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ABSTRACT

PROVIDING A PREMARITAL EDUCATION SEMINAR  
FOR THE SINGLE YOUNG ADULTS OF ABUAKWA  
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN GHANA

by

Daniel Opoku-Adjei

Adviser: Romulus Chelbegean

# ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Document

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: PROVIDING A PREMARITAL EDUCATION SEMINAR FOR THE SINGLE YOUNG ADULTS OF ABUAKWA SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN GHANA

Name of researcher: Daniel Opoku-Adjei

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Romulus Chelbegean, PhD

Date completed: March 2018

## Problem

In my years of service as a gospel minister, I noticed that a sizeable number of church members are censured or disfellowshipped on marriage or family issues, including divorce, adultery or fornication. The reasons for these unfortunate situations in our changing society could be linked to misunderstanding about marriage and the needed preparations. The major root cause of these problems on the part of both the young adults and the older people is inadequate premarital education. This results in wrong selection of life partners, short circuiting the courtship process and misunderstanding of what constitute marital satisfaction and marital stability.

The problem of inadequate premarital education gives room for single young adults to search for sexual intimacy from any source that they can access. In some cases, such problems lead to maladaptive sexual behaviors and corrosive habits that challenge wholesome heterosexual sex in the context of marriage.

## Method

An eight-day premarital education seminar was developed and implemented at Abuakwa Seventh-day Adventist church in Ashanti Region of Ghana. This seminar was conducted from March 12 to 19, 2016, with the objective to prepare the single young adults between ages 20 and 35 for marriage. During the seminar, 90 young adults were taken through a 10 lecture presentation series that included both pre- and post-seminar surveys, question and answer method, video presentations and discussions among participants. The educational seminar which was implemented had few challenges and so after the program, an evaluation was done. Both the successes and the challenges were noted.

## Results

Throughout the seminar, these single young adults expressed their joy for such a program to be conducted in the church, and wished it was done on a regular basis. It came to light that some of these young adults were participating in a premarital education seminar for the first time. The participants took part in both the pre-survey and post-survey, and were curious to study the solutions to challenges relating to securing stable and satisfactory marriages. The study also showed that the young adults recognized the need for premarital education as the most important part of the initial preparation for marriages. The materials used during the seminar motivated the young adults who showed their eagerness to select best life partners, acquire separate living arrangements, and foster good communication during marriage life. They saw the need to improve their religious faith and expressed their desire to achieve marital success and stability. The participants sought for clarification on communication issues and conflict management, sexuality and family planning for couples. They also

inquired about the best way to choose a marriage partner, and when a young adult can say no to a marriage proposal.

### Conclusion

The outcome of the seminar indicated that premarital education is the single young adults' most important need, before they actually decide to date friends and select partners for courtship. It became clear that the young generation needed some theological foundation for marriage, and this confirms the fact that marriage partners need biblical support. It is generally believed that couples who have similar values and objectives achieve much success in life. At the end of the seminar, most of the participants agreed that the selection of a life partner and preparation for marriage go a long way to promote marital satisfaction and stability.

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Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

PROVIDING A PREMARITAL EDUCATION SEMINAR  
FOR THE SINGLE YOUNG ADULTS OF ABUAKWA  
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN GHANA

A Project Document  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by  
Daniel Opoku-Adjei  
March 2018

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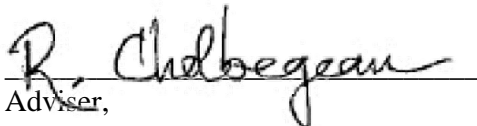
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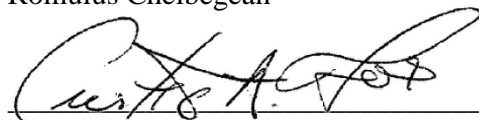
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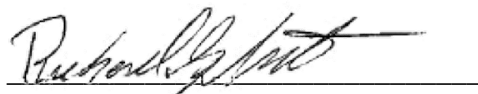
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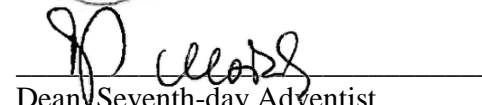
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Date approved



## DEDICATION

I am highly grateful to dedicate this project document to my dear wife, Alice Opoku-Adjei, my three sons, Nathanael, Michael and Emmanuel, and my daughter-in-law Rita. They contributed in diverse ways to the success and completion of my doctoral degree.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Research studies on relationships that lead to marriage or the characteristics for establishing a strong, lasting, and satisfying marital relationships have been documented in several books and journals. Many of the issues concerning marriages are discussed in several circles, including religious organizations, secular establishments, educational institutions, and also among cultural or ethnic groups. Many conversations focus on marriage relationships to either expose their weaknesses or appreciate their successes. From my observations, couples who enjoy their intimate relationships are positive and intentional on how they relate to one another. Such husbands and wives resolve to maintain or improve their marriage relationship, in both favourable and difficult times.

Marriages are formed in several societies that go a long way to populate the communities and the nations. However, as the people in the world increase in numbers, there are many problems that are now associated with marriages and families. One may come across many marriage related materials but in my Ghanaian context, many a young adult is likely to ask a question like this: how does a single young adult start the marriage relationship on a strong foundation. Another important point is to find a good material that guides the single young adults towards marriage. The biblical support for life partner selection provides the young adult the needed ground on which marriages grow into healthy families.

This chapter focuses on the description of the ministry context where the project was implemented. It highlights how the project was developed, the theological

foundation adopted, and the reviewing of recent and relevant literature. The chapter includes the strategy for developing the methodology and evaluating the project's intervention. The chapter ends with the definitions of some terms related to this project and a summary.

### **Description of the Ministry Context**

Abuakwa Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Central Ghana Conference (CGHC) of Seventh-day Adventists in Ghana, West Africa, was the setting for this project. CGHC was organized in 1970. The conference operates in the Ashanti region with its headquarters at Kwadaso, in Kumasi, Ghana's second largest city. It has 78 and 112 organized and unorganized churches respectively, with a total membership of 15,689 (Information at CGHC, 2016).

Information at Abuakwa Seventh-day Adventist church (Church records of Abuakwa Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2016) seems to suggest that the church was established in the first week of September, 1978. It is an organized church in CGHC with a membership of 420 congregants. The church was organized in 1987. There is a youth church where mostly young adults below the age of 35 worship. In this congregation, there are 51 young men and 58 young ladies between ages 18 and 35. These young generation speak the Akan-Twi and English languages. It is estimated that 90% of the youth have an equivalent certificate of senior high school or below. About 10% are attending tertiary institutions or have attained at least a Bachelor's degree. Of this number who are youth, about 25% are engaged in some income generating work. The remaining 75% are still in school or undergoing some form of vocational training to acquire some skills in technical or vocational work. One can say that the pastor of the church is also the pastor of other congregations, referred to as a district pastor. Abuakwa Seventh-day Adventist church has an elementary school.

I am a pastor and I am the major researcher and implementer of this project. I am married to a biological female partner with three sons, one daughter-in-law and a year-old grandson. I am the first child of my parents and the first among the children to become a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. I joined the Ghana Armed Forces on June 04, 1979, and served for 15 years before I resigned in July 1994. I worked as a teacher at Abrepo Junior High School in Kumasi for two years. In September 1997, I attended the Valley View University in Ghana for my Bachelor of Arts degree in Theological Studies. My employment with the church started from June 01, 2001, when I was employed as a District pastor. Later on, I received my ministerial credentials on March 11, 2006. Since February 2014, I have been serving as a Departmental Director. Currently, I am the Health, Family Ministries and Chaplaincy Director for my Conference, with additional responsibility as a church pastor.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In my years of service as a gospel minister, I noticed that within my Conference a sizeable number of church members are censured or dis-fellowshipped on marriage or family issues, including adultery or fornication. In my opinion, the root cause of these problems is that many of the single young adults have inadequate premarital education. The two reasons I can easily identify as the causes for these behaviors are wrong life partner selection and lack of proper preparation for marriage.

Inadequate premarital education gives room for single young adults to search for sexual intimacy from any source that they can access. In some cases, such lifestyles lead to maladaptive sexual behaviors and corrosive habits that challenge wholesome heterosexual sex in the context of marriage. To prevent some of these unfortunate situations showing up in marriages, this premarital education seminar seeks to examine some needed preparations that the single young adults will have to

consider carefully. The candid application of these principles by the young adults can foster the building of enjoyable and successful marriages.

### **Statement of the Task**

The task of this project is to develop, implement, and evaluate a premarital education seminar, designed to equip the single young adults of Abuakwa Seventh-day Adventist church with the resources needed to make good choices, in their current premarital and future marital relationships. This project seeks to prepare the young generation of this particular Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist church with a biblical foundation concerning the Christian view on life partner selection, and to help them acquire the needed knowledge on starting strong marital relationships. I am sure that many of the single young adults were indeed Christians, and had Christian views on marriage, but did not have the needed knowledge about marriage preparation. They also lacked relationship skills to navigate the marriage life in the real world.

### **Delimitations of the Project**

The current project was limited to the single young adults in Abuakwa Seventh-day Adventist church in CGHC. The participants who were attended ranges from ages 20-35. Furthermore, this project was restricted to only those who could communicate in the Akan-Twi and English languages.

### **Description of the Project Process**

The project process is about the development of the teaching strategy to equip the single young adults to learn about premarital education. This was done by conducting a seminar for eight days. There was a pre-survey that was administered to the young adults before each day's presentation. Daily, we had a lecture presentation, questions and text messages with a short break. There was a video presentation and a

discussion on the case study selected. The last item for each session was the administration of the post-survey, which was answered by respondents who participated in the seminar. The participants interacted among themselves during the socializing part at the end of each day's presentation.

### Theological Reflection

As part of preparing a theological foundation for premarital education for the single young adults, stories about Isaac's and Samson's marriages were selected. Several factors were considered before the focus was centered on premarital education. Some singles keep on changing their partners and even when they select one, they lack the necessary knowledge for establishing strong marriage. From personal experience, it is better for parents, ministers, and marriage educators to have meaningful contributions to the future marriages of the young generation, before they select their life partners. This project seeks to minimize or prevent broken engagements in growing relationships, when such partners commit themselves to marriage. I have observed that when the young adults get to the stage of preparing for marriage, they are looking for guidelines to establish their own marital affairs without any coercion from parents or religious leaders.

Research shows the usefulness of premarital education. According to Ceren (2009), it states, "A research project cited in *Family Relationships* reviewed 23 studies on the effectiveness of premarital education and found that the average couple who participated in a premarital counseling or education reports a significantly stronger marriage than other couples" (p. 5).

Isaac's story in the Bible was selected because it was a marriage arrangement that combined both the "arraigned method of marriage" by parents and the "like marries like" theory of partner selection. Samson was also selected because his

marriage illustrates the “individual free choice method” which means he solely relied on his own desires, and selected his life partner according to the “opposite attracts theory.” Samson selected wives who had different religious faith and did not consult his parents about his marriage plans. He disregarded God’s counsel on forbidden marriage alliance and the risk in selecting a wrong life partner.

### Review of Literature

A review of literature that is relevant to premarital education in this changing society was carried out by concentrating on some selected materials. Attention was given to biblical quotations as supporting materials. Some literature from Ellen G. White’s writings were selected because of their relevance to the marriage relationship. I also reviewed literature from other Christian writers’ instructions on marriage preparation for young people, especially those who are eager to establish marital relationships.

Researchers have found out that how well a couple communicates before marriage can be an important predictor of later marital satisfaction (Cate & Lloyd, 1992). One study (Strong, DeVault, & Cohen, 2011) notes, “If communication is poor before marriage, it is not likely to significantly improve after marriage—at least not without a good deal of effort and help” (p. 229). A study (Carroll & Doherty, 2003) finds that in an effort to address the current rates of marital distress and divorce, numerous scholars and educators have advocated for the development and implementation of premarital education or counselling programs (p. 3).

