of God. Come to a marriage decision with a heart ready to bring blessings into the life of whoever God brings into your life as a marriage partner.

You are not a liability, you are a blessing. It is very wrong for a Christian woman to say, "I will marry a man that can take care of me." You are not a project or a problem to be solved by a husband. That statement is only fit for the mouths of spiritual second class citizens, people who have accepted that they are not yet blessed and they need someone to bless them. They have accepted that they are projects in life and not princesses of God.

If you are a Child of God you are not a project but a blessing that God packaged to send to bless someone. I have heard people say "I want the best for myself" as if a husband is a house or car they are trying to buy. No, it is not to be so. This kind of mentality produces slavery—mental and marital slavery. You will find happiness very difficult to achieve as a married woman if you harbour this attitude.

Crazier than the female version is when a man looks for a wife because of her earning capacity. I have heard of men who say they want to marry a professional woman so she can earn to support the family, their business or ministry. Coming from a man, that is very unfortunate. Are you a man or a girl? I am not saying a woman cannot or should not support a man so, but please that cannot be an important criterion in searching for a wife.

This is my advice to every Christian, man or woman: Never look to marriage or a spouse for prosperity or happiness. These things are to be found in the Lord alone. The Bible says, *“Only in the Lord are righteousness and wealth (or strength)”* (Is 45:24). What we all need is the joy of the Lord and the blessing of God which makes rich. Look to the Lord alone; pray to Him that He might grant you the desires of your heart materially. Long ago I heard a word from the Lord, and it said, *“Behold I cause prosperity to flow towards you like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream.”* I knew I had prospered before getting marriage, whether I looked like it or not. Anybody who despised me because of my low level of manifested blessing I felt sorry for. I was as confident as confidence goes. My prosperity was determined by the promise of God. I looked at life like that and it showed in the way I spoke. I never felt inferior to anybody, and I am certain that if I were a woman I could not have looked at a man that he would make me rich.

The proper attitude of a godly woman is that which a dear sister exhibited. She told her mother, “even if I were to marry a poor man, my presence in his life will make him rich.”

That is the attitude becoming of a princess of God.

God is your source of riches, and no man should be able to sway you into marriage because of present availability of material wealth.

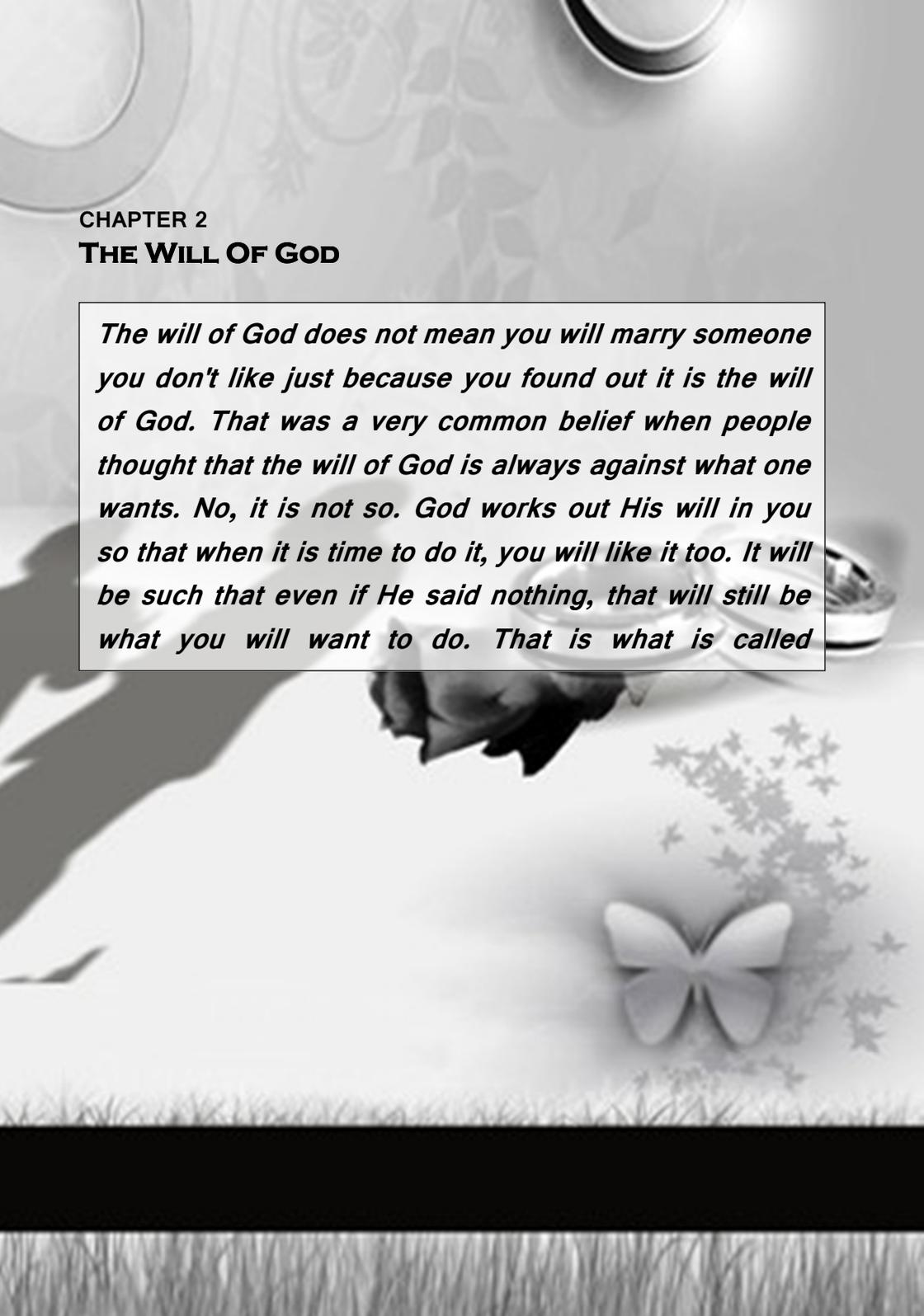
If you have fears concerning these issues, pray about them. Never let prayer and the word of God be far from you. He said, *“man*

shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live.” What that means is that everything you can ever want in life is to be found in the word of God, and that you are to pursue them through the word.

If you are afraid of poverty, pray about it. Bishop David Oyedepo tells the story all the time of how he broke the back of poverty in a retreat with the word of God and prayer. He came out of the place shouting, "I can never be poor." It was from having discovered the word of God. He is very rich today.

If you are afraid about child-bearing, pray about it. Jackie Mize (author of *Supernatural Childbirth*) did not want to marry Terry because she felt she couldn't have children, and this was as testified to by the doctor. To the glory of God, Terry destroyed that expectation with the word of God and she ended up having several. She is truly qualified to write that book; it is what she experienced. This is what it means to *live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God* (Deut 8:3).

You cannot do enough investigation in the life of any potential husband or wife to defend yourself against these troubles of life. You can only pray and put your confidence in the Lord. That is the ONLY safe place.



CHAPTER 2

THE WILL OF GOD

The will of God does not mean you will marry someone you don't like just because you found out it is the will of God. That was a very common belief when people thought that the will of God is always against what one wants. No, it is not so. God works out His will in you so that when it is time to do it, you will like it too. It will be such that even if He said nothing, that will still be what you will want to do. That is what is called

Let me now get back to the matter of what the will of God is.

So we see that the promises of God cover all those areas of the fear of gentiles,² so Christians do not ask about them when it comes to the will of God in marriage since they have been settled by the blessing and the word of God and are not dependent primarily on who they marry.

What is the will of God?

The will of God is the plan of God which He wrote beforehand about your life. God knew you and formed you for a particular purpose. It makes sense that the person that will work with you in that purpose cannot be an afterthought.

People often say that unlike poles attract, and so couples tend to have characters that appear to be opposite to each other. An extrovert of a man often marries an introvert. I say however that this is only true of outward less important matters. In the depths of the spirit, you can only marry the person that is exactly like you. Your spirits will be very similar to each other otherwise there will be trouble. The spirits may be in different levels of development but it is the same kind of spirit. The matters of who likes food hot marrying the person who likes food cold and such things are the less important traits that have little to do with the quality of the spirit.

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever. 2 Cor 6:14-15

See, when we believers pray about the will of God in marriage, we are not asking what the Lord thinks of the person.

Do you like him?

Do you think she is beautiful?

Do we look nice together?

²It is those things about security and the future that I call the fear of the gentiles. According to the Lord Jesus, "these things the gentiles eagerly seek." Matt 6:32

It is human beings, like friends and relatives, that we ask those kinds of question. With the Lord the issue at hand is far removed from what He thinks of the individual; we ask questions about destiny and preordination.

With the Lord the questions are more like these:

Is this the one you created me to be with?

Can I fulfil the purpose You have for my life being joined to this person?

Will this one allow me draw closer to You while being bound together under the same yoke?

See, if we ask the right questions the matter of the will of God often solves itself very quickly.

You were created to serve a purpose. There is an assignment that the Lord needed fulfilled before He gave you life. He said to Jeremiah,

"I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my spokesman to the world." Jer 1:5 NLT

This is true of every child of God. It was not unique to the life of that prophet.

If it is true that you were created for a purpose, it must be true that God doesn't have just an opinion about the man or that woman; He actually has a specific will about the matter.

No matter how nice she is, she may not be ordained for you.

No matter how right he looks, it may not be the perfect will of God that you are married to him.

The two of you may look like the perfect couple, but that does not mean it is the will of God.

The will of God is about predestination and preordination. Please understand that.

Now bear in mind that I am not saying that God must 'speak' to you before you know His will; knowing His will is not usually that dramatic. There are many ways by which you will know His will which

may not involve fantastic manifestations. The way spiritual things work is this: once you have this faith that there is a specific will of God, and that it is not just about what I like or dislike but about preordination, He works out the events of your life until you walk into His will naturally. What I am doing here is to create that faith in you by helping you understand what it really means when we use the expression 'the will of God.'

Again let me clear something that often crops up when we talk about the will of God. The will of God does not mean you will marry someone you don't like just because you found out it is the will of God. That was a very common belief when people thought that the will of God is *always* against what one wants. No, it is not so. God works out His will in you so that when it is time to do it, you will like it too. It will be such that even if He said nothing, that will still be what you will want to do. That is what is called conversion; He works His will into your very being.

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Phil 2:13 KJV

It is very unlikely the Lord will have you marry a man or woman you do not like just because it is His will. Rather than that He first puts the 'like' into you so that your will and His own will be the same.

See, what God wants is just for us to have the right heart towards Him and towards His righteousness and we will discover that His will *will* become the very thing we want.

If you really and truly gave your life to Christ, the very desires of your heart will change. The kind of man or woman you desire will change. That is the way it works.

I have a simple counsel for you: if you do not like him or her, then don't marry the person. What if it is the will of God? Simply wait until He works the love for the person into you. Until then it is not time.

WHAT ABOUT DREAMS AND VISIONS

As a single woman, it is possible that a man shows up claiming that God spoke to Him that you are to marry Him. He may claim that He saw the two of you in a cloud joined together or that an angel has been visiting him everyday with an album full of your pictures. Please don't be overwhelmed by that, and don't run him off because you think he is crazy. It is possible that the Lord actually spoke to him but he is too immature or too 'spiritual' to know how to handle it.

What then should you do as a woman?

Simple; pretend you did not hear him say anything about the vision. Don't believe him and don't disbelieve him; just act as if that statement is only a declaration of his desires, and treat him accordingly. Pretend as if all he said was that he wants to marry you. If you end up liking him despite his spiritual misbehaviours, then the Lord indeed spoke to him. If it turns out that you do not like him and have no desires for being his wife, then forget it, the Lord never spoke to him and his visions are only imaginations or maybe he smoked something.

Just to make this principle clear, allow me tell this story of a young woman who travelled quite some distance from another city to Enugu and came to my office. When I asked her what she wanted, she said she came to see me. What is my name? She had no idea. Have we met before? No. All she knew was that I was a pathologist; she was directed to my office when she came asking for the pathologist. So what is up? She said the Lord told her to come see me, that I will help her with her project. She was a final year university student of Anatomy.

I was too accustomed to the abuse of the phrase 'God told me' to be impressed by her claim. I immediately dismissed her voice from 'God' and told her seriously that I was too busy with the real human diseases I was trying to diagnose from the tissue slides before me

to concern myself with her animal slides. I was the only pathologist in a big hospital and I had my plate quite full.

As she turned to leave I asked her to just let me take a quick look at her troubles and she responded promptly. Let's make the story short; I spent the next hour (or maybe more) on her work and had the unction to smoothly and quickly dispense with the whole thing. In just about an hour after she entered my office, what had kept her stagnated for some time was solved absolutely free of charge.

After she left I told myself that God indeed spoke to that young woman. Until just a few weeks before then that office was without a pathologist and she had no idea I had resumed only recently. I did not help her because God spoke to her; I helped her because she needed help. But the Lord must have spoken to her to come see a man she did not know was there; however, the vision was for her and not for me. It did nothing in compelling me to help.

In the same manner, don't marry a man because he claimed that God spoke to him. That vision is for him and not you. Get your own vision if you must, but until you do treat him just like a normal single brother who is simply chasing a woman he wants to marry. It may work or it may not. Please do this even if he is usually a credible seer of visions or a great man of God.

DEREK PRINCE'S STORY

Derek Prince was a real man of God. His first wife had passed on a couple of years before and the Lord revealed to him in a dream (or vision) that he was to marry a particular woman. He had met the woman just briefly before now but he felt absolutely no attraction towards her and he told the Lord as much in prayer. "I don't love this woman at all; why should I marry her?"

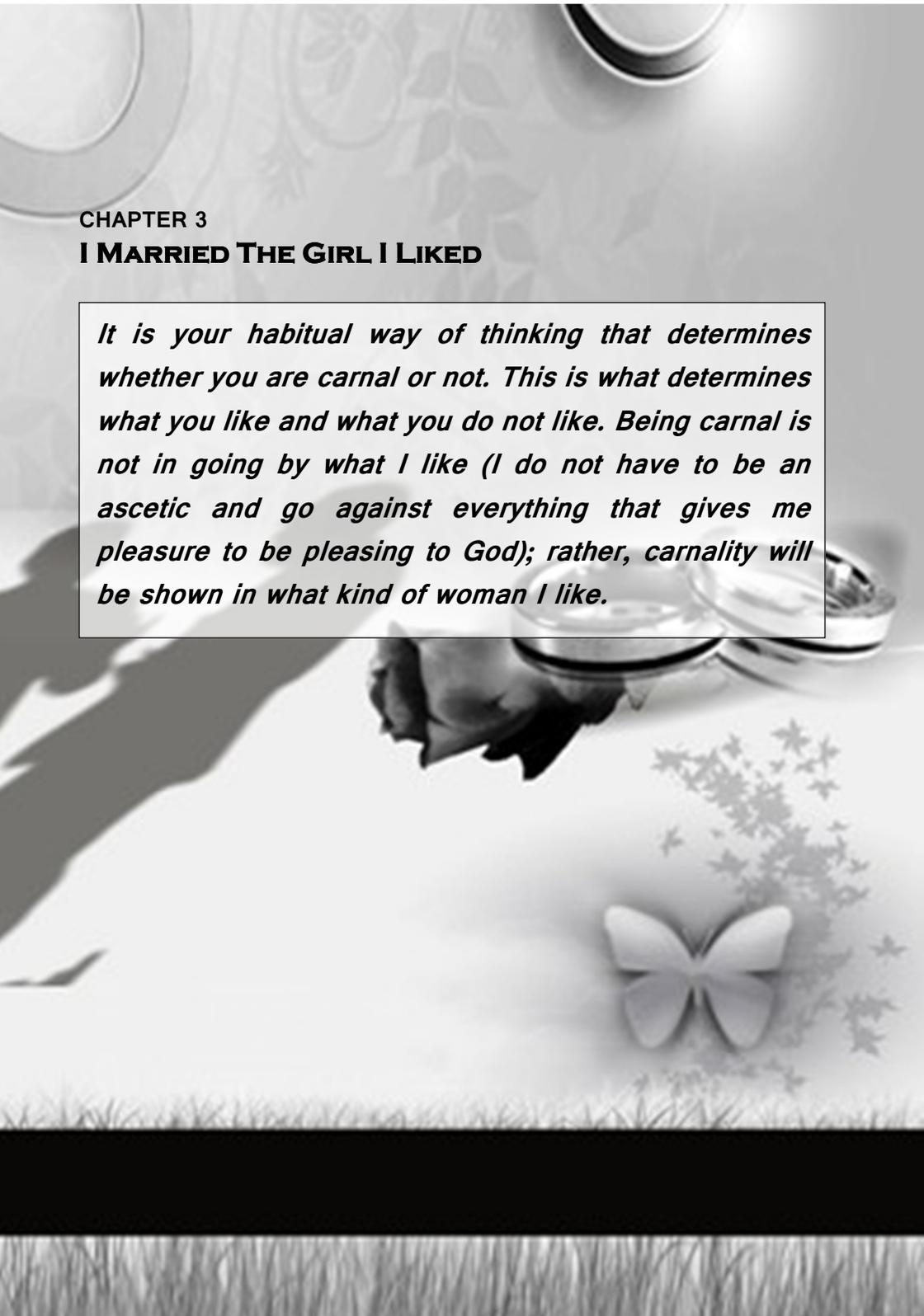
Please note what happened next because it will make quite clear the point I made earlier about God working His will into you.

