CHRIST AND THE CHURCH AS A PARADIGM FOR MARRIAGE: AN EVALUATION OF CHRISTIAN PRE – MARITAL COUNSELLING PROGRAMMES IN KENYA

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby acknowledge that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.

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Purity Mùmbi Njoroge
2nd February 2009

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SUMMARY

The thesis examined Christian Pre – marital counselling among evangelical churches in Kenya. The study set out to investigate the hypothesis that "*Churches fail to set a clear and firm biblical basis on the marriage relationship during Pre-marital counselling in Kenya*" resulting in misconceptions about the marital relationship. The study examined the theological foundation of the biblical relationship between Christ and the church in order to understand the socio - cultural relationship between Christian marriage partners. It clarified the commitment, work and expectations involved to make both relationships work. The role, onset and content of Christian pre - marital counselling was also explored. This was done by tracing the roots of pre – marital counselling in the Old Testament and considering its implications to today's church. A clear distinction was made between secular and Christian counselling.

The study population comprised of coordinators of pre – marital counselling and couples in troubled marriages. A review of pre – marital counselling handbooks was also undertaken. This diverse population was a helpful representation in terms of weighing the topic at hand from a broader perspective. The study combined both qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative design permitted collection of rich data from study subjects' experiential and perceptual sets. This ensured that the study findings would be relevant and applicable to specific pre – marital counselling contexts. Three data collection instruments utilized were: Questionnaires, interview schedule and a checklist. The study's validity and reliability were ensured through the two sample populations and pre-test procedures for questionnaires and in-depth interviews.

The study investigations left no doubt that God's intention was for marriage to be a picture of how He relates with His bride who is the church. In so doing, the question of culture was addressed. The conclusion was that cultural practices are acceptable in as far as they do not contradict God's word and His purposes. Where the choice is between culture and obedience to God, the word of God should prevail. The study's hypothesis was also accepted.

The study made various recommendations for theory, practice and research. Key amongst them is the need to redefine the term Christian pre – marital counselling to encompass the outlined Biblical perspective. It also proposed the onset of such counselling to be childhood. As a result there were various players identified in the process of teaching the single Christian.

The study had one key product i.e. the redefinition of the term Christian pre – marital counselling.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 An Overview of Marriage & Pre – marital Counselling in Kenya

Marriage is an institution that was instituted by God in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:24). It was meant to be a most fulfilling relationship for both partners. The marriage union is important to both Christians and non-Christians albeit a very mysterious one. The apostle Paul refers to it as a profound mystery (Eph 5:32). This intrigue of relations between men and women has drawn a lot of attention and numerous books have been written on the subject. However, over the years marriage has continued to face various challenges.

These challenges have not just plagued non-Christians but also the Christian church. In the October 2007 issue of a local Christian daily, *'The Shepherd'*, the feature story was on troubled marriages. Writers observed that the phenomenon of troubled Christian marriages and divorce especially in the United States of America is on the rise. The daily highlighted the troubled marriage of renowned Christian women leaders Paula White and Juanita Bynum who were planning to divorce and had sued spouse respectively. In a study on divorce by the *Barna Research Group* (2006) in the United States, the survey found that divorce rates among conservative Christians were significantly higher than for other faith groups, and for atheists and agnostics. They summarized the findings as indicated in the table below.

Table One: Variation in divorce rates among Christian faith groups

Denomination (in order of decreasing divorce rate)	% Who have been divorced
Non-denominational (small conservative groups; independents)	34%
Baptists	29%
Mainline Protestants	25%
Mormons	24%
Catholics	21%
Lutherans	21%

Source: Barna Group1999. Online article:
http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_dira.htm , 2006-06-08.

Feinberg, Feinberg and Huxley (1993: ch11) note that the lack of proper equipping of engaged couples for marriage in America has created an epidemic both within and outside the church. The divorce rate they indicate hovered around fifty percent for both groups of great concern is the perpetual cycle that is furthered through children of divorce. They also point out that any counsellor would attest to the loneliness, abandonment, and dissatisfaction of children who have become victims of divorce. They therefore conclude that the counsellor facing the engaged couple today has the challenge to help them lay the foundation for a happy and successful marriage now more than ever.

The scenario is not very different in Kenya. The rate of divorce and separation is on the rise amongst Christians worldwide and Kenya is

no exception. A Christian writer in a leading local daily in Kenya pointed out *"Divorce rates are rising in Kenya as individualism grows, extended families drift apart and failed marriages lose their stigma."* Kamotho S (2001:6-7). Not only are church members affected by divorce but Christian leaders too. For example, a prominent evangelist in Kenya's capital Nairobi was featured very prominently in the local dailies in the months of January and February 2007 after she denounced and publicly insulted her former husband. Munene M and Mugonyi D (2007:3) give an overview of the goings on in this saga after the High court barred Bishop Wanjiru from being married to her fiancée who was also a church minister.

Four main factors may be attributed to this growing trend of divorce in the Kenyan church. The first is that of traditional beliefs and practices related to marriage. In traditional Africa, marriage was the focus of existence and hence was a requirement for everyone. Mbiti (2002:133) points out that it is important to note that the definition of marriage included polygamy in most cultures or polyandry in some. With the advent of Christianity, the definition changed to monogamy. Whereas a majority of evangelical Christians ascribe to monogamy, other traditional practices in relation to the wedding and marriage still pose a great challenge.

For example, some tribes did not advocate for cross-cultural marriages with certain tribes. Either those who do so are ostracized or parents block the marriage. Dowry, which is key to the marriage ceremony, does sometime become a challenge when the bride's parents ask for exorbitant fees that the groom may not be able to raise. Failure to raise this may result in the bride being locked in the house and this has resulted in delay at many weddings and animosity amongst the in-laws, which eventually affects the marital

relationship. Kenya is a country endowed with a wide variety of cultures having over 50 tribal groups coexisting together. Due to urbanization, different people have met in the cosmopolitan city of Nairobi or elsewhere resulting in many cross-cultural marriages. As the church grapples with the effect of transition from traditional beliefs to Christianity, the church has failed to come up with clear guidelines in regard to Christian marriage. The key question that needs to be answered is where culture and Christianity meet.

The second factor is that of modernity. The definition of marriage seems to pose great challenges amongst Christians in the world with some advocating for same sex marriages. The church has seen some denominations ordain gay ministers. Modernity also seems to advocate that marriage is not a necessity. Marriage is perceived as a difficult and problematic thing that interferes with ones ambition, which is at best not entered into. Many alternatives have been proposed. One of the most popular is 'the booty call' as explained by Nyambura P (2006: 6-7). This is where you get into a sexual relationship with a man or woman whom you call at your own convenience. Randa M (2006:8-9) observes that for those who choose to get married, wedding ceremonies are so expensive that only a few are able to afford. An average Kenyan wedding costs between Kshs. 300,000 – Kshs. 350,000. The pressure for such elaborate weddings is more in the urban centres. As a result many including Christians who feel they cannot afford this, end up moving in together without solemnizing their marriages.

The third challenge for the church is preparation for marriage. In traditional Africa, preparation for marriage was a long process, which was marked with rituals. According to Mbiti (2002: 134) the final ritual was initiation, which then meant that one was now ready

for marriage. During initiation, the elders emphasized to the initiates what has been passed on to them along the way regarding their society's expectation of them as mature adults. The Theological Advisory Group (1996:65) notes that while young people in the past were prepared for marriage, this training has been lost today. Churches however conduct pre-marital counselling when the couple presents themselves to the minister for purposes of solemnizing the marriage. By then the couple is already emotional about their intended marriage that questioning how they figured out they need to start a home together would not be taken positively.

In recent years, the church has tried to revive the traditional rites of passage (ROPES). ROPES is a one week camp that is conducted after children complete their primary education. It usually runs immediately after the candidates' final exam, which is around the months of November or December. This program is aimed at developing self-discipline in the areas of faith and interpersonal relationships. The relationships that are usually addressed are peers, opposite sex and parent relationships. There are teaching sessions and group discussions although a large part of the training involves outdoor challenges and obstacles that require teamwork or self-discipline.

The fourth factor is the lack of Role models. In the earlier mentioned feature in October issue 2007 of 'The Shepherd', Many Christians especially the single ladies have expressed concern over the impact of the two high profile Christian troubled marriages will have on their perception of marriage and ministry. It has been estimated over the years that the Kenyan population is 80% Christian. Nevertheless, within the last fifteen years or so, there has been significant violence and unfaithfulness in marriages. This has led to a formation

of non – governmental organizations such as Coalition against Women Violence (COVAW) and Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) that offer services to women in stressful and abusive marriages. Role models are key to development and growth. Titus 2:4 - 5 emphasizes the role of the older persons in teaching the younger in relation to marriage. However, how can the older teach if they are unable to keep their marriages together?

However, the emphasis in counselling the initiates is geared towards avoiding pre – marital sex, relationships with parents and how to work towards a career. Some churches, for example, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa P.C.E.A have taken the ROPES programme to be a time to teach the initiates their traditional beliefs. This church brings together the candidates for circumcision and during the healing period, they undergo some teachings. Girls do not undergo circumcision but they too are put in a different group for the purposes of teaching. Whereas this is a good program, it is important to point out that the ROPES candidates are not ready to make a decision for marriage. They are usually around 14 years old and are looking forward to joining high school before embarking on a career. Hence, when it comes to Christian marriage, an individual is usually on his/her own. It is important to note that ROPES is an important programme that came to fill a gap in the church but there is a need to offer clear direction based on the word of God.

There are a few churches that conduct pre – marital counselling programmes. For example the Nairobi Chapel, International Christian Centre and Mamlaka churches. Whereas these programmes are meant for their individual congregations, they attract a large number of participants from other churches. This is due to the lack of such programmes in most churches especially the

main stream churches i.e. the Presbyterian, Anglican churches. For those Churches that conduct pre-marital counselling, their content has been adapted from the west. A closer look at the manuals reveals that most of their references are from western writers especially those from the United States of America. Some of the Christians have shunned these as lacking the African perspective of marriage. Brown and Brown (1999:13) quoted Dr. Wakaba in his discussion of African and Western marriages saying that industrialization, westernization, education, urbanization and even westernized Christianity have moved the contemporary African family away from the biblical model rather than towards it. The church on the other hand has failed to give guidelines on where culture and the bible meet in relation to Christian marriages.

The concept of pre-marital counselling seems to be taking root in the city of Nairobi. It is therefore imperative that a review of what is existing is undertaken in order to maximize the impact of such programmes. However, where ministers may want to implement pre - marital counselling upcountry, they lack the expertise. Most of them thus rely on cultural practices or what has been done by others to counsel couples. This thus creates a need for development of a framework that the church may use to implement or evaluate their pre-marital counselling programmes.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to review Christian pre-marital counselling programmes for churches in Kenya. The study used the paradigm of Christ and the Church as a model for understanding the complexities involved in the marriage relationship. It examined four categories namely: Expectations, Commitment, Work and Outcome. It provides a unique way in which to review Christian pre–marital

counselling programs for churches in Kenya and beyond. Pre-marital counselling is critical especially in these changing times. However, when programmes are implemented, it is always important to review their impact. In this way initiators of such programmes would be able to revise and improve their effectiveness. Review of existing programmes is also beneficial especially for those that seek to initiate the same using the earlier programmes as a model.

This study examined already existing pre-marital counselling programmes with an aim of proposing areas needing revision for greater impact. This study is very important for Anchoring Consultants, a Christian Psychological firm where the researcher works. One of the firm's main goals is to work with the evangelical church in Kenya in order to equip the Christian leaders with counselling skills that will augment their outreach to the community. The researcher will therefore use the study and the knowledge acquired during this study to train ministers who have limited resources and opportunity to attend training and yet have a passion and commitment to serve God in the rural areas of Kenya in the course of duty.

The researcher also hopes to communicate the findings of this study to the Kenyan church using various available forums for example conferences and seminars organized by the Kenya Counsellors Association (KCA), and other speaking engagements especially those involving pastors workshops.

Engelhart (1972:12) stated, *"...What the research thesis does for the student is equally important. If the thesis serves to enhance the student's understanding of his professional field, gives him an abiding interest in his problem and stimulus to further research in*

the area, and results in knowledge and appreciation of scientific methods and attitudes, his degree is deserved." It is anticipated that the researcher in this study will benefit immensely in knowledge in Christian pre – marital counselling and that it will ignite an interest and stimulus for further research in the field of Christian marriage counselling.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

- ☑ To evaluate existing Christian pre-marital counselling programmes in Nairobi. These will include already existing pre-marital classes such as Nairobi Chapel and Mamlaka and the counselling sessions held in the mainstream churches such as the Anglican and Presbyterian churches.
- ☑ To examine the theological foundation of the biblical relationship between Christ and the church in order to understand the socio - cultural relationship between Christian marriage partners;
- ☑ To compare expectations between Christ and the Church on one hand and between marriage partners on the other;
- ☑ To clarify the nature of commitment in being a member of Christ's Church and entering a marriage relationship;
- ☑ To clarify the kind of work involved to make both relationships work;
- ☑ To establish the role of pre - marital counselling;

1.4 Hypothesis of the Study

Churches fail to set a clear and firm biblical basis on the marriage relationship during Pre-marital counselling in Kenya.

1.5 Conclusion

The challenges facing marriage are accelerated by the mass media. Right from childhood, individuals are bombarded with concepts regarding human relationships that are not in line with the Christian faith. With the lack of clear guidelines this has led to a general lack of understanding on the marital relationship as set out in the word of God. Christians in Kenya seem to draw more from their cultural background or secular literature when considering marriage. Although there has been some research on marriage, the researcher has not yet come across one that investigates pre-marital counselling in Kenya.

The challenge for the church in modern day Kenya thus is to develop a tailor made guideline for pre-marital counselling that addresses the critical concerns of the modern day Christian. The key questions that need to be addressed include:

- ☑ Is there a biblical basis for Pre -marital counselling or is it a western concept?
- ☑ What should the content be?
- ☑ What is the relation between Christ and the church and how does this relate to the marriage union?
- ☑ Where do culture and the bible meet?
- ☑ At what point should the church introduce pre-marital counselling?
- ☑ Who should conduct it?

The study used empirical methods to gather primary data by use of questionnaires and personal interviews conducted by the researcher. It also contains an element of literal research as it includes exegesis of key texts and in review of already published manuals used in various pre-marital counselling classes in Nairobi.

In the next chapter, the researcher first explores marriage through an in-depth examination of the paradigm of Christ and the church and marriage. This chapter also contains an in-depth look at culture and Christian marriage. In the following chapters the study proceeds to set the biblical basis of pre-marital counselling, explain the study design and methods used to gather primary data. It then moves on to analyze and interpret the data and concludes with recommendations.

Chapter Two

Explaining the Paradigm: an In-Depth Analysis of How Christ's Relationship with the Church Impacts on Marriage

2.1 Overview

The relationship between marriage partners is similar to the relationship between Christ and the church. The paradigm is clearly set out by Paul in his writing to the Ephesians in chapter 5:22-33 in which he states:

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church; however, let each one of you

love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (RSVA)

In this passage, Paul brings out the comparison between Christ and the church and marriage. In verse 32, he notes that the relationship between husbands and wives is a profound mystery yet it refers to Christ and the church. These verses form the basis of this study. It is important to also note that in the Old Testament days God often used the allegory of marriage to refer to His relationship with Israel. Many biblical scholars concur with this thought.

For example, Easton (2007) notes *"The marriage relation is used to represent the union between God and his people (Is 54:5; Jer 3:1-14; Hos 2:9, Hos 2:20). In the New Testament the same figure is employed in representing the love of Christ to his saints (Eph 5:25-27). The Church of the redeemed is the "Bride, the Lamb's wife" (Rev 19:7-9)."* Commenting on the Ephesians passage Foy (2006) points out that the relations between spouses should be such in closeness of bond and degree of trust that they are appropriately compared to the relation of Christ and his church.

Strauss (2006) on the same passage writes *"If there is one thing he wanted these folks to understand about marriage, it was that the husband-wife relationship can be compared to the relationship between Christ and His church. He repeated it three times in three successive verses. Then, after speaking of a man being joined to his wife, he makes this amazing assertion: "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church". The marriage relationship was intended by God to be a living illustration of the relationship between Christ and His church. Although marriage was instituted in the Garden of Eden long before the church began, that union nevertheless anticipated the fact that God would someday*

form the church and ultimately present it to His Son as His bride. This is a great mystery, a divine truth hidden in ages past but now clearly revealed. Marriage is a magnificent drama, vividly portraying the relationship between Christ and the church."

Deffinbaugh (2006) concurs with Strauss. He indicates that the symbolism of marriage can only be understood in the light of the substance on which a Christian marriage is based and that is the mystery of Christ's relationship to His church.

Other scholars have had this to say on the same:

"Paul's concept of marriage is that of a spiritual head and body. .... As there must be spiritual coordination between Christ and the church (the Head and body), Paul indicates that there must be spiritual coordination between the husband (who is the head) and the wife (the body) within the marriage relationship." (Kuykendall 2002:7)

"...Christ's spiritual union with the church, mystically represented in marriage, is of deep import." (Fausset 2007).

This chapter will therefore systematically examine relationships of marriage, Christ and the Church and how they compare in order to gain a broader perspective of Paul's assertions. The chapter will conclude with an examination of culture and how it relates to Christian marriage.

2.2 How the relationship begins

Relationships of all kinds always have a beginning. For example if one was to consider an employee - employer relationship, one is not considered an employee on the interview day. The relationship

begins the day he or she reports for work and responsibilities are allocated to them. Likewise, there is a point at which Christ's relationship with the church begins just as there is a point at which a relationship between two people intending to get married begins. The genesis of any relationship is foundational. It determines the outcome of the relationship.

Collins (1988:392) lists various reasons for the present instability in marriage. In the list he includes sexual attraction, the desire to escape from a difficult situation at home, a vague feeling of love among others. These he points out cause many marriage relationships to be too flimsy to withstand the pressures, challenges and storms of daily living. This section hence considers how the relationships of Christ and the church and marriage begin in an effort to figure out the foundations on which a strong Christian marriage is based on.

2.2.1 Finding a spouse

The relationships of marriage and that of Christ and the church find their beginning in the book of Genesis. In the Genesis 2 account of the creation, God creates man without a mate. Adam was lonely but he does not request God for a helpmate. In verse 18 God notes Adam's need and decides to create for Him a helper. Verses 21-23 recount how God created Eve and Adams reaction. As a result of this act of creating Eve, marriage is born. The world would like people to believe that people get married because they love each other. However, the scripture in Isaiah 34:16 notes that it is God's mouth that calls the mates out and His spirit that gathers them together. Attraction and the resultant emotions are tools that He uses to

draw mates together. Easton (2007) in reference to Gen 2:18 – 24 notes that marriage was instituted in Paradise when man was in innocence and that it is from here that we have its original charter which was confirmed by Christ as the basis on which all regulations are to be made in Mt 19:4 – 5.

Likewise, God reaches out to Adam & Eve when He calls out to them and dresses them after they ate the forbidden fruit and hid from Him on realizing they were naked (Gen 3:9, 21). He then promises them a saviour in (Gen 3:14-15). Man is the recipient and not the initiator of his relationship with God. Scripture is full of verses that clearly point out that the plans of the redemption of man and the resultant relationship was all God's idea. For example John 3:16 points out that as a result of God's love for the world (man), He gave His son. Christ died for man while he was still a sinner (Rom 5:8; Eph 5:25-27) in order that he might have a relationship with man.

From this a key question does arise. How then does God bring the two spouses together? The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (H.I.V) and Auto Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) pandemic has also brought out a key question to be addressed about spouses coming together. Is it possible for God to bring two discordant persons for marriage?