I researched literature that relates to issues affecting premarital education, which include one’s religious faith, age group, character and personality, income levels of partners and the cultural background of the persons in a relationship, among others. Finally, some limited attention was given to both local and foreign videos and

movies that support the idea of establishing marriage. All these contribute in finding the roadmap towards healthy intimate relationships. In this context, videos that promote building strong foundation and biblical basis for marriages were used as case study. These were part of the teaching strategy to provide the premarital education for the single young adults.

### Development of the Intervention

The project intervention was started as a result of working among some young people during a youth camp in Ghana. The idea of working out a project for the single young adults concerning the preparatory stages in marriage, and the need to adequately prepare for marriage, engulfed my thinking some years ago. This project development caught my attention when some young men and women asked me to have conversation with them, about the most important points to consider before one selects a life partner. The conversation went on and we discussed the necessary preparations one needs towards a marriage relationship. What broke the camel's back was when a young couple who were going to marry came to me for counselling. As an ordained minister who has served the church for some time, I did not have any prepared material for them. From that moment, sometime in the year 2010, I started to search for information that could be used as a guide for both the single young adults and myself as a family life educator. The research through the Bible, Ellen White's writings and some marriage and family life books gave me the motivation to start talking and teaching about intimate relationships like marriage. In the course of my teachings, I focused on the young adults who were yet to marry. After teaching these premarital educative lessons to the young adults in some churches, quite a number of them started to follow these simple steps towards marriage. It dawned on me that it is

part of the ministry of Jesus Christ, so I started to engage the young adults for studies on ways of starting a relationship towards establishing a marriage.

### Structure of the Intervention

The project intervention was structured along the lines of an educational seminar. Abuakwa Seventh-day Adventist church premises was secured as the venue for the eight days of lectures that undergirded the intervention. There were some announcements in the local church for three consecutive Sabbaths prior to the scheduled date, and the young people between the ages of 20 and 35 were invited to participate in the study. The following 10 topics were selected and materials were prepared for the presentations. These materials were based on the literature reviewed in the context of teaching premarital education:

1. Divinely Designed: meaning and purpose of marriage
2. Culture: mating rituals or match-making, dating, and courtship
3. Identity and Wholistic Maturity: self-image and self-esteem.
4. Good Fight: communication and conflict management
5. Compatibility: equally yoked or negotiable vs. non-negotiable items
6. Enjoying Life Responsibly: resource management
7. Genesis 2:24 vs. the fifth commandment: in-laws and living arrangements
8. Oneness: healthy sexual intimacy and family planning
9. The Script: gender roles and mutual expectations
10. Red Flags in life partner selection.

During the premarital education seminar for single young adults, a pre-survey was administered and 90 participants gave their responses. This was done before the start of each lecture presentation. Only one copy of the questionnaire was administered to each participant. Usually, participants took less than five minutes to



give their responses. At the end of each of my 10 presentations, the same pre-survey was administered to the participants as a post-survey. When the post-survey questionnaire was administered, 89 of the participants took part as respondents.

Throughout the eight consecutive days of the premarital education seminar, one presentation was made each evening, while two presentations were conducted on both the first Sabbath and the second Sabbath. The starting time was scheduled at 6:30 pm. The intended outline was as follows:

1. 5 minutes pre-survey administration
2. 25-30 minutes presentation of one selected topic
3. 10-15 minutes questions and text messages
4. 10 -15 minutes snack or water break
5. 20-30 minutes video case study
6. 20-30 minutes discussion on the case study
7. 5 minutes post-survey administration
8. Socializing

Each session ended with an open discussion on the video presentation that was watched as case study. The responses from both pre- and post-surveys were analyzed and included in chapter 5. Chapter 6 is the summary, conclusion, personal transformation and recommendations about the project.

### **Definition of Terms**

There are some terms in this paper that may need some clarifications. To assist in making reading easy and the content well understood, these terms have been listed in the order as they appear in this document, starting from the beginning page.

*Central Ghana Conference (CGHC)* is the regional headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana, which serves 16 Districts in the northern

part of Ashanti region of Ghana. CGHC serves as the executive body with supervising administrative authority of all the 16 Districts within its constituency, with 78 organized churches and 112 unorganized churches respectively.

*Marriage* in this paper refers to an intimate human relationship between a biological man and a biological woman who have covenanted to commit their lives together in a holy matrimony. This study is in line with the biblical definition of a man and a woman who God created and blessed as married couple, with the exclusive rights to have sexual relationship that may produce a child(ren).

*Premarital education* is explained as the needed knowledge required by a single young adult to guide such a person in order to prepare adequately for marriage, including knowing the characteristics of life partner selection.

*Spirit of Prophecy Writings* is a collection of reading materials that were authored by Ellen G. White, one of the three co-founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

*Arranged method of marriage* is a type of marriage that an individual finds a life partner with the help of other person(s), either through the parent, friend(s) or elderly person(s).

*Individual free choice of marriage* is the marriage arrangement where the person to marry independently selects his/her own life partner for marriage.

*Like attracts like marriage* is a marriage arrangement between persons who share many things in common like same religious faith, values, interests and common goals in life.

*Opposite attracts marriage* is a marriage union between persons who are different in many areas in life endeavours, like religious faith, values, interests and goals in life.

*Dating* normally precedes the courtship period and it is the early stage of friendship where a young adult enters a relationship with the idea of selecting a life partner.

*Rush-to-marry syndrome* refers to situations where partners marry very fast without going through the courtship stages.

*Courtship* refers to the period before the marriage ceremony that two individuals engage in a relationship with the sole aim of developing interest in the other partner, to pave the way for a marital union.

*Participants* here refers to the young adults who took part in the seminar.

*Respondents* refer to the singles who answered the pre-survey and the post-survey questionnaires during the seminar.

### **Summary**

The introductory part of this document brings out the reasons for implementing this project with the aim of developing a strategy to guide the single young adults, for them to appreciate the challenges in marriages and their solutions. The presentations were designed to make the study very practical, so that the young adults will apply the premarital education lessons in their lives, which will go a long way to address some fundamental challenges associated with starting a new marriage. The seminar was designed according to the Christian worldview which accepts God's instructions as the bases for practical living. The two marriages used as case studies were selected purely on the basis that both the Christian counsellors and the counselees will be better prepared, to have an insight of what possibly lie ahead before a marriage relationship is contracted.

The biblical foundation and research suggest that the type of marriage more likely to succeed will depend on a number of factors. The marriageable persons must

be of good character who cooperates with Christian parents and depends on God for direction. They must adopt the “like attracts like” model of marriage. The life partners must be from the same religious faith with similar background, share same values and in the same age group. The partners must be matured, attractive and people with good character. Such couple must be diligent persons who are loving and loveable. The marriage must not be rushed through the courtship period, but must go through some form of premarital counselling and sufficient time partners to study another’s character. Even though short periods for courtship must be avoided, the courtship period should not be too long—probably not more than two years.

For a marriage to be successful, in addition to the points enumerated the partners must consider prayer and obedience to God’s commandments as a necessity towards its success. There should not be any premarital sexual activity to promote a type of marriage that is more likely to succeed.

This introductory part of the study highlights the need for premarital education for the single young adults, so that they do not associate their future marriages with the divorce cases in the Ghanaian society. The series of topics outlined in the methodology seek to encourage the single young adults to intentionally work out their own strategies, in order to build a strong foundation for marriage, by incorporating the principles in the premarital education seminar. The desire of the implementer is that the young adults will have the needed knowledge concerning the characteristics of selecting their marriage partners, and intentionally planning for their future marriages. It is the belief that this project document will go a long way to help the single young adults enjoy successful, strong and long lasting marriages, and the best of family relationships in their future lives.

The aim of this study also is to provide a premarital education early enough in the lives of the young adults, so that they will use the knowledge acquired to prepare themselves for successful marriages. As the young glow, interact and mingle with the opposite sexes, with informed knowledge, it will be quite easier for them to choose their life partners by cooperating with their parents and Christian leaders. The young need the experienced people to help them in planning for their marriages.

To the parents, religious leaders and other counsellors who need to guide the single young adults to prepare for marriages, this study will add to their store of knowledge as they give counselling the young people. This premarital education is also to assist the singles avoid the mistakes and wrong practices that have caused many marriages to break. It is envisaged that the general public will be guided by this study, in order to help the single young adults break away from some of the cultural habits that devalue the holiness of the marriage relationship.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON PREMARITAL EDUCATION

#### **Introduction**

The plan for this premarital education seminar was to develop a theology as a basis for teaching the young generation, and equipping them with insight about the preparatory stages of establishing a marriage union. The theological reflection is based on the *Holy Bible*, Ellen G. White writings and other Christian scholars' views on intimate relationship like marriage.

The *Holy Bible* clearly elevates marriage as an intimate human relationship that is holy. "Marriage is honourable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb 13:4). Because of God's intention for human beings' cooperation in the act of procreation, there comes moments in individuals' lives when people desire to marry. However, as the creator, God has instructions to guide the single young adults in their marriage preparation. The apostle Paul says "because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband" (1 Cor 7:2). "Find a good spouse, you find a good life – even more, the favour of God" (Prov 18:22).

The concern for a better future marriage and a satisfying family living for grown-up children were and are still major issues that most parents would not leave in the hands of inexperienced people. The first book of Moses, Genesis, contains a lot of information about the early marriages and families in Bible times. The 24th chapter of

Genesis outlines the various steps taken by Abraham in the matrimonial plans of his son, Isaac, which resulted in the marriage between Isaac and Rebekah. This part of the project deals with the theological foundation associated with premarital education for single young adults in our present generation. Lessons are drawn from the marriages of Samson and his Philistine wives, including Delilah; and the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. The marriage of Isaac and Rebekah can be referred to as “like attracts like marriage” and also as an “arranged marriage.” When a person finds a partner with the help of other person(s), it is known as “arranged marriage.” Samson and Delilah’s marriage can be referred to as “opposite attracts marriage,” and can be called as “individual free choice marriage.” When one independently finds a partner, it is known as “individual free choice marriage.”

Some of the young adults in our churches are not regularly discussing their preparations for marriage with knowledgeable adults for the needed information, and so without much knowledge for starting a marriage relationship, they rush to marry. As a result, some of such marriages encounter early marital conflicts and challenges, which sometimes result in divorce cases later on.

The first part of the chapter examines the Scriptures’ specific instructions on life partner selection as one prepares to enter marriage. Marriage is mentioned as something that will last until the second coming of Jesus Christ (Matt 24:38-39). The ordinance of marriage as instituted by God has been marred by many divorce cases because some people ignore the counsel “What God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mark 10:9). God’s instruction is that “He hates divorce” (Mal 2:16). Many reasons account for divorce cases and that is why from the beginning stage—the foundational level of the relationship, until death separates the couple, partners’ choices and life experiences must be based on good counsel and the word of God.

The second part of the chapter examines the period during the dating process, from the friendship stage of the relationship to the marriage ceremony day. Some singles seem to rush through the dating process, thereby marrying people they know very little about. As part of entering an important relationship like marriage, premarital counselling sessions by competent marriage counsellors are also needed. White (2001b) states, “Heaven looks with pleasure upon a marriage formed with an earnest desire to conform to the directions given in the Scriptures” (p. 70).

The concluding part of the chapter highlights the negative effects of ungodly marriages. An example of such stories is that of Samson’s marriage as recorded in the Bible from book of Judges 14:1-14. Samson’s marriage life shows how the neglect of wise counsel can cause problems in marriage. The consequences of Samson’s miserable life are a case study for young adults to reflect on, so that the wise among them will choose to follow God’s instructions in life partner selection. God desires that marriage partners share things in common, and therefore disapproves of intermarriages between partners of different religious faiths.