Shortly after this the woman came to see him because she needed counsel about an issue. Now, because of a problem with her back she requested to sit on the floor so she could rest her infirm back against the wall. He was sitting on the chair at the desk. So she sat on the floor and he had to turn to face her direction. As he did, the picture of her that he saw was exactly what he had seen in the vision, and at this point, a rush of love for her flooded his being. It was as if God in heaven was pouring a jar of honey into him. He said nothing to the woman about all these but simply began to court her as a man should court a woman. The vision was for him and not for her. Eventually he asked her to marry him and they were happily married to each other for the rest of their lives.

If you know of the circumstances around her and him at that time you will understand why the Lord had to initiate their relationship with a vision. He needed it to get him interested and to persuade him it was God. His close associates needed it to accept the woman. It was very much like the story of Peter and the trip to the house of Cornelius;³ the vision was necessary for both for Peter and for the elders of the church in Jerusalem.

Visions and dreams are however not so often necessary; seeking them is absolutely out of order. If they come we will accept them, but we are not allowed to seek them. We are to seek only to understand the ways of God by His written word.

³In Acts 10, Peter fell into a trance and saw a vision in which the Lord told him to stop calling unclean the things He had cleansed. He was still contemplating the vision when the messengers from Cornelius arrived. Cornelius was a gentile, and the Jews called them unclean. Cornelius had had a separate vision in which an angel told him to send for Peter.



CHAPTER 3

I MARRIED THE GIRL I LIKED

It is your habitual way of thinking that determines whether you are carnal or not. This is what determines what you like and what you do not like. Being carnal is not in going by what I like (I do not have to be an ascetic and go against everything that gives me pleasure to be pleasing to God); rather, carnality will be shown in what kind of woman I like.

A brother came to me once and we were chatting. At a point he asked if the Lord spoke to me about the wife I married. I told him yes. How did I hear the voice of God? I answered him that the officiating minister said, “I pronounce you man and wife.” Oh, he laughed so hard.

Of course his question was about hearing the voice of God, a thing that has created more problems for more people than it solved. The problem is not the voice of God; it is what people call the voice of God. They seek for voices, and the seeking of voices is against the will and the word of God.

Yes God speaks, but nobody dictates to Him when, how or even *if* He will speak. And He hardly talks to people with those voices many claim to hear.

Did God speak to me about the wife I married? Going by voices, no. But was I careful to seek His will, and was that will revealed? Yes, most certainly yes. How did I seek His will?

I will explain that in a moment.

How was His will revealed?

In a very simple way; I married the girl I liked.

Pastor B, is that not carnality?

No it is not! See, carnality is an attitude; it is a lifestyle. And so is spirituality. To be spiritual or carnal is about the way a person thinks.

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Rom 8:6 KJV

Please notice that it is a matter of the mind. Later in that same book of Romans quoted above Paul shows that it is the renewal of the thinking pattern that changes a man from being carnal to being spiritual.

...be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Rom 12:2

It is your habitual way of thinking that determines whether you are carnal or not. This is what determines what you like and what you do not like. Being carnal is not in going by what I like (I do

not have to be an ascetic and go against everything that gives me pleasure to be pleasing to God); rather, carnality will be shown in what kind of woman I like. If what I claim to like are excellent things like the traits of godliness, then it is good. But if my parameters for liking the woman are carnal things, like her height, completion, figure, the size of her breasts and hips and such things, then trouble abounds.

The question is, “what kind of person do you like?” In liking someone, what are the traits that tickle your fancy, like we say. Are those things the real things that matter, or mundane things? Peter said both men and women must seek the things that are after the inward man of the heart.

You should be known for the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God. That is the way the holy women of old made themselves beautiful. 1 Peter 3:4-5 NLT

Christianity is not just about decision making as in the time of marriage. It is rather a complete package of a lifestyle, thinking pattern, values and faith. I said in the previous chapter that God works His will into us. It is a continual process in which your thoughts, likes and dislikes are being removed from a low level and elevated into the heart of God. The grouse the Lord had with His people in Isaiah chapter 55 was that they were not using His thoughts and so were not walking in His ways. There is a divine thought about what makes women godly wives. It is imbibing the thoughts of God in everyday life and also in the area of potential wives that is true Christianity, not the practise of 'hearing' God.

Years before I got married, a dear sister asked me what I wanted in a wife, and I gave her a set of points, three of them. She smiled and said that she asked me the same question a couple of years earlier, and those were the same three points I gave. I did not even realize she and I had had that discussion before then. I told that story to point out the fact that I had a consistent set of points. With

all the study of the word of God I was doing at that time, for me to have held on to those points indicates to me that they were the revelations of God to help me. They were not just based on my feelings. I liked the woman who fulfilled them, and she is the one I married.

Let me share those points with you and explain them as I go on.

CHAPTER 4

NO UNEQUAL YOKE

Being a believer is not about being nice. An unbeliever is an unbeliever whether he is nice or not. If indeed your faith matters to you at all, you will not even consider it. The Bible says that a living dog is better than a dead lion. From my understanding of the word of God, a good non-believer is inferior to a not-so-nice believer. It is best to marry a nice believer of course, but trust me princess of God, it is better not to marry than to marry into the family of the devil.

As a young man developing in life and in the faith, I had all kinds of desires. Many of these desires changed as fast as the weather changed. As a matter of fact the spiritual law is that such changing desires, if they were requests with the Lord, would get no answer from Him.

For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. James 1:6-7 KJV

The earliest recollection of my wanting a type of woman as wife when the time for marrying would come was formed, I realized later, from watching the movie *The Ten Commandments*. There was something about the Egyptian women especially as they stood besides the heroes of the movie that formed a kind of desire in me. As a matter of fact desires in life are formed from experiences. For this reason, as one's experiences change, so will the desires of the heart.

Because I understand the source of desires, I do not recommend that believers make a big deal of laying out physical characteristics before God when it comes to the matter of praying for a partner. "I want him to be at least 6 feet tall." "I want her to have a figure like this or that." This has been taught in the church as being specific in prayer and there are often testimonies about them, but I do not believe that is the kind of specificity the Lord wants from us.

The Lord expects us to be more minded of things that really matter, and most of those desires concerning outward qualities are rarely based on real truths; they usually result from standards that have been subtly set here and there by the society or by our personal anxieties. Asking the Lord to give you a wife who has Beyonce's looks is an insult. It shows how much attention you have been paying to the things of the world.

Hollywood and entertainment generally should not tell you what is beautiful. Looking like a model is not necessarily good; it may mean the person is mentally or physically out of order. Versace and co should not tell me what women should look like. Without going into

details, I have watched in the few years I have lived as the societal concepts of beauty changed in a 180-degree fashion around me. One day they want them fat; the next they want them thin. Years ago, full busts were too much; but now they pay vanity surgeons to make them as big as possible. Years ago, Europeans wanted women to be as white as possible, now they want them tanned round the year. Long necks, fat lips, etc, are things they pull in and out. I see madness all around. Some of the girls they put up as images of beauty are medically certifiable as sick; they are physiologically underweight and infertile. Better believe that Satan is at work and immune yourself from his antics.

It is a rarity for people to actually form those desires on what they understand about themselves or about the real things of life. Sometimes they are formed on very wrong beliefs. That is what is called carnality. I am not saying we cannot have preferences, but these things should not be primary in our minds. It is like making the colour of a car the primary issue in making a purchase decision. Of course we have colour preferences but there are things that are far more important about a car.

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Col 3:2-3

The above things are those things that are founded upon the word of God. They are the things that actually matter in life. They are the things that have to do with the heart and with the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit led me into this when I was yet unmarried. I had a set of points which I created based upon the word of God which I understood, and I was not even trying to be spiritual; they were just the things that mattered to me as I began to understand and appreciate the real things of life. When I finally got married I said to my wife, “you are my dream embodied in flesh.”

That dream was created from interacting with the word of God.

BELIEVER, A MUST

It may surprise many when I point out that it was not one of my points that the lady must be a believer.

Why not?

Simply because that was not even to be discussed; it was a forgone conclusion! For me to be even thinking about it was like saying the person must be alive. C'mon, is it possible to marry a dead person? That was the matter; it was not to be discussed at all. I did not believe it was possible for me to be attracted to anybody who was not a committed believer. I am not even talking about being a nominal Christian but a true believer without question. No matter how beautiful a woman was or how good-natured and nice she was, once I had any doubt about her status with regard to the faith of our Lord Jesus, the attraction went up in smoke. All the recommendations in the world about the quality of her character would not matter; the injunction from the word of God was clear to me and not to be reasoned against.

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 2 Cor 6:14-16

A lot of times it happens that a believer is questioning whether she should accept to marry a man who is very nice but she is not sure of his faith-status (almost always it is a woman asking this question, and very rarely a man). I have heard people recommend that if he is nice and from a good family there is no problem. I hardly ever have anything to say about this to such people, and my reason is that I just believe that the faith of the lady asking that question is in doubt too and so she can marry the devil for all I care. However, for those who might just be true believers but who are only ignorant or just plain stupid and so are asking, let me make a few statements.

Being a believer is not about being nice. An unbeliever is an unbeliever whether he is nice or not. If indeed your faith matters to you at all, you will not even consider it. The Bible says that a living dog is better than a dead lion. From my understanding of the word of God, a good non-believer is inferior to a not-so-nice believer. It is best to marry a nice believer of course, but trust me princess of God, it is better not to marry than to marry into the family of the devil.

...what harmony has Christ with Belial...

Don't deceive yourself that you will convert him because you cannot do a work even God is not sure He can do. He said, 'I desire that all men will be saved (1 Tim 2:4).'

It is a desire. Nobody can convert anybody; all we do is pray and preach. I do not have the space to go into discussing this in details but let me just state that there is no guarantee anywhere in the Bible that you will convert anybody, especially when you deliberately disobeyed the word of God to marry him. It is a mistake a lot of women make. They seem to think that the Lord gave such a guarantee that if they pray He will force their spouses to change. Well a lot of times men have become believers because of their wives, and vice versa, but there is no guarantee that it will always happen. You cannot change a man or woman's spirit, you can only help people improve. If the man or woman does not have the spirit of Christ to start with, you have no guarantee that you can pray it into him or her.

When Paul wrote on this matter, and he was even writing to those who became believers after they were married, he spoke of a probability of converting the spouse but gave no apostolic or prophetic guarantees.

For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? 1 Cor 7:16

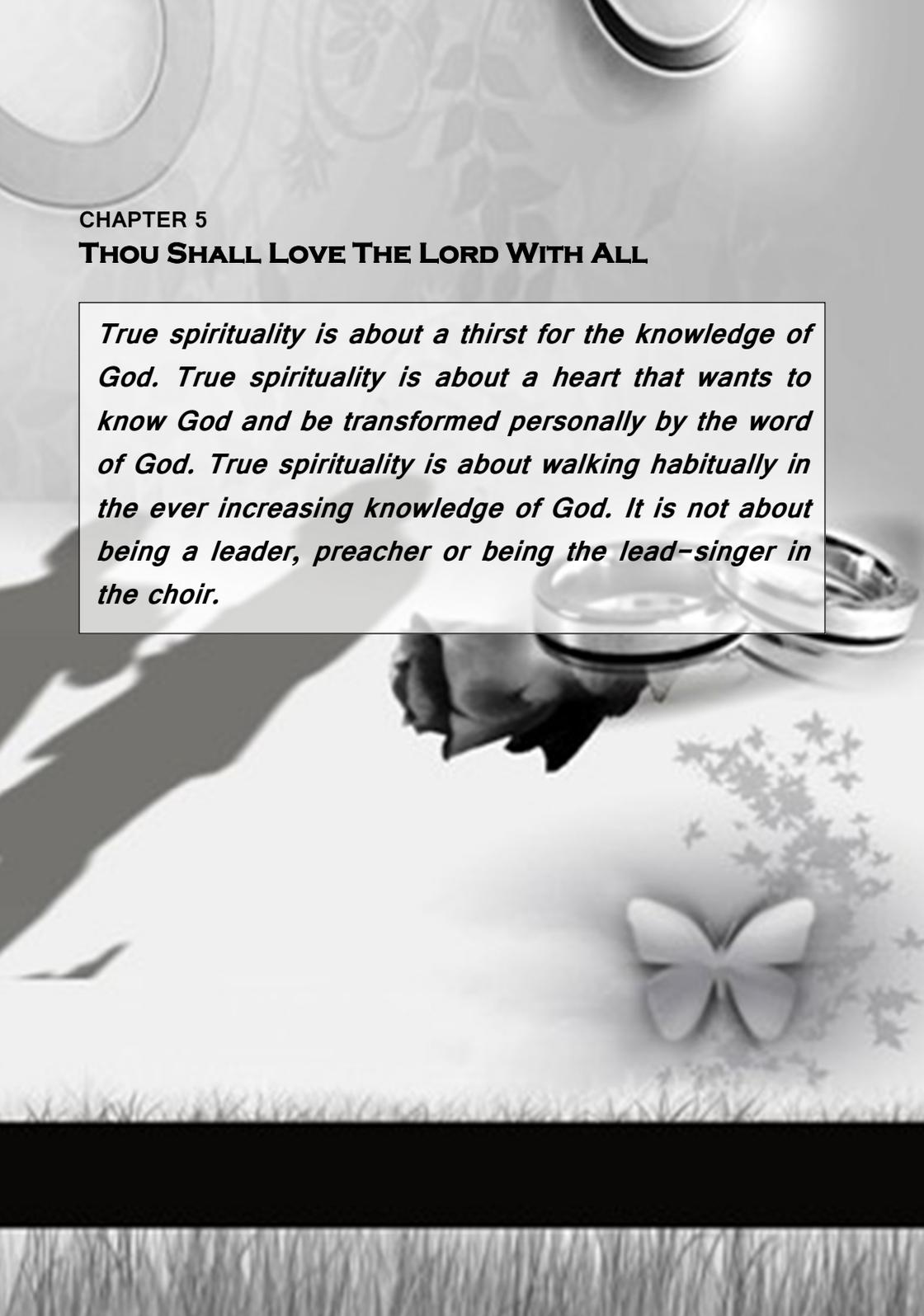
Accept the fellow the way he or she is at the beginning, let the improvement you will see later be added benefits, but you can't count

on anything. Marriage is a serious matter and should not be gambled with. That you will convert him with your example of faith is just a gamble. The fact that you married him despite the fact that you know he is not a believer is all the example he needs to know that your faith is not serious to you.

IT'S ABOUT THE SPIRIT

The idea of being a believer is about the spirit someone is open to and not primarily about a nice character. A true believer is open to the spirit of Christ and will grow into that image if nurtured with the word of God. I was not the best human being on the earth when I married but I have been transformed a great deal over the years by the word of God which I have always been open to. If you marry someone who doesn't regard the word of God, then know that you are on your own.

A common way I have heard women deceive themselves about a man when asked about his faith is, "he is a Christian but he not serious yet." Arrant nonsense! It is just their way of trying to scale that hurdle with self-deception. If he is not serious now he will not be serious later. If your walk with God matters to you (and it will one day) get out of that relationship and grow up in the faith. The truth unfortunately is that for many of these women, marriage is more important to them than a walk of faith, and that is why they will not listen. Once I detect that attitude I keep my counsel to myself. My teaching in this book is directed only at those who pleasing God and a walk of faith come first before all other things.



CHAPTER 5

THOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD WITH ALL

True spirituality is about a thirst for the knowledge of God. True spirituality is about a heart that wants to know God and be transformed personally by the word of God. True spirituality is about walking habitually in the ever increasing knowledge of God. It is not about being a leader, preacher or being the lead-singer in the choir.

I was trying to get to the points I understood by revelation about the kind of woman I was seeking to marry. Now let us get back to it.

We have seen that being a believer was a forgone conclusion. So what was my first stated criterion?

Here it is.

Beyond being a believer I asked the Lord for and I sought a woman that loved the word of God and showed this love in the way she went after it. This should actually be the case for every Christian, but unfortunately it is not. My experience till now is that a lot of believers take the matter of learning the word of God very lightly and are more 'christian' in their church activities than in the word of God. Many of us do not realize the importance of seeking to know God by His word. We love to work for God, we love to go preaching, we love to be very active in every form of church activity, but we are hardly zealous for learning.