2.2.1.1 How does God bring the spouses together?

If bringing spouses together is the work of God, then what is man's involvement in it? Is he just a passive partaker of the process? Does the woman have a role? Pro 18:22 reads:

"He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favour from the Lord"

The Key words to note in this text are 'he' and 'finds'. A common question that single persons have to grapple with is "who is the first to approach the other for a relationship?" Going by the text, the use of the word 'he' may be construed to mean that it is the man who seeks out his Bride. It is interesting to note that since the husband is a picture of Christ, he ought to be the one who makes the first step to seek out his bride. Christ took the first step to seek out His beloved as evidenced in Lk 19:10 and Rom 10:20.

One may consider the term 'find' to mean that although it is God's work to bring spouses together, there is an active role for the involved parties. The man seeks or finds while the woman responds to that search. This concept is well outlined in Jn 1:11 – 13

"He came to that which was His own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God ... " (NIV)

Jesus sought His bride. Nevertheless it is up to his bride, the church, to accept His proposition. Anyone who accepts it then becomes part of His bride the church. Should anyone decline the proposal, then they miss out on being part of His church. This means that when a man

is led by God to approach a lady to be his wife, the lady has an option to accept or reject the proposal. They are therefore active partakers in this work of God.

The key thing is for each one to hear the voice of God leading them. God does promise to be with His disciples Mat 28:20. His presence with them would ensure a constant lending and empowerment to fulfil his will. How does God lead the man to His future mate? Jn 10:27 indicates that God speaks to His sheep i.e. his people. God leads men in many ways. In the New Testament we see instances where spoke to His disciples through visions. One such example is found in Acts 9:10 – 16 when He asked Ananias to go and lay hands on Saul. Sometimes He sent others to speak to them to give them direction. For example the epistles of Paul contain numerous directions for the church and specific people in those churches. God is not bound to working in a particular way. He can use any means to cause an individual to discover the path He has chosen for Him.

Whatever way the Lord does choose to lead his people one thing is certain, His people know his voice and can understand His leading hence they follow Him (Jn 10:27). The promise of Isaiah 30:21 indicates the Lord's willingness to guide His people along the way when He says:

Whether you turn to the right of to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." (NIV)

2.2.1.2 Can God bring a discordant couple together in these days of H.I.V/AIDS?

The challenge of the AIDS pandemic brings a different challenge to Christian singles who hope to get married. What happens if a couple that is engaged to be married has a discordant H.I.V status? Should they split up or view this as God's cue to split up? Could their coming together have anything to do with a work of God? It is essential to point out that there are very many causes of discordance in courting couples. For example, in physical disability, other forms of terminal illness such as cancer, inability to bear children etc. The H.I.V/ AIDS challenge is compounded by the possibility of the virus being transmitted from one spouse to the other. Whereas in scripture there is no precedence of the H.I.V challenge it is vital to note some of the things that God asked of His servants.

For example in the book of Hosea, we find the prophet being instructed by God to marry an adulterous wife in Hos 1:2. His wife Gomer bore him three sons; it seems that she did not give up her wayward ways because in chapter three of the same book we read about of their reconciliation. A pertinent thing to note is that Hosea married Gomer because the Lord intended to symbolize to Israel her sins in departing from the Lord. Gomer was in an undesirable position because she chose to be adulterous. Likewise there are persons who have found they carry the H.I.V virus owing to their lifestyles. Others

have found themselves in the predicament owing to a choice that was not their own. For example due to sexual assault, blood transfusion etc. Should such persons only be married to persons of a similar status to theirs?

Scriptures observe that it is God who directs the steps of men. For example Jer 10:23

"...a man's life is not his own; it is not for a man to direct his steps" (NIV)

Pro 16:9 seems to concur with this thought. The key thing in trying to answer this question is the Lord's leading. Hosea clearly heard the voice of God and determined his response. He is not hoodwinked by God to marry Gomer but rather God clearly tell him the kind of woman she is. If we are to use this story to help us answer the question at hand, it is key for both spouses to be to be aware of the status. The negative spouse needs to be listening to God to know what direction to take. Upon confirmation, they may decide to either get married or call off their engagement. If their decision is to get married, then like all other couples and like Hosea did with Gomer (Hos 3:3), their commitment is to faithfulness.

In line with the paradigm, the H.I.V infection may be symbolic of sin. To many it is like a death sentence. The wages of sin according to Rom 6:23, the wages of sin is death. Christ came to give life to all who believe. He doesn't give up on the church because of her sin but

rather He died for her and continues to cleanse her to present her blameless before His Father Jude 24. To answer the question at hand, there seems to be no scripture negating the thought that God can bring two discordant couples together. Their choice upon confirmation that this is God's leading, is to seek out the wisdom God has bestowed upon men on how to avoid infecting the uninfected spouse. For as it is written in Eph 2:10:

"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do". (NIV)

Boa (2006) indicates that marriage was not invented by man, but instituted by God. It was divinely designed not only to be the basic building block of society, but also to provide an earthly analogy of spiritual truth. For any successful marriage, this foundational truth is very important. It is not rare to hear one spouse say they no longer love their partner or that they made a mistake hence are seeking a way out. God may have used attraction and the emotion of love as a tool to bring them together but that should not be considered as the sole reason that individuals marry.

The sole responsibility of bringing spouses together is God and it is all in His good and perfect plan for their life as voiced in Jer 29:11 when God says,

"For I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."
(RSVA)

The walk of marriage just as the spiritual walk of faith in Christ has its ups and downs but all these have been crafted by the Fathers hand. The designer has one purpose in mind that is to give the recipient a future and a hope.

2.2.2 Entering into the relationship

The beginning of man's relationship with God is a transforming encounter with Him. This is what is referred to as conversion. Grenz (1996:179) defines conversion as *"that life-changing encounter with the triune God which inaugurates a radical break with our old fallen existence and a new life in fellowship with God, other believers, and eventually with all creation."* Likewise in marriage, there is a definite day that all this takes place. This refers to the wedding day. It is at this point that one makes a commitment to one spouse which is corresponds with the Christian conversion. The wedding day signifies joining together (Mt 19:6). Torrey (2007) observes that when this happened in bible times, there was great rejoicing and feasting for seven days. (Jer 33:11; Jn 3:29; Gen 29:22; Jud 14:10; Mt 22:2; Mt 22:3; Jn 2:1-10; Jud14:12)

Fausset (2007) gives a detailed account of what happened during weddings in the bible times. He writes:

"No formal religious ceremony attended the wedding, a blessing was pronounced, and a "covenant of God" entered into (Ezekiel 16:8; Malachi 2:14; Proverbs 2:17; Genesis

24:60; Ruth 4:11-12). The essential part of the ceremony was the removal of the bride from her father's house to that of the bridegroom or his father. The bridegroom wore an ornamental turban; (Isaiah 61:10), "ornaments," rather (peer) "a magnificent headdress" like that of the high priest, appropriate to the "kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6); the bride wore "jewels" or "ornaments" in general, trousseau. He had a nuptial garland or crown (Song of Solomon 3:11), "the crown wherewith His mother (the human race; for He is the Son of man, not merely Son of Mary) crowned Him in the day of His espousals"); and was richly perfumed (Song of Solomon 3:6). The bride took a preparatory bath (Ezekiel 23:40). This is the allusion in (Ephesians 5:26-27); "Christ loved … gave Himself for the church, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church not having spot." The veil (tsaip) was her distinctive dress, covering the whole person, so that the trick played on Jacob was very possible (Genesis24:65; Genesis29:23); the symbol of her subjection to her husband's power, therefore called "power on her head" (1Corinthians11:10). ……... She also wore girdles for the breasts ("attire," kishurim) which she would not readily forget (Jeremiah2:32). Also a gilded or gold "crown" or chaplet (kullah), a white robe sometimes embroidered with gold thread (Revelations 19:8; Psalm 45:13-14) and jewels (Isaiah 61:10). Late in the evening the bridegroom came with his groomsmen "companions," (Judges 14:11); "children of the bride chamber," (Mathew 9:15), singers and torch or lamp bearers leading the way (Jeremiah 25:10); the bride meantime with her maidens eagerly awaited his coming. Then he led the bride and her party in procession home with gladness to the marriage supper

(Mathew 25:6; Mathew 22:1-11; John 2:2; Psalm 45:15). The women of the place flocked out to gaze. The nuptial song was sung; hence in (Psalm78:63) "their maidens were not praised" in nuptial song is used for "were not given in marriage," margin. The bridegroom having now received the bride, his "friend's joy (namely, in bringing them together) was fulfilled" in hearing the bridegroom's voice (John3:29). Song of (Solomon3:11); the feast lasted for seven or even 14 days, and was enlivened by riddles, etc. (Judges14:12.) Wedding garments were provided by the host, not to wear which was an insult to him. Large water pots for washing the hands and for "purifying" ablutions were provided (Mark7:3)."

Wedding days are therefore important in that they symbolize leaving an old life by the removal of the bride from her parent's home. A blessing is then pronounced over them during the ceremony by the minister. A sinner's conversion results in great rejoicing in heaven (Lk 15:7) and also with those around who were sharing the gospel. The celebrations and joy that follow the new marriage union are symbolic of this joy signifying a new covenant relationship.

The public wedding ceremony may bee seen as an opportunity for the bride to own the groom in public. The groom is also able to own the bride in public as she is not ashamed of him. This import is drawn from the scriptures in Mt 10:33 and Lk 12:9 where Christ indicates that whoever denies him before men, Christ will also deny him before His father. The opposite is also true as indicated in Lk 12:8

"And I tell you, every one who acknowledges me before men, the Son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God" (RSVA)

Whereas no extravagant spending goes into owning Christ, the Christian couple intending to get married needs to consider how they will own each other before men without feeling the constrains of finances. This negates the thought of a secret wedding where only the couple and God is aware that they are married i.e. the 'common come we stay' cohabitations even when the spouses are faithful to each other. A believer's new covenant relationship with Christ is not a secret relationship. It may be best symbolized by the reply the healed blind man gave to the Jewish leaders when they wanted him not to talk about what Jesus had done for him in Jn 9:24 – 25. He did not seem to care who was asking or what their opinion was of Christ. All he knew and was not willing to keep quiet about was that he was blind and his eyes had been opened. The wedding ceremony gives spouses a great opportunity to let the world know of their decision to enter into a covenant with each other in spite of what anyone else may think. This is especially important in the African context where in laws later try to influence the couple's relationship or even when they try to disinherit widows upon their husband's death. As observed in the previous paragraph, a public ownership of Christ means He shall never disown the believer.

An important aspect of the wedding is the issue of parent's consent. Scripture has a charge for children to honour their parents (Ex 20:12; Mt 15:4; Eph 6:2). Seeking parents consent is one way of honouring them. In scripture, the responsibility

of handing daughters over for marriage seems to lie in the hands of the parents. For example in Deut 7:3 and Ezra 9:12, God commands parents not to give their daughters or allow their sons to marry from other tribes. In Gen 24, Abraham's servant seeks consent from Laban and Bethuel to take Rebekah to Isaac as his wife. In verse 57 – 58, when the family desired to keep her for a little longer in order to say farewell, Rebekah's consent and decision was respected and thus she departed for her new home. In like manner, where parents are honoured by their children, it is important for them to take care and not provoke them (Eph 6:4).

It is also important to note that weddings are conducted within some God given authority called the government. Rom 13:1 emphasizes that the governing authorities that exist are established by God. Each country has some laws that govern marriage. For example, in Kenya one is required to register the marriage with the registrar of marriages a minimum of 21 days before the intended and receive a marriage certificate on the wedding day. The alternative to this is for the church where the wedding will be conducted to announce marriage banns at least three Sunday's before the material day. The couple receives a marriage certificate on the wedding day. The above mentioned Romans passage, exhorts believers to submit themselves to authority. Similar thoughts on submitting to authority are found in Heb 13:17. It is therefore very wrong for a Christian to disregard the laws of the land in relation to their marriage as they would be rebelling against God Rom13:2.

2.3 The Purpose of Marriage

Paul uses the analogy of a human body as he outlines the spouses' responsibilities. It is important to note that Christ is equated to the head, which is the husband's position, while the church is equated to the body which is the wife's position. The analogy of the church as the body of Christ is not new and is used in various places in Scripture such as Rom 12:4-5 and 1 Cor 12: 12-27.

Anatomically, the brain acts as the control centre of all bodily activity. Interfering with the brain or the delivery of instructions coming from it results in gross malfunction in the body. On the other hand, the head cannot function alone without relying on the other body parts. For example, whereas the head can function without some parts such as one leg or hand, it cannot function without e.g. the heart, kidneys etc. This picture helps us to clearly see the purpose of marriage which is oneness. This purpose is more explicitly outlined in Gen 2:24 which indicates

"Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." (RSVA)

Whereas the Ephesian passage goes on to outline the various responsibilities of a husband and wife, they should only be understood in the context of oneness. The context of oneness is no different from what God's relationship with the church. Christ in Jn 17:21-23 prayed for this oneness which is something He and the Father have. The Church cannot do anything without Christ thus He sent the Holy Spirit as a helper Jn 14: 15-18, 26. In that sense then one is able to see the kind of oneness that God desires between a

husband and wife. Christ sums it up aptly when He explained oneness in Mk 10: 7 – 9

'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, (8) and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. (9) **What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder**.*"[1] (RSVA)*

2.4 The Expectations of marriage

God being the author of marriage has various expectations for persons intending to get into the relationship. These include who should get married and the roles and responsibilities of the marriage partners.

2.4.1 The partners and their relationship

The first thing that one notices from the Genesis account is that God created one wife for Adam (Gen 2:18-23). It is therefore not possible for a Christian marriage to constitute more than two persons. This has to be a man and a woman (Gen 2:24). Likewise Christ's relationship with the church is an individual relationship. Men are not saved through proxy. They have to have a personal relationship with God (Jn 3:16). Their allegiance is to God alone and they cannot serve another (Ex 20:3; 1 Cor 1:11-17). To do so is to break fellowship with God. This contradicts the lifestyles of gay marriages, polygamy, polyandry or any other relationship involving more than two partners of the opposite sex in marriage.

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[1] Emphasis by researcher

Paul's charge to wives to submit to their husbands as to the Lord and the husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church (verses 22, 25) suggests that both marriage partners need to be conversant with the relationship of Christ and His Church. No wonder the bible is clear about being yoked with non believers (I Cor 6:14 – 18). The question of a believer marrying a non believer thus does not arise. The only exception of such a union is when one comes to Christ after their marriage (1 Cor 7:12-14). It is critical to point out that most that refer to themselves as Christians in the church are not necessarily believers. This therefore leads to confusion especially when it comes to marriage.

For instance, according to the P.C.E.A practice and procedures manual for one to become a member they have to profess Christ publicly and be baptized (1998:53). However, according to chapter 3 of the same baptism is accorded to infants usually not exceeding the age of four years. They are then considered to be full members of the church (Section 3.9). They are later encouraged at the right time to attend classes so that they may be admitted to the Holy Communion (Section 3.21). All this happens in childhood. It does not necessarily mean that the child has given their lives to Christ but rather that they have fulfilled the church's conditions for membership. What happens to a child who as a teen or an adult decides to fulfil the motions of the church while at the same time failing to accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour? It is therefore possible for one to assume that an individual is a Christian just because they are active at a church.

The relationship between the spouses is to be based on two key things. These are submission by the wife and love by the husband. Foy (2006) observes that spouses are:" *partners with distinctive and supplemental roles to fulfil or functions to perform.*" The paragraphs below examine these two roles systematically as outlined in the Ephesians 5 passage.

2.4.1.1 The Christian Wife (verses 22, 24, 33)

A Christian wife is to submit herself to her husband. Submission has been misunderstood resulting in a negative attitude towards it. Kuykendall (2002:25-31) discussing submission observes that the wife must understand the difference between status and role. He defines status as our standing before God and role as our responsibility from God. Men and women have an equal standing before God (Gal 3:26-29).

Submission is the woman's God- given responsibility. She is to willingly submit to the headship of the husband just as the church submits to Christ. The question that arises is how the Church submits to Christ. Because God is the author of the relationship with man, submission to Him means total obedience to His word and direction (Phil 2:5-8). The term submission therefore seems to mean the wilful decision to give oneself to the other. Paul in verse 33 seems to equate submission to the wife's respect for her husband.

Lahaye (1996:149-153) discuses Christ's total submission to the Father (Phil 2:4-8) which she observes

should be the kind of submission found in a Christian marriage. Whereas a husband and wife are equal before God, the husband is the head of the wife and they both must function as a team. She goes on to say that Christ's example teaches that true submission is neither reluctant nor grudging, nor a self imposed authority; rather it is an act of obedience to God when it is a chosen, deliberate, voluntary response to a husband.

Similar instructions are contained in 1 Pet 3:1-6. Here the writer describes submission as an inner beauty evidenced by a gentle and quiet Spirit. Peter brings out an important aspect of submission in verse 6 which is a lack of fear. Henry (2007) points out that, wives should be subject to their husbands, not from dread and amazement, but from desire to do well, and please God.

A vivid picture of submission is given in Rom 12:1-2

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
(RSVA)

Here Paul encourages the Christians to present their bodies as a living sacrifice to God. It seems to suggest that the Christian has a direction he may desire to take but he willingly gives that up for the sake of Christ. In like manner, wives are to submit to their husbands. In

the last verse of Eph 5 Paul says the wife is to respect her husband. It is important to note that this command is not conditional. The wife cannot take the attitude "I will if he will". She is to submit out of obedience to the Lord (Col 3:23-24). Submission seems to go against the world's perspective which is to demand or fight for our God given or perceived rights no matter the cost. It is important to note that the Romans passage urges believers not to follow the patterns of this world because God's standard is different.

Is there a time when a wife should not submit to her husband? The scripture has examples of numerous couples. Of great interest to this study is the response of women to their husbands and God. For example in Ex 4:24 – 26 we see Moses the servant of God facing imminent death owing to his failure to circumcise his son. It is his wife Zipporah that comes to his rescue by quickly fulfilling the Lord's requirement and touching her husband's feet with the flint knife. The bible does not say that Moses instructed her to do so or if it was on her own free will. If Moses had instructed her, then we see a clear picture of obedience. Nonetheless, if it was on her own will, we see a woman's obedience to God in the face of her husband's choice.

Another woman who did not seem to have considered her husbands wishes is Jael in Jud 4:17 – 22 who killed her husband's friend. He may not have been there to give his opinion but one sees a decisive decision by a woman to do the will of God notwithstanding the relationship her

husband had with Sisera. Abigail in 1 Sam 25: 1 – 38 rescued her home from bloodshed after her husband refused to give David's men food. Verse 19 records that she did not tell her husband Nabal about her decision to meet David and provide their needs. Could this be termed as lack of submission? She may be seen as having fulfilled the purpose for which God created Eve i.e. to help her husband. In Abigail's quest to help Nabal, she did not fail to submit. Paul in Eph 5:33 sums up submission as respect. There is no indication of her disrespecting her husband. We find that she later discloses to her husband everything (verse 37). This resulted in Nabal's death that the Bible indicates was the Lord striking him.

A different scenario and repercussions is seen in Acts 5:1-10 when Sapphira connives with her husband to lie about money they brought to the Lord. Verse 2 indicates that this was done with her full knowledge. Indeed she submitted to her husband such that when she came to Peter without her husband she stayed with their original story. Peter's question in verse 9 *"how could you **agree**[2] to test the Spirit of the Lord?"* suggests that Sapphira had a choice to disagree and honour God. The end result of this was her death.