There were references to some Christian scholars’ views on marriage and the cultural influences on the single young adults in Ghana. From the theological viewpoint, the meaning and reasons for the institution of marriage are included as part of the discussion in the next section.

### **The Meaning and Reasons for Marriage**

The current information available, according to Cress (2006), agrees that “Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus Christ to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in a loving companionship” (p. 329). Concerning marriage, the apostle Matthew quoted Jesus Christ this way:



Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made male and female? For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So, then they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate. (Matt 19:4-6)

For the Christian a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse and should be entered into only between partners who share a common faith. Mutual love, honour, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His Church. (p. 329)

According to current information, (as cited in Dederen, Vyhmeister, & Reid, 2000, p. 726), Rock explains the five reasons for the establishment of marriage. The first reason given is God's blessings for the human marriage union, a companionship God blessed to be in His own image. Through creation the LORD God shows how much He loves the human race to be united and reflect His image (Gen 1:27). From the Holy Scriptures, Moses says, "It is not good that man should be alone" (Gen 2:18). And God provided the man a helper suitable to him. When Adam saw Eve as his life partner, he remarked this way: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man" (Gen 2:23). The response from Adam showed that he needed a companion, and the one God provided was his best half. White (2001b) posits, "God made from the man a woman, to be a companion and helpmeet for him, to be one with him, to cheer, to encourage, to bless him, and he in his turn to be her strong helper" (p. 99).

Rock (cited in Dederen and others, 2000) advances the second reason for marriage as the function of reproduction. He quotes the Bible which says, "God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28). This means that through marriage, a husband and a wife as a marital couple is "given the privilege of cooperating with God in the perpetuation of the human race" (p. 726).

The third reason posited by Rock as part of the reasons God instituted marriage is the fulfilment of the sexual urge (Dederen et al., pp. 726-7). “Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Gen 2:24-25). “And Adam lay with Eve his wife and she conceived and bore Cain” (Gen 4: 1). Paul also supports this reason and says “because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband” (1 Cor 7:2).

Another reason Rock provided for the creation of marriage is the socialization of children (p. 727). The Bible says: “Children are a heritage from the LORD” (Ps 127:3). The “society provides a number of institutions helpful for the socialization process, but the primary responsibility lies with the family. Parents are the children’s first and foremost teachers. In the home children should be taught to share, respect property, to observe and respond to the needs of others” (cited in Dederen et al., 2000, p. 727).

The fifth reason given by Rock for the establishment of marriage is the sheltering of the family (cited in Dederen et al., p. 727). This gives the parents and the children some responsibilities towards the health and wellbeing of all in the family. A lot depends on the parents who have the responsibility of training the children to know and serve the Almighty God. King Solomon describes the parents’ duty in this way: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov 22:6). Concerning the children’s responsibilities in the family unit, Paul says: “Children, obey your parents in the LORD, for this is right” (Eph 6:1).

### **The Choice of a Life Partner**

The Bible cautions human beings to “Listen to counsel and receive instruction. That you may be wise in your latter days” (Prov 19:20). White (2001b) states, “Upon

no account should the marriage relationship be entered upon until the parties have a knowledge of the duties of a practical domestic life” (p. 87). From the creation of Adam and Eve by God, which took place more than six thousand years ago until today, marriages have been contracted either through the “arranged method” or by “individual’s free choice.” The following guidelines are to serve as roadmap to make what seems to be difficult to some people, become a little easier for the single young adult who wants to glorify God in the search for a life partner.

White (2001b) states that parents should never lose sight of their own responsibilities for the future happiness of their children when counsel is needed.

Isaac, when he was forty years of age, submitted to his father’s judgment in appointing his experienced, God-fearing servant to choose a wife for him. And the result of that marriage, as presented in the Scriptures, is a tender and beautiful picture of domestic happiness. (p. 74)

At an advanced age, Abraham considered it prudent to help his son Isaac to find a wife. He, Abraham took the matter as a serious one that should not be left in the hands of his son only, or any other person without his involvement. From Genesis 24, Moses gives account of the steps taken by the family of Abraham in securing a spouse for Isaac. There was absolute cooperation between the parents and the single young adult that brought about a healthy start for the marriage. These characteristics are some of the important points to be considered by those selecting a marriage partner.

#### Marry From Same Religious Faith and Similar Background

One characteristic to look for is whether the partner has a personal faith in God and His word, and an intimate relationship with Saviour Jesus Christ. The person must belong to a faith community. The Bible records:

So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, please put your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my

son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac. (Gen 24:2-4)

This Bible quotation shows that Abraham's socio-cultural values is a shared value that Isaac experienced. Here too, we see the principles of endogamy and homogamy working together. Isaac's wife will come from the same nationality or ethnic group—for they share common assumptions, experiences and understanding (Strong et al., 2011, p. 272). It is a marriage from a group that has similar background to his faith and values. This is the principles of endogamy. The other principle here is homogamy, which is choosing a partner whose personal or group characteristics are similar to ours. The most important elements of homogamy are race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, age and personality characteristics (Strong et al., p. 272).

The same religious faith is stressed by Paul as he gave counsel in matters about holiness to the Corinthians. “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” (2 Cor 6:14). The people of Israel were warned not to intermarry with foreigners. The *Holy Bible* counsels:

Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods. For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. (Deut 7: 3-4, 6)

The word of God emphasises the need for God's people to maintain holiness by paying attention to the selection of their life partners in marriage. “They shall not take a wife who is a harlot or a defiled woman, nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband; for the priest is holy to his God” (Lev 21:7). Even though this was an instruction given to the priests, God expects His children to marry people with good

moral standards, because according to Peter, believers in Christ “are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people” (1 Pet 2:9).

In her writings, White (2001b) gives strong counsel as a sign of warning to the single young adults, on to how to select a life partner. She advocates,

Never should God’s people venture upon forbidden ground. Marriage between believers and unbelievers is forbidden by God. Those who profess the truth trample on the will of God in marrying unbelievers; they lose His favour and make bitter work for repentance. (p. 63)

She continues, “To connect with an unbeliever is to place yourself on Satan’s ground. You grieve the Spirit of God and forfeit His protection. Can you afford to have such terrible odds against you in fighting the battle for everlasting life?” (p. 67).

Shryock (1999) states categorically: “It is difficult for happiness to exist in a home where one member is expected to conform to regulations with which he or she is not in harmony” (p. 24). White (2001b) also states categorically her opposition to marriage between different religious faiths by pointing out:

The unbelieving may possess an excellent moral character, but the fact that he or she has not answered to the claims of God and has neglected so great salvation, is sufficient reason why such a union should not be consummated. (p. 63)

A strong connection with a faith-community, the practice of belief in the Godhead and the acceptance of God’s laws as outlined in the Ten Commandments, are important factors that support the idea of “like marries like” theory. If partners exhibit these religious beliefs among others, it means that both partners have the same religious faith and similar lifestyle. An example of “like marries like” theory is that of a Seventh-day Adventist Christian marrying a fellow Adventist Christian or a Roman Catholic marrying a fellow Roman Catholic. The other marriage theory is the “opposite attracts marriage.” An example is where an Adventist marries a Roman Catholic believer or a Methodist believer marries a Moslem.

## Parental Responsibility and Support

Another thing one will need to consider is the parental responsibility a young adult will receive from his or her matured Christian parents. Abraham as a father took the responsibility of finding a wife for his son. He had faith in God's providence that his request for a wife for his son would be granted. Abraham prayed:

The LORD God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, to your descendants I give this land, He will send His angel before you (servant), and you shall take a wife for my son from there. (Gen 24:7)

Relying on God's help in choosing a life partner is to agree with the Psalmist who says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Prov 3:5-6). As the single young adults are encouraged to increase their faith in the promises of God, parents must assist their grown-up children to have the needed premarital education so they could be sure that God is leading them into marriage. Hagar helped her son Ishmael to find a wife. "He dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt" (Gen 21:21). Good parents act as coaches who are needed in preparing the single young adults as they mature in age, by drawing the attention of the youth to God's principles in establishing the marriage relationship, and how to make it survive and enjoyable.

Boakye (2014) counsels the youth "to honour their parents in everything including their marriage. If parents approve of your partner, the marriage has a greater chance of success. On the other hand, a marriage without parental approval may face problems" (p. 56). Single young adults who have spiritually and emotionally healthy parents must consult them in the choice of their life partners. White (2001b) states that "wise parents will never select companions for their children without respect to their wishes" (p. 75). In the absence of a matured Christian parent, young adults could

consult mature Christian fathers and mothers to seek counsel. In the case of Isaac and Rebekah's marriage, there was support for their marriage from both families.

In some situations, the single young adults chose their own marriage partners. "Michal, who was the daughter of King Saul loved David. And they (the servants) told Saul about his daughter's desire, and the thing pleased him (Saul)" (1 Sam 18:20).

Even though Abraham took the initiative to find a wife for his son Isaac, Rebekah also made her own decision to marry the proposed husband. Rebekah's mother and her brother asked her to stay for some days, and asked her to declare if she was interested in going along with the proposed marriage (Gen 24:55). "So they said, we will call the young woman and ask her personally. Then they called Rebekah and said to her, will you go with this man? And she said, I will go" (Gen 24:57-58). So the young woman accepted the marriage proposal and made preparation to meet her new husband to be.

#### Prayer Necessary in Life Partner Selection

Depending on an individual's religious belief in God, through prayer God can guide a person to select a suitable partner. With the kind of spiritual background and the training acquired in Abraham's home, the servant on arrival at the outskirts of his destination, decided to ask for God's help. In his prayers, the servant said:

Oh LORD God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, here I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, please let down your pitcher that I may drink and she says, drink and I will also give your camels a drink – let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. (Gen 24:12-14)

It must be noted that after prayer there must be some action, and the servant quickly did the physical part of his prayer request:

The servant ran to meet her and said, please let me drink a little water from your pitcher. So, Rebekah said, drink, my Lord. Then she quickly let her pitcher down to her hand, and gave him a drink. And when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking. She quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough, ran back to the well to draw water and drew for all his camels. (Gen 24:17-20)

In addition, White (2001b) advances the need for prayer here: “If men and women are in the habit of praying twice a day before they contemplate marriage, they should pray four times a day when such a step is anticipated” (p. 71). The Bible encourages Christians to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17). As a sign of trust in God’s providence, Isaac was praying towards a favourable answer from God about his marriage plans. “Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted his eyes and looked and there the camels were coming. Then Rebekah lifted her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from her camel” (Gen 24:63-64). In prayer, the single young adult who is thinking and planning about marriage, must humbly tell the Almighty God to give him/her the grace to choose a suitable and best partner for marriage. By following good instructions which lead a person to select one’s best partner in life, that is the beginning of a marriage journey which is more likely to succeed.

#### A Mature and Attractive Partner With a Good Character

The next characteristics to consider are the maturity level, attractiveness and a partner with good character. The age of a marriageable person is of prime importance in life partner selection. “Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as a wife” (Gen 25:20). According to Genesis 24:16, the young woman, Rebekah was very beautiful and a virgin; no man had known her—meaning no sexual activity before marriage. She had attained the marriageable age when there was a proposal for her to marry. Both Isaac and Rebekah were not adolescents. Strong et al. (2011) find,



People who marry young are at greater risk of seeing their marriage fail. Adolescent marriages (where either is younger than 20) are especially likely to end in divorce. Such young marriages may be more divorce prone because of the immaturity and impulsivity of the partners. (p. 282)

The Bible serves as a guide to the Christian in many spheres of life, including counsels to any young man or woman who needs a life-partner. The character of a person is of prime importance. The Holy Scripture cautions that a Christian should not marry a fornicator, because “he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her, for two shall become one flesh” (1 Cor 6:16). The character of Rebekah was that of a kind single young woman, who had sympathy for both human beings and animals. In simple terms, she was a young woman full of love for God’s creation.

