

Study 0082

Practical Issues in Marriage (1)

So far, we have seen that marriage is of God, and that only those who are truly of God can get married. Also, we have seen that God intended marriage to be between one man and one woman; for companionship between the man and his wife; for the wife to complement, and, complete her husband; for oneness, and, absolute trust between the man and his wife; to maintain sexual purity, and, raise godly children in society; and, to be in effect for as long as both the man and his wife are alive (in other words, no divorce). We have also seen that when a man is about to get married, it is usually initiated by God or one of the authorities He put over the man (his spiritual or biological father); the Holy Spirit is involved in the choice of the bride, who, for a believing man, can only be a believer; parental consent is essential in marriage, as is the consent of the bride; the bride leaves behind her family and former relationships and clings to her husband, which begins with the consummation of the marriage.

We have seen further that to be able to fulfil God's intention for marriage, those engaged therein must of necessity be living the crucified/resurrected life. This is the life that has crucified the old sinful nature in man, and is now living the new life in Christ. And on the basis of this new life, we have seen that the man's role as head, which is a position of both pre-eminence and responsibility, requires that he is engaged in his kingdom-based God-given assignment, is trained in righteousness, and, understands and practices true and loving leadership in relation to his wife. Also, the wife's role as a helper is a supportive role which presupposes that she knows what her husband should be doing in the kingdom of God, and how she would support him in a submissive and humble manner, utilizing prayer as a primary resource in playing her role.

We now begin from this study, to deal with the practical issues that arise in the pre-marital stages and in the marriage itself. May the Holy Spirit help us to receive wisdom, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Pre-Marital Sex

By pre-marital sex, we mean sexual intercourse being engaged in by a man and a woman who are not married to each other. It is usually the case that when a man has proposed to a woman, and she has accepted the proposition, and they have both made up their minds to be married to each other; that they engage in sexual activity before they are married. Some people are now developing new attitudes which demand that a woman be pregnant before she is married, as a means of being assured of a marriage that will produce children. And some are just in a hurry to partake of the fruit of the marriage before the marriage itself. Unfortunately, many marriages never took place shortly after such sexual activity, and some women have been left with the short-end of the stick—being pregnant without a husband!

Courtship

In the Christian context, once a man proposes to a woman, and she accepts the proposal, they immediately go into courtship. Courtship in the world, is seen as the period before a marriage, when the man woos a woman he intends to get married to with gifts, and even seek intimacy in their relationship which unfortunately, often gives rise to premarital sexual activity, like kissing, petting, touching, and the sexual act itself. In Christendom, however, courtship has a completely different connotation. Christian courtship is the time when the man and the woman share their various convictions on how God spoke to them about each

other, their various dreams and aspirations, their understanding of God’s plan and purpose for their lives individually, and now, as a couple-to-be. They also subject themselves to spiritual authority, and marriage counselling sessions in their local assembly. To all intents and purposes, no physical contact is encouraged—no touching, petting, or kissing (not even a peck on the cheek!).

The Wedding

Before a couple gets married, there are undercurrents which could make or mar the marriage. These include the motivation for the choice of the woman, and the motivation for the acceptance of the man’s proposition; both of which have been dealt with in previous studies. There is one major issue though, and that is, the wedding. The wedding is the ceremony before the marriage, and can span a couple of days or weeks depending on how it is planned. The wedding is that part in which vows are made between the man and his wife before many witnesses, and God. But as significant as it is, it cannot take the place of the marriage.

In Nigeria, there are three types of weddings which Christians engage in, and they are, the wedding according to the custom of the woman’s tribe or the Native Law and Custom wedding, also commonly known as the traditional wedding; the wedding according to the Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, also known as the registry wedding; and the joining in the church, also called the ‘white’ wedding.

The *traditional wedding* is when the dowry is paid to the family of the bride, and, gifts are presented to them as well as to the bride (usually predetermined by the family of the bride). It also involves a lot of bargaining and back and forth between the families of the groom and the bride. Unfortunately, there are activities and exchanges which go on during this wedding ceremony that do not glorify God. The *registry wedding* is conducted in a more business-like manner, and requires that the man and his bride appear at the Registry with their witnesses and swear to an oath to be faithful to each other, before signing the marriage register, as well as the marriage certificate which is then presented to the couple. The *church wedding* is conducted in what may be called a solemn atmosphere, and involves a pastor joining the couple by invoking the name of God, after the couple have made vows to be faithful and true to each other, until death do them part. A sermon directed at the couple, their parents, family and friends, may follow, after which there is a wedding reception where a lot of feasting takes place. Unfortunately, most wedding receptions are marred with activities that do not glorify God.

ASSIGNMENT

Your assignment is to review our pre-marital practices and proffer ways and means by which the pitfalls can be avoided, using bible-based examples.

1. How can we avoid pre-marital sex in our midst?

2. How long should Christian courtship last for? And what should it involve?

3. Should Christians be involved in all three forms of weddings? Why?

Conclusion

What conclusion have you reached on pre-marital activities?