Man is not infallible therefore there are limits to submission. The woman's allegiance is to God first, then her husband. The biblical words *"follow my example as I follow the example of Christ"* (1 Cor 11:1) provide a

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[2] Emphasis by researcher

guideline to the limits of submission. If the husband is leading in a direction that is not in line with the teachings of Christ, the woman is to thus follow Christ. This does not in any way mean that the non-believing husband is not the head of his home. Henry (2007) commenting on 1 Pet 3:1 concurs with this thought when he writes *"The wife must discharge her duty to her own husband, though he obeys not the word."*

2.4.1.2 The Christian Husband

The husband according to the Ephesians passage has the responsibility of headship. Christ is the head of the church. He leads by example as is evidenced in the life of Christ. He came not to Lord it over the church but to serve the church (Mt 20:28). Likewise the husband's headship is as that of Christ. Attributes of this headship as outlined in the Ephesians passage include love, cleansing, nourishment and cherishing of the wife. There is a need to look at this attributes more closely.

2.4.1.2 (a) Love (Eph 5:25)

Christ's love for the church caused Him to leave heaven to come and identify with sinful man and redeem him. (Jn 3:16; Heb 12:2). This kind of love is amazing and yet is the standard for the Christian husband who is supposed to love his wife just as Christ loves the church. The definition of this love is given by Paul in 1 Cor 13: 4- 8 which reads:

*"Love is **patient** and **kind**; love is **not jealous** or **boastful**; it is **not arrogant or rude**. Love **does not insist on its own way**; it is not irritable or resentful; it **does not rejoice at wrong**, but **rejoices in the right**. Love **bears** all things, **believes** all things, **hopes** all things, **endures** all things. Love **never ends**; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away."* (RSVA)[3]

Christ describes this kind of love in Jn 15:13 where he indicates that there is no greater love than a man laying down his life for his friends. A Christian husband is therefore called upon to lay down his life for his wife. One way the Lord Ministers to the church is by giving up of himself (verse 25). A closer look at the attributes of love as given in the Corinthians passage reveals a call to give up of oneself. A husband would have to give up his right to be angry, demand change etc. and instead exercise patience, kindness and all the other listed attributes as he trusts God to work in the life of his wife. Kuykendall (2002:15) sums it up by saying that *"Some of the explanations of love tell us of action toward the wife, as the loving husband expresses patience and kindness. Other of Paul's remarks relate how the husband expresses love to his wife as he bears, believes, hopes and endures concerning their marital relationship"*.

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[3] Emphasis is by the researcher.

Another important aspect of the husbands love is the act of leaving his parents and cleaving to his wife (Eph 5:31). A husband's leaving implies a breaking of emotional ties with his parents. Although he is never to dishonour his parents (Ex 20:12; Deut 5:16; Mt 15:4; Eph 6:2), he is to make his relationship with his wife the first priority. This kind of love causes the husband to fulfil the other attributes of his headship. Commenting on the Gen 2:24 passage, Soungalo (2006:4) notes that it is fine for a single man to live with his parents. However, he must separate from them and enter into a new relationship with his wife. This requires autonomy, working at the relationship, full responsibility and maturity.

2.4.1.2 (b) Cleansing (Eph 5:26-28)

In the Ephesians passage we find that the Christ transforms the church through washing to present to himself the kind of bride that He desires. In like manner, the Christian husband is to wash his wife to present her to himself. Christian scholars have varied ideas on the interpretation of the verses. Keener (1993:552) points out that the cleansing was probably figurative to the brides prenuptial washing which set her apart for her husband. However, it is important to note as he points out that this cleansing took place before the bride's removal to he grooms house. This meant that the groom did not take part in the prenuptial washing.

This then seems to negate the concept of the passage. The groom cleanses his bride and it is not delegated to any other. Nonetheless, there is a similarity in between the two. Christ redeems his bride the church. The wedding ceremony is yet to take place (Rev 19:9) but the Holy Spirit is preparing the church to be spotless and without blemish (Jn16: 5-16) when the groom comes for her (1 Thess 4:13 – 5:11).

Kuykendall (2002:75-82) summarises that the passage refers to the husband ministering to his wife's spiritual needs. He goes on to say that it seems that the husband should desire for his wife what Christ desires for the church. He should therefore desire to present his wife to the Lord and himself without spot or blemish. Conversely, drawing on the parallel of the husband being symbolic of Christ in the marital relationship, it would be incorrect to draw such a conclusion from verses 26-28. The head is cleansing the bride for himself hence the husband is cleansing the wife for himself. The questions that arise is how does Christ cleanse the church and what does he cleanse?

The verses indicate that he does this through the word. Keener (1993:552) considers the term 'word' in the verse to refer to the gospel of Jesus Christ as in Eph 1:13. Kuykendall (2002:81) differs with

Keener on the term which he sees to mean 'the spoken word'. The researcher concurs with Kuykendall in that the church has already accepted the gospel of Christ but He continues to communicate to the church through his spoken word even as it is written in the scriptures (2 Tim 3:16-17) and through the Holy Spirit (Jn16:5 – 16) guiding them into all truth. Husbands are to follow this example of the Lord. Words spoken in gentleness and love are instruments for presenting the wife to himself in the way that he desires.

The fact that the husband is presenting the wife to himself does not totally disqualify the thought that the husband should desire to present his wife without blemish to the Lord. This will be a secondary benefit of the husband's cleansing of the wife for himself. The Christian husband has the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16). He therefore able to have desires and ambitions for himself and his wife that are Godly as scripture calls for him to be wholly consecrated to God (Rom 12:1-2). As a result, these thoughts and ambitions will translate into her being transformed more and more into the image of Christ. Indeed the words that 'iron sharpens iron and one man sharpens another' (Prov 27:17) are so true in marriage.

It is interesting to note in the Ephesians passage that Christ is cleansing his bride to present her to himself and does not require her to cleanse

herself. The bride is not aware of the standards when it comes to the groom and is therefore totally dependent on him. Rev 22:12 -17 seems to echo this by urging those who hear to just come and receive the free gift. Since the husband is a symbol of Christ in marriage, in like manner, husbands are to present to themselves the kind of bride that they desire. She may have flaws, just as the church does, but it is up to him to patiently transform her to what he would want.

This negates the worlds thinking that the wife should work on herself especially on the outside e.g. dressing to please her husband. Mutua (2003: 38-39) implies that it is the sole responsibility of the wife to make herself physically appealing to the husband. This is a thought the researcher does not concur with. When a wife makes it her primary responsibility to make herself appealing to her husband, she uses her standards which may not measure up to his. The onus is therefore on the husband to 'cleanse' his wife so that he may present her to himself as the kind of bride he desires. In like manner the church cannot wash herself to present herself to Christ but depends on the work of Christ in her life.

Nevertheless, it is imperative to point out that Christ is in the process of cleansing his bride on the inside. Rom 12:1-2 speaks of renewal of the mind, the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians

5:22 is an internal fruit which is then visible on the outside to the world. The husbands cleansing of the wife is therefore not relegated to the physical but he is also responsible for inner cleansing. This is a continuous process. Christ continues to cleanse the church through the process of sanctification (2 Thess 2:13; 1 Thess 5:23; Col 3:8-12; 2 Cor 3:18; Phil 1:6).

Sanctification is purely the work of God in a believer. However, Duffield (1987:245) points out that since God must make man Holy; man must yield himself to God that He may accomplish this work in him. There is a need for the believer to participate in the work of Christ in his or her life. This is clearly stated by Paul when he encourages believers to work out their salvation (Phil 2:12). In a similar manner, a Christian wife needs to yield to her husband and also take part in the process.

Turaki (2006:1436) sums this thought up by concluding that while a husband cannot like Christ save his wife from sin, he can love her sacrificially despite her imperfections and he can honour and teach the gospel in his home so that his wife can become more Christ like through her husband's love.

2.4.1.2 (c) Nourishment & Cherishing (Eph 5:29)

The husbands love for his wife will translate in his giving up of self, caring and nourishing of his wife. Kuykendall (2002:85) defines the term 'nourishment' primarily as having to do with food and any other aspect that takes care of the physical body structure. The term 'cherish' on the other hand means 'to warm'. It seems Paul may have had in mind the wife's emotional support. Discussing 1 Pet 3:7, Ogan (2001:10) observes that many men are ignorant of the emotional, physical and psychological make up of women. The verse emphasizes that men need to live with their wives *'according to knowledge'* (KJV) *'considerately'* (RSVA). Leaving in such understanding may considered to be cherishing one's wife.

The standards for the spouses in a marriage relationship is very high and yet achievable because we can do all things through Christ (Phil 4:13) and nothing is impossible to those who believe (Mt 19:26; Mk 9:23). Hence there is a need for trust, dependence and obedience to God. As pointed out earlier in section 2.2 above, the roles and responsibilities of spouses need to be understood in the context of oneness. One may not function alone but rather needs the other to function well. Karssen (1982:42) explains that the secret to marital relationships is disclosed by the words of Paul

'Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,' Phil 2:4-5 (RSVA)

2.4.2 The Commitment of marriage

Biblical marriage requires a life long covenant and to break that agreement is to sin against God (Mal 2:16). Smith (1990:10) observes that the word commitment sums up the biblical ideas of trust, covenant, monogamy, love and permanence of marriage. The marriage commitment is unique in that God requires both spouses to make exclusive commitments to each other. In God's purpose marriage lasts as long as both partners live. (Mk 10:2-12; Lk 16:18; Rom 7:1-3) Despite all the problems that are seen in marriages, God's purpose is unchanged. This permanent view of marriage caused the disciples to wonder if it was not better to stay unmarried (Mat 19:10). Commitment may thus be defined as an unshakable resolve to keep the covenant in spite of difficulty and uncertainty of what lies ahead. Commitment is a mark of a mature faith.

The Africa Bible Commentary (2006:1095) notes that divorce is just as abominable in God's sight as mixed – faith marriages. Mal 2:13 gives us the implications of divorce in God's sight. He refuses to acknowledge the sacrifices made by husbands who divorced their wives. The commentary goes on to point out that marriage involves a solemn vow that is witnessed by God (see Ez 16:8). Loyalty to one's spouse is required and one cannot simply discard one's wife in favour of another.

According to Fausset (2007), scripture teaches the unity of husband and wife; the indissolubleness of marriage save by death or fornication (Mt 5:32; 19:9; Rom 7:3). If the wife in marriage is a symbol of the church, the wife cannot leave her husband in order to marry another one. This would be like the sin of idolatry. There is only one God, He is jealous and none other to be worshipped (Exo 20:1-4). White (1992: 87) notes that there seems to be a series of commitments necessary to make a marriage work. However the initial one is that of an absolute commitment to stay in the marriage no matter what. Like wise the Lord does not abandon His bride no matter how hard the going gets. He keeps working on her to restore her to himself. As a result, divorce is not permitted (Mt 5:31-32). The world should be able to experience what God's relationship is with the church by looking at Christian marriages.

Since man is not infallible, where divorce is permitted due to adultery but the spouses cannot remarry (Mt 5:32; Mk 10:2-12; Lk 16:18; Rom 7:1-3). The covenant that was made before God when they came together is until death does them part. Although they may have a legal document from the courts saying they are divorced it seems that this is not recognized by God. Smith (1990:56) emphasizes that Jesus when asked about divorce (Mt 19:4-6); he did not allow divorce in keeping with God's teaching in Mal 2:13-17. He summarizes the teachings of Mat 5:32, 19:3-12; Mk 10:11, 12; Lk 16:18; Rom 7:2, 3 and 1 Cor 7:39 by saying that the New Testament gives no allowance, permission or recommendation for divorce.

It is not rare for churches to conduct remarriages after a divorce. For example, according to the P.C.E.A practice and

procedures manual (1999: 142 – 143) sections 15.55 – 15.62, there is a discussion on remarriage of divorced persons. The sections begin by affirming that marriage is a life long relationship. However, it proceeds on to indicate that there are circumstances that cause a marriage to be irretrievably broken down. It is with this premise that a minister is allowed to solemnise marriage of divorced persons. Of great importance is that the circumstances of a divorce are not outlined hence that seems to be left to the ministers discretion. It is important to point out that this is not the only church that allows divorce and remarriage in Kenya. Nevertheless, this teaching definitely goes against the teachings of Christ concerning the same.

In his discourse on marriage, divorce and remarriage found in Mat 19:1-12, Mk 10:1-12 and Lk 16:18, Jesus indicates that marriage was meant to be permanent. Remarriage amounts to adultery. His disciples seem to have understood the gravity of the matter that in verse 10 of the Matthew passage they conclude it is better for one not to marry. As Jesus in response to His disciples conclusion, observes in verse 11 not everyone can accept this. He encourages those who can to accept it. This is a hard teaching but it calls for those preparing getting married to count the cost (Lk 14:28-30) and not be hasty in making a vow before God as He is looking out for them to keep it (Eccl 5:4-7). Fausset (2007) indicates that Paul recommended that a candidate should be married only once, not having remarried after a wife's death or divorce (1Tim 3:2, 12; Lk 2:36-37; 1Cor 7:40).

Discussing biblical commitment White (1992:25-30) observes that true commitment focuses on the mind, heart and will (M

22:37, Col 3:2, Deut 6:5, 1 Sam 2:1,33; 2 Sam 3:21; Ps 28:2;
Eph 6:6). He therefore lists other aspects of commitment in
marriage to include: a commitment to remain faithful both in
mind and body Heb 13:4; a commitment to love one's spouse
Eph 5:25, Titus 2:4 and a commitment to work on one's
marriage Gal 6:9-10. (1992:87-88). However, commitment is
not devoid of blessings, these include:

The Blessing of harmony   Ps 133:1, Phil 2:2
The blessing of answered prayer   1 Pet 3:7, Jn 15:7
The blessing of oneness   Gen 2:24
The blessing of strength & support   Eccl 4:9-12
The blessing of favour   Prov 18:22, Ps 128:1-4

It is sad to observe that the church has gradually opened the
door of divorce wider and wider. Ngewa (2006:1150) notes that
in cases where husbands actively torture their wives, and
when such behaviour proves resistant to counselling, the
church recognizes this as special cases thereby allowing for
such options as separation, divorce and remarriage. However,
allowing such options as divorce and remarriage seems to be
contrary to the teachings of scriptures as discussed in the
earlier paragraphs.

What then does a Christian do when faced by seemingly
insurmountable challenges in marriage? For example physical
violence and risk of contracting life threatening sexually
transmitted infections such as the Human Immunodeficiency
Virus? The Bible seems to provide an answer in 1 Cor 7:10 –
11. Paul is quick to note that this is not his but the Lord's
command. One ought not to leave, but if they have to, one

needs to stay unmarried with a view of reconciling with their spouse. Commitment to live in accordance to God's standards then is evidenced by one remaining faithful to their spouse even in their absence.

If marriage is a picture of Christ's relationship with the church how does He deal with his unfaithful bride? Christ is committed to his bride the church. Even when the church falls, he has an open way for her to be restored back to him (I Jn 1:9). This unwavering commitment is seen all through the Old Testament and especially in the prophets in the relationship between God and the rebellious nation Israel. John in his writing indicates that *"...that I shall lose none of all he has given me, but raise them up at the last day."* Jn 6:39 (NIV). The marital commitment should be a replica of this. Every spouse should get into the covenant with this in mind as breaking it would be tantamount to idolatry.

2.4.3 The Work in Marriage

Coffey (1990:37-38) notes that the building of marriage is a three way partnership between a husband, wife and God. The basis of this assertion is Ps 127:1-2. To build a marriage that lasts, God is indispensable. Marriage finds its source in God. That is why the couple must be related spiritually to God. The bible in Amos 3:3 asks a pertinent question when it asks if two walk together unless they agree? It is foundational that the man and the woman know Jesus Christ as their personal saviour (Rom 10:9-13).

A house can be made of various materials. Some are built with mud, stones, wood or steel. Materials are very essential in determining the durability of the structure. In the same way a house must be built on a foundation, marriage is built on a foundation. The foundation determines how strong the house is.

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it. For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
1 Cor 3: 10-11 (RSVA)

The foundation of every marriage and the church is Christ. In building marriage, God uses various materials. Prov 24: 3-4 says:

*"By **wisdom** a house is built, and by **understanding** it is established; by **knowledge** the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches." (RSVA)*[4]

Wisdom is very foundational in marriage. Foolishness has brought down many homes and marriages. The bible talks a lot about wisdom Prov 10:1; 12:15, 13: 20, 14:1, 14:16. Wisdom leads to understanding. According to 1 Cor 2:12 one gains understanding through Holy Spirit. The way to obtain knowledge is through the fear of God (Prov 2:5). From these scriptures, the work involved in marriage is actually the fear of God and obeying His commands.

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[4] Emphasis is by the researcher

2.5 The result of marriage

When an individual gets into a new relationship with God through salvation, a number of things happen. First, the old life passes on and a new one comes in place (2 Cor 5:17). In like manner, married spouses can no longer live in the way they lived when single. Marriage comes with new responsibilities and expectations. For example their relationship with their parents' changes, they required to leave and cleave to each other (Gen 2:24).

Second, the believer obtains a new identity. He or she is now referred to as a child of God (Jn 1:12), a saint (which is a name widely used to refer to the Christians in the New Testament e.g. Acts 9:13; Phil 4:29; Heb 13:24; Rev 22:21 etc.) as opposed to a sinner (e.g. 1 Pet 4:18) or disobedient (e.g. Rom 11:30). The bible even talks of a future name in Rev 2:17 where it reads:

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it."
(RSVA)

This identity comes from the Father who is the head of the church. It is a great honour to receive a name known only to God and the recipient. In like manner, a wife receives a new name from her husband who is her head. She therefore acquires a married name and drops her maiden one to symbolize the change over. With this identity comes honour.

Mbiti (2002:133) observes that failure to get married in the African culture means that the person has rejected the society and the society in turn rejects him. As a result, when one got married, they earned respect and acceptance from their community. In Christ, a believer gains acceptance in the beloved (Eph 1:6 KJV) and sits with Christ in the heavenly places (Eph 2:6). These are honour rests only on those who enter into a relationship with Christ.

Third, the believer receives an inheritance. Peter writes in 1 Pet 1:3-5:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (RSVA)

Other scriptures that talk of the believers' inheritance include Eph 1:14, 18; Col 1:12, 3:24; Heb 9:15 and 1 Pet 1:4. There is no inheritance for those who are not one with Christ (Eph 5:5). In like manner, a wife inherits all that is her husbands. There is no demarcation of what belongs to who as the two are now considered to be one. No one can just walk up to claim an inheritance unless the two had a relationship warranting that. Under law, the first option is given to next of kin who is the surviving spouse and children if there were any.

Finally, the union with Christ results in fruitfulness (Jn 15:1-16). This fruitfulness is spiritual as well as physical. Paul writing to the Galatians describes the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). This is a direct result of their relationship with Christ. Physical fruitfulness is

seen in believers when they go out evangelize and disciple new believers. Scripture refers to such believers as infants (Heb 5:13). It is only in marriage that sex is allowed. A direct result of sexual relations between spouses is procreation. God commanded Adam & Eve to multiply and fill the earth (Gen 1:28).

It is however important to note that children are described in scripture as a gift from God (Ps 127:3). This implies that not all sexual relations between spouses will result in children. It is the Lords decision. Since marriage is a picture of God's relationship with the church to the world, a couple living in God's design for marriage and in obedience to His teaching, shall be spiritually fruitful. Their marriage may be a witness to reach out to unbelievers.

2.6 Christian Marriage & Culture

Kenya and Africa as a whole is endowed with numerous ethnic subcultures. The practices of these groups, as pointed out in the introduction, do not necessarily agree with the teachings of scripture. During wedding preparations and in the subsequent challenges of marriage, Christians and especially parents tend to fall back on cultural practices. The Theological Advisory Group (1996:97) indicated that there is a need to develop biblical principles to guide the church in fashioning a Christian wedding in Africa which is Christ honouring. The church therefore has the challenge to give guidelines on where Christianity and culture meet. This is what this section attempts to answer.