Character is so important that even if a partner is a believer but exhibits traces of unconverted spirit, marriage should not be discussed with such a person. The apostle Paul gives this stern warning to Christians:

I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named brother (fellow believer), who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, not even to eat with such a person. (1 Cor 5:11)

On the other hand, Paul says that it is advisable to choose a partner who has these character principles:

whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things. (Phil 4:8)

The counsel for the single young adults is for them to consider critically the character of the would-be life companion before deciding finally to marry. Boakye (2014) further advances the importance of knowing one’s character by saying that:

Know your future spouse’s basic character. Find out if he or she is easy-going, controlling, critical, defensive or funny. Know what he or she likes or dislikes... how he or she reacts under stress, his or her strengths and weaknesses, know how to help your partner build on his or her strengths and cope with his or her weaknesses. (p. 51)

God expects His children to maintain holiness by paying attention to the selection of life partners for marriage. This is very important in order to maintain a good relationship with God. “They shall not take a wife who is a harlot or a defiled woman, nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband; for the priest is holy to his God” (Lev 21:7). Even though this was an instruction given to the priests, God expects His children to marry people with good moral standards, because according to the apostle Peter, believers in Christ “are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God’s own special people” (1 Pet 2:9).

### A Diligent Partner

Another important point for consideration is the ability of the partner to do some meaningful work, at least to help the future family to survive economically. Rebekah was a diligent woman. From the Genesis account, she drew water for both the man and the animals (Gen 24: 18-20). An adage says “work pays.” The manner in which the virgin took the work of giving water to Abraham’s servant and the animals showed that she was not a lazy woman. A diligent partner is a blessing to the marriage union, their future children, their in-laws and the society in general. King Solomon once enquired about a good wife with a question “Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trust her; so he will have no lack of gain” (Prov 31:10-11). A diligent partner is one of the important characteristics that must be considered in selecting a life partner. A young woman should also look for a diligent man. “Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter” (Gen 29:18). It was evident in the life of Jacob that he was a diligent man for he worked hard enough to earn the right to marry Rachel.

## A Loving and Loveable Partner

The next characteristics that needs consideration is whether there is a growing love between the life partners. For any marriage to be successful, there should be a growing love between the partners. This means that the partners must grow from liking one another to loving one another. Such love goes along with the concept of submission from Ephesians 5:21, “and be subject *hupotasso* to one another in the fear of Christ.” There is the need for a husband and a wife to place oneself under the obedience of each other. “Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the LORD... Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for her” (Eph 5:22, 25).

Marriage has the label *Made by God* if partners follow God’s plan to establish such an intimate relationship. The servant of Abraham and the family of Rebekah saw some evidence of God’s approval for the marriage. “This is from the LORD; we can say nothing to you one way or the other. Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master’s son, as the LORD has directed” (Gen 24:50-51).

## Sign(s) From God

Another point to be considered is for a partner to ask for a specific sign or signs from God. To be extra sure, a young adult can ask God in prayer for a specific sign, which will convince him or her whether God approves the life partner selected or not. An example is found from Genesis 24:12-14, where the servant requested a special sign from God, before choosing one of the ladies present at the well of water:

Oh LORD God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, here I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, let down your pitcher that I may drink, and she says, drink and I will also give your camels a drink, let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master.

And true to the requested sign, Rebekah answered positively before Abraham's servant selected her. When all the necessary formalities were done, and the family of Rebekah was also satisfied that there was enough evidence to show God's approval of the unfolding events, and they agreed with Rebekah to go in for the marriage union.

One of the greatest signs is the evidence of balanced spirituality in a partner. A partner who is in love with Jesus Christ and committed to following Him, will show among other things tolerance and humility, and the fear of God to avoid sin. Such an individual will have a lifestyle that is in tune with the word of God, and that person will show evidence of putting the principles of God's word in practical life.

### **The Dating Period**

In planning towards marriage, there are stages in the preparatory process that help partners to know certain personality traits and character of the other partner. Since marriage was instituted by God, the word of God encourages individuals to do everything, including planning their marriages to glorify Him (1 Cor 10:31). Before a Christian decides to search for a partner in life, the apostle Peter gives a caution to the Christian: "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lust which war against the soul" (2:11).

The apostle Paul says "Let all that you do be done with love" (1 Cor 16:14). And for true love to exist, Paul continues to say, "test all things and hold fast what is good" (1 Thess 5:21). Therefore, partners need to be friends in order to know the type of person she or he is desiring to tie the knot with. And the period of knowing one another with the intention of developing mutual love between a man and a woman, towards marriage is referred to as courtship. Dating normally precedes the courtship period, and it is the early stage of friendship where a young adult enters a relationship with the idea of selecting a life partner.

Van Pelt (2002b, p. 36) gives an explanation that “Dating is a special kind of relationship between two persons of the opposite sex that may lead to love, courtship, and marriage.” There are linked stages in the dating processes. The first of the stages during the premarital period is the friendship stage. Because sometimes human beings find it difficult to know a partner who will be a good wife or husband, it becomes part of the parents’ or counsellors’ responsibility to assist the grown-up children, during the dating or courtship period.

As part of the dating process, Jack and Judith (2007) found out that a filter theory that can help the single young adults to narrow their choices to a small number, so that the selection could be made easier. These authors write:

Endogamy, homogamy and complementary needs are three different filters through which a potential mate (partner) must pass. The first and broadest filter in the mate-selection process is endogamy, as most people date and establish relationships with individuals from similar backgrounds. The second filter is homogamy, which is narrower and more selective. Only those persons who have similar interests and characteristics pass through this filter. Casual dating allows individuals to discover which potential partners have compatible interests and characteristics. The last filter, complementary needs, is the narrowest. Whereas a number of potential mates may pass through the endogamous and homogamous filters, only a few will have the exact personality traits to meet one’s most pressing needs. (p. 64)

Van Pelt (2002c) enumerates the various stages of dating and courtship. The friendship stage for the single young adults goes on during social meetings, in schools, in the community, in church or at the work place. The second stage is known as casual dating and it comes on if the friendship wants to grow (pp. 49-57). She states, “Should the partners continue to enjoy each other’s company, the relationship will likely begin to include hand holding and other romantic gestures” (p. 52). Pelt (2002c) recommends, “partners remain at the friendship and casual dating stages for six to twelve months, getting acquainted with each other’s likes and dislikes and learning about their backgrounds, habits, behaviours” (p. 52). The third stage is the

special dating which means that there is a growing emotional attachment between the two single adults. At this stage, the two partners “are spending more time together but are not dating steadily” (pp. 52-53).

The next stage is the steady dating or courtship. During this stage, Van Pelt (2002c) states, “two people develop confidence and competence in interacting with a person of the opposite sex, over an extended period of time. They also get to know themselves better” (p. 53). At this stage, Pelt says it “means that two people (a man and a woman) have committed themselves to date only each other” (p. 37). From this stage onwards, serious partners prepare to engage one another, go in for medical examination, seek premarital counselling from an experienced minister, and then set a date for the marriage ceremony. Most successful marriage ceremonies involve parents, relatives, friends and associates in the planning and executing the event.

The fifth stage is the pre-engagement period where “a couple can take an in-depth look at whether their lifestyles and personalities are compatible enough for marriage” ... “The couple test and retest their values, goals and future plans.” During this period, issues discussed must be transparent for scrutiny so as to reduce the number of broken engagements (p. 54).

In the courtship period, the formal engagement is the time when the couple makes public announcements of the marriage date, and the final preparations towards the marriage ceremony. The final stage towards marriage is the actual marriage ceremony. As the partners get closer and the day of the ceremony approaches, there is the tendency to experiment sexual activity. But the unmarried partners are warned not to involve themselves in sexual test drive before marriage.

All the six stages leading to marriage must be seen as contributing to a successful or failure of the marriage relationship, but the courtship stage is the period

where both partners need to examine critically, to see if what the two partners bring to the marriage table will ensure a stable and satisfying relationship.

### Abstinence From Premarital Sex and Fornication

The next point for consideration is total abstinence from sexual activity prior to marriage. Before a Christian decides to search for a life partner, the seventh commandment of God clearly states that, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exod 20:14). Paul counsels people to “flee from sexual immorality” (1 Cor 6:18) and “not to keep company with sexually immoral people” (1 Cor 5:9). The apostle continues by saying to the “unmarried and to the widows, it is good for them if they remain even as I am; but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion” (1 Cor 7:8-9). From the Bible, marriage is honourable. Therefore, men and women must avoid intimate sexual activities before they become husbands and wives. Fornicators start the marriage journey wrongly and it is a sin.

As the singles engage in dating or courtship, there comes the tendency to think about sexual activity. Van Pelt (2002b) posits this piece to warn the youth, “Many times even young persons with high ideals fall into premarital sex as a result of going steady dating” or experiencing the courtship stage (p. 59). The Scriptures warn the singles against fornication and it is a practice the singles need to guide against. Van Pelt (2002b) outlines some benefits of total abstinence from sexual relationship that the single young adults will benefit from.

Abstinence contributes to minimise divorce cases in marriages, and the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). It promotes greater sexual satisfaction after marriage and perfect bonding among couples, reduces extramarital affairs, eliminates guilty feelings, promotes self-confidence, no risk of pregnancy, and

increases satisfaction during the honeymoon (pp. 114-116). So, the single adults must run away from premarital sex during dating or courtship, in order to preserve their physical and spiritual strength, until they are married. Sexual intimacy is allowed and becomes a form of bonding after spouses are united in holy matrimony. One of the several advantages monogamous marriages enjoy is sexual intimacy. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife and were not ashamed” (Gen 2:24-25).

Dating or courtship is usually linked with intimate relationship. During any of these stages, the closer the man and the woman are to each other, the better for them to pray for spiritual strength in order to abstain from any sexual activity. There should be deliberate effort on the part of both partners not to indulge in any sexual activity.

### **The Negative Effects of Ungodly Marriages**

The marriage of Samson shows a young man who did not obey the wise counsel from his parents. The book of Judges, chapters 14 to 16 give a graphic picture of the lifestyle of Samson. The Bible records from chapter 13:25 that “the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him (Samson) at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.” He did not apply the principles of endogamy and homogamy in his life partner selection. Samson started his ungodly marriages with his first wife. Judges 14:1-9 illustrates how Samson made a choice for a wife:

Samson went down to Timnah, and he saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. So he went up and told his father and mother, saying I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife. (Judg 14: 1-2)



Samson embraced totally the idea of intermarriage between partners of different faiths. His marital relationships with the Philistine women can be referred to as “opposite attracts marriage,” and also known as “individual free choice marriage.”

It is very clear that Samson down played the role of religious faith in choosing a marriage partner. “His father and mother said to him, is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all our people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” (Judg 14:3). His parents’ response to his request showed that Samson ignored the parents’ rich experience, and thereby brought great physical and spiritual problems to his marriage. Samson who did not take heed to parental counsel said to his father “Get her for me, for she pleases me well” (Judg 14:4). The wisest king, Solomon once said, “Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised” (Prov 31:30). Because of Samson’s disobedience and lack of spiritual maturity, he failed to listen to good counsel that says: “a prudent wife is from the LORD God” (Prov 19:14).

Samson’s choice of a wife from a different spiritual background, showed that he did not consider his body as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul asked questions concerning forbidden marriages: “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot?” Paul answers: certainly not. He further asked: “or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For the two shall become one flesh” (1 Cor 6:15-17).