I was never impressed by 'spiritual' sisters. Don't blame me please; it is just that I had seen a lot of hypocrisy. Many of those acts of spirituality were nothing but learnt performances; the people were just acting a role. Also I was taught early to recognize the difference between an anointing and a personal trait. God would often pour His spirit upon people who have been put into positions and for this reason they will perform impressively but only because of this influence of the anointing. However this does not translate to personal true spirituality.

TRUE SPIRITUALITY

True spirituality is about a thirst for the knowledge of God. True spirituality is about a heart that wants to know God and be transformed personally by the word of God. True spirituality is about walking habitually in the ever increasing knowledge of God. It is not about being a leader, preacher or being the lead-singer in the choir. Many of those things are just what we call *gifts* or simply, *talents*.

I was never ever interested in marrying a woman because she was a leader in Christianity, and my wife will testify that even though I was know already as 'Pastor' when we met, I quickly shed the title in our personal relationship. Being a pastor has nothing at all to say about whether I am a good man who will make a good husband or not. There are many lying and cheating pastors. I used to jokingly but truthfully say to women not to accept to marry a preacher until they have met many times without his anointing operating. A man operating under an anointing is more handsome than his normal self and has a lot of other attractions that are not resident within him normally. So watch out that you are not carried away by manifestations.

I also advise young women who are still unmarried, especially university students, to please drop all those high-flouting titles that may confuse them as to their own spirituality. A young girl being called 'mama' is a risky operation; she may just start believing it! The same goes for men too. If they call you 'daddy' don't believe them. Don't ever think of yourself as a spiritual giant, because the most likely thing, no matter how you feel, is that you are not a giant anything. You must be careful, like Paul said, not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think (Rom 12:3). You may miss God's best if you do. There are many women who have thought of themselves better than the sincere brother who is interested in them, just because they are leaders in the church and he is not. What a pity! Read the Bible and you will find out that Deborah, a judge and prophetess in Israel, was not married to a spiritual giant. Joyce Meyer is a world renown minister of the gospel; her husband is hardly ever seen, but he is there and a strong pillar behind her.

Even though I knew I was called to preach I was not at all looking for a 'befitting' lady to complement my professional appearance. I hope you understand (It sounds funny but you will be amazed at what things go through the minds of believers). I just wanted a woman who truly loved the Lord and was seeking Him with all her

heart. The way I recognized that, in my understanding, was a personal quest for the knowledge of the word. No, I am not at all talking about knowledge for the purpose of preaching or showing off, but just to know and be changed by it.

I told the Lord I wanted a lady that loved Him and whose love for Him showed in how she pursued the knowledge of Him. I told Him I wanted a woman who loved Him and His word more than she would love me and that her love for me should be an outworking of her love for Him.

It is interesting to note that what brought my wife and me together was that she came to ask me how she might study and improve in her knowledge of the word of God. I had just finished ministering that day in a meeting where she was present. She also wanted to know how to memorize the scriptures. I testify today that I know of no one who loves to learn the word of God more than my wife. I testify that as at today my wife studies more than I do (sometimes I overtake her; it's a holy competition). She indeed was my dream embodied in flesh in that area.

Why did I want that? I guess it was because of what I had learnt. He said *'man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD'* Deut 8:3. The word of God is the source of life. It is the source of joy, good children, good home, health and prosperity. It is the source of everything. If you love the word and have a spouse who does, then all other things shall be added unto you.

My son, give attention to my words;

Incline your ear to my sayings.

Do not let them depart from your sight;

Keep them in the midst of your heart.

For they are life to those who find them,

And health to all their whole body. Prov 4:20-22

CHAPTER 6

THIS PROPHET MUST HAVE HONOUR

I asked the Lord for a wife who would believe that I am called and anointed to teach, and that I have the capacity to teach her. This was a point born out of a sense of purpose. It was not at all a matter of pride or being full of one's self. I knew my purpose in life, and this was just a simple judgment in the interest of peace, long life and prosperity.

Remember I said I had three points. The first which I just ended explaining is the most important. Let us go on to the next.

My second point had to do with my calling. I believed I was called to teach the word of God and that this would be the central focus of my life. One scripture that was not to be fulfilled in my marriage is the one in which Jesus lamenting said that a prophet is not without honour but in his own home. No, I intended very much to have prophetic honour with my wife. The Bible says *"two cannot walk together unless they are agreed."* How do I pursue a carrier that my helpmate might be thinking is a waste of time?

For this reason I reasoned that it was vital that I had a wife that believed I am called to teach, and just as importantly that I could teach *her*.

I have had experiences with ladies who talked more than me; they had to have the last say when we would be discussing. Their points were superior to mine as far as they were concerned and their opinions of matters of the scriptures and life were more important than mine. They were not bad people, but they just were not my wife material.

There is an order to everything; those kinds of people simply needed a different husband from this young man. They needed someone who could command their respect, and I most certainly was not enough to make them listen. It was a sure sign that I was not to consider settling there. Some may have simply been unteachable, in which case the matter is really a serious one for them.

I loved to teach, and since my wife would be my number one companion, she had to be someone who did not mind me teaching her. To me this seemed like common sense. I remember a sister who never seemed to listen while I would be talking to her; for whatever reason I just couldn't hold her attention. She was a nice person and a friend of mine but I used to wonder to myself how it would be being married to someone like her. I guess frustration would

have had a nice time chopping me up mentally. I was determined to avoid that.

So I asked the Lord for a wife who would believe that I am called and anointed to teach (which is true), and that I have the capacity to teach her. Like I mentioned earlier, this was a point born out of a sense of purpose. It was not at all a matter of pride or being full of one's self. I knew my purpose in life (at least I thought I did), and this was just a simple judgment in the interest of peace, long life and prosperity.

Did I get what I wanted?

Let us see.

Once my young wife and her young husband were speaking; I was telling of the great influences in my life in the area of learning the word of God. I spoke of the likes of Kenneth E. Hagin, Derek Prince, John G. Lake, David Oyedepo and a few others. After a while I asked her who had been the greatest influence in her life, the person who she had learnt more from than any other. I was not at all expecting what she said. In all honesty I was expecting to hear a name like TD Jakes (she had given me a book by him, and she had a few of his tapes before we married) or David Oyedepo (who I had given her a number of his messages and she had a few herself before then), or some other great preacher. It was quite surprising to me when she said I was the one; she had learnt more from me than from any other preacher. It was a real surprise, but I shouldn't have been so surprised.

From the first time we started relating, I preached at every opportunity. I wasn't trying to teach her *per se*, I was just talking and chatting away a lot of those times but I was inadvertently exercising my teaching gift. *And she used to listen.* And she would ask me a lot of questions. Believe me, I actually overdid it. I remember when we met at my friend and fellow minister, Pastor Courage's wedding. I came from Lagos to Benin, and we had not seen for quite a while before this. The first moment we had to chat

alone (I remember I was sitting on the bonnet of a car), I said to her, “let me teach something I just learnt about ratification of covenants.” She snapped back, “I don't want to hear.” I did not realize that almost all I ever did was expound scriptures; the young woman had *had* her ears full and just wanted me to talk about something else for once. She pointed out to me that I had not inquired about her studies, her health or any other thing about her. I was not even going to give a gist of what had been happening to me in the period since we saw each other last. I apologised and found something else to talk about, but still managed to get that my lesson on the topic of ratification of covenants in sometime before I went back to Lagos.

This continued after our wedding. Until Kingdom-Word Ministries took off, she was my only congregation and so I poured my spirit upon her alone. Before I met her I used to literally preach to the wall, the air as I took night strolls and to imaginary congregations. So when she came into my life, I had a ready and willing audience.

This was how it happened that I taught her so much. But more important is the fact that she was listening and was interested in learning from me. Till now my wife calls me up to get clarification on doctrinal matters when she is discussing with people. She would reserve questions that come up in her studies till I would get back home. She believed I could teach her. In fact if we had disagreements on anything I was careful not to use the scriptures to support my point, even when I had some to use; I felt it would not be a fair discussion and I was being careful not to abuse my office as a teacher.

She testified to me one of those days that a major reason she agreed to marry me was that she felt I had a lot to teach her about the faith of Christ.

On my birthday in April 2000, the first after we got married, she bought me a book by Rick Joyner and wrote on it, 'To my husband, mentor, and teacher.'

Did I get what I asked the Lord for?

You bet I did!

In that area too, she was my dream embodied in flesh.

CHAPTER 7

I LOVE ORDER

Respect of authority is not a matter of culture or the state of technological development of a people; it is a spiritual and godly order.



My third and last point was also founded on the word of God.

Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband. Eph 5:33

We live in a world today that has lost a lot of the knowledge of God's order. They speak as if there are now regularly two captains in one boat. The equality of men and women is touted in a place where it does not belong. Men and women are equal as the Lord Jesus has ordained, and which only He is able to make effectively certain; I do not subscribe to any doctrine or religion that says they are not. All men are also equal. But in every home the father, though equal to his sons, is the leader and the head. He has authority the boys do not have in that home. In the same manner even though his wife is his equal as also being a child of God and a fellow heir with Christ, she is to be subordinate to him in the home. Equality of the individuals does not take away authority and order.

Respect of authority is not a matter of culture or the state of technological development of a people; it is a spiritual and godly order. The manifestations may be varied here and there because of culture, but basically respect is respect anywhere, and my experience is that everybody recognises it when they see it, even those that do not practise it. (By the way even in the so called 'advanced' countries, they have refused to take away rank, authority and the recognition of these from the military; this is simply because they know it is real and not just a matter of culture).

Because of this observation of the lack of respect that is pervasive in the society, in which it is a sign of sophistication that women throw away all forms of respect in their relationships (a woman who kneels for her husband is considered a village woman by 'enlightened' people; these have actually only thrown away the light of God and are enlightened only with the 'light' of this age); because of it I told myself I will not marry a woman who is of that school of thought

and who does not think I should be respected as a leader and head. Some call it male chauvinism; I called it godliness.

My observation is that the primary reason why there is so much divorce and marital disharmony these days is that people have abandoned their positions in the home. There are now two heads in many families, and sometimes there is no head at all as the husband has decided that he is a democratically elected president who must do only what everybody agrees upon. Call it what you like, if you go against the order of God, the house will fall apart. Psychologists and public opinion did not create the marriage institution; God did. His law is what you will obey into success in that home.

I learnt that law before I got married and I asked the Lord to please give me a wife that is ready to obey that law.

And I got it. My wife too initially thought I was odd, but she had the right spirit and in her the third point was also fulfilled.

I will speak more on this latter (in the second section).

Once these my three points were fulfilled I did not care whether the woman was short or tall, fair or dark, fat or thin, PhD holder or secondary school leaver. I did not care about her natural place of origin. Those things would pale in the face of the things that really matter. I was looking only for the things which really matter.



CHAPTER 8

SO I MARRIED MISS PERFECT

My wife was not perfect, neither was I. A perfect man or woman is one in which there is no need for improvement, and is someone you do not want.

If you believe I married Miss Perfect then you don't know anything yet.

It is not possible to marry a perfect person. I was neither perfect nor did I desire a perfect person. The qualities I desired were just to be foundational, and even in those ones my wife was not perfect. Yes they were present, but they were not perfectly present. There definitely have been times (both before and after we were married) when my wife displayed behaviours that seemed so far removed from the qualities I thought I saw in her. As a matter of fact there was a time she thought that a nice and submissive woman may be misinterpreted by her husband as weak, and she tried to show a number of times that she wasn't weak. We had to settle those matters afterwards with plenty talking and explaining and learning the word of God. No wonder John said if we say we have no sin we are deceiving ourselves (1 John 1:8), and Solomon said even a righteous person errs once in a while.

Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins. Eccl 7:20

However, that same Apostle John pointed out that anyone born of God does not practice sin (1 John 3:9). He was implying that even though the basic right spirit may be present, there may still be occasions where there are manifestations of errors; but they are errors, not the basic fibre of the person's being. Those correct qualities as the basis of the life is what the Bible calls *spirit*.

But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. Rom 8:9

The spirit of a person describes the force pushing someone and this is what determines the direction the person is headed in. My wife was not perfect, neither was I. A perfect man or woman is one in which there is no need for improvement, and is someone you do not want. I was not a perfect man at the beginning, and so I have come a very long way since. My wife was far from perfect too, but I testify under God that she has the finest spirit you can wish for in

a wife. She loves her Lord, she loves His Word, she loves to pray, and she desires true spirituality. Tell you the truth, I was initially accepted in her heart because I was a manifestation of help for progress. But she has grown to love me so.

I thank God for the basic qualities, also that I was able to see beyond all her shortcomings, and she beyond all mine too, and I was able to focus on the things that are more important. I thank God because it had to be Him anyway.

CHAPTER 9

DRESS PREPARED

You will only attract your true type. No matter how hard you pray and how much you learn methods of making the right choices, you can only be granted that partner that is in accordance to your ability to accept



There are different ways by which one prepares to make a choice of a mate. I do not want to present it as if everybody must make their plans according to my order. However there are basic things we must all learn and abide by.

I have used my 3-point agenda which I explained up till this point as an illustration of how to hold unto things that are excellent. I will discuss in a short while many of the things that are really out of Christian order that many believers have held on to and are still holding on to. Before I get to that however let me quickly explain something.

The most important thing about choosing a good wife or husband is preparing to be a good husband or wife yourself. Every other thing is secondary to these, including looking for those spiritual and truly godly qualities. Paul taught it very clearly that, *God is not mocked, whatever a man (or woman) sows, that he will also reap*. The Lord may be kind, but He is not unjust; he will only give you the mate you are suited for.

It is often said that opposites attract, and that is true to some extent. It is only true however as far as superficial things are concerned. When I say superficial I mean things like temperament, the love to travel or remain holed up at home, colour preferences, and such mundane things. In the real issues of life, opposites repel.

*Can two people walk together without agreeing on the direction?
Amos 3:3 NLT*

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? 2 Cor 6:14-16

We see from these verses that the doctrine of opposites attracting is to be reserved for shallow matters that are not the main meat of life.

What I am saying is that you will only attract your true type. No matter how hard you pray and how much you learn methods of making the right choices, you can only be granted that partner that is in accordance to your ability to accept.

Please this point can be controversial for some people, but this is actually because they are not looking at what God is judging by. We are often mistaken in judging spirituality by church activities so that when we see a nice holy sister being captured by a spiritually unserious joker we think that there is a problem with this doctrine. The truth is that she may just have been identical to that chap in the realm of the spirit, her church going notwithstanding.

True spiritual values are the things that the Lord judges by; he does not judge by the outward activities that men see. The Lord said this thing clearly to Samuel when a replacement for Saul was being sought from the house of Jesse. Samuel was misled by the fact that Saul was a very tall man and the fact that kings were commanders of the army of the nation. So when Eliab came forth looking like a warrior he thought he was seeing the next king of Israel. No, the Lord was judging with the heart.

...for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. 1 Sam 16:7

The heart of a man or a woman is where the matter is. The heart is something that only the Lord can see and only He can judge. Unfortunately the real person is what he or she is in the heart. So Solomon explained in Prov 23:7 that, *“as he thinks within himself, so he is.”*

The real person is decided by the thought pattern of the heart, which we can't see. For this reason we must totally trust in God if we must get a good wife or husband. There is no human wisdom possible to use. Only God can give it to you.

House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD. Prov 19:14

You cannot rely on your parents getting a good wife from the village for you. You want a girl that is not yet 'spoiled' by too much exposure. I wish you will bear in mind that wickedness is deep in the heart and not determined primarily by exposure.

You cannot even be sure of the ones in your church; the word 'hypocrite' is only used for Christians, don't forget. There are people in church that only came there to get a wife or a husband; their hearts are as far away from church as is possible.

By the way this is an interesting way by which people try to mock God. Many men go to look in church for decent ladies to marry, and women have learnt this too. It is now a regular practise for girls to start going to church when they begin to think of settling down. They know that the guys they meet at bars and parties do not want to marry the girls met there. So they too go to church to get ready for the guy coming to church to look for a wife. Now because of the righteousness of God, and because God is not mocked, these two groups of people will usually find themselves there. Their spirits are the same and so they will be attracted to one another. They will catch themselves and together go away into a home of hypocrisy.

Those days when we were in our campus fellowship, one particular brother, a president of the fellowship, used to utter this prophecy, and we saw it play out in one interesting case.