2.6.1 Definition of the Term Culture

First, it is critical to define the term culture. Feltham and Horton (2000:63) define culture as a social concept referring to the features of an individual's environment. This encompasses all of the values, attitudes and behaviours common to a group, and is socially transmitted. In his discussion on scripture and culture, Bediako (2004:2-11) seems to concur with Feltham and Horton's definition as he defines culture as our world view that is fundamental to our understanding of who we are, where we have come from and where we are going. He considers culture therefore as being far more than music, dance, artefacts and the like.

Kottak (2005:41) defines culture by borrowing the Taylor 1958 definition which states that:

"Culture… is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society".

This definition focuses on attributes that people acquire by growing up in a particular society in which they are exposed to a specific cultural tradition through enculturation. Culture is not an individual attribute but of individuals as members of groups. Lingenfelter and Mayers (1986:18) agree with this definition when they define culture as:

"the conceptual design, the definitions by which people order their lives, interpret their experience, and evaluate the behavior of others."

However, they point out that even within what looks like similar culture, there is a more defined and more limited cultural heritage that is acquired in the early learning which the child unquestioningly accepts. Culture, then, must not be confused with race, ethnic or national origin, or religion. Culture is the lens through which one sees, focuses, and filters his or her life. It may therefore be said that every individual has a unique culture.

Kottak (2002:63) notes that enculturation unifies people by providing them with common experiences. There are various levels of cultures but of interest to this study are subcultures based on ethnicity. According to Kottak (2005:59), ethnicity may be defined as:

"A means of identification with or, and feeling part of, an ethnic group and exclusion from certain other groups because of their affiliation."

Ethnic groups share certain beliefs, values, habits, customs, and norms because of their common background. They thus define themselves as different and special because of distinctive cultural features. This distinction may be due to language, geographic location, collective name and any other aspect that may draw them together.

2.6.2 The Genesis and Purpose of Ethnic Sub Cultures

All humanity gains its ancestry from Adam and Eve (Gen 1:27). In their time, there was only one culture in existence. The

emergence of ethnic subcultures in the scriptures may be traced back to Gen 11:1 1-9. From the passage, it is evident that the people were able to communicate to which would make it possible for them to do exploits (verse 6). It would be much easier for them to unite and rebel against the Lord. As a result, God intervenes by confusing their languages so that they could not understand each other and scattered them across the globe. This was the birth of ethnicity. From the passage one may infer that God's purpose in initiating ethnicity into the world was to divide the people and to prevent rebellion.

Indeed, there are visible divisions amongst people of different cultures in the world. In Africa, the divisions have led to one tribe looking down on the other. For example in the Rwanda massacre of the 1990's, brothers who had lived together turned and killed their neighbours on the grounds they did not belong to their tribe. In Kenya, the tribal divisions have always been so visible especially during the general elections. It is these divisions that led to the post election violence of December 2007 which led to about three hundred thousand persons to be internally displaced.

The fulfilment of the purpose of cultural differences is also clearly evident when it comes to marriages. Parents sometimes have a very difficult time allowing their children to get married to persons from a particular tribe. For example, for many Kikuyu's, it is seen as a taboo for one to get married to a Luo man. The main reason given is that Luo men do not undergo circumcision. Hence young couples intending to wed usually encounter all sorts of difficulties as the plan their

wedding. In some instances, even Christian parents will not attend the wedding. There are various instances where one may clearly see the results of different cultures in the society. Cultural differences thus make it impossible for people to unite and rebel against God as those who tried to build the tower of Babel.

2.6.3 Christ and Ethnic Subcultures

The purpose of ethnic subcultures as is described in section 2.4.2 above is in direct opposition to what Christ came to do. Whereas Christ separates the righteous form the unrighteous (Gal 4:3-9; Eph 2:19), those who believe in Him become one (Eph 2:11-22). As a result, they are considered the descendants of Abraham (Gal 3:26-29). There is consequently no more division in terms of culture. The Galatians passage clearly points out that there is neither Jew nor Gentile. This negates the desire of believers wanting to identify themselves with their ethnic subcultures. Christians have now become one, following a similar set of beliefs, laws etc. this was at the heart of Christ's prayer for the believers when He prayed:

'...that they may be one even as we are one,'
Jn 17:22 (RSVA)

When the church is faced with issues related to cultural identity, it is therefore it's role to remind persons to work on those aspects of culture that unite as opposed to those that divide (Ps 133:1; Rom 15:5; Eph 4:3).

Bediako (2004:2-11) aptly examines the relationship between scripture and culture. He notes that when our cultures pass through the prism of scripture, we see them in a new way. Christians are therefore no longer defined by traditions, but allow scriptures to interpret those traditions. He brings out five key points in relation to scriptures and culture.

First, he sees scriptures as a record of God's engagement with culture because it records God's dealings with His people and within their culture. Scripture is itself a fruit of this engagement. It thus provides a yardstick for encouraging, identifying and controlling all subsequent engagements of the gospel and culture. Second, he considers the scripture to be a road map. In this instance, it provides Christians with a map where they can see where they have come from and how they got to where they are. It also points them in the direction they are to take if they are to reach their destination.

Third, scripture is the believers' history. Bediako notes that all of us have been adopted into Christ with our traditions and are therefore transformed with our traditions (Gal 3:26-29; Gal 4:7; Rom 11:7-20). As a result, fourth, scripture is the basis of our identity. The basis of our new identity he observes is religious, not ethnic, national, social or cultural in a narrow sense. Believers' have become a kingdom of priests to serve God (Rev 1:5-6; 1 Pet 2:9-10). Finally, Scripture is our story. As a result, Christians need to view it not just as a Holy book from which we extract teachings and biblical principles, rather as a story in which we participate. Scripture in a sense speaks to the Christian because it speaks about us.

Although Christians live in the world, they are not of it. (Jn 17:15-16). We are therefore born within our ethnic subcultures but that does not define who we are. Whereas there are different ways of life in the various subcultures, the decision of what to take and what to drop from the practices should be gauged on whether it is in line with the underlying principles of the Christian faith. Where this is not so, the Christian has a God given responsibility to shun any appearance of evil (Rom 12:9; 1 Cor 14:20; 1 Thess 5:22) so that they may impart grace to those who get to hear or observe them (Eph 4:29) and that they may have nothing evil to say of them (Titus 2:8).

Hoekema (1986:100) indicates that a proper appreciation of the doctrine of the image of God should rule out all racism. God made all human beings in his image, and all of them can enlighten and enrich us. Scripture refers to believers as a peculiar people (1 Pet 2:9) and this peculiarity should be seen in their choices and actions. One of the things a Christian may forget in forgetting what is behind (Phil 3:12- 4:1) is ethnicity. Our remembrance of cultural practices may be in remembering where Christ brought us from as scripture implores the Children of Israel to remember their past (Is 51:1; Ps 78:1-8). Paul's urge to the Corinthian church in 1 Cor 1:26 – 31 may be echoed back to the African church in the middle of ethnic differences. Verse 31 emphasizes *'..."Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord.".'*

2.6.4 Some Cultural Practices the Church in Kenya Needs To Address

2.6.4.1 Bride Price/Dowry

In his in-depth expose' of African philosophy, Mbiti (2002:140) defines bride price as a gift to the brides people in the form of cattle, money, foodstuffs and other articles. He notes that it is a token of gratitude on part of the bridegrooms' people to those of the bride for the care over her and for allowing her to get married into their family. Whereas this was not viewed commercially, greed over the years has caused dowry to be very expensive. The Theological Advisory Group (1994:87) sitting in Kenya noted that Greed had led to exorbitant dowry. The therefore proposed that the church educates parents to sow how that the dowry problem is one of the main reasons for few church weddings.

Is the act of receiving or giving dowry wrong for Christians? It is interesting to note that in the bible whereas it is not referred to as dowry; there is an aspect of a price. In the Old Testament, we see Abraham's servant giving gifts of gold, silver and clothing to Rebekah her mother and brother after they allowed him to take her to Isaac (Genesis 24:52-53). It is significant to note that in this entire account, Rebekah's family did not demand for gifts, but the servant had come bearing voluntary gifts of great worth. The family had already accepted the servants request in verses 50 and 51 before the servant had bestowed the gifts on them.

In this study we have likened marriage to Christ's relationship with the Church. How fitting it is to note that Christ has not just received the bride for free. He got it for a great price as explained in 1 Cor 6:20, 7:23. He was not forced but He gave his life up for her freely Col 2: 6-8; Rom 3:24; Eph 1:6. In like manner it would be fitting for the groom to bear tokens or gifts of appreciation for his bride. However this should be out of his volition without any coercion at all. Since individuals in the church are endowed differently, grooms need to give according to their ability to the brides parents as a token of his appreciation. Parents on the other hand need to be like Bethuel and Laban (Genesis 24:50-51) and acknowledge the work of God in bringing the couple together and therefore purpose not to hinder them.

2.6.4.2 Polygamy

The Theological Advisory Group (1994:158) indicated that polygamy has proved to be one of the biggest problems facing the Christian Church in Africa. Whereas polygamy was tolerated in the Old Testament, it is not so in the New Testament. Monogamy is taught in the New Testament e.g. 1 Cor 7:2. In the light of the paradigm, Christ has only one bide as discussed in 2.2.1 above. No matter what the church does, the Lord does not give up on her, see section 2.2.2 above. A man therefore has no reason at all to take a second wife. However, polygamy remains an issue that is not fully resolved in today's church as it is common to find an individual,

even pastors in certain areas secretly marrying a second wife even after a Christian wedding.

2.6.4.3 Children

Mbiti (2002:133) states that in the African community without procreation marriage is incomplete. The Theological Advisory Group (1994:191 - 194) noted that according to the African custom, childbearing was inseparable from marriage. A childless marriage either ended in a divorce or in the husband taking a second wife. Not only was barrenness an issue but also the lack of boys in the family. Childless marriages are a major problem today although not always. There is enormous pressure from the extended family which leads some Christian men to take on a second wife. As pointed out in 2.3 above, children are described in scripture as a gift from God (Ps 127:3). This implies that not all sexual relations between spouses will result in children. It is the Lords decision.

2.6.4.4 The Extended Family

The Theological Advisory Group (1994:173) notes that interference from parents sometimes leads to divorce. This interference they note comes in many forms. For example trying to dominate the couple, rejecting a daughter-in-law, over attachment and dependency on the couple for financial support (1994:211-212). Sometimes the mother-in-law or a spouse's sibling may come to live with the young couple. The daughter-in-law must then

accommodate the demands of her mother-in-law which leads to conflicts and resentment. What is the role of a Christian mother-in-law? How should the young couple relate with the extended family? These are critical questions that the church needs to give guidelines on.

2.6.4.5 Remarriage

Traditionally, it was very acceptable for widows to marry, but they only married the brother of the deceased husband or another close relative. The challenge of remarriage is particular among some Kenyan Christians as children not only belong to the mother but also to the father's family as well. In this instance the widow finds herself in a dilemma as children must remain with the father's family. What does the Christian woman do? The Theological Advisory Group (1994:161 - 166) notes this as a major problem within the church in Kenya and offers some biblical guidelines on the same.

In reality, almost every marriage is an intercultural marriage to at least some degree. Every couple comes from a unique experience even if they are from the same region, race, ethnic group, social class or religion. Nevertheless as Howard and Hendricks (1971: 256) observe, any counsellor who works with an engaged couple must address the specific defining, interpreting and evaluating mechanisms that the two members of that couple maintain. The counsellor who prepares the intercultural couple must specifically address and deal with cultural orientation. They move on to point out that it should also be added that the church should also deal with this issue.

2.7 Conclusion

Marriage is God's idea and it needs to be entered into with respect and awe. Only God can give wisdom, understanding and knowledge into marriage. Without Him one can do nothing. As Lee and Lee (2002:15) note, marriage is a unique opportunity where an individual shares every aspect of his/her life with another. Despite all the challenges facing marriage, God intends for marriages to work. He still says that finding a wife is a good thing and he who finds one obtains favour from Him (Prov 18:22). It is imperative that the Christians aspire to have marriages modelled on Christ's relationship with the church.

Brown & Brown (1999:13 – 14) quote Dr Wakaba's discussion on the African and Western marriage where he sums it up very well when he says that the African family should not be contrasted with the western family but rather where culture is very significant, consideration should be on the bible's teaching on marriage. Bediako (2004:2-11) concludes that as our particular culture encounters the activity of God in building up a community, believers will gradually come to share in a family likeness that is not measured by ethnic particularity but by nothing less than Christ himself (Eph 4:13). As Focus on the Family (2007:18) notes, God, the Creator of humanity and of marriage itself, has laid out His plan for marriage as a lifelong union. God knows this design is the best. When we stray from His plan, the results are damaging on many levels.

Chapter Three

The Bible & Pre - Marital Counselling

3.1 Overview

Counselling is an area that is rapidly growing in Kenya. As a result of the numerous secular counsellors the tertiary colleges are turning out, and due to the lack of understanding of what counselling is all about, many Christians have shunned counselling as a whole. Many have been unable to disconnect counselling from psychiatry and psychology. The discussion on pre – marital counselling therefore begins with defining what counselling is and tracing it's origins in scripture if any. It will then move on to differentiate Christian counselling from secular counselling. Finally, it will end with a look at the scriptures to establish a biblical basis for pre – marital counselling, tracing its onset, content and the pre – marital counsellor.

3.2 What is Secular Counselling?

3.2.1 Definition of secular counselling

Collins (1998:16) defines counselling as *"A process that attempts to provide encouragement and guidance for those facing losses, decisions or disappointment."* A quick look at this definition may cause one to erroneously conclude that counselling is only meant for individuals needing help facing challenges in their life. However, Collins use of the term decisions may not necessarily refer to problems. There may be positive decisions that may drive one for counselling such

as moving from one city to take up a better paying job in another. The Lierop (1992:2) definition of counselling offers a more comprehensive view of what counselling is. He says *"Counselling is helping people face their lives, to find answers to their lives and to grow and develop to maturity."* In a more recent definition Gladding (2001:32) defines secular counselling as a psychological speciality that aims to facilitate personal and interpersonal functioning across the lifespan.

From these definitions it is clear that secular counselling is both solution and growth focused. Secular counselling may thus target persons who need help to solve problems in their life or to help them move on into their next stage of development. The second key thing that emerges from these definitions is that counselling is a process. This means it is not a one day affair but takes sometime to achieve the set out goals. In this process, the counsellor seeks to encourage or guide counselees to face challenges in their life as they grow and develop into maturity.

3.2.2 Goals of Secular Counselling

There are various views on the goals of secular counselling. Egan (2002:7-9) discusses two basic goals of counselling. The first is related to clients' managing specific problems in living more effectively and developing missed opportunities and unused resources. The second is related to helping clients become better at helping themselves in their daily lives. Collins (1988:17) breaks this down when he infers that secular counsellors attempt to teach skills , give support in times of need, teach responsibility, instil insight, guide as decisions

are made, teach problem solving skills, help clients mobilize their inner and environmental resources in a time of crisis and to increase client competence and self - actualization. McLeod (2003:7) sees the task of counselling as giving the client an opportunity to explore, discover, and clarify ways of living more satisfyingly and resourcefully. These views are more aptly summarized by Welfel and Patterson (2005:2) in their observation that the goal of counselling is to provide people with tools and experiences that help them improve specific aspects of their lives and offer them a more positive perspective on their own self worth and a deeper belief in their own capacity to live meaningful and productive lives.

3.2.3 The Secular Counsellor

Numerous persons counsel. Nevertheless, in the secular counselling profession there are clear guidelines on who a counsellor is and what his or her qualities are. Jones (1995:4) lists four categories of people who may view themselves as using counselling knowledge and skills but not necessarily as professional counsellors. These are groups are : helping service professionals such as counselling psychologists, social workers and psychiatrists; voluntary counsellors trained in helping skills; people using counselling skills as part of their jobs such as teachers, doctors etc; and informal counsellors in daily relationships such as friends and work colleagues.

For a secular counsellor to be effective various attributes are considered to be key. These include genuineness, empathy and an unconditional positive regard for the client. Egan (2002:19) notes that helpers need to be wise and part of their

job is to impart some of their wisdom to their clients however indirectly. One who is able to achieve this in counselling a client may therefore be considered to be an effective counsellor. On the other hand he notes that one of the aspects of wisdom in a counsellor is *"an understanding of the spiritual dimensions of life"* which is a thing that is elusive to non Christians but available to those who believe in Christ.

Recent scholars have taken the described characteristics and broken them down further. For example Welfel and Patterson (2005:12 - 18) describe at length nine characteristics of an effective secular counsellor. They consider an effective counsellor to be one who:

- Is skilful at reaching out to counselees;
- Communicates caring and respect for counselees;
- Has the ability to reach in as well as reach out;
- Manages conflict between counselee and counsellor effectively;
- Understands the behaviour of the people they try to help;
- Recognizes counselee's self defeating behaviours and helps them develop more personally rewarding behaviour;
- Has expertise in some area that will be of special value to the counselee;
- Able to reason systematically and to think in terms of systems;
- Culturally competent i.e. understands the social, cultural and political contexts in which they and other people operate.

3.3 What is Christian Counselling?

3.3.1 Definition of Christian Counselling

Three terms are often used interchangeably to mean Christian counselling. These are Christian counselling, Pastoral Care and Pastoral Counselling. Meir, Minrith and Wichern (1989:291) define Christian counselling as a relationship in which one individual by virtue of both spiritual and psychological insights seeks to help another individual, recognize, understand and solve his or her own problems in accordance with the Word of God. The Denver Christian Counselling Centre (2009) defines Christian counselling as:

" a form of therapy or counseling in which a Christian counselor, as a representative of a the Christian faith and community, uses the insights and principles of the Christian religion, theology and modern behavioral sciences in working with individuals, couples, families, groups and institutions toward the achievement of wholeness and health".

According to the centre, an important ingredient which makes Christian counseling different from other forms of counseling and psychotherapy is the conviction that life's crises and transitions, as well as emotional dysfunctions, are best met by both the wisdom of Biblical teachings and the knowledge and skills of the human behavioral sciences such as psychiatry and psychology.

Beck (2001) makes reference to Johnson and Jones (2000:9) who point out that Christians have taken different positions

regarding the extent to which they should have anything to do with modern psychology, some embracing it wholeheartedly, others rejecting it just as vigorously, and many others falling somewhere between. They selected four views as representative of the current state of affairs regarding the relationship of psychology to theology. First, a view that corresponds to a thorough integration of the two fields that is described in the Johnson and Jones volume by Gary R. Collins.

A second view which argues that psychology and theology are parallel disciplines that engage in different levels of explanation and thus are not truly integratable fields as explained by Myers in the same volume. This second view they observe, in practice, often gives more attention to the psychological side of the equation than to the theological side. A third view described by Roberts in pages 148 – 177 argues that we should seek to build a Christian psychology by mining the wisdom of saints who have gone before us rather than by attempting to distill truth from contemporary and largely secular sources of psychological information. Obviously, this view puts heavier emphasis on historical, biblical, and theological sources of information than on the psychological side.

And finally, the biblical counseling view, as described by David Powlison in the volume, argues that we should not engage in integration at all but should seek to derive our helping strategies from the pages of Scripture only. Whatever the view, the one constant in Christian counselling is the scriptural reference i.e either integrated or not.

However, Collins (1988:16-17) notes that there is a need to make a distinction between pastoral care, pastoral counselling and pastoral psychotherapy. He defines pastoral care as the church's overall ministries of healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling people to God and to one another. He goes on to say that pastoral counselling is more specialized in that it involves helping individuals, families or groups as they cope with the pressures and crises of life. He notes that this is traditionally the work of an ordained pastor. Collins further defines pastoral psychotherapy as *"the long term in-depth helping process that attempts to bring fundamental changes in the counselees' personality, spiritual values, and ways of thinking."* He however does not indicate who undertakes pastoral psychotherapy.