Concerning the dangers in associating with the ungodly in marriage, White (2001b) states, we are not to associate with the ungodly and partake of their spirit, for they will lead the heart away from God and to the worship of false gods...It was by associating with idolaters and joining in their festivities, that the Hebrews were led to

transgress God's law and brought His judgments upon the nation – Israel. (pp. 459-460). Because of the wrong choice in partner selection, Samson had to take another woman as a wife who was also a harlot from Gaza. He again took a third woman as a wife who was also a worshipper of idols from the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah (Judg 14-16).

This ungodly woman Delilah used her hypocrisy, and as a wife to Samson demanded the key to Samson's unusual powers. "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and with what you may be bound to afflict you" (Judg 16:6). And because of Samson's spiritual weakness, after the wife's attempt to find out the secrets of his unusual strength, he gave his secret out to her. Samson's wife was against his interest. Here comes the revelation by Samson when he said to her:

No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man. (Judg 16:17)

It is not strange that Samson behaved this way, and finally this marriage union led to the loss of his eyes, and his untimely death. White (2001b) posits,

Satan exults and God is dishonoured when men and women dishonour themselves. The good name of honour is sacrificed under the spell of this infatuation, and the marriage of such persons cannot be solemnized under the approval of God. They are married because passion moved them, and when the novelty of the affair is over, they will begin to realize what they have done. (p. 56)

The *Holy Bible* poses the question: "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Samson and the three successive Philistine women, including Delilah married as partners who practised the theory of "opposite attracts marriage". Owusu-Yeboah (2014) has this to say about Samson's forbidden marriages:

The happiness and prosperity of a marriage depend upon the unity of the parties. Between the believer and the unbeliever there is a radical difference of tastes, inclinations and purposes. They are serving two masters, between whom there can be no concord. However, pure and correct one's principles may be, the influence of the unbelieving companion will have the tendency to lead the other partner away from God. (p. 45)

The negative influence of Samson's wives was the cause of his unhappy marriages. White (2001b) states, "This step taken unwisely is one of the most effective means of ruining the usefulness of young men and women. Life becomes a burden, a curse" (p. 43). To the young people like Samson who give various excuses for choosing an unbeliever as a life partner, Van Pelt (2002c) says:

The admonition against a relationship between a believer and an unbeliever still exists. So instead of trying to ignore the problem, justify the relationship, or disobey, you must take a hard look at what this means for you and the one you love. If you do not do it now, you will later have to deal with the consequences of having a spiritually incompatible spouse. (p. 90)

Van Pelt (2002c) continues her counselling to the single young adults by saying:

The same advice goes for naïve lovers who enter marriage with differing sets of spiritual blueprints. If one is a Christian and the other is not, they have entered an arena where oneness will never be achieved. All the seminars, books, counselling, and tears cannot solve the problems this couple will encounter. (p. 91)

White (2001b) points out another weakness with some young adults:

Young people too often feel that the bestowal of their affections is a matter in which self alone should be consulted – a matter that neither God nor their parents should in any wise control. Long before they have reached manhood or womanhood, they think themselves competent to make their own choice, without the aid of their parents. (p. 80)

She also states, "Satan has woven his meshes about them (young adults) in unwise attachments and poor marriages. This he saw would be the most successful way he could allure them from the path of holiness" (pp. 80-81).

Ayertey (2009) indicates, "Differences in the religious beliefs of the married couple is one of the serious threats to the stability of most marriages." He points out, "couple with religious differences are likely to disagree on many things relating to life. This could affect the smoothness of the marriage" (p. 89). From the biblical account, Samson let his God down. By this unholy alliance, the Philistines boosted of their god.

The lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice. And they said: Our god has delivered into our hands Samson our enemy. When the people saw him they praised their god. (Judg 16: 23-24)

What a pathetic situation! A glance through Genesis 6:1-8 shows how the wickedness of human beings became rampant on earth, which brought God's anger upon the then world. What was the problem? Wrong selection of life partners for marriages.

That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. And the LORD said, My Spirit shall not strive with man (humanity) forever, for he is indeed flesh. (Gen 6:2-3)

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD God was sorry that He had made man (human beings) on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. (Gen 6:5-6)

Commenting on recent studies in the area of intermarriages (Dybdahl, 2010) between the sons of God and the daughters of men, it seems to show “the Sons of God refer most likely to the righteous and God-fearing descendants of Seth, while daughters of men may point to the corrupt descendants of Cain” (p. 13). Owusu-Yeboah (2014) points out, “sin, corruption, and crime multiplied to the extent that God regretted for creating man.” “So the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them” (Gen 6:7). “The world was destroyed by flood in the time of Noah, as a result of the consequences of these intermarriages” (p. 46). The results from the forbidden marriage alliances between the children of God and the ungodly, led the people to disobey God's commandments.

Concerning the choice of marriage partners, many who claim to have knowledge about the word of God fail to select life partners who are one in flesh with them. Counsels from marriage counsellors and spiritual leaders are disregarded. An example is found in the book of Ezra.

Now while Ezra was praying, confessing, weeping, and bowing down before the house of God, a very large assembly of men, women, and children gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept very bitterly. And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land. (Ezra 10:1-2)

The people of Israel recognized and confessed their sins that by marrying pagan spouses, they had disobeyed God. Ezra told the people of Israel “You have transgressed and have taken pagan wives, adding to the guilt of Israel” (10:10). From the biblical account, it becomes a lack of faith or the transgression of the will of God, if God’s children fail to consider the faith or religious belief of a partner, and go ahead to marry an unbeliever. Many of such marriages struggle to survive.

Some Bible characters who went their own way to indulge in cross-cultural marriages were criticized. Examples are the marriages between Esau and the two Hittite women (Gen 26:34-35), Solomon who married Pharaoh’s daughter (1 Kgs 3:1) and King Ahab who also married Jezebel (1 Kgs 16:31). These people miserably failed God in their activities because of their alliances with ungodly spouses. In support of the biblical account, White (2001b) says that the forbidden marriages had very bad influence on the people.

In forming an alliance with a heathen nation, and sealing the compact by marriage with an idolatrous princess, Solomon rashly disregarded the wise provisions that God had for maintaining the purity of His people. The hope that this Egyptian wife might be converted was but a feeble excuse for the sin. (p. 64)

She further states that some Christians are also marrying the wrong partners.

Many professed Christians think like Solomon, that they may unite with the ungodly because their influence over those who are in the wrong will be beneficial; but too often they themselves, entrapped and overcome, yield their sacred faith, sacrifice principle, and separate themselves from God. (pp. 64-65)

White (2001b) further indicates, “Those who are ruled by passion and impulse will have a bitter harvest to reap in this life, and their course may result in the loss of their souls” (p. 63). She explains how wrong marriages lead people astray.

There are men of poverty and obscurity whose lives God would accept and make full of usefulness on earth and of glory in heaven. But Satan is working persistently to defeat His purposes, and drag them down to perdition by marriage with those whose character is such that they throw themselves directly across the road to life. Very few come out from this entanglement triumphant. (pp. 63-64)

### **Some Christian Scholars' Views About Marriage**

One of the greatest Christian scholars, Martin Luther, when he found the truth from the Holy Scriptures, wrote *On Monastic Vows*, in which he “urged monks and nuns to repudiate their wrongful vows, to leave the cloister and marry” (Cairns, 1996, p. 293). In 1525, Luther married an escaped nun Katherine von Bora and had six children with her. It is on record that, Luther “felt that he had done the right thing and derived much joy from his home life” (p. 294).

Balswick and Balswick (2006) write, “We believe God’s intention for marriage is that two spouses become one through a mutual, reciprocating process in which interdependence develops through the coexistence of distinction and unity in relationship” (p. 33). Some centuries ago before the Reformation era, Augustine (354-430) in his teachings once “taught that sexual intercourse transmitted original sin” (Thomas, 2000, p. 203).

The early Christian Church leaders had difficulties in dealing with human sexual activity, as something acceptable by God. Their Jewish counterparts had a comfortable view about God’s gift of sexuality among married couples, and accepted it as part of human procreation. The Protestant reformers helped in shaping a biblical view of human sexuality as holy and acceptable before God. Balswick and Balswick (2006) explain the sanctity of marriage and give these comments:

The Holy Trinity is a mystery in which relatedness goes hand in hand with particularity. God is one, yet composed of three distinct members. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are distinct but not separate, as they exist with and for each other. They are related without absorption as noted in John 17: 21, as you, Father, are in

me and I am in you. The mutual indwelling of the Godhead provides the model for unity in marriage. (pp. 31-32)

Thomas (2000) states, “Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) taught that carnal or earthly love is actually the first step in human experience that leads us love God” (p. 212). Melgosa and Melgosa (2011) found out that the protestant reformers supported the marriage relationship between a man and a woman, with reference to the Bible. The Melgosas favour the role of parents guiding their grown-up children in the selection of their life partners, as opposed to a commanding role of parents in the choice of their children’s partners, like what happened in medieval Europe. The Reformers clarified the holiness of human sexuality. It was emphasised that God created man and woman as sexual beings, and gave them the instructions to multiply while enjoying the intimacy and pleasure in marriage. At the same time, celibacy for God’s ministers was also eliminated (p. 23).

### **The Ghanaian Culture and Its Impact**

In Ghana, among the various ethnic groups, some cultural practices and beliefs are in agreement with biblical principles. One of such cultural practices is the marriage ordinance. Adu-Yeboah and Obiri-Yeboah (2008) write, “Marriage in Ghana is recognised as a union between a man and a woman with the consent and blessing of both families. The main purposes of marriage include procreation, companionship, mark of maturity, recognition and sexual fulfilment” (p. 138).

Ayertey (2009) states, “In Ghana, marriage is more than an agreement between a man and a woman; it is a communal affair that involves the immediate relatives of the couple and other members of the extended family” (p. 73). Because the family members of the young adult consider the marriage relationship as an important part of human life, family members, relatives and friends take active part from the beginning stage until the marriage is finally consummated. Whatever one’s

belief, Christianity, Islam, African Traditional Religion or any other, the traditional way of preparing and conducting marriage forms the basis of all marriages in Ghana. There are common procedures about marriage preparation and its related activities that are performed before a marriage union is accepted by the family, and by extension, the society.

Because one's family considers marriage and its related activities as part of the family's responsibilities, the parents and family members go through the certain activities with the single young adult who is preparing to marry. Ayertey (2009, p. 76) outlines that the activities/processes include "the selection of partners, family negotiations, the marriage ceremonies—including payment of the bride price and the final handing over of the bride to the groom."

It is generally accepted that when a marriage ends in divorce, it shows that the couple are not able to solve their problems or lack the skills in managing the challenges in their marital relationship. As such, the culture frowns on divorce cases and try all possible means to settle such cases when they develop. In some situations, the family members are not able to reconcile the partners together, which result in divorce. From careful observation, some of the factors that result in marriage separation or divorce cases could be avoided, if the married partners were taken through some form of premarital education.

Some causes of divorce cases in Ghana include religious differences, communication problems, adultery, financial problems, interference by in-laws and friends, lack of sexual enjoyment, childlessness and lack of love among married partners. These problems could be addressed with proper premarital education, which will enlighten the single young adults, to know who to choose as a life partner, and be well-prepared for the marriage union with one's spouse.



## **Conclusion and Summary**

In this chapter, the meaning and purposes why God instituted marriage were highlighted. The important points to be considered before a man or woman selects a life partner were pointed out. Whether a partner uses the individual free choice method to select a life partner or the arranged method, it was emphasised that God's people need to pay attention to the counsels from the Holy Bible. It is clear from this chapter that, single young adults who are believers in Jesus Christ, are to marry fellow believers in the same religious faith. The partner one selects for the marital union must have a good character. The single adult must consider oneself as a representative of Saviour Jesus Christ, who is living a changed life. Therefore, he or she must choose a life partner who will be endorsed by Jesus Christ.