A PROPHECY FULFILLED

Sister Irene (not her real name) was quite active in the body and was named as one of us. A time came and I began to see one Brother Abel around (again, this is a false name). Shortly after I noticed Bro Abel I heard he was engaged to be married to Irene. Well, in those days we were quite wary of such quick 'performance' and I raised the issue with one of my friends in the fellowship. He said he also noticed and had discussed the matter with a senior

brother and the senior bro seemed convinced of the genuineness of the faith of Bro Abel. Anyway, that settled it for us and we forgot about it. The pair graduated and got married immediately afterwards.

A few years later my friend met Bro Abel on the street and as part of exchanging pleasantries he asked after his wife Irene. He reported to me that the guy laughed one funny stuttering laughter as he blurted out the words, “my wife, my wife Irene; one man took her from me last year o.” This woman had left this man for another, according to him, a man that was richer. My friend was dumbfounded. He said that all he could think of was what our president used to say. “You have come to fellowship to find a wife; you will meet a woman who came to find a husband, and both of you will find yourselves and go away.” What that lady did was unheard of among the brethren and I very much doubt she was truly a Christian. Abel came to find a wife among good people; he found Irene who was apparently there to wait for the likes of Abel.

Behold, God is not mocked...

The only solution, my brothers and my sisters, is to truly be a believer yourself and serve God with a sincere heart. That is the only solution. Be a good one yourself and trust the Lord to take care of you.

*And I discovered more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are chains. **One who is pleasing to God will escape from her, but the sinner will be captured by her.** Eccl 7:26*

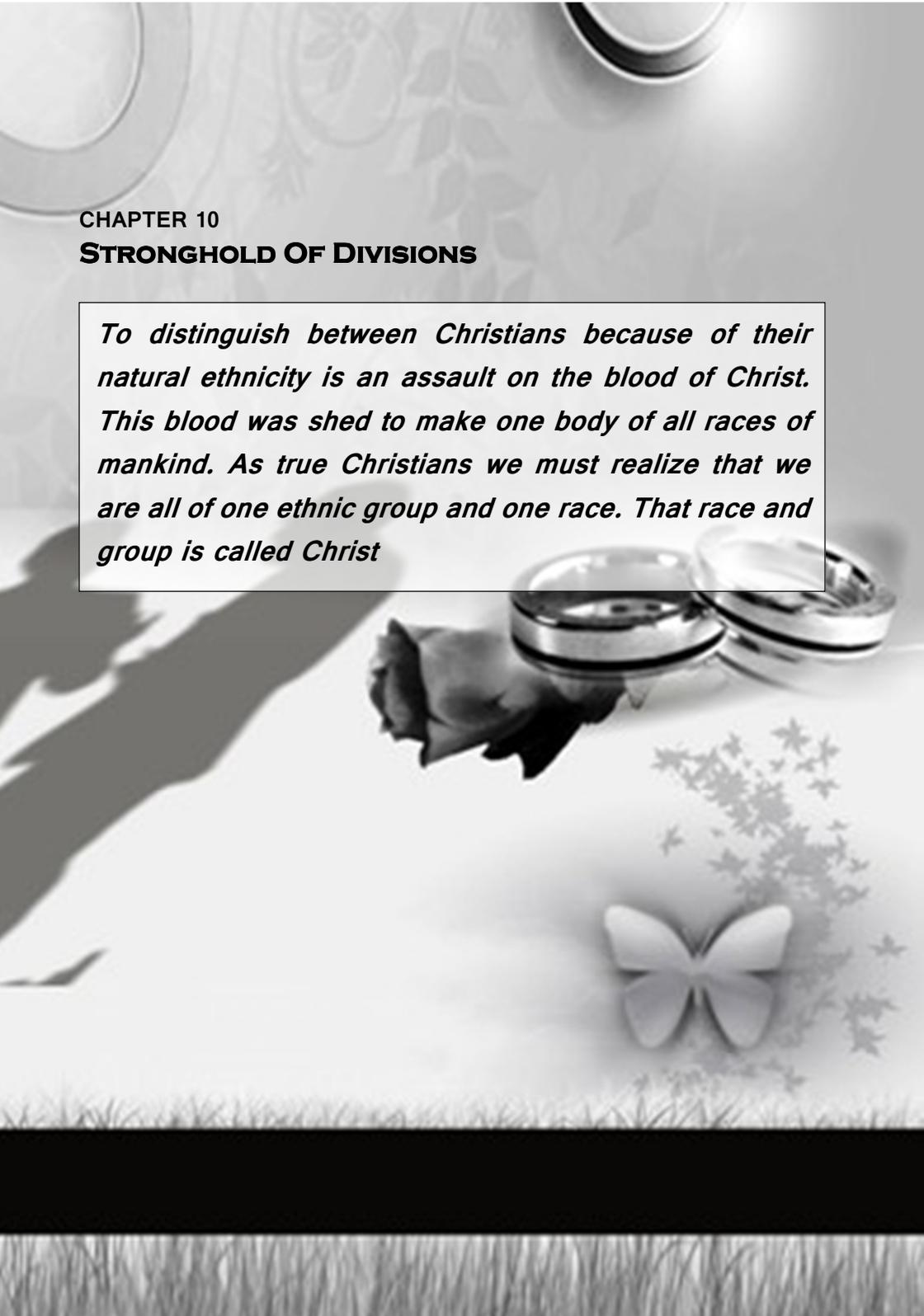
Please note this verse quoted here very carefully. It is not about being smart; deliverance from hypocrites come only from being pleasing to God yourself. If you are a sinner you will be captured.

I remember then when I came from Lagos to Ado-Ekiti and for a few days I worked with some young ministers (I was very young too). The men were from another ministry and were doing the ground work for an upcoming gospel crusade. One of those days we chatted about the affairs of this life and about marriage in particular. One of

the men was quite impressed with the thoughts I expressed. He asked me just to confirm that I was not married. I confirmed that. This worried him because I came from Lagos, and so he counselled that I should be "careful of Lagos sisters." I told him calmly that there was no need to take any special care, that all I needed to do was to take care of my heart before the Lord and safety would be guaranteed. I opened this verse above and read it to him. I told him that, "even if I were to be found in the midst of a thousand Jezebels I will not marry one." That word guided and guarded me.

Safety is not in just praying. It is not in having visions and dreams about who your wife or husband will be. The will of the devil can be revealed to you in a dream too. Safety is not in learning the right methods of hearing God. Safety is in walking with the Lord with the integrity of your heart and a dedication to serve Him, marriage or no marriage. God will deliver you in the time of choice making. Kenneth Hagin told the stories of how God delivered him from two different women who the elders in the church he was the pastor of were trying to arrange for him. One was a lead singer in the choir. The Lord just gave him visions in which he saw the real lives of these women. The Lord allowed him to see beyond their whited exteriors displayed in the church. The other day I was analysing with my wife how the Lord guided me away from a particular attraction that I was following up and kept me with another until I was ready to meet what He had planned, and till she was ready to meet me. We had a good laugh about it.

Don't forget, it is the sinner that will be captured.



CHAPTER 10

STRONGHOLD OF DIVISIONS

To distinguish between Christians because of their natural ethnicity is an assault on the blood of Christ. This blood was shed to make one body of all races of mankind. As true Christians we must realize that we are all of one ethnic group and one race. That race and group is called Christ

Next we will see some of the things that constitute errors in criteria for choice-making in the lives of Christians. The truth of life is that if only we would remove the hindrances from our lives, many of the things the Lord wants us to have will come naturally. Walking in the will of God is supposed to be natural for the Christian; the only problem is when we place hindrances in the way of the smooth running of God's glory in our lives. That is why preparation of the way is what is emphasized when we want the glory of God to be revealed (Isaiah 40). It is when we hold on to criteria that are against the will of God that we find it truly hard to get to know His will.

Let us bear in mind that even though God is kind He is also just. This means therefore that we must be careful that we do not deliberately flaunt His ways and still expect to get the fullness of His blessings. To be a Christian means that Jesus is Lord over your life. To be a true disciple of Christ implies that you are taking His words and using them to shape your life. That is what it means to be a living sacrifice.

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Rom 12:1-2

The issue of marriage is not an isolated thing in life but is part of the daily walk with God. God has something to say about every sphere of life and the issue of marriage is definitely not an exception. We must not conform to the ideas of the world in making decisions on marriage. Sin is when we reject the counsel of the word of God and accept the counsel of the world. If you read the gist in Isaiah chapter 55, you will see that an unrighteous person is known by his or her thought pattern.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Isa 55:7

It is plain unrighteousness to use ideas that are contrary to the word of God when we are making decisions that have to do with marriage. This is what many have done.

Let us take an example.

There is the division of mankind into races and ethnic groups. What role is this supposed to play in Christian marriage? In my environment the question is almost never that of races since we are all Black Africans, almost all Nigerians. The question is usually about ethnic groups within the country. Nigeria has a lot of these ethnic groups, literally scores of them with a sizeable number in population. I live in eastern Nigeria where the major one is the Ibo race. Here also I have seen serious matters of further subdivisions into various segments within this large group. I have been told often that I get better treatment from certain segments being from far away, from the west of the country, than they would give to their brethren from nearby but of a different segment. These are all Ibos! I have seen divisions that go down as far as which village within the same local government area people originate from. This is not unique to this region as other parts of Nigeria, and indeed the world, have similar things going on. These things only show that human beings just love to segregate and to discriminate.

The problem in this matter is not with the world, and I have no word for them; my issue is with those of us who call ourselves Christians but who have not bothered to check with the word of God about this matter of racial and ethnic segregation. Many Christians are praying for the will of God in marriage, but they do not forget to remind the Lord that His will must come from the ethnic group or race that they like or their natural families accept. A Christian of the Yoruba (Western Nigeria) extraction may refuse that God can possibly want her to marry an Ibo brother. She may not voice it, but it is

deep inside her heart. That is what is called a stronghold; it is an obstruction to the flow of God's glory.

Strongholds are deeply held beliefs that contradict the word of God and which will prevent the power of God and the perfect will of God from manifesting. Strongholds are not necessarily morally bad things (in fact they rarely are), they are usually preferences and beliefs formed by years of being moulded by societal values. They usually are quite acceptable to fellow *strongholders* (I just coined this word please), and often to a very large segment of the society. Apart from popular strongholds, there are also personal and *strange* strongholds.

AN ASSAULT ON THE BLOOD

Let me say in simple terms: To distinguish between Christians because of their natural ethnicity is an assault on the blood of Christ. This blood was shed to make one body of all races of mankind.

You are worthy to take the scroll and to break the seals that are on it, for... with Your blood You purchased men unto God from every tribe and language and people and nation. And You have made them a kingdom (royal race) and priests to our God... Rev 5:9-10 AMP

As true Christians we must realize that we are all of one ethnic group and one race. That race and group is called Christ. We are all in the same kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are no Hausa Christians or Ibo Christians or Zulu Christians; there are just Christians. We must have an open mind in this regard and show the world that we are actually a single race.

I read many years ago in a book by E. W. Kenyon that there are three basic divisions of mankind. There are Jews, there are Gentiles, and there is the Church of God.

Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God. 1 Cor 10:32 KJV

One is either a Jew or a Gentile or a member of the Church of God (Christ). All the divisions that we know or often worry about

are within the gentile race, and we are no longer members. From every tribe and race within the gentile fold, the Lord Jesus has picked all those who believe and has made them into one new nation. In this new nation the principles differ; here we are more concerned about things like vision and purpose in choosing a mate. Within the fold of Christ there is no distinction between even Jews and Gentiles, talk less of divisions among those that were of gentile origin. God does not distinguish between white, Asian and black. We are all in the same family. All Christians are of the same race, the race of Christ by faith. Denominationalism is even a problem today in the eyes of God.

This is the reason we must go beyond the nonsense of making marriage choices with the criteria of ethnicity. When we do that we are trying to build the very wall that Jesus died to destroy. He abolished these divisions in the body.

For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall. Eph 2:14

I learnt this long ago and so did not care which part of the country my wife will come from naturally speaking. I was a student in the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria; and if you understand Nigeria well, the then Bendel State (now Edo and Delta states) had more ethnic division than many people have the capacity to imagine. This reflected in the diversity of brethren I had as a young man (let's bear in mind that the rest of the country, beyond Bendel, had good representation, and a few west Africans too). I was trained with the word of God not to see people different from one another as long as they are Christians. Many of my closest friends and brethren are from Eastern Nigeria, and I guess it would be an insult to them and to Christ Jesus our Lord if I ever said I could not marry an Ibo sister. This is one of the ways we insult our friends and neighbours and not realize it. Such crazy thoughts never crossed my mind, and I think it is a sign of ignorance and spiritual immaturity to harbour such thoughts. My darling wife is from Urhobo-land in

Delta State. I thank God every day she is my wife. When my younger brother, Deji, wanted to marry and my mother asked my opinion of the matter that the young woman is Ibo, I said to her simply, “Mummy, we are either Christians or we are not!” That was my opinion and I did not even think it was a matter of great faith for which I should be commended. I think it is a matter of common and basic faith.

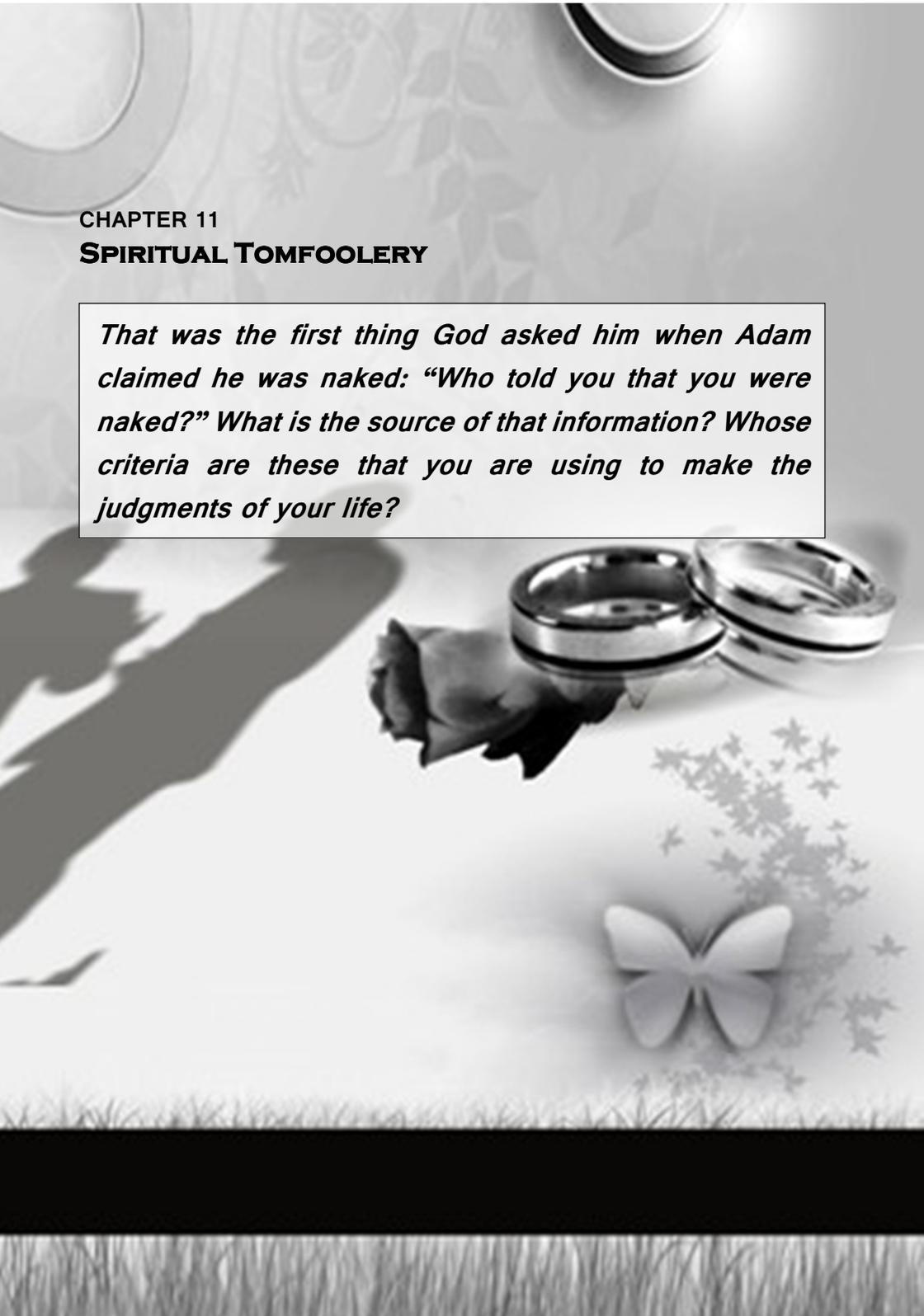
Many Christians have missed the plan of God for their lives because they have hindered His hands with this worldly stronghold they are holding on to. God will not adjust to their idiocy. No matter what the community we are in say, let us never forget we are still the light of the world. This means that we are the ones to show to them the new way in Christ. Who do you fear anyway; the people or the Lord? Our gospel must be real; they must see it in our actions.