From the above definitions, three different helping relationships within the Christian set up emerge. The first refers to the care that is provided by the pastor to his or her entire congregation e.g. from the pulpit, consoling during bereavement etc. For the purposes of this paper we shall term it Pastoral care. The second is Christian counselling as defined by Meir, Minrith and Wichern. This definition does not differ extensively with Collins definition of Pastoral psychotherapy. However, Christian counselling as opposed to Pastoral counselling is conducted by another person other than the pastor who doesn't interact with the counselee in any other forum.

The third is Pastoral counselling as defined by Collins. The difference between this and Christian counselling is the

identity of the counsellor. Pastoral counselling is conducted by a pastor who may have multiple relationships or interactions with the counselee. Benner (2002:24) observes that Pastoral counselling should not mimic help offered by mental health professionals such as Christian psychologists as the Pastoral counsellors' area of study in psychology or counselling is limited.

3.3.2 The Uniqueness of Christian Counselling

Over the years Christian counsellors have used many techniques that have been developed and used by non-believers but there are various features that make Christian counselling distinctive. Collins (1988:17-18) mentions four characteristics that make Christian counselling unique.

First, it is based on unique assumptions. Meir, Minrith and Wichern (1989:292) note that it accepts the Bible as the final standard and authority. Rowe (1996:2) and Powlison (1993:2) concur on the need and placement of the bible as a counselling text book. Adams (1973:15) notes that it is only biblical counselling that possess divine authority. He considers this authority to be imperative in counselling. Crabb (1975:17) remarks that every concept of biblical counselling must build upon the fundamental premise that there really is an infinite and personal God who has revealed himself propositionally in the written word i.e. the bible and the living word i.e. Jesus Christ. While discussing Maslow's hierarchy, Kincely (n.d:1) observes that many biblical counsellors have rejected the various need theories because of their apparent contradiction to the word of God.

Second, it has unique goals. Whereas secular counselling seek to help counselees change behaviour attitudes, values and or perceptions based on humanistic standards, Christian counsellors seek to stimulate spiritual growth in counselees by encouraging confession of sin and the experience of forgiveness; modelling Christian standards attitudes, values and lifestyles; presenting the gospel and encouraging counselees to commit their lives to Christ; and stimulating counselees to develop values and lives that are based on biblical teachings. Christian counselling therefore has a strong element of guidance in it. Crabb (1989:17) indicates that the goal of Christian Counselling is to free people to better worship and serve God by helping them become more like the Lord. Rowe (1996:2) concurs with this thought. This is a direct contrast to the discussion on the goals of secular counselling found in 3.2.2 above whose main focus is the self. As McConaughy (n.d: 1) writes, Biblical counsellors have a biblical picture of humans i.e. human beings are accountable to the creator.

Third, Christian Counselling uses unique methods. The Christian counsellor does not use methods or techniques that would be considered immoral or inconsistent with biblical teachings. Rowe (1996:1) observes that a counsellor cannot separate methods from beliefs. Finally, Christian counsellors possess unique counsellor characteristics. These are discussed further in 3.2.3 below. Broger (1993: Supplement 1, Page 1) concludes that Christian counselling is based on these presuppositions which have been verified by years of application, observation and testimony. The principles of

Christian counselling are not only verifiable but they are also effective in every part of the world, in every culture, with all age groups and in all levels of society.

3.3.3 The Christian Counsellor

Christian counsellors are unique in that they do not proceed in the same way and use methods or agree on the same explanations of why people behave as they do. The Denver Christian Counselling Centre (2009) views Christian counsellors as persons who have three distinct characteristics. First, they have received graduate training in both religion and behavioral science for a clinical practice that integrates psychological and theological disciplines. Second, Christian counselors believe that there is One God in whose image and likeness we are created. They believe that we yearn for a transforming connection with the divine, and that psychotherapy can mediate the loving and healing nature of being itself.

Third, Christian counselors also make therapeutic use of traditional religious resources such as prayer, Scripture reading, and participation in the worship and community life of a congregation. Adams (1986:4) notes that there are three people involved in counselling. He makes reference to Mt 18:20 to conclude that where a Christian counsellor and a counsellee meet in Jesus name, they can expect the very prescence of Christ as counsellor in charge. As a result, Christian counsellors also pay special attention to the religious history of the client and his or her family, noting how it may contribute to the suffering or resources needed for coping.

In his definition of a Christian counsellor, Collins (1993:4) indicates that a Christian counsellor is one who "*is a deeply committed, Spirit guided servant of Jesus Christ; applies his or her best God given abilities, skills, training, knowledge and insights; to the task of helping others move to personal wholeness, interpersonal competence, mental stability and spiritual maturity.*" This is a thought that he carries forth from his book in 1988 and which Meir, Minrith and Wichern (1989:295-297) concur with. They sum it up by referring to such a person as a wise Christian. That is one who is in pursuit of God, knows Gods word in a living way knows the importance of prayer, values fellowship with godly people and shares the word of God.

Meir, Minrith and Wichern term this as the basic characteristics of a Christian counsellor. They however outline other essential qualities which they term as learned or gifts from the Lord. These include accepting attitude, good listening skills, and knowledge of proper technique, appropriate use of scripture and prayer, unshockable response, confidence and a sense of humour. They do outline the need for proper training for Christian counsellors. Adams (1983:9) sums it up by pointing out that it is not experience, but biblical truth and skills developed by biblical principles that qualify someone to counsel.

3.3.4 Counsellors in the Bible

Although counselling is seen as a recent profession, the existence of counsellors may be traced back to the Old

Testament. Some of these counsellors are mentioned by name. They include:

- *Ahith'ophel the Gi'lonite, David's counsellor (2 Sam 15:12; 1 Chr 27:33)*
- Zechariah son of *Shelemi'ah (1 Chr 26:14)*
- Jonathan David's uncle (1 Chr 27:32)
- Athaliah king Ahaziah's mother (2 Chr 22:3)

The inference to other counsellors is made in various passages of scripture for example in Is 41:28. The Bible describes Christ and the Holy Spirit as counsellor for example in Is 9:6 and Jn 14:26. It is however interesting to note that the role of guiding, counselling, directing or advising was a responsibility carried by various persons. For example parents have a role to guide their children (Deut 6:7), older persons are meant to guide the younger (Titus 2:4) etc.

Like in the past, counsellors have the ability to either mislead people (e.g. 2 Chr 22:3) or lead them in an appropriate direction (e.g. Ex 18). Counsel is essentially not a thing that people needed long ago but is also useful today. The advent of Christian counselling in the church should therefore not be seen as a new and secular idea.

3.4 Pre - marital Counselling

Pre – marital counselling refers to counselling that is primarily centred on preparing unmarried persons for marriage. Whereas most pre – marital counselling in Kenya takes place within a church context, not all pre – marital counselling is Christian. There are

marriage and family counsellors who conduct secular pre – marital counselling sessions. Their main goal is usually to prepare the couple on the practical issues of marriage. However for the purpose of this study, the emphasis is on Christian pre – marital counselling which the main focus of discussion in this section.

3.4.1 Christian Pre – marital Counselling

3.4.1.1 Introduction

As the term suggests, Christian pre - marital counselling refers to that aspect of Christian counselling that is focused on helping unmarried persons prepare for marriage. There are various reasons for the present instabilities in Christian marriages but key among them is the lack of care with which many marriages are put together. Marriages based on physical attraction, the desire to escape from certain realities in life such as running away from a difficult family situation or bowing to societal expectations when one reaches a certain age are just a few of the factors that cause marriages not stand when the pressures of living together come. That is a weak foundation of dreams and inadequate preparation. Wright (1995:10) notes that many marriages today are like the house built upon sand referred to in Mt 7:26. Pre – marital counselling seeks to address the causes of these instabilities in marriage before one encounters them.

Klassen [2007] indicates that, the need for premarital counselling in the church is testified to, in part, by the

church's history of involvement in this particular area of counselling. He notes that the impetus for pre - marital counselling in the church would seem to be both sociological — considering the large number of troubled marriages in our society, and theological — taking into account the high regard afforded the institution of marriage in the Bible.

What then is the purpose of Christian pre – marital counselling? In his guide on pre – marital counselling, Miller (2006) gives us the key motive when he points out that few things are more profitable than men and women committed to the study of God's Word as it relates to marriage, particularly in today's society. Christian pre – marital counselling is designed to help couples grasp the mind of God in relation to marriage. When approached reverently and biblically, marriage can be one of the most joyful experiences this life can offer. Yet we are familiar with many of its consequences such as divorce and domestic violence. Any couple entering into the marriage covenant needs to assess what God's expectation of them is in marriage before they make the commitment.

Collins (1988:393 - 397) outlines eight reasons for pre – marital guidance. These are:

☑ Unrealistic expectations that lead to disillusionment;
☑ Personal immaturity that can lead to insensitivity;

☑ Changing roles that can lead to confusion;

☑ Alternative styles of marriage that can lead to uncertainty e.g. gay marriages and blended families;

☑ Loosening sexual standards that can lead to immorality;

☑ Previous experiences that can lead to self confidence e.g. remarriage of widowers or widows;

☑ Circumstances that can lead to later misery e.g. a pregnant bride, serious emotional problems etc.;

☑ High divorce rates that can lead to unhappiness.

Strauss (2006) brings up an important aspect when he describes a couple that had come to him for pre- marital counselling. He indicates that at some point he tactfully had a conversation with the bride to be on his perception that the groom was only interested in the gratification of physical desires. However the couple went ahead and got married in another church but two years down the line they had divorced. It is important that the couples coming for pre – marital counselling evaluate their reasons for wanting to get married. The result of this counselling should lead to either marriage, a postponement of the marriage or a cancellation.

Kisau (2005:22-23) tends to agree with Strauss when she proposes a four pronged purpose of Christian pre – marital counselling. First she observes that it encourages the couple to asses their readiness for marriage. The couple needs to be able to answer why they are getting married. It is better to have a broken

engagement than to have a broken marriage. Second, it helps the counsellor in guiding the couple in discussion and explain God's biblical concept on marriage. Many couples go into marriage with preconceived ideas picked from their socialization process and rarely understand God's plan and purpose for marriage. It is therefore the role of every Christian pre – marital counsellor to help clarify these. Third, it gives the couple an opportunity to discuss practical issues. These include their expectations, how to cope with their differences, parents, where to live, children, relationships with others etc. Finally, it is an important time for the couple to be taught and helped to understand the role of sex in marriage. Lack of preparation in may lead to unrealistic expectations that can lead to disillusionment.

Numerous pre – marital counselling programs have been developed worldwide. Whereas they may differ in the content and duration, they all seem to underscore the importance and relevance of Christian pre – marital counselling. For example, Nicky and Sara Lee (2002) have written the Marriage Book based on the marriage course they ran in the United Kingdom. This course covers topics including ; Building Strong Foundations; The Art of Communication; Love in Action; Resolving Conflict; The Power of Forgiveness; Parents and In – laws and Good Sex. The Rapha Christian Counselling Centre [2008] has developed a pre-marital counselling package for couples. One of the goals of this program is to first help the couple in practical ways to learn about

differences, similarities , Conflict styles and resolution , communication , expectations , emotional Intimacy , stress in the relationship and how each deals with it. Second, it aims at providing couples with a place to discuss how, if at all, they plan to integrate their faith into their marriage. Finally, it aims at providing a realistic screening aspect for the marriage. Should the couple marry? Are they ready? The ultimate decision always rests with the couple.

Swenson [2008] underscores the importance of Christian pre – marital counselling when he writes *"Marriage involves many things: companionship, a working relationship, intimacy, and trust. One word that isn't commonly associated with marriage is ministry. Yet **marriage may be the most intense form of ministry a person will experience.** Consider that God brings one person into your life in such a way that you will have a major impact on them, for better and for worse. In addition, any children will be similarly impacted. No mission board would send a person into the field unprepared. Neither should a man or woman enter marriage unprepared."*

Although reasons indicated for pre - marital counselling and the proposed content may differ slightly among Christian writers, they all do underscore the importance of setting a biblical foundation for marriage. Some of these writers include Miller (2006), Daigle (2006), Strauss (2006), Kisau (2005), Wright (1995:10) and Collins (1988:391 - 399).

3.4.1.2 When it begins

Baker (2003:1) implies that pre – marital counselling is a wonderful tool but it would be wise to start earlier so that the foundation of the couple's future marriage may be stronger. He refers to the current mode of pre – marital counselling as pre – engagement counselling or discipleship. Collins (1988:392) observes that in the church the term "pre -ceremonial" counselling is more accurate than pre – marital counselling. This implies them that pre – marital counselling happens just before the couple gets married as they prepare for their wedding day. This is no different from what is on the ground in Kenya today. The question that thus arises is what the onset of pre – marital counselling is.

It was interesting to note that all the materials the writer came across as considered pre – marital counselling to start just a few weeks to the wedding. Collins (1988:393) proceeds to observe that the closest the bible comes to pre – marital counselling is Paul's advice in 1 Cor 7 when he encourages people to remain single but acknowledges that it is better to marry than to burn with lust. Whereas we do not see direct reference to pre – marital counselling in the bible one needs to consider teachings related to the content of pre – marital counselling i.e. marriage to figure out when it should begin.

The initial inference to marriage is found in Gen 1:27 – 28. However a more explicit mention of marriage is found

in the following chapter in verse 24. From then on in the relationship between Adam and Eve they are referred to as man and wife e.g. Gen 3:8. However at this point there is no direction as to if and when this should be taught to their descendants. One therefore has to look further in scriptures to figure out when the teachings about marriage came about.

When God gave the Ten Commandments to his children Israel, in it were contained two direct mentions of marriage related issues. These are found in Ex 20:14 and 17. God clearly commands the children of Israel not to commit adultery or to covet their neighbour's wife. Whereas this particular passage does not tell us when to teach the laws, a more explicit direction is contained in later scriptures. This is found in Moses' charge to the Children of Israel in Deut 4: 9 – 14 where he commands them not only to watch how they live but to also "teach them to their children and to their children after them". Although this gives us an indication of the Lord's expectation that children may be taught it does not give us a clue at what age this was to start. A more explicit direction is found later in the same book in chapter 6 verse 7 which reads

"and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." (RSVA)

Similar directions are found in Deut 11: 18 – 21. In this passage the Lord commands his people to even *"write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates" (verse 21).* Deut 31:12-13 contains similar directions of teaching children the law so that they may learn to fear God. The only time when parents get an opportunity to teach children as they lie down is when they are young and still under their care. Hence the implication of these verses is that children are to be taught right from infanthood.

Some biblical examples of parents who taught their children about marriage are king Solomon (Prov 5:1 – 23) who warns his son against adultery and King Lemuel's mother (Prov 31) who gives him instructions about sexuality (verse 3) and teaches him about a wife of noble character. In the New Testament an example of such kind of a teaching is Timothy. In a letter to Timothy Paul in 2 Tim 3:15 he remind him:

> *"... How **from childhood** you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (RSVA)*[5]

An earlier passage in 2 Tim 1: 5 helps us know where he learned his teachings about God. This was from his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice.

From the above Old and New Testament examples, it is clear that the greater responsibility of teaching children

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[5] Emphasis by the researcher

the law rested with their parents and grandparents. God required it to be taught to the children and their children after them. Today, the responsibility of teaching the teachings of the scripture is not just left to parent. The charge to go and make disciples (Mt 28:19 – 20) may be seen as all inclusive in its teaching. Part of what Christ had taught his disciples related to marriage e.g. Mt 19: 1-12; Mk 10:6 - 12; Lk 16:18. Hence not only are we to teach men about salvation through faith but also how to live godly lives. One person who put this into practice was the apostle Paul. Some examples of his instructions of marriage are contained in 1 Cor 7 and Eph 5:22 – 33. However, in relation to marriage a more explicit command is found in Titus 2:3 – 4 where older women are meant to teach the younger women on issues related to marriage.

Doherty (1986:56) observes that some people consider the task of teaching children the word of God to be of little importance. There is also a trend in children's work to focus on bible stories and what may be considered to be easily understood by children. God's command to Israel was to teach children the entire law as discussed earlier. Prov 22:6 encourages that children be trained in the way to go and the promise is that they shall not depart from it. Could this be the reason marriage is so misunderstood in the church leading to divorce and other perversions such as same sex marriages?

Children are bombarded with secular and ungodly messages from such a young age which means that

trying to teach the correct teachings on marriage at the time they've already chosen a marriage partner is so futile. Barnes (1997:115) notes that a parent might never know exactly how much a child is learning. However, it is important to teach the important lessons whether or not the person seems to grasp the magnitude. Many bible scholars agree with this thought. One such person is Matthew Henry the famous bible commentator who wrote *"It is of great happiness to know the Holy Scriptures from our childhood. The age of childhood is the learning age; and those who would get the true learning must get it out of the Scriptures."* (Doherty 1986:58).

3.4.1.3 The Content

In the previous section we concluded that the teaching on pre – marital counselling finds its basis in the law. As a result, it is imperative that the content be sought out in the word of God as contained in the scriptures. In this section we thus discuss the contents of pre – marital counselling guided by scriptures.

In Gen 1: 27 – 28; 2:23 – 24 we find various fundamental teachings on marriage. In these passages we find explicit mention of who the partners in marriage are, the roles of the marriage partners and the purpose of marriage. It is clear from this passages that marriage is between a man and a woman; the woman is created to help the man; that they are created to be fruitful i.e. to bear children; and that the purpose for marriage is oneness hence the charge to leave father and mother.

Marriage is therefore not for children or immature persons but for those who are ready to stand on their own and provide for themselves. From this one may also infer that sexual relations are meant to be found in the context of marriage. A key thing that stands out in the Genesis account is that marriage is solely God's idea.

More unequivocal guidelines are found in the laws given to the children of Israel. For example Lev 12 which talks about childbirth; Lev 18 which discusses unlawful sexual offences; Deut 22: 13 – 30 which gives a series of marriage violations; and Deut 24:1 – 5 which discusses divorce remarriage and directions not to send a newly wed to war. Solomon in Prov 5 instructs his son on adultery, while King Lemuel's mother (Prov 31) taught him about a woman of Noble character. Could this be the guidelines he used to select a wife? The bible does not tell us but the teaching must have had a great impact on him for him to repeat it again for others to learn from it. Barnes (1997:14) emphasizes that without a selection tool, people will make decisions about spouses using their eyes, biology or emotions rather than wisdom.

Later in scriptures we find descriptions of who to marry e.g. Ezra 9, 10: 18-44; 2 Cor 6:14 - 18; How many persons to marry e.g. Gen 2:24, Eccl 9:9, 1 Tim 3:2; the roles and responsibilities of the spouses in a marital relationship e.g. Eph 5:22- 33 and the duration of the marriage e.g. Mal 2: 13 – 16, Mt 19: 1 – 12, Mk 10:2 - 12. All these things are key to building a marriage that pleases God.

The content of various pre – marital classes or sessions differs from one scholar to another. They range from the couple's relationship with God such as their walk with God, church involvement etc. and with each other such as conflict resolution, managing finances etc. Whereas this study has not discussed all of them the researcher has considered various suggested guidelines such as Wright (1980), Collins (1988), Worthington (1989), Smith (1990), Daigle (2006), Deffinbaugh (2006), and Strauss (2006). One main theme that cuts across them is the need to peg all teaching on marriage on the word of God. However the foundation of such teaching should be pegged on Christ. Paul writing in 1 Cor 3:10 – 15, remarks that Christ is the only foundation and the rest of us need to carefully build on him. This should be the marked difference between the content of Christian and secular pre – marital counselling.