It must be noted that, in order to find a good partner, the one searching for a life partner must equally be a person with good character. What makes this theological foundation more important is the fact that, in our present evil generation, the surest way of knowing that God is leading an individual to make the selection, is to rely on the counsels from the Bible and God's chosen messengers.

It is a common occurrence that since the fall of humanity, human beings find it difficult to choose correctly. Therefore, the single young adults are cautioned to make haste slowly in order to go through the dating and courtship period intelligently by following biblical principles. The single young adults must take time to know the personality or character of the other partner, before taking a final decision. The case of Isaac's marriage with Rebekah is an example of the needed cooperation that must always exist between parents and their grown-up children, when the time comes for the young ones to choose their marriage partners.

It must also be noted that a Christian scholar like Martin Luther, together with other Church leaders supported the idea of a man and a woman coming together to form the marriage union. Protestantism made it clear the sanctity of human sexuality among married couples. In the marriage relationship, when contracted according to biblical principles, and where the couples experience faith in God and practise obedience to the marriage covenant, they enjoy the blessings from the Creator-Man-Woman Triangle. Research have proved that many cultures also support the marriage institution, as a way of sustaining their societies through procreation.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

As part of planning a premarital education seminar for Adventists single young adults in the Ghanaian context, a review of some selected literature that relate to premarital education was done. What the Bible teaches about marriage, Ellen G. White's writings, Christian scholars and sociologist's views on premarital education, and the impact on building marriage relationships were reviewed. In fact, there is much literature on the subject of marriage, but a sizable number of them were selected to support this premarital education seminar. The materials used for this project are mainly restricted to those published between the years 1950 and 2017. However, other works which are of much importance to this study are included.

The structure of this literature review includes 10 major sections. The first section focuses on divinely designed: the meaning and purpose of marriage as instituted by God. Second is culture: the mating rituals for marriage preparation, dating, and courtship. The third is identity and wholistic maturity: an individual's self-image and self-esteem. The fourth is the good fight: communication and conflict management. Fifth is compatibility or equally yoked: the negotiable versus non-negotiable items. Sixth is enjoying life responsibly: resource management. Seventh is Genesis 2:24 versus the fifth commandment: in-laws and living arrangements. The eighth focuses on oneness: healthy sexual intimacy and family planning. Ninth is the script: gender roles and mutual expectations. And the tenth one is Red Flags in life

partner selection. There are some subsections which provide further details about a particular section.

This project primarily assumes that the single young adults are those who have never entered into any serious marital relationship. Jacobsen (2015) quotes, “The old taboos are dying. A new, more permissiveness is taking shape ... And behind this expanding permissiveness is... a society that has lost its consensus on such crucial issues as premarital sex ... marriage, birth control and sex education” (p. 4).

Premarital education is necessary for many important reasons. Marriage as the most important intimate human relationship on this earth needs some time of preparation, and the knowledge as to what it entails. A number of marriage counselors recognise the fact that premarital education is linked to marital satisfaction and marital stability. A review of premarital education and marital outcomes materials are included in the next section.

### **Review of Premarital Education and Marital Outcomes**

Senediak (1990) states that premarital education programs are best defined as a knowledge and skills-based training procedure which aims at providing couples with information on ways to improve their relationship once they are married. In recent times, three main categories of people conduct premarital education. They include family life counselors, medical professionals or therapists and the ministers of the gospel. The “clergy provide the greatest amount of formal premarital education, as part of optional or mandatory marriage preparation programs before church weddings” (Carroll & Doherty, 2003, p. 5). Existing information on some research on the success of premarital education gives a bright picture. Strong et al. (2011) quote,

A recent study by Stanley and associates (2007) examined data from a large, multistate U.S. random sample to determine the effectiveness of premarital

education in lowering marital conflict, raising marital satisfaction, and reducing the likelihood of divorce. More than 3,000 adults in Oklahoma, Kansas, Arkansas, and Texas were surveyed to see whether the use of such programs had increased, and whether use led to desired marital outcomes. (p. 256) among others.

Their encouraging findings include the following. Strong et al. (2011) write,

1. Participation in premarital education programs varied by race and ethnicity and with education. Latinos were most likely and African Americans least likely to participate. Those with lower levels of education as well as those with higher levels of economic distress were less likely to participate.
2. Premarital education appears to enhance marital outcomes. Participation was positively associated with marital satisfaction and commitment and negatively associated with marital conflict. Perhaps of the greatest interest, participation in premarital education was associated with a 31% reduction in one's odds of divorce.
3. The more time one spends in such a program is associated with greater benefit from such training. Stanley et al. (2007) results support other research findings in generating optimism in the possibility of enhancing marital quality, by learning to improve communication, and reduce or more effectively manage conflict. At present, most people who participate in premarital programs do so through the religious organizations to which they belong as they prepare to marry. (p. 256)

In the social science area, research show that some sizable number of marriages are breaking down due to various reasons. According to Strong et al. (2011), some of the causes for divorce cases include societal factors like changes in the nature of the family. Other causes are demographic factors which include employment status, income, educational level, ethnicity and religion. In addition, some causes of divorce cases include life course factors that highlight the age at the time of marriage, premarital pregnancy and childbirth, cohabitation, remarriage, and intergenerational transmission. Intergenerational transmission is the increased likelihood that divorce will later occur in young adults' marriages because parents divorced. Finally, some family processes like marital happiness, children, marital problems and no-fault divorce can cause divorce among couples (pp. 456-463).

### The Union Between a Male and Female

From the time God created the first male and female (Adam and Eve), He

intentionally pronounced that the two shall become one flesh. This union of two personalities is the beginning of the marriage relationship. According to Cress (2006), it was pointed out that marriage as a special relationship constitute the pillars for the family. He notes,

Marriage has been the foundation of the family, the foundation of society itself, ever since. Scripture describes marriage as a decisive act of both detachment and attachment: One shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh. (Gen 2:24)

### **God's Design: Meaning and Purpose of Marriage**

God's gift of marriage will last until the world comes to an end. He has given humanity a precious gift that has many by-products. As a God of love, He has given us the power of choice and those who follow God's plan in marriage enjoy its blessings. On the other hand, those who reject God's way of life, live to regret. Not enough studies and too few programs exist to help the young people increase their participation in premarital education. Also, inadequate knowledge about the meaning and purpose of marriage surface in society. Boakye (2014) highlights the following: "In marriage, you are expected to leave your parents, friends, old habits, activities and anything that could interfere with your marriage. Leaving gives you the opportunity for bonding and intimacy with your spouse" (p. 2). Within God's plan for humanity to experience successful marriage life, one can point out three essential principles of marriage. They are love, unity and indissolubility.

Love will make the marriage union last until death separates the two. The definition of unity in the context of marriage, according to Boakye (2014), involves the open, full sharing and giving of oneself in every aspect of the marriage. He agrees that the only avenue for this oneness is the type of communication that presents itself in an exclusive monogamous marriage. However, concerning indissolubility, Boakye asserts that this principle builds a marriage union to last a lifetime, and cannot be

dissolved either by parties themselves or institutions. This principle if adopted by the partners, is the unbreakable bond that provides the cornerstone of the marriage relationship (pp. 3-5).

It is strange that most religious bodies and church leaders give too little education to premarital programs and teachings. Marriage as part of our social living constitutes a greater part of life. As long as people live on the earth, there is the need for teachings and programs that focus on premarital education for the single young adults. This is because every society relies heavily on the human resources that come out of marriages and families—the children. The factors that motivate people to marry should be well understood by both the young adults and their parents. Because many young people do not understand God’s purposes for marriage, there is the need to provide them with premarital education. Such knowledge will equip them with informed insight and empower them to fully enjoy life.

Concerning marriage, many factors motivate people to marry. Ayertery (1990), points out the following motivational aspects: The first is procreation or childbearing. Many enter the marriage contract to fulfill the commands found in the Holy Bible to be fruitful and multiply, thereby contributing to populate the earth with human beings. The second point of the conversation turns to socialization and how marriage is supposed to provide a safe place for individuals. It is the first place to train and educate children, by means of imparting moral discipline together with religious beliefs. It also becomes a conduit to introduce the children into their own culture and enable them to fit into the society. The third reason is the need for companionship. Marriage gives opportunity for spouses to support one another, spend hours together, and exchange ideas. To support his argument, Ayertery (1990) quotes Genesis 2:18: “It is not good for man to be alone, I will provide him with a helpmeet.” The fourth

reason also mentioned is about legitimate sexual access. Marriage provides a context for the proper expression and fulfillment of sexual needs for both partners. In addition to these, a fifth reason mentioned here is about financial security as an important reason to marry. Furthermore, Ayertey points out that peace and unity in marriage translates into peace and unity in society. On the other hand, there is a social status or recognition, especially in Ghana, where singleness carries a negative stigma in society (pp. 74-75).

The Seventh-day Adventist church in Ghana and other agencies are doing their part to educate the members and the population to accept and respect persons who are single, either by choice or by uncontrolled circumstances. There are some characters both in the Bible and history who were single like John the Baptist, Paul, Anna, Martha, Leonardo da Vinci and Florence Nightingale. There is on-going education for the general public to recognize individual differences and the contributions of every person in the society. There is the rule of law in Ghana and therefore every person can live and work in peace. Nobody can be forced to do one's bidding. The proliferation of media outlets is helping to educate the people to change their mentality, in order to work in peace with singles who do not want to be pressured into marriage.

Adding to the discussion of fulfillment of human needs, Boakye (2014) argues that "some human needs can only be met by an individual of the opposite sex. God made marriage for completeness, in order to fill up the needs in each other." In fact, he believes, "spiritual development in marriage serves as a model of our relationship with God" (p. 5). Boakye supports this idea because the Bible often refers to God's interaction with His people as a marriage relationship. In the same way that God promises never to leave His children nor forsake us, but will graciously bless us, He expects the same from married couples. As such, human beings will benefit if similar



principles are adopted to serve as guidelines for success in marriages. Such lifestyle will help people grow spiritually in their relationship with God (pp. 29-30).

### **Culture: Mating Rituals, Dating and Courtship**

Every culture promotes certain acceptable ways of ushering young people into marriage. Traditional marriage forms the basis of all marriages in Ghana. The people in the Ghanaian communities view marriage as a family responsibility. The parents and the immediate relatives help in this all important shared process which includes the selection of life partners, family negotiations, and the final marriage ceremonies. Ayertey explains the marriage process from the beginning stage.

#### Selection of Marriage Partner

Ayertey (2009) talks about the two different ways that a potential partner selection is done in Ghana—the arranged and the individual free choice methods. For the arranged method, “the parents of the man or the woman may choose the potential spouse with or without the consent of the young person concerned” (p. 76). However, the current trend finds this arranged marriage method transitioning into a free individual choice method where the young adult freely selects the partner he or she wishes to marry.

#### Family Negotiations

Family negotiations are important in Ghana. Ayertey (2009) explains that traditionally in Ghana, it is the man’s family that takes the role of making a marriage proposal to the woman’s family. It all starts with the man deciding on the woman of his choice and getting her consent for marriage. Then, the man talks to his father and he in turn does some research on the girl’s family, in order to make sure that her family’s background is satisfactory. “After the man’s family is satisfied with the

background history of the woman, the head of the young man's family then proceeds to ask for the hand of the woman in marriage" (p. 77). Before accepting the proposal, the woman's family also investigates the history of the man's family, and if they are satisfied with the marital union, they will accept the proposal from the man. Then preparations begin by both families towards the marriage ceremony, which will conclude with a formal wedding arrangement.

#### Marriage Ceremony and Handing Over of the Bride

Furthermore, Ayertey (2009) states that every traditional marriage climaxes with the payment of the bride price on or before the day of the marriage ceremony. This bride price will depend on the societal status of the young woman and the religious affiliation of the family. At this point, the two families move to the final stage of the customary marriage ceremony, which consists of the handing over of the bride to the groom and his family. He explains that in Ghana, this handing over is characterized by a ceremony, which include dancing, drumming, and counselling both the groom and bride (p. 77). Of late, marriages between couples who are Christians, Muslims or any other religious group end up with their marriage celebrations in their places of worship.