This is just one example of errors we hold on to and so limit the will of God from being manifested.

CHAPTER 11

SPIRITUAL TOMFOOLERY

That was the first thing God asked him when Adam claimed he was naked: “Who told you that you were naked?” What is the source of that information? Whose criteria are these that you are using to make the judgments of your life?



And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is.

I need to emphasize that as Christians we are the light of the world, just as the Lord Jesus said. This means that we show the world the way. We must not allow this role to be reversed by learning from them the criteria for choosing a mate. There are societies that teach young women to value money and wealth more than anything else when they want to marry. The young men also learn the culture and so will never marry until they are 'made' financially. This again is not only wrong, it is stupid. We will look at that further shortly.

When using certain standards we must be careful to ask ourselves whose standards they are. One major question we must learn to ask in life is about the source of the information we are walking by. That was the first thing God asked him when Adam claimed he was naked. "Who told you that you were naked?" What is the source of that information?

Whose criteria are these that you are using to make the judgments of your life?

Who said you cannot marry at this age?

Who told you it is wrong to cross that separating river to choose a mate?

Who decided which colour of skin goes with your own?

I believe that if we asked more of these questions we will find it easier to clear our minds in order to be able to receive what God really wants us to have. Instead we have often spent our energy on questions that are silly in the eyes of God.

"Is she from a broken home? (I want to know since the God I serve cannot heal a broken life.)

"How rich is his family? (Since my God is limited by circumstances I have to be sure he is covered.)

"Is her mother fat? (You know she will become what her mother is, and being fat is a sin.)

"Does he have financial responsibilities? (I want to be the only project he has to solve as you know.)"

Sometimes we listen to words of ignorance but which pretend to be spiritual, and this is because the people uttering these words are preachers, and so we continue our silly questioning.

"Was his grandfather a witch doctor? (Such people may need special deliverance, I think.)" A fat lie anyway!

"Is there a curse in the family?" Forget it; every sinner is cursed!

"Does she have aunts that are divorced? (You know these things can be curses running in families, and since Jesus died in vain, why take a risk?)"

Listen to me; these things are pure undiluted nonsense in the life of the Christian. Jesus died to wash away all these curses even if they were real at a time. That is the power of being in Christ. Remember I am writing this book for Christians. Psychologists and science may claim it as a fact that someone from a broken home is more likely to end up with one, and that is possibly statistically correct, but...

...if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 2 Cor 5:17

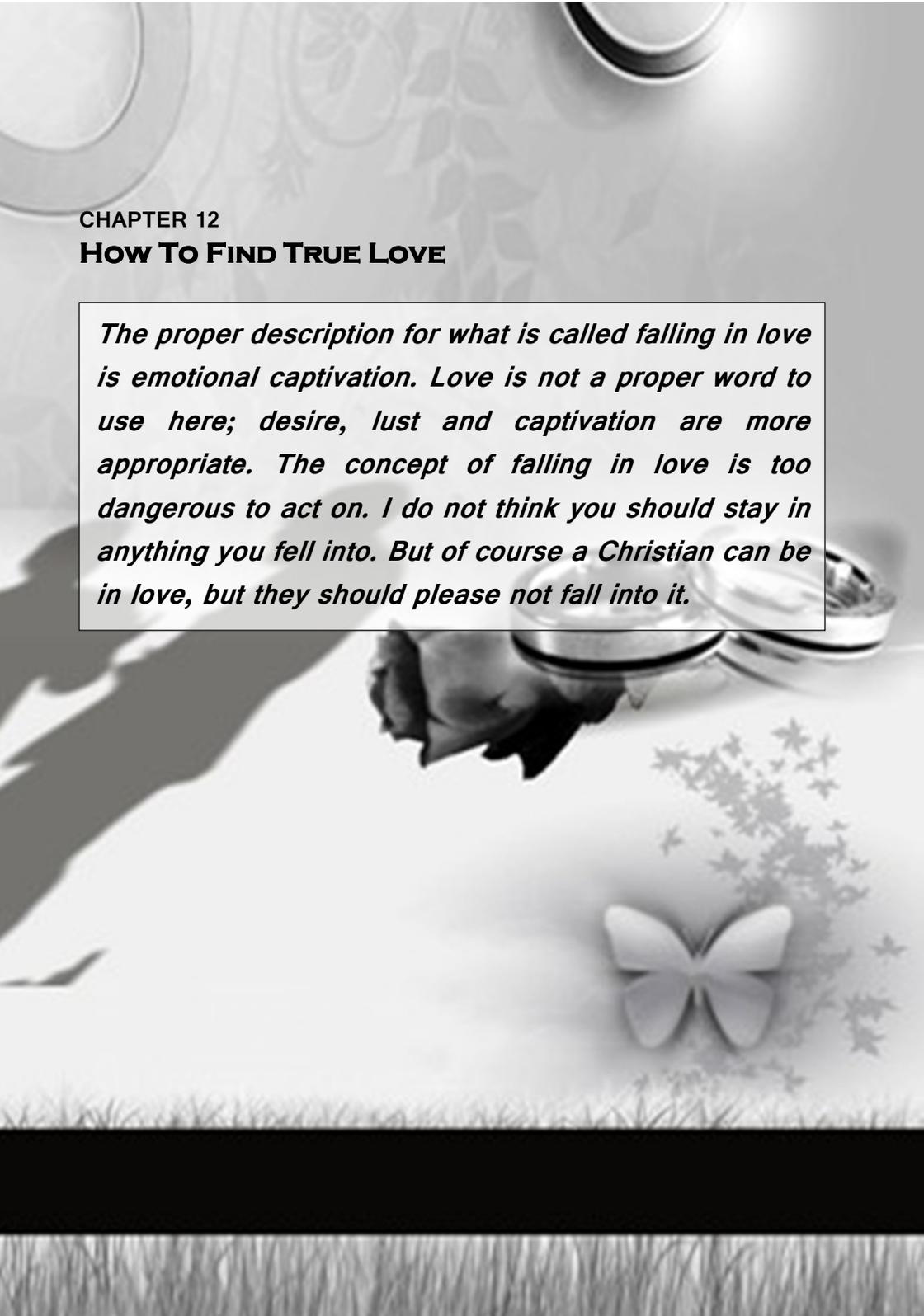
All the ancestral curses invented by a grandfather who was a witchdoctor are erased by being in Christ. All those problems you are trying to avoid by your long questioning have been swept under the blood of Christ. If you don't accept these facts you are not a believer yet!

What your life will experience is a product of what you are believing. If you hold on to these natural lies of the world and of the devil, they will control you. Like I said earlier, marriage is a part of a whole life; therefore if you will walk by the natural laws of the world in making marriage decisions, you will reap the fruit in every other area too. You cannot reject a blood-bought Child of God because her parents are divorced and expect God to prosper you

when your own father was poor. If you will not accept the power of the blood of Jesus to make her new in the area of having a stable marriage, why do you think you have the faith to be made rich when you are from a poor background?

Listen, the way you make decisions in things like marriage speaks volumes about your faith. If you use the criteria of your village to choose a wife or husband, please remember to pray to the gods of that village for blessings in that marriage. Faith is not just the ability to grab something from God by confessing and 'believing' for it. No. Rather, it is knowing the ways of God and abiding by them. If God says something is good, accept it as good and good will come into your life. You cannot reject what He called good and then start asking for blessings of good afterwards. In a like manner, don't eat the fruit that He calls bad and then start claiming good by faith. It does not work like that!

My brethren let us learn to ask the questions that really matter and stop all these spiritual tomfoolery that we are engaged in with our silly questions.



CHAPTER 12

HOW TO FIND TRUE LOVE

The proper description for what is called falling in love is emotional captivation. Love is not a proper word to use here; desire, lust and captivation are more appropriate. The concept of falling in love is too dangerous to act on. I do not think you should stay in anything you fell into. But of course a Christian can be in love, but they should please not fall into it.

A few years ago I was to preach in a midweek service, and that Wednesday was St Valentine's day. Because of the kind of day it was, everybody felt I should preach on love. In fact as I was preparing to go to church that evening my wife said to me, "Pastor, preach a message on love please." It was a kind of sarcasm because my wife knew me too well to expect me to. Once my wife calls me Pastor, then know there is a kind of fun in the talk. I am the type that wouldn't preach on the birth of Jesus during Christmas nor preach on the death and resurrection of Christ at Easter. I generally refuse to mark religious days. It is just my character. That was why my wife said what she said. I was not going to preach on love and she knew it; I did not care who St Valentine was and I was not planning to adjust my sermon to suit him. But I am not my own; I am a minister of Christ.

As I was about to be called up to preach, a thought and a scripture dropped into my heart. I knew it was the Holy Spirit and I had to comply. I mounted the platform and declared that I was going to preach on "How to find true love." Oh, my wife was pleasantly surprised. (The message is available in our audio library).

This was the scripture I read.

Your oils have a pleasing fragrance,

Your name is like purified oil;

Therefore the maidens love you.

Draw me after you and let us run together! SOS 1:3-4

So how do find true love?

It is in the last line of the verse quoted above. Your true love is the person you can run together with!

Love is deeper than a feeling. Feelings are so fleeting; they can change with the weather. Feelings are generated by all kinds of things. Entertainment stars generate feelings in young vulnerable people, and they start having feeling for people that look like those stars. Speak nicely and kindly to anyone persistently for some time

and the person will start having feelings towards you, especially if it is a woman.

A lot of loose people are so because they operate by how they feel. 'It was the way he looked at me.' One of the problems with godless and morally loose societies is that they let themselves believe that feelings are to be run by. The spirit that was to wreck the house of David acted through the feeling of Amnon, the king's son. He was so much in love (he thought) with his half-sister Tamar that he arranged to have her by force.

Absalom had a beautiful sister named Tamar. And Amnon, her half brother, fell desperately in love with her. 2 Sam 13:1-2 NLT

But feelings are so fleeting that once he had his way the feeling turned violently.

Then suddenly Amnon's love turned to hate, and he hated her even more than he had loved her. 2 Sam 13:15 NLT

What he thought was love was just the feelings of the flesh. It is so subject to change and we must be careful not to base our sound judgement on it. You can't run your life by your feelings; those who do eventually reap the bad fruit. In societies where people run by their feelings divorce is the order of the day. The problem is not first with the divorce but with the reckless way in which they get married.

People ask me sometimes, "Is it ok for a Christian to fall in love?" To this I answer that they should note that it is a *falling*, and anyone that falls should endeavour to get up. That the word is *fall* shows it is a failing and a weakness of the flesh. The proper description for what is called falling in love is *emotional captivation*. Love is not a proper word to use here; desire, lust and captivation are more appropriate. There of course have been times in which someone falls in love and the whole thing turned out good; however the concept of falling in love is too dangerous to act on. I do not think you should stay in anything you fell into.

But of course a Christian can be in love, but they should please not fall into it. That is why there is absolutely nothing like real love at first sight. There is overwhelming attraction at first sight but that is not love; like I mentioned earlier, it is just emotional captivation. If your attraction turns out to be nurtured into true love, it is good but don't confuse the generations after you about love at first sight.

I was seriously attracted to my wife the first time I saw her, so affected that I ran to my dear friend and brother, Chuks Eke, asking him to come and see. Afterwards I dismissed it as just one of those things. It was months later that events made me remember, and when I half-seriously dropped her name while talking to the sweet Ijeoma (I.J), she did not rest until she made sure I did not let it slip again. I walked back with my eyes open and became so much in love that I was beside myself sometimes.

What I am saying is that it is true that sometimes we do fall in love but we should please get up, open our eyes well and consider. If Amnon had had enough sense to do this he would have realized that it was his sister and that evil spirit would have gone somewhere else. But he was a spoilt prince who acted by his feelings.

Draw me after you and let us run together.

You should only walk into love, not fall, with someone you can run with; someone whose life and yours are moving in the same direction. Your love is yours to set upon anything and anybody you so desire, even if it was an arranged marriage (I will share more this on a short while). It has to be someone who has the same spirit as yours. I mentioned earlier that opposites only attract when it comes to unimportant and shallow things. In the real things of life, only like spirits go together.

You may have fallen in love with an unbeliever, it is time get up from your fallen state and walk in the light. You *cannot* marry an unbeliever. You cannot marry a man or woman with the hope to change him or her. It is not the right thing to do.

I know it may be hard to get up out of the love you fell into, but there is the power of prayer to assist you. Talk to the Lord in prayer and pour your heart out before Him. Come knowing He will help you get out of it, not sincerely telling Him that you must marry the fellow. No. You want to come out but it is hard, ask Him to help you come out because that is what you want to do. If you pray that prayer from your heart, you will be amazed at what God will do for you.

Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need. Heb 4:16

So we see that a true love is not necessarily the person you feel so much attraction to, but one that you can run with. He or she is the person that shares your spirit. It is not the person who is rich and ready. True love is not even necessarily the one who makes you feel so special; these are carry-overs from Hollywood, things that are obviously not working for them. True love is about life's principles; it is about vision and it is about destiny. Your true love is one with whom you can run in the same God-ordained direction. How you will get to know that person is another story.

Just as an addition, let me state that attraction can be useful if your senses are well trained. Also, apart from some cases of arranged meetings and people who events and duties brought together, invariably there will be some sort of attraction or feeling at the beginning to call your attention to someone. If your senses are well-trained through use, and you have learned to approve that which is excellent, there is a good chance you will only *fall* for a true love. Even then, it still must be tested with clear and open eyes.

CHAPTER 13

THE WIFE OF THY YOUTH

We who know the mind of God will rather marry early than late. It is easier to succeed working together with a God-given wife than to succeed without one. She is a help and not a liability



In this chapter I will deal with another of the common strongholds that hold people back from the best of God.

When the Bible would speak about the time people get married, the word 'youth' is usually attached. So we read of the wife, husband or companion of one's youth.

Let your fountain be blessed,

And rejoice in the wife of your youth. Prov 5:18

Many times women are encouraged to marry men who have 'made' it, like we say; men who are 'settled.' This has become a culture among many people, and the men do not think of marrying until they are so settled. By being settled we mean having accomplished financially and acquired some significant materials things of the earth. Now, this culture is directly against the God-ordained principle of wife-of-thy-youth, and Christians should forsake it as it is the way of the world.

The word 'youth' is used to describe someone who has just started out in life. It is not talking about a child but one who has the fullness of vigour and who has just commenced on the chosen course in life. For example a man who has just completed his university education and is getting his first job, or a man who has just completed the skills training and has just set out in his profession. A gospel minister who has just started in the ministry fully is also an example. A man's profession is usually described as that which he has been from his youth (see 1 Sam 17:33). It is in this time that a man begins to wholly take responsibility directly for his life and is no longer under the control of parents or guardians. He is now a man.

So you see that the Bible never taught marriage as being for the person who is settled. And this makes sense when we consider the purpose of marriage. If you see your life as that of someone who is on assignment from God you will realize that the partner or helper should come to you to do the work and not come at the end of doing it.

The issue here is the different perspective that God has concerning marriage which is above that of common people. In many places the wife is seen as an acquisition; something a man adds to the vast store of material possessions he has laid up. They see the woman as being there to bear offspring for the man and to show off his wealth. There are cultures in which this is all the woman is about. This is why the man does not want her until he has accomplished in his materialistic life, and the women themselves are getting themselves ready only to be a show piece and a baby factory. Thank God for the true women liberation that is found only in Christ Jesus.

To God a woman is as much a child of God as the man is. Her life is also a ministry and she has a calling. She is called to do certain things for God in shaping the events of this earth and in blessing the people He wants to bless. That is the reason why she may be given to a man to be his wife. As a wife she is working with him that they may both succeed. She is a blessing to him and not a liability. Her presence will make it easier for him to accomplish in all aspects of life. She will bear him children, true, but that is a secondary part of the deal. In fact the children are part of the assignment they both have to fulfil—raising a new generation for the purposes of God. The children are not just bragging points. She is to be a part of him, synergizing with him in accomplishing their combined ministries. Where he would have succeeded to a measure, her presence with God's blessing increases it as much as 1000 times.

Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. Eccl 4:9

How could one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight..., Deut 32:30⁴

If this is what you understand about what a wife is, why would you want one only when it is certain she won't be able to add

⁴ Even though the context is about Israel's enemies, this is quoted to show that with God, one plus one has an exponential effect in increasing the output of labour.