3.4.1.4 Who conducts it?

From the discussion in 3.3.1.2 it is clear that the responsibility of pre – marital counselling is not the domain of a single group of persons. The task begins with parents and grandparents at home see Deut 4: 9 – 14, 2 Tim 1:15. This is then supplemented by the teachings of the church through the disciples see Mt 19: 1-12; Mk 10:6 - 12; Lk 16:18. A more explicit instruction is found in Titus 2:3 – 4 where older women are meant to teach the younger women on issues related to marriage.

3.5 Conclusion

Collins (1988:397) asks a pertinent question when he asks if pre – marital counselling really improves marriage or not. However as he notes and as the researcher discovered during the cause of this study, there is no conclusive research evidence to demonstrate that pre – marital counselling really does prevent later difficulties or contributes to the building of more stable marriages. Stanley (1997:51-60) indicates that successful pre – marital training programs are those that show advantages on three key dimensions namely results relevance and reality. This he observes need to be tested.

Whereas research support is inconclusive, Christians have a responsibility before God to help couples live fulfilled lives that are pleasing to God. Baker (2003:1) proposes the implementation of discipleship towards marriage that will bring glory to God. This he believes should start earlier with the young people as too many of them are stumbling around making unwise choices and being guided by their own flesh. The suggestion that this type of guidance or education needs to start early seems to be taking root in secular counselling.

The emerging trend of counselling in the world is life skills counselling. Compared to all other counselling approaches, this is a preventative approach. Pre – marital counselling is a preventative measure. Jones (1997) skilfully explains this approach which holds values that are within or outside a religious frame work in his book. He refers to life skills counsellors as developmental educators (1997:10). Marriage is a stage in the development of an individual

hence Christian pre – marital counselling needs to take a developmental approach.

In conclusion, pre – marital counselling as we have discussed it is much broader than a few pre – ceremonial sessions with the pastor or in a pre – marital class. Martin Luther the founder of the Protestant Reformation is quoted by Doherty (1986:58) saying,

"... If the Kingdom of God is to come with power, we must begin with the children and teach them from the cradle. See to it that you first of all have your children instructed in spiritual things... Young trees though some may break in the process, are more easily bent and trained. Therefore let it be considered one of the greatest virtues on earth, faithfully to train the children of others ...."

When viewed in the broader context addressed discussed in 3.3, pre - marital counselling is part of Christian discipleship. While this broader concept of education for marriage may not have been studied empirically it has been mandated by God in the Bible and it is the responsibility of every Christian to respond to the charge. As Nicholas, Clarke and Hogan (1987:37) observe, *"the family is a basic set of relationships in which faith must make a significant difference"*.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters set to explain the problem and conceptual component of the study. The researcher also explained the biblical basis of Christian pre-marital counselling. This chapter discusses the research design and methodology used in the study. The sample population and sampling techniques are fully outlined and the data collection instruments presented. The chapter concludes with a brief explanation of how the gathered data was analyzed and presented.

4.2 Research design

The study combined qualitative and quantitative designs. However, it is primarily qualitative. The approach used in this study was geared towards discovery of new information while at the same time testing the study hypothesis. This approach allowed respondents to introduce important concepts from their experience in the field.

4.3 Description of Study Area and Target Population

Kenya has numerous churches owing to the freedom of worship that is entrenched in the country's constitution. These churches range from evangelical churches, catholic churches and indigenous churches which are a blend Christianity and African traditional practices. There are also cults that at first glance would be considered to be Christian churches. In studying the church in Kenya a researcher therefore needs to clearly specify the target

population. The population targeted in this study was evangelical churches. These are churches that believe in the doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. However, these churches are numerous hence the need to follow clear sampling techniques to obtain a representative study sample. The sampling procedure is explained in 4.4 below.

Nairobi is the capital city of Kenya and most of the churches found in the rural areas or in other towns within the country usually have their roots in Nairobi. Most church headquarters are located in Nairobi. The city churches usually act as pacesetters in implementation of programs to other local churches. A well selected sample from Nairobi can therefore be representative of trends in the Kenyan church.

As earlier noted in chapter one, there are Christians who are already going through challenges in their marital relationships and sometimes divorce. This study also targeted such couples in order to provide a comparison in the findings from the churches so that the results of the study may provide a more comprehensive conclusion.

4.4 Study Sample

4.4.1 The Churches

For sample selection the researcher was to obtain a listing of the evangelical churches in Nairobi from the Evangelical Alliance of Kenya (AEA – Kenya) and the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCK). However the list from the AEA website of its members contained twenty three churches while

the NCCK website had fewer than that. A more comprehensive list was found in the yellow pages of the official Nairobi edition of the telephone directory.

The first step involved assigning a number to each evangelical church in alphabetical order. On conclusion of this first step, it was noted that the listed churches were over one hundred. The researcher therefore used the stratified random sampling technique in sample selection. The strata were generated from common classifications of the churches in Kenya. From each stratum two churches were selected to form the study sample. The strata used were: Presbyterian Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, African Inland Church, Assemblies of God, Non – denominational, Christ is the Answer Ministries, and Deliverance Churches

The churches that make the sample in each stratum were selected by use of random sampling. After listing all the churches in each stratum alphabetically, each church was allocated a number. Using the lottery method, two churches were selected. The selected sample size therefore consisted of twenty churches. These were:

Presbyterian	Bahati and St. Andrews
Anglican	St. Marks and The Children's Church
Methodist	Kariokor and Charles New
Baptist	Ridgeways and Thika Rd
Lutheran	Nyerere Rd and Ngong Rd
African Inland Church	Ziwani and Milimani
Assemblies of God	BuruBuru and Parklands

Non – denominational	Eagles Faith and Jubilee Christian Centre
Deliverance Churches	Umoja and Eastleigh
Christ is the Answer Ministries	Valley Rd and Woodely

However, as mentioned in chapter one, there are already churches that are known to have already running premarital counselling classes. Since they may not form part of the sample selected randomly, the researcher used purposive sampling. According to Kenya Institute of Social Work and Community Development (KISWCD), the basic assumption behind this method of sampling is that with good judgement a researcher can hand pick the cases to be included in the sample thus developing samples that are satisfactory in relation to ones needs (n.d:28). The churches in this category were omitted from the first list described in the previous paragraph. A second list containing all the churches running pre - marital classes in Nairobi was generated. Using the lottery method, two churches were selected. These brought the total number of churches in the sample to twenty two. The selected churches were Mamlaka Chapel and International Christian Centre.

4.4.2 The Couples

The study targeted couples experiencing marital discord. Owing to the sensitivity of the matter very few couples come forward for counselling. For sample selection the researcher therefore targeted a psychological firm that deals with Christian marital therapy in Nairobi. Through

purposeful sampling discussed in 4.4.1 above, Anchoring Consultants was selected. The parameter used for this selection was that it mainly handles clients referred from evangelical churches and therefore the researcher was bound to get a sample that fitted the target area of study. On the other hand the curiosity about pre – marital counselling that preceded this study was as a result of past clients that the researcher had encountered while working there.

To obtain a sample, the researcher obtained a list of clients that were undergoing therapy during the time of the study. There were ten couples in therapy at the time of the study. Owing to professional ethics, the researcher requested them through their therapist if they were willing to participate in the study. The purpose of the study and how the data was to be collected was clearly explained to them. They were assured of confidentiality. After clarifying all questions related to their involvement in the study, they were asked to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. Seven out of the ten couples agreed to participate.

4.5 Study Instruments

The study targeted two specific subjects. First, there were the service providers, namely the churches. Second, there were the recipients of the service namely the married couples. This meant that the researcher needed to device two distinctive methods of collecting data as outlined below.

4.5.1 The Churches

This section of the study evaluated existing Christian pre-marital counselling programmes in Nairobi. The instruments used in the study had a two fold purpose. First, they helped establish the subjects thoughts and ideas on Christian pre – marital counselling. Second, they sought to establish what is happening on the ground. In this way the study evaluated if there is congruence in the subjects' thoughts and actions.

The researcher used empirical methods to gather primary data by use of questionnaires and observation conducted by the researcher. Two instruments were used in data collection. These are a questionnaire and a check list.

4.5.1.1 The Questionnaire[6]

This tool was to be filled by the person charged with the responsibility of pre – marital counselling within the church. The tool was self-administered, that is, the subjects were allowed to complete the instruments themselves without any supervision but within the interview time.

The questionnaire items were both structured and unstructured. The structured items will had a list of all possible alternatives from which respondents could select the answer that best describe their situation. Space was provided for any perception that was not captured by the listed alternatives. The unstructured

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[6] See Appendix 1

questionnaire items allowed subjects to communicate their private feelings, perceptions, thoughts and construed meanings. Macleod (1994:80) notes that such questions emphasize the recording of spontaneous free flowing meanings that subjects are able to articulate.

In Section A, the subjects were required to give their personal definition of pre – marital counselling and its purpose. The questions that followed sought to establish if there is pre – marital counselling conducted within their church and how it is structured. It also sought to identify other forums that marriage is discussed with unmarried church members and their main reference materials.

Section B gave a list of fourteen suggested topics for pre – marital counselling. Subjects were then required to list them by order of priority one - fourteen, one being the most important and fourteen being the least important.

4.5.1.2 The Observation Checklist[7]

The Observation checklist was administered by the researcher and not necessarily within the interview time. Its target was to evaluate the churches existing pre – marital counselling programs. This may be in the form of a class or individual counselling sessions. The researcher read through the content of class materials and manuals used for pre – marital counselling where available. Where no materials are available, the

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[7] See Appendix 2

researcher interviewed the key informant i.e. the person who conducts pre – marital counselling, using the checklist as a guideline.

The observation checklist contained a list of topics as has been outlined in chapter two that are deemed key in forming a biblical basis for Christian pre – marital counselling. These topics were contained in a table having four columns. Column one contained the list of topics. In column two the researcher was required to tick against the topic that is contained in the class content. On the topics found to be covered, a rating scale to assess the sufficiency of the biblical content on a scale of one– five, one being poor and five being excellent was used in column three. Column four contained any other observations made on the same.

4.5.2 The Couples

This section of the study evaluated Christian marriages experiencing difficulties. The instrument used to collect data first helped establish the cause of marital discord in the couple's life. Second, it helped establish the couple's pre – marital counselling experience and its perceived benefits. The instrument also set out to determine the subjects' thoughts and ideas on Christian pre – marital counselling i.e. content and onset. The researcher gathered primary data by using an interview schedule[8]. Both the husband and wife were interviewed together.

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[8] See Appendix 3

4.6 Data Collection Procedures

This section described how the data was actually collected from the subjects in the study. The process involved two major steps namely the pre – test and actual data collection.

4.6.1 Pre – Test

To check the validity of the questionnaire items, the researcher conducted a pre-test. The selected subject sample in a pre – test should be similar to but not the actual sample. The researcher therefore used subjects from a church not within the selected sample. To avoid bias, the pre-test sample was selected after the main study sample had been selected. The pre-test sample consisted of four couples who facilitate the pre-marital counselling class at Parklands Baptist church in Nairobi. The pre – test for the couples' questionnaire was conducted using eight couples selected from the same church.

The pre - test results indicated that the subjects clearly understood the questions hence there was no need to change the questions to suit the study objectives. There was no pre – test for the observation schedule as the researcher was the only one to use it during the interview and she clearly understood what she was looking for.

4.6.2 The Study's Data Collection

4.6.2.1 The Churches

Data collection involved two main steps. First, the subjects were asked to fill in the questionnaire, in the presence of the researcher. This way the researcher was able to clarify any questions where needed. Second, the researcher reviewed written content of pre – marital counselling by use of the check list. Where there is no written material, the researcher used the checklist as an interview schedule in – order to obtain the required information verbally from the subjects. There was no research assistant used.

4.6.2.2 The Couples

Keeping in line with the counselling ethics, permission was first sought from the clients to include them in the study's sample. They were then assured of confidentiality and that none of the previous information given to their therapist would be used. The only information used in the study would be the information given during the data collection interview. This would also be coded and kept as confidential as possible to protect the client.

4.7 Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher used statistical methods to analyze the data. Following data collection, the questionnaire sheets, checklist and

couples' interview questionnaires were grouped into three. Coding and categorization of variables was then done followed by data entry. The researcher used Microsoft Excel for data analysis and presentation. Tables, charts and diagrams were then generated to summarize the study's' findings.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research design and methodology used in the study. The study findings are presented and discussed in chapter five in order to accept or reject the study's hypothesis.

Chapter Five

Findings Of The Study

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the research design and methodology used in the study. The sample population and sampling techniques were fully outlined and the data collection instruments presented. The chapter concluded with a brief explanation of how the gathered data was analyzed and presented. This chapter provides a detailed discussion and analysis of data provided by the study's respondents. It begins with presentation of the findings and concludes with a discussion on the same. In Section 5.3, a comparison is made between the data collected from the churches and that from the couples. It is from this discussion that the researcher was able to decide whether to reject or accept the hypothesis. This decision is found in the final conclusion i.e. Chapter 6.

5.2 Presentation of the findings

5.2.1 The Questionnaire

All the twenty two churches comprising the sample were interviewed. The finding indicated that all the twenty two churches had pre – marital counselling in their respective churches. The mode and content differed as will be explained later in this section but their target group was the same. They all target couples who come forth and indicate their desire to be wedded then the pre – marital counselling commences.

On being asked to define the term pre – marital counselling, all respondents concurred that it was teaching or guidance that is given to two people with an intention to get married. Twenty one of the respondents described the purpose of pre – marital counselling as an opportunity for the couple to either learn about marriage with an aim of help them to figure out how to live together and to face or overcome the challenges that lie ahead. One respondent indicated that other than learning about marriage, it is a time where couples need to take their time to reflect deeply on their intentions and also bond further through the learning period.

To the question who conducts the sessions, 73% indicated that it was the pastors responsibility while 27% indicated that it was the responsibility of couples as assigned by the church's coordinator of pre – marital counselling. A similar finding was found when they were asked about the references they used in counselling where 73% indicated that they used the bible as their source of reference while 27% used a handbook they had developed. The 27% also referred couples to other books. These were:

- ☑ Men are from Mars and Women from Venus
- ☑ His Needs, Her Needs
- ☑ The Marriage Builder
- ☑ Gender and Grace
- ☑ Honest to God
- ☑ Strike the Original Match
- ☑ The Pursuit of Intimacy

The listing of the various forums that single persons are prepared for marriage did not differ so much. These were:

- ☑ Young professional forums
- ☑ Sermons from the pulpit
- ☑ One day seminars
- ☑ Bridal Showers

When asked how many sermons in the year talked about marriage, it was interesting to note that only two churches had taught on marriage in a period of twelve months from the date of the interview. The two had each had a sermon during their family week.

Conversely, one church had a ten week course that is similar to their pre – marital counselling course that they take all their young adults through in small groups. One other church had a program called the school of marital wisdom. This they initially started to help both the married and singles. However, the pastor observed that it has drawn interest mainly with the married couples. Maybe one or two singles attends the meetings that are held once a month.
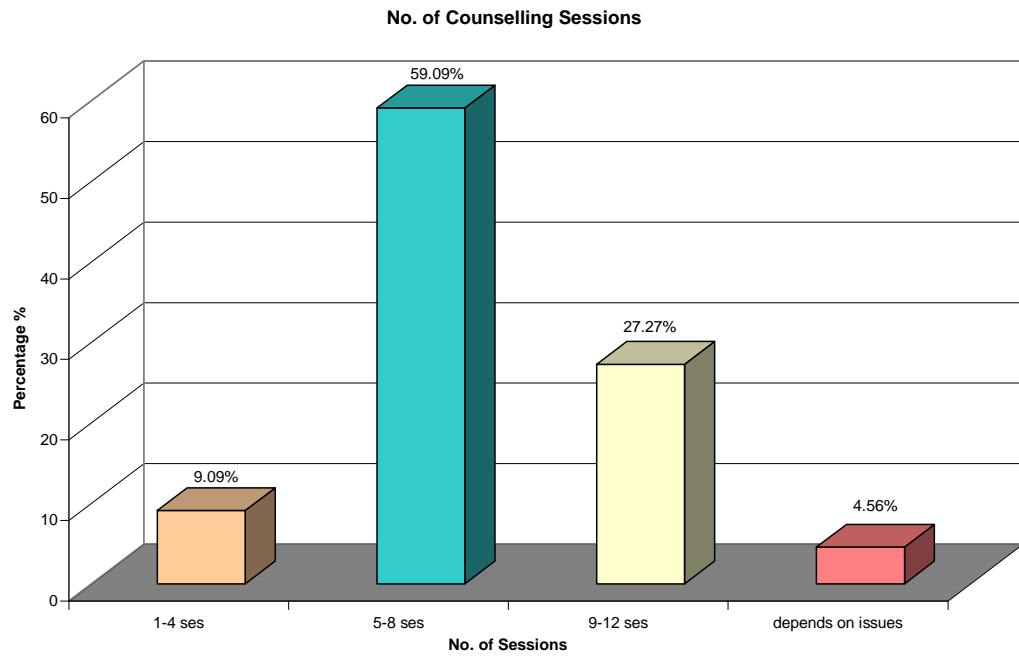
When asked about the onset of pre – marital counselling, about 86% indicated that it began two to three months to the wedding while about 14% indicated that it began 4 – 6 months before the wedding as indicated in the chart one below.

Chart One: The Onset of Pre – marital counselling

Onset of Pre - marital Counselling

4 - 6 months
13.64%

2 - 3 months
86.36%
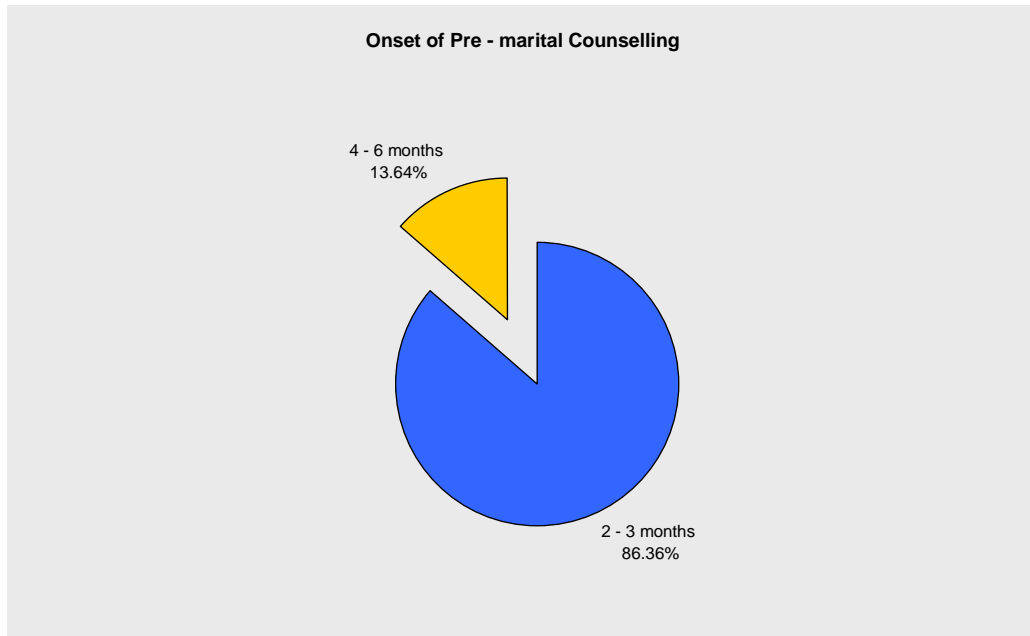
The number of sessions varied as indicated in chart two below where about 27% of the respondents had sessions that lasted about nine to twelve sessions, 59% five to eight sessions, and about 9% one to four sessions. It was interesting to note that there was about 5% who had no fixed sessions. It all depended on the issues the couples came with. If there were no contentious issues the sessions were one or two.