#### Stages in Dating Relationships

Both Boakye (2014) and Van Pelt (2002c) recognize friendship or group dating as the first stage in the dating relationship. Boakye states that group dating is meeting people of the opposite sex at social, educational, religious and cultural functions to share activities and to get acquainted with other people, usually without any intention of marriage. Van Pelt (2002c) says, "If you take your time getting to know someone at the friendship level first, and let love grow slowly and gradually, you are more likely to have a friend for life whether you marry this person or not" (p. 51).

Van Pelt (2002c) enumerates six stages in the dating and courtship period before marriage. She calls the first stage as the friendship stage where the young people communicate among themselves. The second stage is the casual dating where two friends now move away from the group to engage in couple activities. This involves doing things in common to learn from each other. Van Pelt calls the third stage as special dating. The relationship during this period between the partners means that there is a growing emotional attachment between the two opposite sexes, but they have not yet reached the commitment level. The fourth stage is known as the steady dating or courtship. She explains that it is an important stage because the two get to know themselves better, and can make intelligent decision regarding their compatibility. From this stage, the partners agree to continue the process of getting married or end their plan of marrying. The fifth stage is known as pre-engagement stage. Here the couple is thinking about future marriage, but nothing is binding. During this stage, Van Pelt recommends that before the couple announces their engagement, the partners must go to a marriage counselor. Partners can decide either to continue to the engagement stage or break the commitment and see themselves as ordinary friends. The sixth stage in Van Pelt's book is the engagement stage. This is the period where public announcement is made that a couple is about to marry. The final stage is the actual marriage ceremony. Van Pelt says that unfortunately some partners often go through these stages out of sequence, by jumping to steady dating/courtship stage or pre-engagement, and ignore the need for knowing one another as friends first (pp. 49-58).

Van Pelt (2002c) suggests a not less than two-year rule for partners before the engagement stage. She quotes researchers at Kansas State University who said, "a strong correlation was found between the length of time spent dating their current

spouses and current marital satisfaction” (pp. 58-9). However, there is counsel against the practice of too long courtship. This means that if the singles are not ready to marry within two years, they must not start any courtship, or better still postpone their plans.

### Courtship

For Boakye (2014), “courtship is a process of developing closer friendship with a person of the opposite sex for mutual understanding, and with the idea of possible marriage” (p. 44). Within the courtship framework, one has the opportunity to test, examine and evaluate a partner’s inner character, values, beliefs, practices, interests and life goals. Courtship, therefore, helps the single young adults to prepare for and preserve marriages (p. 44).

As part of the preparation process for marriage, would-be partners do benefit greatly if they engage the services of a professional marriage counselor. A recent study (Melgosa & Melgosa, 2011) summarizes the characteristics of a couple during courtship by a competent premarital counselor in the following statements: First, it is “a selection process by which some options are discarded... some kept in mind” (p. 28). After that, they view their decision as an important, intentional effort by both partners in order to prepare for marriage, especially due to the psychological and biological differences that exist between men and women. The task of getting to know each other and getting ready for life together is transcendental in the courtship stage, as it directly affects the success of marriage relationship (p. 28).

### **Identity and Wholistic Maturity: Self-Image and Self-Esteem**

#### Self-Image

According to Stevenson and Waite (2011), self-image is one’s own idea or picture of oneself, especially in relation to others. Any single young adult desiring to

enjoy married life, must have a good self-image about himself or herself, in order to communicate well with a chosen partner or others in any meaningful relationships.

### Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is explained as the respect or honour for oneself and a feeling that one is behaving wisely and with dignity. There is a proverb in the Ghanaian language which suggests that one must respect one's self before others can respect the person. Van Pelt (2002b) suggests some ways for single young adults to build their self-image and self-esteem. She writes that when some women over the age of thirty were counselled, they appeared to harbour feelings of hopelessness regarding their marriageability. It was found out that most of them had reached the stage of "I guess I will never get married." She suggests some simple positive practical things the single adults in this age group must do, that they: (a) should focus on their strengths and do them, (b) rebuild their thought patterns, (c) develop admirable qualities, (d) never compare oneself with others, (e) give of yourself to others (f) and also to ask God to make something beautiful out of your life (pp. 31-35).

Melchizedeck (2012b) shares his life story with the single young adults as he narrates his experiences with 16 different people when he was searching for a life partner (p. 23). It is normal for single young adults to have failures in their pursuit of choosing a life partner. Such singles must not lose confidence, but have the needed self-esteem. The youth must wait on God while considering the principles of endogamy, exogamy and homogamy in the selection of a life partner.

### **Good Fight: Communication and Conflict Management**

To fight the good fight of life and achieve success in marriage demands love from both partners, quality time together, enjoying interpersonal communication and

managing conflicts. It should be the aim of married couples to help and support one's partner with the aim of enjoying a stable, strong and lifelong relationship. One of the signs of evil on this earth, and events pointing to the world coming to an end is the increasing divorce rate. Table 1 is a source found in Melchizedeck (2012a).

Table 1

*The Divorce Statistics in Accra Metropolitan Assembly 2001-2010*

Year	Marriages	Divorce	Percentage of divorce (%)
2001	2,182	653	29.92
2002	2,257	345	15.28
2003	2,669	399	14.95
2004	2,669	384	14.39
2005	2,119	488	30.03
2006	1,714	333	19.43
2007	1,511	618	40.90
2008	1,512	615	40.67
2009	2,312	419	18.12
2010	3,426	455	13.38

From Table 1 the divorce statistics from Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) in Ghana is provided. This statistics from the AMA was given by the Head of Registrar and this is part of the real story that exist in the whole nation. These figures about divorce cases only represent the reported cases (pp. 113-4). According to Melgosa and Melgosa (2011) “data gathered by a group of psychotherapists for couples show that communication problems top the list of reasons for divorce” (p. 142). I agree with Melchizedeck (2012b), who states that for effective communication to exist in marriage, there must be one language the couple and their in-laws speak in

common. This is an advantage for the success of the marriage, as he identified lack of proper communication as one of the causes of divorce cases in Ghana (pp. 101-102).

Van Pelt (2002b) compares infatuation and love and points out that some singles have inadequate communication skills to know the difference. They confuse infatuation with love, which is a barrier to effective communication. Such confusion unfortunately result in conflict in marital relationships (pp. 83-85). Van Pelt (2002a) advances an idea for implementing intimate communication among couples. She stated that honest communication brings down emotional tension, clarifies one’s thinking and provides a peaceful atmosphere in the home. Van Pelt says “it allows a couple to work toward common goals which paves the way toward a truly intimate relationship between husband and wife and God” (p. 77). Applying the word of God to direct affairs in the marriage relationship resolves conflicts amicably.

### Communication Skills Needed

Boakye (2014) posits,

Communication in marriage means sharing feelings, ideas, beliefs, concerns, likes and dislikes in words, signs, symbols and gestures that your spouse understands. Through speaking, listening, observing and acting, you learn to support each other. Even when you refuse to speak to your partner, because you are angry, you are sending a message. Spouses are communicating all the time. Communication is the brain of all marriages. Effective communication is, the most important tool and the biggest single factor that determines the kind of marriage you have. (p. 77)

### Model of Communication

This representation shows a model of communication.

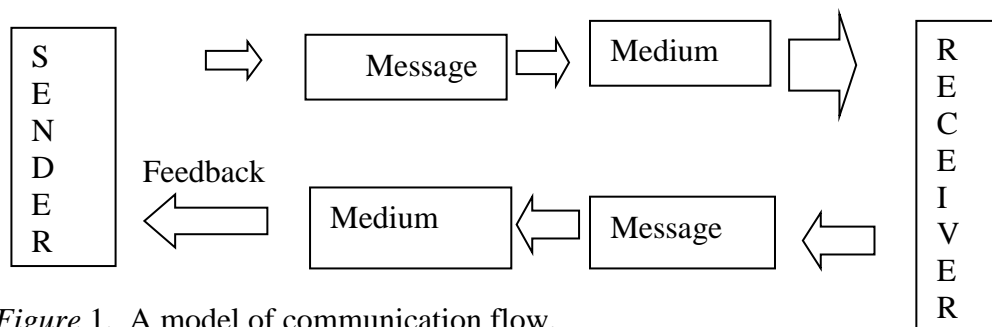


Figure 1. A model of communication flow.

The sender initiates the process to inform, educate, take decisions or get his/her ideas across to a receiver. The medium is what is used to express ideas (messages). The feedback is the response the receiver returns to the sender. There are two channels or types of communication: the verbal and non-verbal communication. The verbal communication refers to what comes out of one's mouth to depict feelings, ideas, concerns, likes and dislikes. It includes face-to-face conversation, telephone and video. Non-verbal communication uses non-spoken media like physical objects, written words, symbols, signs, gestures, touching, withdrawal, silence or facial expression. Others include perfume, dressing and body language. In the end, cultural behavior may be used to communicate non-verbally (Boakye, 2014, pp. 78-86).

Good communication is holding conversation at all levels. Melgosa and Melgosa (2011) list all the five levels of communication as follows: (a) Cliché - This is the most superficial level. (Hello, how is it going?); (b) Factual information - This comprises concrete informative content, generally what other people have said or stating the facts; (c) Personal ideas and judgment - Here the speaker informs of facts while at the same time including personal opinions and assessments; (d) Feelings and emotions - The speaker describes what he or she feels inside. One partner shares his or her most intimate secrets with the other; (e) Personal commitment - This is the deepest level of communication. It implies a total opening towards one's partner and acceptance of playing any role to help one's partner (p. 67).

### Resolving Conflicts

Boakye (2014) posits that conflicts in marriages are open disagreements, divergent interests, ideas, or wills between couples. It may be physical, verbal, mental, emotional, sexual or social, but the most common type of conflict that couples experience is verbal, usually referred to as "fight." We fight to vent, control, clear the



air and release stress (p. 92). Many specialists in marriage therapy employ several steps to resolve conflicts between couples. Melgosa and Melgosa (2011) enumerate some steps for couples to reach a reasonable level of satisfaction. Understanding the problem well is identified as the first step. Both partners need to see and repeat the problem from the perspective of their spouse. The second step is to understand and pinpoint the wishes of each partner. To reach this end, both partners need to express what they want in order to negotiate. Then, the third step comes as the couple begins to suggest solutions. The fourth step is to negotiate. With this step, the couple must come to an agreement of a solution that adequately satisfies both spouses. The Melgosas suggest that finding a middle point is fitting and promotes a reasonable level of satisfaction. For the fifth step, the emphasis falls on the action of creating contracts in writing or other means, alongside the use of arbitrator (witness), as the need may be. Finally, the last step of the conflict resolution strategy focuses on ways to periodically review the restructure of acknowledgements, in order to prevent future occurrences (pp. 128-9).

### **Compatibility: Equally Yoked or Negotiable versus Non-negotiable Items**

From Homby (2015), the word compatibility simply means “the state of being suited to, in accord with, of ideas, arguments, and principles, able to exist together.” Webster (1973) explains it as “capable of existing together in harmony.” The practice of endogamy is a common practice in many cultures and ethnic groups in Ghana.