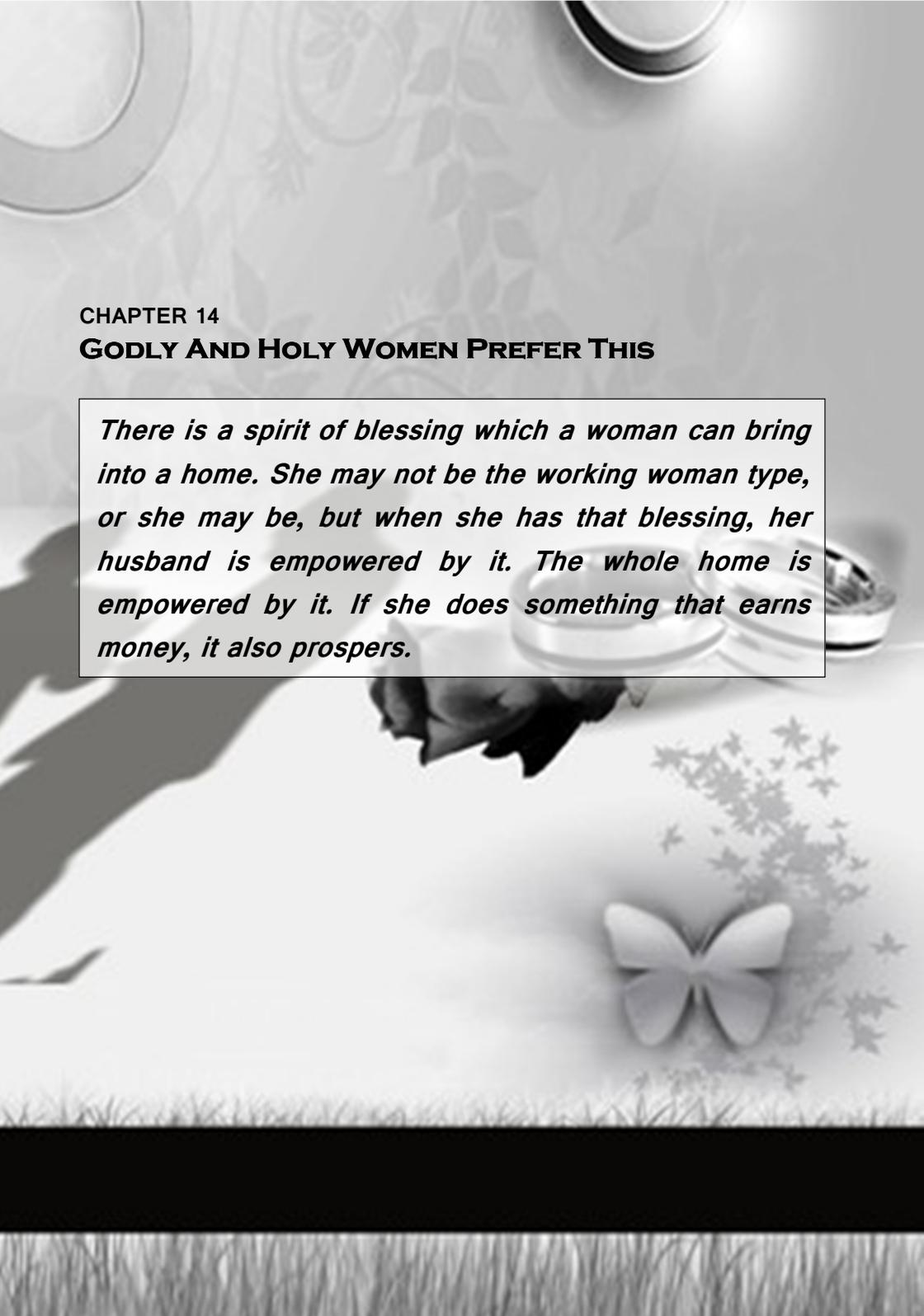
anything to you. See, it is absurd. We who know the mind of God will rather marry early than late. It is easier to succeed working together with a God-given wife than to succeed without one. She is a help and not a liability. She is not just a baby machine.

If you are a godly man and you are not called specially to a Paul-like ministry that involves celibacy, then the earlier you marry the better for you. You do not need to have all those trappings of success to marry. What you need is a sense of purpose and direction in life. Once you are ready to start working and you have the ability to leave so as to cleave,⁵ then you are ready. Pray that God will give you a woman that is ready to be a wife of your youth. Share with her your vision of the future and the plans you have for harvesting divine blessings. Share your faith with her; the woman ordained for you by God will believe you. When you meet such a woman, you are blessed. Marry her quickly, and you will succeed faster that way.

From my understanding, what will be youth period for most young men today will be anything between ages 21 and 30. I agree that 21 may appear early for our current day society in Nigeria, but it is actually in order. 30 years of age is pushing it to the far end. Of course there is no hard and fast rule about this, but generally speaking, marriage was designed to be entered into in the youth period. If you are waiting till you are made, then you will not marry

⁵ The ability to leave is the ability to earn enough to live on your own and provide food and accommodation for two. This must not be a potential ability but a practising one, that is you must already be doing something like that. It has to do with the basics of living and not luxury. It may be a room with a mat on the floor; once it is yours, it is alright. I believe that a man must leave, and then cleave. Many people cleave first, and then start trying to leave. They are joined to their parents even after marriage. When problems start, and they often do, they suddenly realize that there is wisdom in leaving. Please do not marry until you have 'leaved' (please pardon the neologism). Prepare to leave first in your mind, and then leave in reality. Do these ever before you cleave, or marry. We will see more on this when I begin to discuss how to deal with in-law matters.

the wife of your youth, and there is so much fun and blessing that you will miss.



CHAPTER 14

GODLY AND HOLY WOMEN PREFER THIS

There is a spirit of blessing which a woman can bring into a home. She may not be the working woman type, or she may be, but when she has that blessing, her husband is empowered by it. The whole home is empowered by it. If she does something that earns money, it also prospers.

Let me address this issue particularly as it concerns women. Godly and holy women prefer to be a wife of someone's youth. Please note that this is a title that sticks with you all your life. If you are looking for a made man to marry, you can never have that title. You either married someone in his youth or you did not; it is not a title you claim 'by faith' afterwards.

“What is the big deal?” you may ask.

You are sowing a seed for joy and happiness in your old age. God sees such women differently from the way He sees the other women who only come to chop, like we say in Nigeria. For example, there is a special blessing of divine defence that He gives only to such women as are wives of youth.

And this is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. "Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Mal 2:13-14

This scripture is showing us divine defence against oppression from wayward husbands. I pray that you will not need this extreme of defence but it shows us that women who are wives of youth are specially favoured.

This favour will manifest in many ways, more than we are able to imagine. One of such ways is that your prayers over your husband and your children are more potent than you imagine. It has more potency than that of the woman who is the wife of settlement. Please note that I am not saying good women only marry 'poor' men; this thing is about the attitude of the heart. It is possible for a man to be rich and be in his youth. If he comes from a rich home he cannot suddenly become poor so that he may be wedding in his youth. But even if he was born rich, there is still an assignment for his life and a woman with the right attitude does not see him as a

made man but as someone who is going somewhere. Such a woman will not throw a tantrum if the man decides to literally leave his father's wealth that he may create something else. I read the story of Bill Hybels, Larry Lea and other men; these were sons of wealthy people but they forsook all to go into the ministry and so created a new story of success for the world to read. This thing is about your attitude as a woman, and it is there even before you meet your husband. It affects the way you relate with men—potential husbands, generally.

Worldly women are the only ones that are permitted to allow themselves to be treated like second class citizens—women without purpose who are only looking for a house of financial security to enter. She will never support the husband in anything that looks like a threat to their financial security, even when it is obviously the will of God for their lives. Such a one is acknowledging that she is not a princess of God and she is not blessed enough to make a man prosper by her spiritual influence. Let me state it again; men do not only need the physical help that their wives are, but they also need the power of the spirit of a godly woman pushing them into success. A woman brings favour into the life of a man.

He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD. Prov 18:22

There is a kind of blessing and favour that a woman brings into a man's life. If she has the right spirit and God's blessing is upon her, her presence in a man's life will make him prosper. God said, "it is not good that the man is alone," therefore He made a helpmate for him. It is not just a physical thing but a spiritual one. Just like they say "behind every successful man is a good woman," I also say "behind every failure of a married man is a woman who did not bring him favour." He is not responsible alone for his failure; both of them are culpable. Success and prosperity is not first about struggles and hard work; it is a spiritual thing. You need a blessing to prosper. A blessing is a spiritual empowerment to succeed.

It is the blessing of the LORD that makes rich... Prov 10:22

Let me tell two stories to illustrate this point.

FAVOUR FROM ABOVE

I read the first one in Reader's Digest. A rich business executive riding with his wife pulled into a fuel station to fill his tank. While the attendant there was working on the car he went into the store to pick a few things. On returning he noticed his wife chatting familiarly with the attendant. So on the way he asked whether she knew the man before then. She informed him that she once dated the man but that was a long time ago. He then proceeded to tell his wife how lucky she was to have not married the man; "If you had married him," he said, "today you would have been the wife of a fuel station attendant." "Oh no!" She said. "If I had married him, he would have been a rich business executive and maybe you would be the fuel station attendant."

It was supposed to be some sort of joke, but I saw truth in it. The man was mistaken thinking it started with him alone. No; that woman brought a spirit of success into that home and she knew it. These things are spiritual.

The second is a story of one of my friends. I wish I had the opportunity to tell it in detail. He married when he was struggling. His wife was a young graduate and he was then out of the nice job he used to have. He was doing different kinds of stuff to keep things together, including teaching people preparing for all kinds of profession examinations in the financial industry. He was a man who used his brains well.

They got married all the same in the midst of his struggles. I still remember the small wedding and the excitement of the young bride after the ceremony.

A few years later I went with another friend to his Victoria Island, Lagos office. It was hard to comprehend the amount of progress he had made. He was by this time a branch manager with a leading

bank in the country. Another few years after this, he owned his own businesses apart from being the head of a major division in a leading telecom company in the country. I looked at the whole thing then and I said to myself, “it is not this man that is blessed; God poured this blessing into this home to honour this woman.”

There is a spirit of blessing which a woman can bring into a home. She may not be the working woman type, or she may be, but when she has that blessing, her husband is empowered by it. The whole home is empowered by it. If she does something that earns money, it also prospers (Pr 31:16).

A woman looking for a rich guy to marry does not have that spirit. She does not have a giving spirit; her spirit is restrictive and not generous. Her fears or covetousness (whichever one is her motivation) has paralysed her spirit.

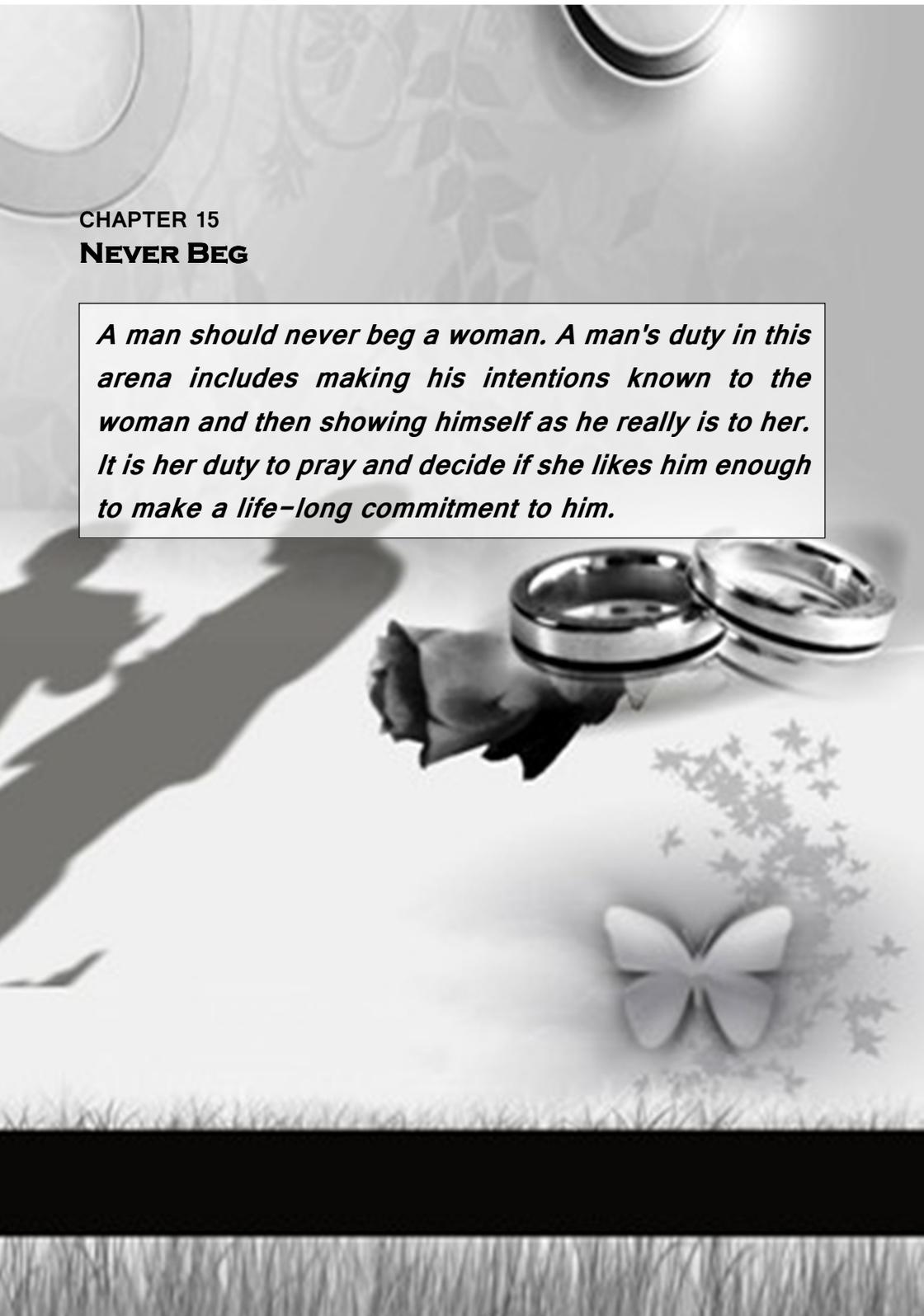
Young man, if a woman leaves you because she found a richer man to marry, please don't feel bad at all. If you married her you would not have succeeded; she would have nagged you to pieces. A woman's hands can be chains, preventing a man from progressing no matter how hard he thinks he is trying (Eccl 7:26). A godly man should not miss her at all. She has by that action demonstrated to you that she could not have helped you prosper. She is a drain, a nag and a source of spiritual confusion. Rejoice for the great deliverance of the Lord.

What a godly woman wants in a man is that he is a man of faith with a sense of purpose, and that he is moving in the direction of his destiny. She wants a man who can sell her his dreams of God and who she sees is working towards that dream. What he is now outwardly may not be much but his faith is big, his prayers are like those of Jabez, and his diligence is real. A real woman does not want a Dodi—a rich boy who is only planning to inherit from his father a lot of money. She does not want a man that had one lucky break but whose life is not guided by principles. She wants a man she can run with.

Again, I am not saying that godly women only marry 'struggling' men. We are saying that they look at something beyond outward manifestations of success. Even if those things are there, they are not swayed by them. The godly woman's presence in any man's life will cause increase, even if there was plenty. They are able to discern the inner man that may not yet have manifested. They marry the husbands of their youth. All other things are added them. They do not look down on a man or reject him just because he is currently not made. They are ready to persevere with a man that they perceive is going somewhere.

CHAPTER 15
NEVER BEG

A man should never beg a woman. A man's duty in this arena includes making his intentions known to the woman and then showing himself as he really is to her. It is her duty to pray and decide if she likes him enough to make a life-long commitment to him.



Beggars get crumbs. Whatever you beg for, you get crumbs of. It is true with money; it is true with women (and also with men). One of the things a man must bear in mind is that he must *never* beg a woman to marry him.

We all agree that it is absurd for a woman to do this, but also I have never understood why a man should do it. As a woman, you are not permitted to be in love with a man who is not showing you any attention or affection. It is a failing of the flesh; you *fell* into that love. Like Andrew Wommack would say, “pull your thumb out of your mouth and grow up.”

It is only children that allow the love of a man who is not interested in them to make them sick. Like I said at the beginning about visions, even if the Lord spoke to you that you will marry him, forget that vision until he comes asking. That feeling of yours is just that—a feeling, and feelings generally follow the direction of your attention. It was said by one of the preachers of old that *feelings follow thought*; and someone else said, “what you give attention to is the direction your desires will take.” All the feeling of love is because you have given him attention. Those dreams are not necessarily of the Holy Spirit; please don't deceive yourself. You like him is the reason you have been dreaming of him. It is no proof that God wants you and him to be joined in holy matrimony. Stop that crap and stop begging a man to love you. And stop waiting for him too, believing that he will come to a realization of what you think you already know is the will of God. Well, if he does, good. If not, you have not disobeyed God if you marry someone else. I have seen many cases of people who wait like this, and usually the women wake up when the guy gets married to someone else. There are too many spooky people walking around these days claiming they are hearing God, and many of these are hearing God telling them about marriage to people who are not at all interested in them. If God won't persuade him to come, even though you think you heard God about him, forget it!