Chart Two: the Number of Counselling Sessions

No. of Counselling Sessions

Percentage %

- 59.09% (5-8 ses)
- 27.27% (9-12 ses)
- 9.09% (1-4 ses)
- 4.56% (depends on issues)

No. of Sessions

All the sessions lasted between one and two hours. Chart three below is a diagrammatic representation of the distribution of the session hours.

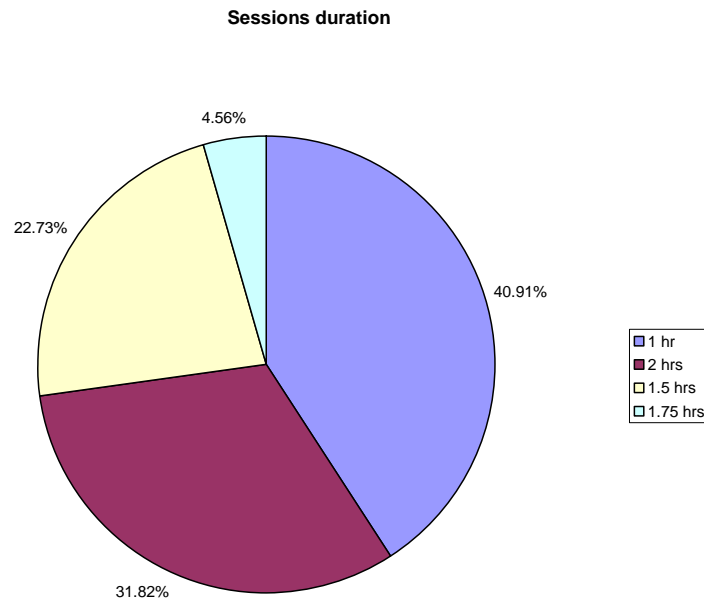**Chart Three: Duration of Pre – Marital counselling Sessions**

Sessions duration

4.56%

22.73%

40.91%

31.82%

Legend:
- 1 hr
- 2 hrs
- 1.5 hrs
- 1.75 hrs

Table Two below is a representation of a rearrangement according to respondents responses when asked to list some given topics for pre – marital counselling according to their order of importance. They were to score one for the topic of most importance and fourteen being the least important. The least score would therefore be twenty two, while the highest score would be three hundred and eight.

Table Two: Rating of topics for discussion

Topic	Score
1. The purpose of marriage	51
2. Communication in Marriage	87
3. The commitment of marriage	103
4. Managing family finances	113
5. Understanding your spouse's personality	138
6. Dealing with In - laws	150
7. Discussions from the bible on marriage	153
8. The Role of a husband and wife	170
9. Church & Spirituality in Marriage	173
10. Sex in marriage	190
11. Children and Parenting	216
12. The role of parents during the wedding	267
13. Cultural practices related to marriage	297
14. Planning the wedding	307

From the above table, the topic of most importance is the purpose of marriage. However, the topic on communication was found to be of greater importance to the respondents than the commitment of marriage. Discussions from the Bible on marriage were ranked seventh. They were out ranked by other practical issue of the marriage relationship namely managing family finances, understanding your spouse's personality and dealing with in – laws.

5.2.2 The Observation Checklist

Of the twenty two targeted churches only three churches i.e. 13.63% of the total sample had a handbook that the

researcher could use. Four other churches i.e. 18.18% of the total sample had some handbook but this was not available for perusal. The other churches i.e. 68.19% of the total sample did not have a handbook. The researcher therefore used the checklist as an interview schedule in the absence of a handbook. The results from the interview were sketchy hence inconclusive. The results contained in this section are therefore in reference to data obtained from the three churches that had an available handbook for perusal.

The three classes were very similar. The duration was ten weeks with each session taking between two to two and a half hours. All the classes were facilitated by selected couples. However in one of the classes there was always an overseeing pastor present. Their activities included facilitation, group discussions and a reading assignment. At one of the classes however, there was a team building session and a group dinner at the end of the class.

Table three below is a representation of the rating of biblical content in the handbooks. Of the fourteen listed topics, five of these topics were not covered at all by any of the churches. These are topics that were considered too theoretical. The churches leaned more on the more practical lessons on how to stay married. The fifteenth and sixteenth topics were additional topics covered during pre – marital counselling sessions that were not part of the listed ones.

Table Three: Covered topics with their ratings

Topic	Rating of Biblical Content		
	Church 1	Church 2	Church 3
1. Marriage is God's Idea	0	0	0
2. Represents Christ's relationship with the church	0	0	0
3. Entering into the relationship	1	0	2
4. Marriage as a covenant	2	3	3
5. Parental Consent	0	0	0
6. Wife's Role	2	2	2
7. Husband's role	2	2	2
8. The commitment of marriage	4	4	4
9. The blessings of marriage	0	0	0
10. The work of Marriage	0	0	0
11. The result of Marriage	1	1	1
12. Marriage & Culture	0	0	0
13. Communication in Marriage	4	4	3
14. Marriage & Related Issues	2	3	2
15. Growing in Intimacy	4	3	2
16. Sex in Marriage	2	2	1
Total	**23**	**26**	**25**
Percentage (%)	**28.75%**	**32.5%**	**31.25%**

NB: Rating scale - 1 being poor and 5 being excellent.

From the above findings, the rating of biblical content was very low. Out of a possible score of eighty points for each church, they all scored below thirty points. This was less than thirty three percent. Whereas the Bible may have been used to bring out a teaching or principle, it was used to affirm teachings or principles that were not necessarily from a Christian perspective. For example in one church the topic of communication was covered by having a reading assignment from 'Men are from Mars and Women from Venus'. The principles were then contextualized in a Christian setting.

In discussing the roles of the husband and wife, the focus was mainly headship and love for the husband and submission for the wife. Other aspects such as nourishment, cherishing and cleansing were left out. Most of the sessions dwelt more on communication. In two churches it was covered in four sessions. These were divided into Communication I & II and Conflict Resolution I & II. The other church had one session on it. The topic of Marriage and related issues was well covered. However, the related issues were covered as weekly topics. The topics covered in all the churches were in – laws, Finances and Children.

5.2.3 The Couples' interview

5.2.3.1 Couples' Background

The findings indicated that the ages of the respondents ranged from 31 years to 53 years with a mean age of 42 years. 57% respondents had been married from between 6 months to 5 years while the other 43% had been married for between 16 to 20 years. They were all married in an evangelical church.

Chart Four below gives the respondents' reasons for getting married.

Chart Four: Reasons for marriage
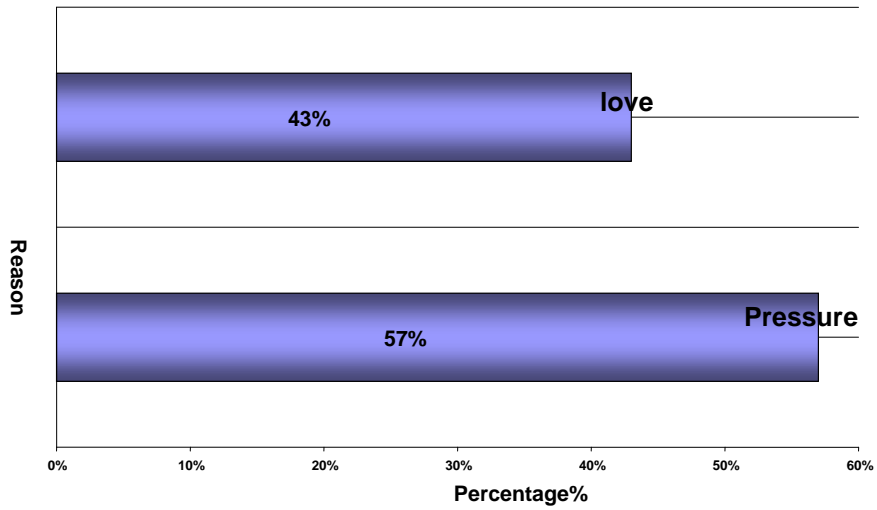
57%% married out of pressure from peers parents or society, while 43% married out of love.

When asked about their faith 57% of the couples were both born again when they got married while 29% were not. 14% of the respondents were a discordant couple i.e. one was born again while the other was not. Chart Five is a diagrammatic representation of the same.
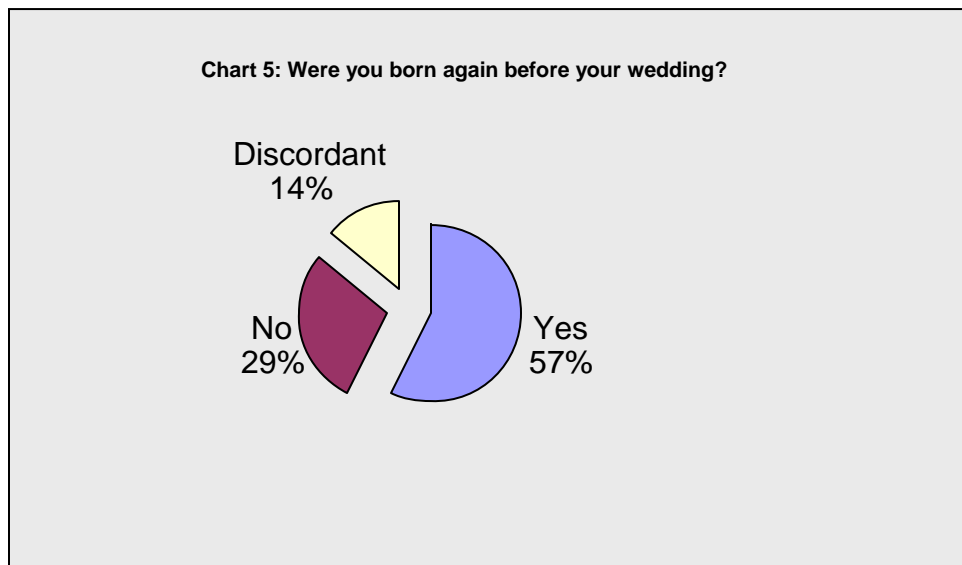

Chart 5: Were you born again before your wedding?

Chart six is a representation of the onset of marital problems. From it we see that 86% of the respondents started to experience serious problems in their marriage in the first three years of their marriage. Out of these, 83% attributed the genesis of their problems to be separation owing to work. This led to their failure to grow together resulting in different interests and resultant infidelity by one or both the spouses. The other 17% attributed their problems to a change in one of the spouse's sexual orientation.

Chart Six: Onset of Marital Problems
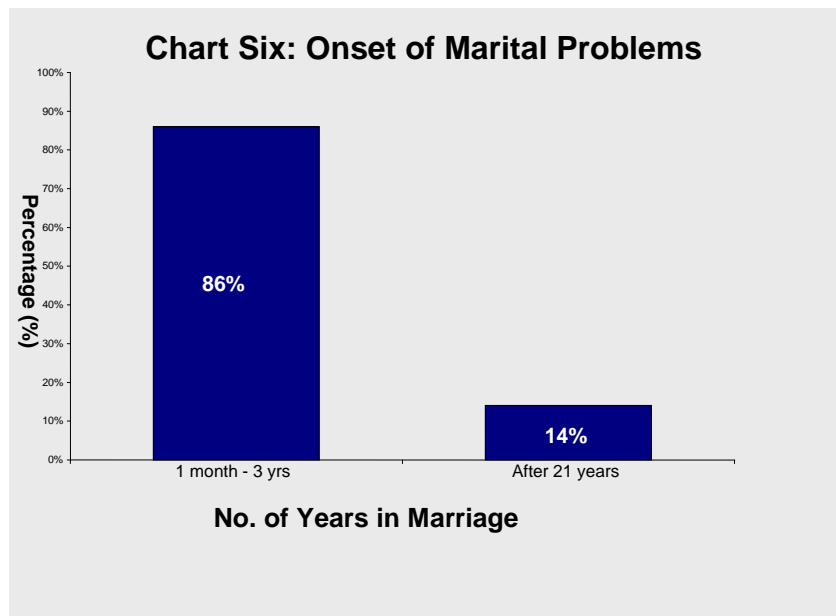
14% of the respondents started to experience serious marital problems in their marriage in their 21st year of marriage. They attributed their problems to one spouse committing their lives to Christ, leading to different interests that resulted in their relationship drifting and eventual infidelity. They however were not willing to give up on their marriage owing to their faith in God.

57% of the respondents came into counselling to be assisted to restore their marriages while the other 43% was seeking psychological and emotional support to enable them divorce amicably. It was significant to note that all those seeking a divorce had been married for less than 3 years. They considered their being tied to their partner as an obstacle to attaining the happiness they felt they deserved.

5.2.3.2 Pre – Marital Counselling Experience

All the younger couples i.e. 57% of the total sample had attended pre – marital counselling while all the older couples i.e. 43% of the total sample had not attended pre – marital counselling. All respondents who had attended pre – marital counselling had undergone less than six sessions with a church minister a few weeks before their wedding. The sessions lasted an average of one hour one hour. Although they attended different churches, they all covered four topics in counselling. These are Communication in marriage, budgeting, coping with in – laws and the responsibilities of each partner.

5.2.3.3 Their Perception of Marriage and Pre – marital counselling

When asked to respond to the statement *"if a marriage becomes too hard one should quit"* 57% strongly disagreed, 29% either strongly agreed or agreed while 14% were not sure. For those who strongly disagreed, 75% gave the resultant pain and shame as the reason for

their answer. 25% did not believe divorce was God's plan. The 29% that agreed with the statement, felt that they were entitled to a good life hence there was no use to live in a marriage that does not meet their needs.

All the couples felt that pre – marital counselling was important in preparing persons for marriage. Chart Seven below details the respondents' views on how the church would have better prepared them for marriage.

Chart Seven: Help you would have obtained from Church before marriage
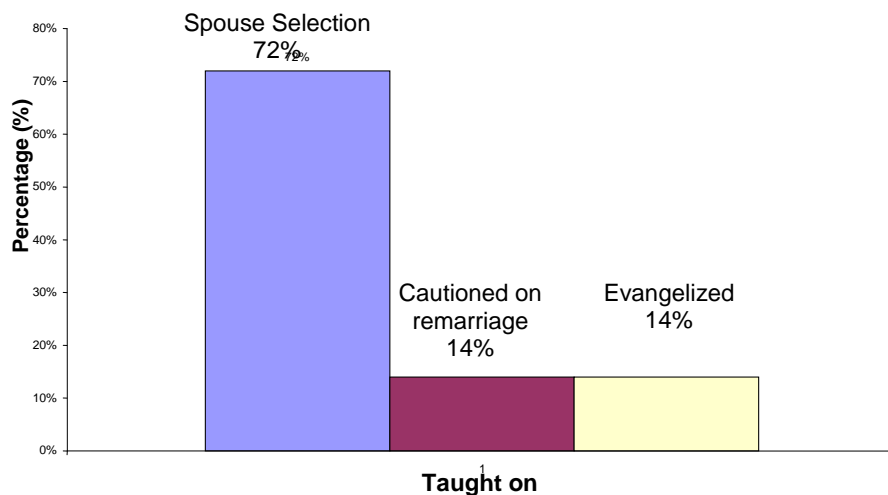
72% felt that they should have been counselled on how to select a partner long before they fell in love, while14% felt that they should have been cautioned about remarriage and another 14% felt that the minister conducting their marriage should have shared the gospel with them.

5.3 Discussion of the findings

Whereas data was collected from three different sources, the results presented in section 5.2 bring out a number of similarities and differences. First, they bring out the fact that pre – marital counselling is present in the Kenyan church. The view of pre – marital counselling is also similar in that it is mostly seen as a time to prepare couples for their impending marriage. For a majority of the churches this happens two to three months before the intended marriage. This definition and onset is divergent form the biblical perspective on the same discussed in chapter three where it is clearly brought out that Christian pre - marital counselling should begin at childhood. Nevertheless, it is imperative to note that the definition of the Kenyan church is not dissimilar from what is the norm else where in the world as is seen in section 3.3.1.

This is further strengthened by the responses of the couples as seen in chart seven where a majority noted that the church would have better prepared them for marriage by teaching them on how to select spouses. Of interest are other responses to the same question where evangelism is also listed. This brings out another key aspect. That is that the definition of pre – marital counselling. Whereas churches prepare the couple for marriage, the church seems to focus more on the process of marriage and forget the biblical mandate of making disciples found in Mat 28:19. A closer look at the topics listed in sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 reveal that there was no evidence on a discussion of the need for salvation in any of the sampled churches.

Whereas pre – marital counselling is present, there is a lack of concurrence on the mode, duration and content of the sessions. A

close look at the topics reveals that Churches choose to focus on more practical aspects of marriage. This thought is strengthened by the findings from the interviewed couples. All who underwent pre – marital counselling indicated that they had each been taken through sessions on communication, budgeting, handling in – laws and their various roles and responsibilities. This is also affirmed by the findings in 5.2.2 where the topics biblical content was rated as below thirty three percent amongst all the respondents. The discussion in chapters two and three do give guidelines on important foundational Biblical truths that need to be covered in pre – marital counselling. These topics are so divergent and cannot be covered in a matter of weeks as the findings have indicated is the practice.

A closer look at the listing of the topics in 5.2.1 it is interesting to note that some key topics that affect marriages in Kenya as brought out in chapter one, are found at the bottom of the list. The role of parents during the wedding and a discussion of cultural practices related to marriage were ranked twelfth and thirteenth respectively. Whereas the pre – marital counsellor may not delve deeply into traditional practices, a discussion on how to cope with the specific challenges would be key in averting a lot of confusion. A failure to look at the role of the parents during the wedding on the other hand may cause some couples to ignore their thoughts and convictions about the wedding. A couple may on the other hand end up succumbing to parental demands even when unreasonable or against their faith thus causing them discomfort or to wind up in sin.

Whereas The Bible was the choice tool for pre – marital counselling, there was a greater reliance on other books. This is also seen in the rating of the Biblical content of the pre – marital counselling manuals in section 5.2.2. In a sense there seems to be dissonance

in relation to what the respondents indicated should be the practice and that which is happening on the ground. The Bible is used in pre – marital counselling to affirm aspects of counselling that have already been set out by a book or school of thought. To avoid missing out on the key aspects of marriage, one should refer to the Bible then use the books to assert the revealed truths. This is a thing that the Psalmist knew as is found in Psalm 119:24 when he indicates

"Your statutes are my delight, they are my counselors" (NIV)

A lack of these foundational truths is evidenced in the findings by a number of things. All the interviewed couples saw the reason for their marriage as either love or pressure from parents or others. None of the couples considered their marriage as part of God's plan for their life. As a result, forty three percent of the interviewed couples were seeking psychological and emotional assistance for a divorce. This was after three years in marriage. These couples had been through pre – marital counselling but the purpose and commitment of marriage seemed to have been missed or forgotten. These couples viewed their present marriage as an impediment to their joy and a better life. It is essential to point out that these couples were born again Christians. It is of great importance to note that those not seeking divorce were older couples who credited their stand to their spiritual growth and understanding of the need to wait for God's plan to unfold in their life. This thought is echoed by the response to the question on what one should do if marriage became too hard. A majority of the respondents indicated that one should quit.

From the presented findings, pre – marital counselling in most cases seems to be the domain of the pastors. No wonder the number of sessions and duration of varied significantly. Taking into consideration the dynamics and responsibilities of leading a congregation, pastors may not have sufficient time to prepare the couples a few months before their wedding. In some churches, there are couples that are being used to teach where classes are available. Nevertheless, these classes are yet to be embraced by the larger Kenyan church. They seem to be a domain of a few mainly the Non – denominational and Pentecostal churches. The aspect of parental involvement in pre – marital counselling did not feature in any of the respondents.

