

Study 0086

Practical Issues in Marriage (3.3)

In the last study, we looked at the second of the five ‘C’s, Commonality. We noted that in Christian marriage, commonality can be described as the joint ownership of interests, purpose, possessions, etc., as against individuality, which is the sole ownership of interest, purpose, possession, etc., by an individual. We said that commonality is an off-shoot of Commitment, because, commitment between a couple would naturally progress to commonality. Taking a cue from the ‘communism’ of early Christians (**Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35**), we noted that commonality between a man and his wife begins with allowing the Holy Spirit to make them to be of one heart and one soul. A Christian couple must have all things common (interests, purpose, possessions, etc.), including those things acquired before salvation, and, before and in the marriage. None should claim exclusive ownership to anything, save what appertains to each as per their individual sexes. Indeed, prenuptial agreements (which is practiced in most Western cultures) is unchristian and ungodly, and neither helps commitment nor supports commonality, and should never be encouraged. Commonality should also apply to the operation of bank accounts, responsibility towards children, and assistance to in-laws. We noted that because of peculiarities in certain cultures which ascribe ownership of possessions to one spouse, it is wise to make purchases in the name of the disadvantaged spouse so that, in the eventuality of the death of the advantaged spouse, the disadvantaged spouse is not left out. As with ownership, so also should the use or utility of possessions be subject to commonality. Thus, there can’t be provision for selfish desires in utilizing family property, neither should there be any provision for unilateral decisions by one spouse; nor should any one spouse dominate. Commonality cannot be forced or faked; as such there needs to be trust between a man and his wife, understanding, discipline and consideration for the other spouse, before commonality can be successfully practiced. There must be full disclosure between a man and his wife or bride, willingness for them both to put commonality to practice, and no manipulation, or subtle coercion, if commonality is to succeed. It is also important to note that a spouse, who is selfish, inconsiderate, or, lazy, will give commonality a death blow, as will individuality.

In this study, we discuss Communion.

Communion

The word, ‘communion’ as used in the bible, is found in **1 Corinthians 10:16-21; 2 Corinthians 6:14; 13:14**, and it connotes “to have fellowship with someone”, “to partake of something with someone”, “to participate jointly with someone in an activity”, and “to be involved together with someone in a thing or project”. Thus, communion can be said to be the union of two or more people in a common interest, purpose, etc. The bible speaks of our union with Christ in His suffering, death, and resurrection life, and this union takes place as we share in, partake of, participate in, and partner with Christ through the power of His resurrected life, having ourselves been partakers with Him in His suffering and death. Communion also connotes a friendship that excels any other relationship, including filial relationships (**Proverbs 17:17; 18:24; 22:11; 27:6, 10, 17; Numbers 12:11; 2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; Luke 11:5-11; John 3:29; James 4:4; 2 Samuel 16:16-18; Songs 5:16**). Biblical friendship is a union that cannot, and should not, be broken, hence, when the bible says, “*A froward man soweth strife, and a whisperer separateth chief friends.*” (**Proverbs 16:28**), it is speaking of the power and damage that the activity of a forward man and a whisperer (tale bearer, gossip) can cause even between the closest of friends.

What all these mean in relation to marriage is that the chief (principal, pre-eminent, closest, best) friend of a married couple are each other! All other unions or relationships are secondary, including their children. As friends, they should affectionately share, partake, and participate in each other's pains, sorrows, trials, burdens, joys, success, etc. By communion, we are thus, talking about sharing, partaking, participation, partnership, all as a result of true friendship. Hence, while commonality refers to joint ownership, communion is about sharing everything together, including each other's lives. When we talk about sharing, partaking, participation, and partnership, we are talking about a relationship where oneness is achieved, such that, even when they are away from each other, a man and his wife can effectively act in the interest of each other, knowing what the other spouse likes, and does not like, and so, can take decisions on behalf of the other without failing. It is communion that makes a wife to be sure that her husband is not, and cannot, cheat on her; and vice versa. This is why any act of infidelity is a horrible betrayal and act of treachery (*Psalm 55:12-14; 41:7-9; Matthew 26:47-50; Luke 22:54-62*). Because of the kind of bonding which the bible speaks of, about true and godly friendship, it is usually heart-rending when one person acts unfaithfully towards the other, where a couple are supposed to be committed to each other. The bond of communion is such that a separation will utterly tear the relationship apart; therefore, it is the best antidote to divorce in marriage.

When a man and his wife achieve communion, then commitment and commonality are not an issue, and the kind of bonding and unity which the Lord prayed for, for His disciples (including those yet to become disciples) effectively takes place (*John 17:14-22*). The bond of unity between a man and his wife is to be the strongest bond there is ever to be outside of the Lord. And this can only be achieved by a vertical bonding upward with God individually and jointly, and a horizontal bonding with each other. If anybody must know a secret, it is your spouse. No wonder many marriages are threatened when certain secrets become open and the other spouse only got to know about it from a third Party.

Sharing meals is a major aspect of communion (*Acts 2:42*). As much as we concede that there is the pressure of modern society, it must not impede a man and his wife (and children) sharing meals together. A major offence which a spouse can commit is to refuse to eat the meal prepared for him by the other spouse; and the worst act of betrayal and treachery, is for a spouse to poison the meal of the other (*Proverbs 3:29*). Husbands and wives should share each other's burdens, as owning those burdens, and going before the Lord in intercession on behalf of the other. Most times, the person in the thick of a burden or situation is weakened by such burdens and circumstance, and that is when the spouse should rise up and share in that burden, own it, and take it before the Lord, as well as give comfort to their spouse.

Finally, in **1 Corinthians 7:3-5**, the bible tells married couples to render the benevolence (affection, conjugal rights) due each other. Sex between a man and his wife should never be used as a weapon against the other, or something for the personal gratification of one spouse; rather, it should become the channel for closer bonding and deeper fellowship with one another. Again, to give one's self in a sexual act to anyone other than your spouse is one of the most heinous acts of betrayal and treachery. Please note also that every time one spouse deliberately seeks to hurt the other spouse, he or she is really hurting himself or herself as the case may be (*Ephesians 5:29*).

ASSIGNMENT

Our assignment is for husbands and wives to rededicate themselves to each other under God, and either commence or reaffirm a true friendship relationship with each other, as they work at their relationship with God. For those who are yet to get married, let them commit themselves afresh to God and seek a closer and deeper relationship with Him. Those who are widowed should likewise commit themselves to God and build a closer and deeper relationship with Him.