Marriage is supposed to be by mutual consent in that you like what you are getting and the other party likes what he or she is getting. That is the point I am making. A man should never beg a woman. A man's duty in this arena includes making his intentions known to the woman and then showing himself as he really is to her. It is her duty to pray and decide if she likes him enough to make a life-long commitment to him. A man cannot beg a woman to like him and he should please not try. He should not even try to impress her by going beyond his normal capacity in doing things for her. Never start what you can't continue forever.

Young man, just show yourself for what you are really like. Do not pretend; don't speak as if you know everywhere in London when you have never been to the Ikeja or Abuja International airports. If you watched it all in movies, tell her as much. Don't try to pass across as something that you are not. To a real woman, being deceptive is worse than being poor. Also let me say this: any woman that you have to impress to get is not yours anyway, so why bother?

The woman that God is sending your way likes you the way you are, or she will be ready to adjust to what you are now until things get better. You must never beg a woman to marry you. Don't buy things that you cannot afford just to make her like you. You must of course be generous towards her as this is good and fitting, but you must never do things that are beyond your ability. Only people who are begging for unhappiness later in marriage do such things. The reason is because the way you start is the way you will continue. If you start out in life begging a woman to marry you, you will sustain that marriage on your knees (and I don't mean prayer), otherwise both of you will become very sad and may end up separating.

I have also observed that those who do try so hard to impress women hardly get anything out of it anyway. If another man is out-spending you on her, then leave her for him. It is the way of the world that tells you that you must fight for her. Arrant nonsense! A good wife is not a price to be worn in a duel; she is a gift of

God.⁶ If she wants to marry the greatest spender, please gladly loose and be happy. The truth is that love, true love, cannot be bought, so do not try.

If a man tried to buy love with everything he owned, his offer would be utterly despised. Song 8:7 NLT

Let me state it again: your duty is to declare your true self; it is the woman's duty to decide whether she likes it or not.

AVOID DECEPTION

Deception is something we must all avoid, both men and women. As a woman, don't marry a man who is lying to you.

There are different ways of telling lies. There is the obvious way of using the mouth to say things that are not true, but there are many other ways. A man driving a car bigger than what his income can afford him is a liar; rather than telling his own lie, he is living it. You get to his house and he has gadgets bigger than his income; he is living a lie. Such people usually are chronic debtors, they don't give (they can't), and *may* actually be stealing. Their lives cannot be happy no matter how much they have. They are liars. Run from them!

Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal faithfully are His delight. Prov 12:22

Just by the way, if a woman is putting you under pressure to do beyond what you can, no amount of love or inspiration should keep you in that relationship. Get out while your life is still intact. One of the greatest sources of my peace of mind has been a good wife who understands. My wife does not put me under pressure to buy things we cannot afford. Even the ones that we can, if I explain to her that the time is not yet ripe, she understands and backs down on it. In fact, often I have to persuade my wife to allow me spend

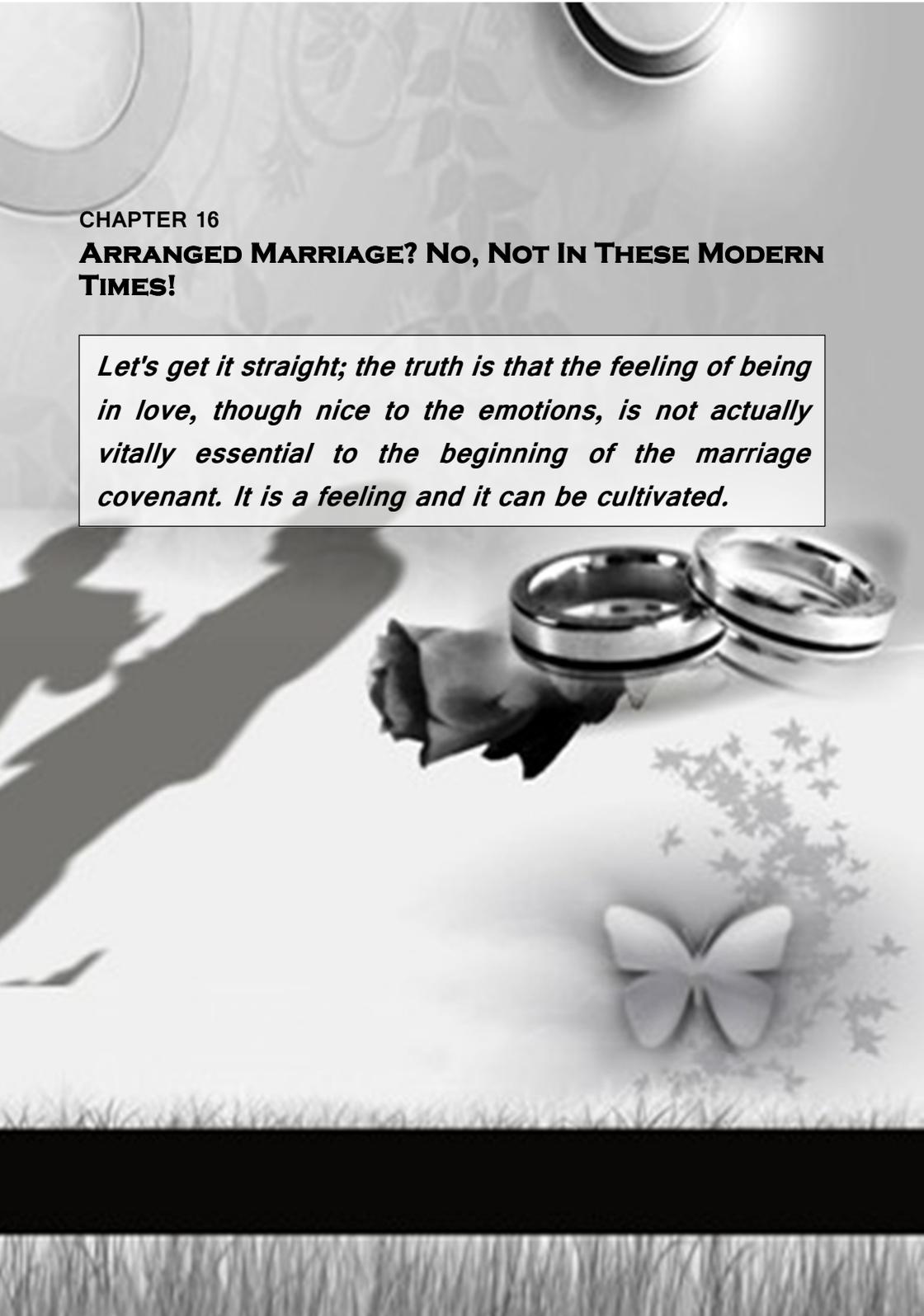
⁶ House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD. Prov 19:14

more money on buying her some nice things. I remember once she called me from where she went to buy a gown, and it was quite costly. She was reluctant to buy it and asked me what I thought. I asked a few questions to ascertain that it was really worth the money and not just an over-priced fad nonsense. Once I was satisfied, I spent some time explaining to her why it was good to buy it even though it appeared costly. It took me years to persuade my wife to upgrade the quality of suits she wears; she kept on telling me that what I am asking her to wear are costly, but I kept saying that I am not complaining and can afford them. My wife has *never* asked me to change her car before I do. She is usually quite okay with it when I decide it is no longer good for her to continue using it. I cannot imagine living with a woman who nags me to pieces because of her materialistic and vanity lifestyle. If you see those signs early, pray and prepare to run!

CHAPTER 16

ARRANGED MARRIAGE? NO, NOT IN THESE MODERN TIMES!

Let's get it straight; the truth is that the feeling of being in love, though nice to the emotions, is not actually vitally essential to the beginning of the marriage covenant. It is a feeling and it can be cultivated.



No, the heading of this chapter is not my opinion. I have only expressed what people often say, but please allow me to shell-shock you back into reality, the reality of the truth.

We have discussed a lot in this book up till this point. Please do not forget a point I made at the very beginning, and that is that the Lord has a specific will about who you should marry. He is not just looking for someone that you will like and who will be compatible with you, but He has the person that is His will named if you will accept it. All we have been doing up till this point is to see how we may find this person. We are seeing how we may prepare ourselves to know and to receive that person that He wants us to marry in His perfect will.

The Lord may reveal His will through different means; there are no hard and fast rules to the method He may use. When the heart is right, and that is the most important thing, the Lord will guide us even with our foolishness into the place of meeting with the person of His will. He may use spectacular means like dreams and visions, but they are not the more common means. His more usual method is that He works in us gradually until His will and ours become one and the same. Though the Lord did the job of bringing them together, when Adam saw Eve he did not marry her just because the Lord said he should; he married her because he liked her.

Let us not forget all these things.

So what does God say about arranged marriages?

Before I began to write this I asked a gathering of Christian young men, about a dozen, most of them unmarried, what they thought of arranged marriages. Most thought of it as old fashioned and not what the Lord would want. I did that quick survey just to confirm it as the opinion of most Christians. What surprised the people gathered was that I said there was nothing wrong with it. The truth is that God can reveal His will to you through an arranged marriage as well as He can through the route He used with someone like

me—I chased my wife myself after I set my eyes on her (OK, someone else did part of it for me).

Let us be careful to distinguish between *arranged* and *forced* or *coerced* marriages. The forced marriage is very wrong; even the Lord who made Eve did not force Adam to accept her. We should not force anybody, or tactfully coerce⁷ them, into marrying anybody, and no one should allow himself or herself to be so treated.

An arranged marriage is that in which the choice of a marriage partner is made for someone and the person *accepts* the judgment of those making the choice as good. A very good example in the Bible is that of how Isaac allowed his father Abraham to make the arrangement, and Eliezer made the choice of Rebekah for him. Note that Isaac was very alright with the idea, and Rebecca freely accepted to go back home with Eliezer.

And they said, "We will call the girl and consult her wishes." Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go." Gen 24:57-58

So we see that it was not forced at all. An arranged marriage, the way I understand it, requires the consent of the marrying parties; it only means they trust the judgement of the people making the choices on their behalf.

There are a number of reasons why most believers think that arranged marriages are wrong, and about the most important reason is simply that it is associated with traditional settings and often confused with forced marriages. Also, many think they must be in

⁷Please note that coercion can be through prophesying and the influence of a spiritual superior. A spiritual leader can tactfully threaten young ladies, and young men too, into marrying someone they don't like by insinuating that doing otherwise will tantamount to disobedience to the will of God. When a man you thought hears God says that God spoke to him about your marriage, you need a lot of nerve to disobey him. However, like I explained at the beginning, if you do not like someone or are not personally convinced about the person, please don't marry even if there is a prophecy or all members of the council of Bishops say you should. Even God did not force Adam to marry Eve.

love before they marry and therefore it is just not possible to arrange a marriage since one cannot achieve the I'm-in-love state with someone one has never met.

Let's get it straight; the truth is that the feeling of being in love, though nice to the emotions, is not actually vitally essential to the beginning of the marriage covenant. It is a feeling and it can be cultivated.

Ravi Zacharias, an international evangelist of Indian descent, told the story of how he was really worried for his elder brother when the brother was about to go home to India to a wedding in which he was the groom and would be meeting the bride for the very first time (they had only seen pictures of each other). They were living in Canada and the marriage had been arranged between the families. He asked his brother how it would be if he finally reaches the place and discovers that he does not love the bride that had been chosen for him. His brother told him simply that love is as much a decision as it is a feeling (I am not sure of the exact words now). I am of the opinion that love is more of a decision than it is a feeling; true love, that is. Forget those funny sweet stomach feelings; they are as transient as the Hollywood marriages that so frequently illustrate the effects of walking solely by them. Feelings can be created; true love is a decision which one makes.

*Because he **hath set his love upon me**, therefore will I deliver him...*

Ps 91:14 KJV

You are required to do what you deem fit with the capacity to love which the Lord has given to you. You can set your love upon someone, and can withdraw it from someone. I am not saying that the emotions won't protest so as to make it a difficult thing to do; of course the protest will be strong. Despite that however, it is still a thing to be done. We must master the flesh and make it do the bidding of the spirit.

If you understand this, understanding arranged marriages will not be so hard.

Let me tell a true modern-day story like that of Isaac, and it will help me explain what is wrong with the common concept of arranged marriages, and how good use can be made of an arranged marriage if necessary. In case you are thinking that Isaac's story belongs to the days long gone by, please follow this gist.

Pastor CEC is a man of God, he is happily married to the wife he so much loves and appreciates. He told me the story to the end that by the time he met his wife for the first time, they were already married according to traditional rites. Their families had met and dowry had been paid, and these were before they ever saw each other face to face. I was excited to hear the story because I had come to know that it was possible.

The story started with a phone call he received from a fellow minister and brother in the Lord, Pastor NC. He was residing and doing mission work in Europe then. Pastor NC wanted to know what was up in the area of marriage and he replied that there was nothing going on, but that he did not think he would like to marry someone from over there. He preferred to marry someone from back home in Nigeria. Pastor NC then told him, "I have a wife for you."

That was the beginning. A picture was sent to him but it was not helpful as it was not a clear one. He only asked one question about a physical feature of the woman, and he was told to rest assured that it was in order. He prayed and asked the Lord for a particular sign, and it was fulfilled. She of course had her doubts concerning a man she had never met, but the Lord dispelled that through a visitation in a dream. The couple spoke on the phone a few times. And the wedding arrangements commenced. Families met and dowry was paid, and they were technically married without having ever met. They met for the first time when she went to Europe later, partly to finally meet him and to prepare for the rest of the wedding ceremonies. They both knew that it was the will of God. Please note that these are not village people but well educated and enlightened people.

I have summarized the whole story, but I told it to let us know that God indeed works through arranged marriages. It was God working, just as He chose Rebekah for Isaac. Now, there are a number of things that I will like to examine from the story above.

SOME POINTS TO NOTE

First, Pastor NC knew Pastor CEC very well, and he knew what kind of woman would be suitable for him. He suggested her and it worked.

Number two point: The arrangement was based upon the principles of faith and not tradition. What is wrong with most arranged marriages is that it is hardly based on the faith of the people but on other parameters like social class, business connections, ministry connections and ethnic segregation. These are the things wrong with those arrangements for Christians. If you read the story of Isaac and Rebekah, Abraham's concern was on the worship lifestyle of the people from where the wife would come. Some have thought he wanted a relative for the sake of being related, but it isn't so. He went to where he knew the kind of worship they were engaged in, and he gave strict instructions especially as it had to do with his covenant with God. The man he sent to get the wife knew that it was God that was choosing the girl, and not man.

*now may it be that the girl to whom I say, ' Please let down your jar so that I may drink,' and who answers, ' Drink, and I will water your camels also'; — may she be the **one whom Thou hast appointed** for Thy servant Isaac. Gen 24:14*

It was a divine appointment, and that is what we must bear in mind.

In my story, and in the story of Isaac, the person arranging was thinking in the same frequency as the persons being arranged. That is why the way our society is today, in which most parents do not have the level of faith of their sons and daughters, arranged marriages by them is very unlikely to work. But when children being born in

recent times to parents who married in the faith of Jesus and are living in that faith, when their times to marry would come, I believe arrangements will be more common.

You should not get involved in arrangements with people and for people who you are not in deep heart-fellowship with, and you should not accept recommendations from such. Everyone involved must be on the same spiritual frequency for it to work. I can imagine that my dear brethren who knew what I wanted in a wife and knew the kind of person I was could have been used by God to arrange for me if it was necessary.

Please I am not by this chapter telling you to now transfer the load of finding you a wife or husband to other people; I am just saying that if the Lord chooses to use this method, do not reject it because you erroneously think it is not modern. It is good and acceptable in the sight of God and He will use it if the situation calls for it and you are open to it.

It is not a forced marriage, just an arranged one.



Q&A

SIR, MY PARENTS WANT ME TO MARRY A MAN I DO NOT LIKE. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Simple; refuse! If even God will not make you marry someone you do not like, why do you think parents can? God brought Eve to Adam, and Adam made a decision. Your parents can bring up a suggestion; that is alright. They must however allow you decide if it is okay with you. Please refer to the chapter (No 16) on arranged marriages in this book and get understanding.

SIR, WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN TO DO WHEN THE PARENTS DO NOT ACCEPT ONE'S CHOICE OF A MATE?

In this one you have to be careful. If the parents are believers who know the word of God, then you must go and pray. Parents, when they perform their roles properly, are actually a layer of protection in the life of young people. That is something about authority figures generally.