None of the respondents indicated that the teachings on marriage began with children at church school. The earliest time marriage is discussed is with young adults. This is at a time when their age group is either actively involved in a relationship or searching for one. It is therefore a very emotional time where reason sometimes may not come through. There is however an effort to assist them to make the right choices as was the case in one of the churches where they undergo a ten week course that is similar to the pre – marital counselling program. Other forums to educate the singles included bridal showers and yearly retreats. There was also a School of marital Wisdom which unfortunately reached the married persons and not the singles as it was originally designed for. These findings indicate the lack of a clear and effective way to educate the younger congregants on the Christian marriage within in the church.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the study's findings. From the above findings, there is evidence that pre – marital counselling is evident in the Kenyan churches. The onset, duration and content may differ but the goals are similar. However, this study set off to either accept or reject the postulated hypothesis. The above results support the hypothesis that Churches fail to set a clear and firm biblical basis on the marriage relationship during Pre-marital counselling in Kenya. Whereas the Bible is used during the sessions, it is often as a tool to support a selected topic.

There was no evidence of an exploratory or expositional approach to the Christian marriage in any of the sampled churches. A closer look at some of the reference material such as, *"Men are from Mars and Women from Venus"* by John Gray point to the use of contemporary schools of thought to counsel Christian couples. This therefore does not differ too much from what would be offered at a secular pre – marital counselling session. The results of the observation checklist in section 5.2.2 reveal a lack of sufficient biblical basis for that which was taught.

Chapter Six summarizes what the study was about and its findings. It then concludes with a number of recommendations.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

6.1 Summary

The present study endeavoured to examine Christian Pre – marital counselling classes in Kenya. The focus was on the evangelical churches. In chapter one, the researcher set forth to explain give the background to the study. The objectives and hypothesis of the study were set forth. From these some key questions to be addressed were laid down. First, is there a biblical basis for pre – marital counselling or is it a western concept? To answer this question, the study in chapter three traced back the roots of pre – marital counselling from the times of Moses to our time.

In chapters two and three, the researcher brought out key elements of the content of pre – marital counselling. This was done by tracing the origin of the marital relationship, what the responsibilities of each partner and their parents are to the expectations and result of marriage. The Law of Moses was also used to expound part of the contents of pre – marital counselling. This therefore helped to answer the second question that asked what the content should be.

Third, the question on what the relationship between Christ and the church is and how it relates to the marriage union was so aptly addressed in chapter two. Here the researcher delved into the relationship between Christ and the church and brought out very clear and distinct comparisons to both relationships. It left no doubt that God's intention was for marriage to be a picture of how He relates with His bride who is the church. In so doing, the question of

culture was addressed in the same chapter. The conclusion was that cultural practices are acceptable in as far as they do not contradict God's word and His purposes. Where the choice is between culture and obedience to God, the word of God should prevail.

The next key questions i.e. at what point should the church introduce pre-marital counselling and who should conduct it, were expounded in chapter three. The researcher traced the onset of pre – marital counselling to childhood. This would continue up to the point an individual takes his or her vows. As a result there were various players identified in the process of teaching the single Christian. These were parent, grandparents and the church members. A parallel was drawn between pre – marital counselling and discipleship. Hence it is the role of every married believer to take part in preparing the younger generation for marriage.

A hypothesis was postulated in chapter one. It stated that *"Churches fail to set a clear and firm biblical basis on the marriage relationship during Pre-marital counselling in Kenya"*. Data was collected and analyzed according to the methodology set out in chapter four. This data was drawn from three sources. First, the facilitators of pre – marital counselling were invited to give their views on the same. Second, data was collected from a group of couples who were seeking help for their troubled marriages at a counselling centre. Third, the researcher perused and evaluated pre – marital counselling handbooks used at the sampled churches. This gave a more comprehensive perspective to the topic at hand. These results are presented in chapter five. After data analysis there were clear indications that supported the hypothesis hence it was accepted. Whereas the Bible was used during pre – marital counselling

sessions, it was found to be often as a tool to support a selected topic or school of thought that was not necessarily Christian.

6.2 Recommendations

As a result of the above findings the following recommendations are suggested. The recommendations are with regards to theory, practice and further research.

6.2.1 For Theory

The effectiveness of any work lies in its foundation. Likewise, the effectiveness of pre – marital counselling lies in its foundation, namely its definition. As it stands today, the definition of Christian pre – marital counselling is faulty. The study has clearly brought out that Christian pre – marital counselling is seen as counselling to prepare for marriage two persons who have declared their intention to wed. Therein lies the key problem.

There is subsequently a need to redefine Christian pre – marital counselling from a biblical perspective. This definition needs to indicate the onset, the target, the duration and a clear purpose. From the in paradigm and explanation of the biblical perspective on Christian pre – marital counselling in chapters two and three, the researcher would define Christian pre – marital counselling as:

"Christian discipleship intended at enlightening unmarried persons on God's perspective on marriage, while at the same time preparing them for spouse selection, courtship and how

to live together within the Holy covenant of marriage whose onset is early childhood and terminates at the altar after a couple takes their marriage vows."

Such a redefinition would result in the church rethinking of her strategies and approaches to the entire subject. With this definition in mind, there is then a need to sensitize the Christian leaders on the outcomes of this study so that they would consider reviewing their approach to Christian pre – marital counselling within their congregations. These need not just be church pastors only. Other stakeholders such as theological training institutions may need to re-evaluate their training programs/ curriculum's with an aim of preparing Christian ministers to conduct a holistic pre – marital counselling program when they are commissioned.

There is also need to sensitize the congregations on what the Christian marriage is and the need to teach and model a biblical basis for marriage for their children. Using a community counselling approach involving community education through programs and from the pulpit may be useful. These need to clearly set out what the role of each stakeholder is. These stakeholders include parents, grandmothers and other relatives, church program directors and any other person involved in the lives of children in reaching out to the singles within the church.

There is also a need to create awareness amongst the unmarried persons on the gaps that have been and are still there that hinder them from acquiring a clear understanding of God's perspective on marriage. These would challenge them

to seek assistance on the same in a similar manner as those indicated in chapter one that seek out pre – marital counselling classes elsewhere where there is none at their local church.

6.2.2 For Practice

Recommendations for practice take into consideration already existing gaps in reaching the ideal Christian pre – marital counselling as set out in this study. They are thus divided into long and short term interventions.

6.2.2.1 Short Term Interventions

Short term practical interventions suggest mitigation where pre – marital counselling has not began at childhood. The researcher suggests that already existing pre – marital counselling programs targeting couples that are yet to get married to be revised to include an exploration of God's perspective on marriage. Nevertheless, for churches without a formal pre – marital counselling class, they may need to develop one exploring the parameters addressed in this study. The implementation of such programs may be the first and most effective way of redefining how Christian pre – marital counselling is conducted in Kenya.

However, since there are still numerous unmarried persons in any given congregation, there is an urgent need to develop and implement some form of program that will address the same. This idea is borrowed from

Mamlaka Chapel, one of the respondents in the study. They take their young professionals through the same course they use for pre – marital counselling before they enter into a committed relationship. The goal of such a program would be to enable the participants to understand the Christian marriage, obtain parameters they may use in spouse selection and understand how to go through courtship. This program should strive not just to explain the how to's of relationships but also include an in-depth biblical exploration of the same.

However, it is an uphill task to get the churches to implement the proposed measures taking into consideration the bureaucracy involved in launching new programs especially when one seems to suggest that what is on the ground is insufficient. It is therefore suggested on a more practical note that Bible study materials that explore the Christian marriage targeting the unmarried persons within the church be developed. The popularization of such study guides would reach a broader spectrum of individuals within and out of the church.

6.2.2.2 Long Term Interventions

The Long term practical interventions are aimed at establishing pre – marital counselling as defined in this study. This has a two pronged approach. The first recommendations have to do with equipping the parents and Christian community at large with knowledge and skills to help them fulfil their God given mandate of

instructing their children in relation to marriage. The second set of recommendations concern the integration of the similar teachings within the already established church programs.

A multi pronged approach in equipping parents to fulfil their God given mandate may be the most effective way. The initiative may begin by incorporating specific teachings on marriage and suggesting how the parents may pass on the same to their children may be the place to begin. A course on the same may be developed or incorporated in churches' parenting classes or groups. These will give parents an opportunity to discuss their challenges and share on how best to disseminate the appropriate knowledge and skills to their children.

The church on the other hand needs to offer retraining for all their pre – marital counsellors where there are available. Given that the study indicated that pre – marital counselling is the domain of the pastors, there is a need to recruit and train persons to conduct pre – marital counselling within the church. It may also be helpful to develop a series of lessons that may be used during other annual or school holiday's events. These include vocational bible clubs and camps for children and retreats and camps for the youth. There are usually various series up for selection each year. This would in a sense not really be new programs but rather optional curricula that may be used from time to time.

It is proposed in this study that existing church programs or church curricula for children and youth be revised and rewritten to incorporate teachings on marriage. On the other hand one may not need to rewrite all the materials. A supplementary guideline on where and how to incorporate the teachings on marriage may be all that is needed. Some of the programs in Kenya that may be appropriate for this venture may be ROPES and CROSSROADS for the youth. Children's ministry materials that are very popular in Kenyan churches such as Christian Learning Materials Centre (CLMC) or those developed by Child Evangelism Fellowship of Kenya (CEF) may be revised. A supplementary guideline for the same where possible, may also address the current gaps.

It is important at this point to point out that there is a need for remedial intervention. This would target couples who did not undergo pre – marital classes and are experiencing challenges in their marriage. The admission bracket for such a program may not be limited only to those who are struggling but to all married couples. The biblical basis brought out in this study may be incorporated to already existing programs such as The School of Marital Wisdom that one of the respondents' has, and other marriage enrichment ministries at the various churches. The development of Bible study material targeting this group may be helpful. As opposed to just teaching, the studies would also offer a time of reflection and commitment to living in accordance to God's ordinances.

In the absence of a functional Christian counsellors association in Kenya, the creation of an association of Christian marriage counsellors to address the issues of Christian pre – marital and marital counselling would be very helpful. Its goals among others would include:

☑ To create awareness on the need to redefine Christian pre – marital counselling in the country;

☑ Design and implement programs on Christian pre – marital counselling;

☑ Initiate and supervise the training of Christian marriage counsellors;

☑ Serve as a reference for those seeking solutions to Christian marriage counselling;

☑ Conduct further research on pre – marital and marriage counselling in Kenya.

The purpose of the recommendations for practice is not aimed at just suggesting new programs. As is evidenced in the laws given to the children of Israel, they were all incorporated in their daily lives. If a church is to introduce a new program for pre – marital counselling it will work. However, it may set precedence where on every occasion a practical need is noticed within the church, development of a new program becomes the quick solution. This would in the future result in numerous programs and lead to confusion owing to the dynamism of life and the new challenges that keep cropping up. The integration of desired content into the already existing foundations may be the most desirable way to go.

6.2.3 For Research

One of the greatest challenges the researcher encountered during the study was the lack of empirical data related to Christian marriage in Kenya. Indeed there is still more to be done worldwide in relation to research on pre – marital counselling as Stanley (2001:272 – 280) notes that despite various efforts aimed at increasing the availability of pre - marital education to couples, many questions remain unanswered:

- ☑ Is premarital education generally effective?
- ☑ Is it effective for all couples?
- ☑ Are we able to reach couples at higher risks for marital failure?
- ☑ Are some forms of premarital education more effective (or plausibly so) than others?
- ☑ Are some forms of premarital education more effective for some types of couples than others? High or low risk couples? First or second marriages?
- ☑ Who is in the best position to help couples build better marriages from the start?

There is a great need to carry out research in order to shed more light on certain issues pertaining to not just Christian pre – marital counselling but Christian marriage in Kenya. First, this study established that there are other programs targeted at pre – marital counselling such as the school of marital wisdom. The pre – marital counselling classes highlighted in this study have also been running for a number of years. However the researcher did not come across any data or study

that evaluated the effectiveness of the same. It is the recommendation of this study that a research to evaluate the impact of the existing pre – marital classes would be useful in the effort to improve service delivery in future classes and or programs.

In the absence of Christian pre – marital counselling programs starting at childhood, other questions on Christian pre – marital counselling arise. These are:

- ☑ What is the best mode of delivery for pre - marital counselling? Is it best to have a pre – marital counselling class or individual sessions with a couple? There are various arguments for or against this hence one needs to actually study this in order to decide. This would be very helpful especially when revising pre – marital counselling approaches.
- ☑ Who sets the agenda for pre – marital counselling? There was a small proportion of the sample that allowed the couple to set the agenda. Is this wrong? What if they are having trouble in their relationship? Should those without visible or voiced challenges go in for fewer sessions? What would the impact of this be?
- ☑ What are the current levels of competencies of Christian pre - marital counsellors in Kenya? What are their levels of training? How does this impact the counselling sessions.

Whereas Christian pre – marital counselling ends at the altar when the couple gets married, is there something like post - marital

counselling? If yes, what should its content be? What is the best mode of delivery? Should it be for couples that undergo marital difficulties? If not, how should the church disciple couples that have been recently married through the challenges of the new status? There are numerous studies that could be undertaken to help Christian marriage counsellors enhance their service.

In the absence of substantial studies the researcher sees a gapping need for all sorts of studies targeting the Christian marriage in Kenya. However it is imperative to indicate as Stanley (2001:272 – 280) points out, it will take decades of more research to answer questions on pre – marital counselling. Do we wait to have all the answers (were that possible) before we act on what is already known?

6.3 Conclusion

The study used the paradigm of Christ and the Church as a model for understanding the complexities involved in the marriage relationship. The parameters for Christian pre – marital counselling set forth provide a unique way in which to review Christian pre– marital counselling programs for churches in Kenya and beyond. The study proved the hypothesis *"Churches fail to set a clear and firm biblical basis on the marriage relationship during Pre-marital counselling in Kenya"*. Although pre-marital counselling is critical especially in these changing times, the study has brought out the glaring gaps in the delivery of Christian pre – marital counselling in Kenya. As a result, various recommendations have been put forward.

Halford, Sanders & Behrens (2001) found that the results of their study replicated previous findings that skills-based relationship education enhances couple communication and prevents erosion of relationship satisfaction. To date, there is no evidence for the long-term benefits of relationship education approaches other than skill-based programs. Given that theirs was the third study to report positive long-term effects of skill-based relationship education, this paper does not discount the need for inclusion of the same during Christian pre – marital counselling. Nevertheless, it proposes the use of the Bible as the foundational guide by which all Christian pre – marital education derives its content as opposed to using it to validate psychological theories and concepts.

Beck (2001) notes that most approaches in trying to integrate theology and psychology are either focused heavily on the scriptural/biblical side of the equation or they relegate theological considerations to a relatively unimportant status. His paper argues that the original vision for a balanced approach remains valid and that current imbalanced approaches suffer from limitations that will cripple the endeavour over time. Therefore, although Christian pre – marital counselling programs are a noble idea. It is imperative to review their content in an effort to find a balance. Such a review should cause initiators and implementers of such programs to re-examine their work in an effort to faithfully execute their calling in a manner that they would not be ashamed as Paul exhorts Timothy in 2 Tim 2:15 i.e.

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." (NIV)

Christian pre – marital counselling is an important issue for the church today and more emphasis needs to be given to this area in research and practice.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Questionnaire No: ___

A Study Of Christian Pre – Marital Counselling In Kenya

QUESTIONNAIRE

Church: _____

Denomination: _____

Designation of Respondent: _____

SECTION A

Instructions: *Please answer all the questions below to the best of your knowledge. Where boxes are provided tick [√] the most appropriate one.*

1. How would you define pre – marital counselling?

    _____
    _____
    _____

2. What is the purpose of Pre – marital counselling?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

3. Is there Pre - marital counselling in your church?

    Yes ☐   No ☐

a. If yes, when does it start?

☐	1 – 4 weeks before the wedding
☐	1 month before the wedding
☐	2 – Three months before the wedding
☐	4 – 6 months before the wedding
☐	Other [Specify] _____

b. What is the duration?

☐ 1 – 4 Sessions   ☐ 5 – 8 Sessions

☐ 9 – 12 Sessions

☐ Other [Specify] _____

c. What is the length of each session?

☐ 1 hour   ☐ 2 hours

☐ 3 hours

☐ Other [Specify] _____

d. Who conducts it?

☐ Pastors   ☐ Church Counsellors

☐ Couples within the church

☐ Other [Specify] _____

4. Are there other forums within the church that single persons are prepared for marriage? If Yes, list examples.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. Give at least three [3] main reference materials you use for pre – marital counselling.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section B

In the table below is a list of some proposed topics for Pre – marital counselling.
In **column A**, list by order of priority [1 – 14] **1 being the most important and 14 being the least important**.

Topic	A
1. Managing family finances	
2. Dealing with In - laws	
3. Children and Parenting	
4. Church & Spirituality in Marriage	
5. The role of parents during the wedding	
6. Understanding your spouse's personality	
7. Communication in Marriage	
8. Discussions from the bible on marriage	
9. The purpose of marriage	
10. Cultural practices related to marriage	
11. Sex in marriage	
12. The Role of a husband and wife	
13. Planning the wedding	
14. The commitment of marriage	

Thank you for taking time to fill in this questionnaire.

God richly bless you!

Appendix 2

Questionnaire No: _____

A Study of Christian Pre – Marital Counselling In Kenya

OBSERVATION CHECK LIST

Background Information

Church: _____

Stratum: _____

Duration of class: _____

No. of Hours Per Session: _____

Activities: _____

Facilitators: _____

Class Content

The table below contains a list of topics for Pre – marital counselling. Tick **[√]** against each if included in the course content. Rate the Biblical content on a scale of 1 – 5 **[1 being poor and 5 being excellent]**. Include any other observations on the same in the remarks column.

Topic	Tick (√)	Rating	Remarks
1. Marriage is God's idea			
2. Represents Christ relationship with the church			
3. Entering into the relationship - Wedding			
4. Marriage as a covenant			
5. Parental Consent			
6. Wife's Role [Submission]			
7. Husband's Role [Headship, Nourishment & Cherishing, Cleansing and Love]			
8. The Commitment of marriage			
9. The blessings of marriage			
10. The work of marriage			
11. The result of marriage			
12. Marriage & Culture			
13. Communication in Marriage			
14. Marriage & Related Issues e.g. In – laws, Work, Finances, Spirituality, Children			

List other topics covered that are not included in the above list

Topic	Tick (√)	Rating	Remarks
i.			
ii.			
iii.			
iv.			
v.			
vi.			
vii.			
viii.			
ix.			
x.			
xi.			

Any other Comment

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Date: _____   Time: _____

Signature _____

Appendix 3

Schedule No: ___

A Study of Christian Pre – Marital Counselling In Kenya

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Respondent No: _____

2. Age: _____ 3. Gender: _____

4. Religion: _____

5. Church they wedded at:

      Evangelical   ☐

      Non – Evangelical   ☐

6. a] Did you undergo pre – marital counselling? Yes ☐   No ☐

   b] If YES,

       i. Who Conducted it? _____

       ii. How many sessions? _____

       iii. Duration? _____

       iv. Topics covered?

          _____

          _____

          _____

          _____

v. Do you think it was helpful? Explain your answer

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. Were you born again when you got married?   Yes ☐   No ☐

   If No, are you born again?   Yes ☐   No ☐

8. Was your spouse born again when you got married? Yes ☐   No ☐

   If No, are they born again?   Yes ☐   No ☐

9. Why did you get married?

   Love ☐   Parental pressure ☐

   God's plan ☐   Societal or Peer pressure ☐

10. Reason for coming into counselling.

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. When did problems in your marriage begin?

_____

12. If marriage becomes too difficult one should get out.

   Strongly agree ☐   Agree ☐
   Strongly Disagree ☐   Disagree ☐
   Not sure ☐

Give reasons or your answer.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

13. if you could rewind the clock and go back to the days before you got married, how would the church have better prepared you for marriage?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. Any other comment

_____

_____

_____

_____