Now, sometimes the parents give their reasons, and those reasons are totally against the word of God. For example, they may object because the man or woman is from a 'wrong' ethnic group or he is not rich yet. It is very common for parents to refuse a suitor for their daughter because his father is a nobody. Some even go to diviners and the oracle (or prophet) tells them it is not to be a good marriage. This is idolatry which a Christian must never subscribe to. When they start giving such ungodly reasons, they are pitching themselves against the word of God in your life and you must take a stand. Authority figures are not permitted to directly oppose the written⁸ word of God (Acts 4:19).

⁸ Please note that it is the written word of God that we are talking about, not the 'witness in your spirit' which can mean anything and which changes with the weather.

When parents directly oppose God's word in their opposition, then it is time to be the light. Explain to them in polite but clear terms that the principles they are operating by are against the word of God, and you have no choice but to be against them here.

One thing I must say here is that it is good that this is not the first time they are discovering you respect the word of God. Many people make the mistake of compromising with their parents on everything else but then take a stand for the word of God now because it supports their love life. If that is your case, you will smell pepper before God defends His word in your life. These cases differ widely from one another, so all I can give are some general guides.

It will take patience and prayer.

Please bear in mind that women, as a rule, are to be given in marriage. Usually this is done by the father. As a woman, you can't just flaunt that rule and be guiltless; so pray and wait until you persuade your parents. Your pastor or friend cannot give you out in marriage unless your natural father first disowns you, and this because of your faith (not because of marriage). Many pastors have committed this error and given Christianity a bad name and encouraged rebellion.

It is different for a man who has more liberty once he has *leaved* his parents. Even in this, it is better to use patience and prayers to win them over, even if they remain in a grumbling state, rather than to just ignore them entirely. It is still your duty to be a light to them in many more things that will come forth in life.

SIR, IS DATING BEFORE MARRIAGE AMONG CHRISTIANS GODLY?

First, let us get our definitions aligned. What do we mean when we say dating? The Bible does not use that word so we just have to see what is meant contemporarily.

If by dating we mean just to go out with someone, eat, watch a movie and just get acquainted, I think it sounds harmless enough

and it is not forbidden for Christians. Of course we understand that you are not likely to propose marriage to a person who you have given no signals ahead of time; so unless this so-called dating is for the direct purpose of working up to the point of marriage proposals I do not think it has a useful purpose. If it is the idea of pairing off in a Pentecostal form of girlfriend-boyfriend romantic relationships, whether it involves sex or not, it is not appropriate. It is a needless and deceptive way by which young Christian people get themselves into unnecessary romantic entanglements.

Everything in life has a purpose. So what is the purpose of those romantic relationships? It is not true that you need a long time to know someone who you want to marry. Even if you need the time, you do not have to be in a private romantic relationship with the person. You can know someone very well without being emotionally involved. By the time romantic emotions set in, you should have marriage proposals ready or close at hand.

When these things are used carelessly they lead to unnecessary temptations and falling into sexual sins. Paul said 'flee temptations.' Avoid all things that fire up your hormones and lead you into temptation.

Just for emphasis, Christian relationships before marriage must be non-sexual. The idea of fornication is not a 'holiness movement' thing. These days we preach more faith and prosperity and so we forget to remind ourselves about the basics of Christianity. Sex before marriage is against the will of God, even if you are engaged to the person. Engagement and marriage are two totally different things.

SIR, IS IT GOOD TO BE IN COURTSHIP FOR A LONG TIME? HOW LONG SHOULD IT BE?

Again let us understand what we mean when we use the term courtship. Some use the term to mean the period between the point a man shows interest in a woman and the point they come to an

agreement to marry. This is actually the proper meaning in the English language, according to the dictionary I consulted. If this is what we are talking about, then it is not a good question to ask whether one should be in courtship for a long time. Courtship in that sense is for the purpose of setting the stage for engagement and so should be as short as is possible.

Now my experience is that when many Christians use the term courtship, they assume the man and the woman are already in agreement to get married one day, sooner or later, and they are getting to know themselves better before the date. In this sense courtship means the period between engagement and marriage.

The question now is whether this period should be long?

I have heard arguments on why it should be long. People say the time is needed to get to know each other very well. Well if that is the case, it means the marriage proposal was premature. By the time you are proposing marriage to someone, or you are accepting, I think common sense dictates that you should know the person enough to be willing to marry him or her. If you are not sure you want to marry someone, then please don't propose marriage or accept it yet. Keep watching the person and relating generally in the meantime.

The problem is often that a young man may like someone (he falls in love), and because he is a Christian who is not allowed to have a girlfriend, the only thing he can do is to propose marriage. A marriage proposal is supposed to be a proposal to marry, not just a declaration of love. Unfortunately the latter is what it turns out to be for most young Christians. This is why they start the so-called courtship that has no choice but be long. The truth is that they were not really planning to marry when they proposed marriage. I was that young at a time too and was in the university; I look back now and laugh. That is why more than 80% of those 'engagements' did not make it to marriage.

Should courtship in this sense be long?

Apart from cases in which there are special problems, it can't possibly be long if persons involved were actually planning to marry before giving or accepting the marriage proposal. It is a question I hear only from young people who are still in school or just leaving. Those who actually want to marry don't have time for such. Let me state it clearly for those who are 'getting engaged' early so they can fulfil the long length many have advocated: *you don't need it*. The word of God and experience have shown us that the quality of a marriage is not affected in any way by the length of the engagement. So please don't waste the time.

Please I am not saying you should rush into marriage; I am only saying the time of caution must be before you get into that engagement. Do not propose marriage to a woman, no matter how much you love her, unless you have a plan to marry soon.

Also please my dear woman, please do not accept a marriage proposal from a man who has no serious plans for marriage anytime soon. Try and understand the difference between a love proposal and a marriage proposal. A lot of young Christian men only have love proposals which they think are marriage proposals. If it is a love proposal, keep it so. Love him too and keep loving him on the phone. Don't make any commitment to him. When he is ready with a marriage proposal, let him come back. Don't let any man waste your time.

I AM IN LOVE WITH A YOUNG MAN WHO SAYS NOTHING TO ME. BECAUSE OF THIS MAN I HAVE REJECTED MANY SUITORS. I FEAR I MIGHT KEEP REJECTING SUITORS AND AT THE END HE WILL NOT MARRY ME. AGAIN SHOULD I ACCEPT ANOTHER PERSON'S PROPOSAL KNOWING THAT THE REAL ME IS IN LOVE WITH ANOTHER PERSON?

I have two answers here. First, if you are not living as a Christian (maybe because you are not) and this man you say you are in love with is your boyfriend who you are having sex with and so you are soul-tied to him, then I am sorry to say I am a teacher of believers only. The only thing I have to tell you is that you should give your life to Christ and God's will *will* be revealed to you. Whether you are in love or not, you need Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sin in His blood.

However, if you are a believer, I think you should know you are walking in self-deception. I know you think this thing you are feeling is real, but trust me, this love you feel is called infatuation. Stop fooling yourself. If a man has said nothing, he has said nothing. No matter how nice he is and no matter how much he shows affection, until he says something, he has said nothing. In this marriage matters, there can be no assumption. Pray for God to help you forget him and find someone else who is ready to marry you and who you like. There is nothing like "the real me is in love with someone else;" those things are the problems created by reading romance novels and watching too much movies. It is just a simple attraction which you are concentrating too much on. It does not mean you are bad; it happens to everyone at one point in life or the other. It even happens to some married people, and it is the reason why people in those permissive societies change wives and husbands every so often. "The heart wants what the heart wants" is pure carnality.

Also, for men, if you are chasing a woman and she looks and behaves very interested, propose marriage and get your response. If she says no, believe her. Don't stay there wasting your time because you claim you love her. Collect your love and go somewhere else. Jesus said if you are persecuted in one city, flee to the next. A lot of ladies are afraid to let a man go until they get something better, so they keep showing positive signs while refusing to make a commitment. It is wrong and wicked. As a man, defend yourself by laying your cards on the table and demanding an answer from her.

Believe the answer when she gives it; if she still says nothing, forget her and move on.

SIR, COULD YOU KINDLY ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF DENOMINATIONS AS IT RELATES TO MARRIAGE. WE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT THAT AS CHRISTIANS WE MUST NOT MARRY UNBELIEVERS. BUT NOW IN CHRISTENDOM, ARE WE PERMITTED TO DECIDE BASED ON DENOMINATIONS SINCE WE ARE ALL BELIEVERS IN CHRIST JESUS?

It is most certainly right that a Christian should not marry an unbeliever. However, the issue of denominations is not so.

First let me talk about denominations a bit.

What is my denomination? I am asked this sometimes. My answer truly is I don't have any. I am simply a Christian. I know I fit what people will call a Pentecostal and Charismatic, but I personally do not like labels. I am a Christian and that is all I care about. I love the word of God and anyone that loves the word of God is acceptable to me. Though I do not pastor a church and currently attend a Pentecostal church, I preach most Sundays in one church or the other, and I think for now I preach as much in what we call orthodox churches as I do in new generation Pentecostal ones. So you see I look beyond denominations.

Also, we all know that even among Pentecostal and Charismatic churches there are many different groups of churches. The interesting thing is that even though they are all of the Pentecostal label and they believe essentially the same things, some will still frown at their members marrying from other Pentecostal churches. A lot of pastors are only afraid to lose their members through marriage and that is why they counsel against marrying from the other places. Beyond the matter of membership, some feel they are better than every other group. There are four church groups which I am aware of in Nigeria

today that each feels like it is the one that is the true church of Christ. Three of these are very well known Pentecostal churches. I think this madness is beyond the matter of marriage; I think anybody attending those churches should please learn to discern the body of Christ as Paul wrote in the first letter to the Corinthians. No, as long as we are all Christians, denomination should not matter in the matter of marriage.

Having said this however, it is not going to be easy to be in unity with someone who differs widely from you in important doctrines they hold unto. How are you going to pray for healing together with a spouse who does not believe that God still heals today? Are you going to be praying in other tongues in a home where your husband thinks that it is a manifestation of demons? "Two cannot walk together unless they are agreed" is what the Bible says, and so I don't think it practical for unmarried people who differ seriously in doctrines to pretend like they will marry and have fun unless at least one of them is planning to change and makes that change before marriage. I know they may both be Christians but are they truly agreed? It is another one of those recipes for trouble. This is one of those situations in which it is a matter of common sense to avoid possible hassles if you can, and God will have to prove it is His will, if it is, through mighty manifestations.

Please we should not be denomination minded; we should rather be more keen on love for the truth. Be sure that you and the person you want to marry are actually in agreement on major matters. There will *always* be varying degrees of differences in minor matters, so please relax on those. If one person believes that speaking in tongues is compulsory and the other thinks it is optional, I call that minor. It is clear they both believe in the current day manifestations of the Holy Spirit. One person may believe in tithing and the other doesn't; as long as they both believe in generous giving, there should be no problem. I have heard pastors teach that a woman should not marry a man who doesn't tithe. I think that is carrying minor things

to the extreme; it is a minor thing of Christianity and that is why it was not ever emphasized in the New Testament church recorded in the Bible.

SIR, I WANT TO ASK ABOUT A SITUATION IN WHICH A MARRIAGE SET ON A SOLID FOUNDATION STILL GOES WRONG. WHAT COULD BE THE CAUSE?

First, notice that the key word here is 'foundation.' A foundation is not a building; it is the solid base upon which a house stands. You can have a very solid foundation but add to it bad pillars and a leaky roof. The building will still fail despite the fact that the foundation is solid. So it is with marriage.

There are things to do to make a marriage sweet and enjoyable. There is work to do everyday. We don't just lay a solid foundation and go to rest. A solid foundation however makes restoration of a damaged or poorly finished building easy. A marriage with a solid foundation is also very easy to restore.

Marriage is a place where most people want to get it right even though their whole life is wrong. Well, no matter how well they discovered the will of God when choosing a mate, the fact that they are not keen on building every aspect of their lives on the word of God will make it impossible for them to build well on the solid foundation, even though they were able to successfully lay it.

SIR, IS IT ALRIGHT FOR A MAN TO MARRY A WOMAN WHO IS OLDER THAN HIM?

It is true that generally wives tend to be younger than their husbands. The fact that females mature physically earlier than males may partly explain why this is natural. However my study of the scriptures has revealed to me nowhere that this was commanded, admonished or implied. I have a lot of examples in modern times in which the wife

is older than the man and they led a very successful godly married life. I think therefore that if it is alright with the couple there is nothing wrong with it.

SIR, IF A MAN IS IN THE MINISTRY, SHOULDN'T HIS WIFE ALSO BE IN THE MINISTRY WITH HIM? IS IT POSSIBLE FOR A PREACHER AND HIS WIFE TO BE PURSUING DIFFERENT CAREERS?

It is common practise for men who are in ministry to train their wives to join them in ministering; the women are encouraged to do essentially what the husband is doing. I don't think that is right most of the times.

Generally speaking, being in ministry just means to work in one way or another in the ministry. If this is what we are talking about, then it is good. I preach and my wife helps Kingdom-Word Ministries in whichever way needed. She leads prayers; being a trained accountant she helps with the auditing of accounts; she runs a business and the business gives to the ministry. Also she and others among my co-workers sometimes teach or give exhortations in our meetings, especially when I am absent. She has also honoured some speaking engagements on her own. It is all good.

However, being called into the ministry of the word as a calling can only be done by God and a husband cannot do it. It does not come to you by association. As at today my wife is not a preacher, and I cannot make her one. It is a wrong concept to expect that a preacher's wife must also be a preacher. It has no foundation in the scriptures. The only people in the Bible that I am aware of who were both in preaching ministries as a couple were Priscilla and Aquila, and Isaiah the prophet and his wife (he called her the prophetess). Most of the men mentioned in the Bible as preachers were married but you rarely hear of their wives being mentioned as ministers. Quite a number of women in the Bible were

also mentioned as prophetesses (Miriam, Deborah, Huldah etc), but apart from Priscilla and Mrs Isaiah I cannot easily recollect any other whose husband was also a preacher.

So we see that it was never implied that a man's wife must also be a minister of the word because he is one. If the woman is a minister, it will manifest and the husband should encourage her. However, if she is not, he should not even try to make her one; it is unnecessary. Just like a businessman can have a preacher as a wife, and a doctor can have a school teacher as a wife, so can a preacher's wife belong to any calling that the Lord chooses. She does not have to share your gift to be an effective helper; life has many facets.

SIR, I UNDERSTAND THAT THE BIBLE SAYS A WOMAN SHOULD BE SUBMISSIVE TO HER HUSBAND IN ALL THINGS. BUT WHAT ABOUT A SITUATION IN WHICH A MAN REQUESTS HIS WIFE TO DO SOMETHING THAT IS WRONG?

I will lay a few points clearly out here. One, submission is an attitude. I have explained that extensively in the relevant chapters in this book. It does not mean blind obedience. Also as I have already mentioned, authority figures are not permitted to directly oppose the written word of God (Acts 4:19). If it is something that is against the word of God, of course the woman cannot obey it.

I need to add however that this kind of question rarely comes up in a Christian home running normally on Christian principles. The problem we often have is that the home is run by every other principle apart from the word of God and then suddenly a husband begins to demand submission as prescribed by God at certain times. I am not saying the woman should therefore be non-submissive; I am just saying that I actually do not have a simple and straight forward answer to their question. The problem is usually much more

complicated than whether the woman should obey a certain instruction or not. Imagine a situation in which a man requests his wife to go sleep with a big man just because he hopes to get a contract that will make them rich. I think the least of the problems in that marriage is submission. The problem is more of demon-possession that requires serious casting out when a man will willingly give up his wife into a thing like that because of money. Let's follow God in every aspect and some questions will not even arise.

About Kingdom-Word Ministries

Kingdom-Word Ministries is a non-denominational teaching ministry based in Enugu, Nigeria. Activities of the ministry include weekly Bible classes at the ministry office, publication of free teaching tracts and books, radio/TV broadcasts and organizing teaching seminars in various towns and cities.

Pastor Bankie's audio message digital catalogue includes hundreds of messages which are available on CDs and MP3 Cds.

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Dr. Bankole Olusina, fondly called **Pastor Bankie**, is a teacher of the Word of God. He teaches from the platform of Kingdom-Word Ministries, a non-denominational teaching ministry based in Enugu, Nigeria. The emphasis of his teachings is the separation of the church from the world by the obedience to the truths of God. He is a member of the Light of Christ Community Alumni Fellowship (LOCCAF) Ministers' Forum and is happily married to the wife of his youth and partner in ministry, Ufuoma.



This picture of Pastor Bankie and his wife was taken at the venue of the Dec 2015 outreach seminar of Kingdom-Word Ministries, a week before their 16th wedding anniversary