The *Holy Bible* asks some questions in connection with compatibility among couples. From Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, the Bible makes statements and poses some questions: “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with

darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?" (2 Cor 6:14-15). Amos 3:3 puts it this way: "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" According to Cress (2006), "clearly, Scripture intends that believers should marry fellow believers. True oneness demands an agreement in beliefs and practices... To achieve the oneness Scriptures speak of, people should marry others within their own communion." (p. 333). So, the Bible supports the principle of endogamy. White (2001b) supports the idea of marrying from the same religious faith and she writes, "Never should God's people venture upon forbidden ground. Marriage between believers and non-believers is forbidden by God" (p. 63). She also advises young people to have patience and "make haste slowly" in matters relating to the selection of life partners. The singles should not rush to marry, but must commit their request to God in prayer. White continues, "If men and women are in the habit of praying twice a day before they contemplate marriage, they should pray four times a day when such a step is anticipated" (p. 71).

Melgosas and Melgosa (2011) outline what a man or a woman who is looking for a life partner must consider. Five points were outlined that need consideration: (a) the observation of the spouse's personality and character; (b) the spouse's age; (c) the level of education; (d) one's religious faith; and (e) the spouse's social class. It is established that people tend to choose a partner on the basis of similarity in age, social class, academic achievements, race and religion (p. 29).

The Melgosas (2011) further propose a process of selection filters. They suggest five levels of filtering, through which options are eliminated until there is only a reduced number of possible partners. The filters are: (a) Proximity, where one chooses between people who are nearby, available in time and place; (b) Social group, which refers to those with significant age difference (same generation), or belonging to a

social class; (c) Physical attraction that has to do with some kind of mutual likeness that can propel partners to start the relationship; (d) Compatibility that comes in areas like personality type, interests, plans, values and other characteristics the two potential partners will desire; and (e) Compensation which both partners put into and receive from an eventual relationship (p. 31). The single young adult therefore needs to know what the other partner will bring to the marriage relationship, which will improve their marital union, to the benefits of both partners.

Marriage, as a special relationship instituted by God, needs the necessary preparation by all who intend to enter. As Melgosa and Melgosa (2011) put it, “Preparation for marriage should be intentional and to a certain extent, organized and systematized” (p. 34). White (2001b) writes that, “marriage is something that will influence and affect your life both in this world and in the world to come” (p. 71). She further states, “a sincere Christian will not advance his plans in this direction without the knowledge that God approves his desire. He will not want to choose for himself, but will feel that God must choose for him/her” (p. 43).

Melchizedeck (2012b) explains how his wife Hana challenged God with three signs, before she was fully convinced of God’s approval of her decision to marry him. The first sign was that God should cause her partner to pass through rains to visit her one day. The second was for him to call her on the phone ten times in a particular day. The third sign was for God to cause the young man to buy her an underwear on her birthday anniversary. And God granted all the three requests. It is advisable for young adults to deliberately ask God, for concrete sign(s) to be sure of God’s approval in the selection of their life partners (pp. 64-65).

#### Premarital Counselling

In line with a counsel from the *Holy Bible*, “A good name is to be chosen rather

than great riches” (Prov 22:1), the apostle Paul warns Christians “not to keep company with anyone named a brother (believer), who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner – not even to eat with such a person” (1 Cor 5:11). A good character is a non-negotiable point. As so if even partners have the same faith, by eliminating those with the above-mentioned character defects, one can select a life partner who is a serious Christian for marriage.

Premarital counselling is a must for single young adults who are preparing for marriage. During counselling sessions, non-negotiable items like partners’ religious beliefs, character and personality traits, level of maturity in terms of age, level of education and the social class of partners become known to the counselor, who must point out some of these issues for the young adults to consider. Most counselors are in a better position to guide the young adults to consider their compatibility status.

Another non-negotiable item is whether the partner respects people. The young adult must satisfy himself or herself if the partner selected respects him or her, his or her own parents and that of the would-be-in-laws from the two families.

The negotiable items like proximity of dwelling places, physical attraction, and one’s economic status or a partner’s work can be critically analyzed. During the premarital counselling sessions, single young adults could work on the negotiable items. In counselling, partners have the best opportunity to know a lot about the other partner, and what they can expect in their marriage. If differences arise during counselling, partners have the chance to use what they know of themselves and their partners to make healthy choices. They may decide to settle their differences or decide not to continue the relationship. They may think through and deal with their own problems and concerns about issues, that can make or unmake successful marriages. Counselling, therefore, helps the partners to confirm whether one has made the right

choice and doing the needed preparations. Those who attend marriage counselling sessions find some valuable experiences, especially in the early years of marriage. Premarital counselling also significantly reduces the risk of divorce.

### **Enjoying Life Responsibly: Resource Management**

In order to enjoy married life in a responsibly way, partners should plan to manage all their resources well. Borkar (2013) explains family management as a “process which utilizes resources in order to accomplish individual or family goals. Management involves a process consisting of three steps: planning, implementing and evaluating the use of resources in order to attain desired goals.” Every resource that is wasted goes against the well-being of a family unit.

#### Concept of Management

Borkar (2013) goes on to highlight the fact that management is an “integral part of human life” since individuals and/or families always try to achieve various goals. Borkar again states, “Most of the time, it is essential for family members to take wise decisions regarding education, career, marriage of family members depending on their values and goals.” In her perception, two specific concepts regarding family management exist, the human concept and materialistic concept.

#### Human Concept and Materialistic Concept

In the idea of the human concept, the emphasis and significance go to the overall development of each individual in the family unit. Thus, the resources are made available to each member at a maximum use in order to meet human needs. In this paradigm, the standards are usually adjusted many times on a situation-by-situation basis. However, the materialistic concept of home management emphasizes set standards that must be met, in order to improve quality of work and achieve higher

levels of perfection. This concept involves inanimate items that cannot operate on its own without the human resource.

In my research, I noticed that the human concept proved to be more helpful in establishing successful marriages. This is so because, when the human capacity is developed, it can work to achieve success in business and earn income for the family.

### **Genesis 2:24 versus the Fifth Commandment: In-Laws and Living Arrangements**

Marriage as the most intimate of all human relationships takes precedence over the relationship between a parent and a child. This precedence was recognized at the time God gave His blessings and divinely ordained marriage. In this connection, the Scriptures command, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). The *Holy Bible* is 100% in support of monogamous marriage. This text demonstrates a physical leaving and any form of leaving which shows love to parents by the new couple, to pave the way for them to start a new family. This biblical injunction also allows the married partners to cleave together by having exclusive intimacy in sexual activity.

However, the fifth of the Ten Commandments says, “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.” Commenting on this commandment, Shryock (1999) states that the Bible allows grown-up children to set up their own families even though they are to obey their parents in the Lord. Furthermore, he explains that this arrangement actually serves to alleviate the stresses that could arise when grown-up married children live with their parents-in-law. This author does not support financial dependency where married adult children depend heavily on parents. Shryock argues that when newly married couples depend too much on parents, this stunts the personal growth of the

young adults and could have negative repercussions (pp. 80-1).

### **Oeness: Healthy Sexual Intimacy and Family Planning**

When it comes to sexual activity, Boakye (2014) sheds the following light: “Sex makes marriage a reality, because it is the only intimate experience that couples share to the exclusion of all other persons” (p. 158). He believes that it is in this context that couples may reach a place of personal growth and real intimacy. He says “a happy sexual life is a happy marriage” (p. 158). After all, sex is a powerful God-ordained activity that was designed to provide for pleasure and procreation. By critically analyzing issues about sexual relationships, it can be said that intimate sexual activity can be associated with or even becomes an act of worship if the sexual activity meets God’s approval. Sexual relationship between couples is a good gift from God to humanity, and those who honour God experience satisfaction in their married life.

Generally, people need to know these three important points about sexual activity. The first is the sexual differences between a man and woman. The second is to understand the basic features of male and female reproduction systems. And the third is to develop a healthy biblical perspective and understand the sexual response cycle or the know-how of sexual activity (p. 163).

The reasons why it is necessary to know these three important points about sexual activity are stated clearly by LeVay and Baldwin (2012) and they are as follows: (a) “Improving your understanding of the structure and function of your genital organs and those of your partners will help you give and receive more pleasure from sex. (b) Educating yourself about contraception and sexually transmitted diseases will lessen the chance that your sexual behavior may end up harming

yourself or your partners. (c) Becoming knowledgeable about sex will be an asset to you in any career that brings you in contact with other people. (d) Educating yourself about sex will enable you to educate others—including your children, if you have them” (pp. 4-5).

### Healthy Sexual Intimacy

Sexual intercourse is an essential component for the success of a couple’s marriage relationship. Melgosa and Melgosa (2011) points out some suggestions for a good human sexuality. They are: first, adapting to a partner’s specific needs; second, couples discussing the topic openly; third, preparing for sex; fourth, making a sexual encounter something more than copulation (pp. 58-59). Van Pelt (2002b), writes this to the singles or newly wedded couples:

Central to the honeymoon experience is sexual intimacy. Your first intercourse will represent the consummation of your marriage. The relaxed atmosphere of your honeymoon will allow you to indulge your sexual desires freely and with flexibility. For many couples the honeymoon represents a peak in sexual activity. (pp. 183-4)

### Family Planning

For Boakye (2014), family planning is a reference to the various ways used to limit and control the number of children desired by a couple, or to monitor the pregnancy and its timing or the spacing of children. Family planning methods are categorized into two major sections: natural and artificial. Boakye explains, “The natural method is the planning of the birth of children based on indicators, including fertility or infertility in a woman’s body. There is a period of infertility during which sexual intercourse may not produce conception, and there are also days in which sex may produce conception.” On the other hand, Boakye (2014) states that the artificial method is the use of any mechanical instrument, chemical substance or bodily action



in a sexual act to prevent conception. The artificial means of birth control is termed, contraception (pp. 207-211).

In their study, the Melgosas (2011) observe that given the variety of contraceptive methods, a specific method should be considered by both partners on a case-to-case basis, with professional guidance and thorough knowledge. For example, younger couples are advised not to opt for sterilization given the irreversibility of the operation. It is also not wise for a younger couple who wish to have children in the future, but wants to delay child bearing in the present time to choose an Intrauterine Device (IUD), due to the chance of sterility. For oral contraception, the Melgosas posited that, before starting a course, it is necessary to undergo a medical examination and to follow the advice of a gynecologist. Women with regular menstrual cycle can take advantage of a combination of natural methods. By taking together these methods provide a good indication of the moment of ovulation. This method requires that the couple avoid sexual intercourse on certain days of the month (p. 82).

Among the natural methods, Boakye (2014) also includes the following: period of breast-feeding, fertility awareness methods (FAM), basal body temperature (BBT), cervical mucus or billings method, and calendar or standard days method (Rhythm Method). Some of the artificial methods are: coitus interruptus (withdrawal or pull out method), male condom, female condom (Femidom), diaphragm, intrauterine device (IUD), cervical cup, spermicides, the pill, combined oral contraceptive pill (COCP), emergency contraceptives (E.C.) or morning after pill, injectables, sterilisation, vasectomy, tubal ligation, hysterectomy (pp. 211-217).

Family planning brings about a number of positive results and has some purposes. According to Boakye (2014):

Family planning gives you the opportunity to manage your marriage, space your children and have as many children as you can bring up and educate, taking into

account all their needs – health, finance, housing and spiritual values. It safeguards your health, preserves your resources and improves your quality of life. The best family planning method for you is the one that fits your goals, values, dislikes, daily lifestyle and religious restrictions. (p. 219)

Nevertheless, these benefits involve some responsibilities and careful thought. The family's resources must be taken into account when planning for the number of children to be raised and cared for. Future parents need to know how best to provide for their families in managing both the human and material resources.

### **The Script: Gender Roles and Mutual Expectations**

#### The Husband/Father

Dederen (2000) points out, “The husband and father fulfills several important roles. The man functions as priest, provider, protector, parent, lover and friend” (p. 729). According to Boakye (2014), the first role of the husband is to head or lead his marriage. The husband can show leadership by his influence to be a good role model. He must be a servant-leader. The husband must also provide security to the wife and his children, if any. He must have mission and clear vision for his family. The husband must also take mutual decisions with the wife. It is the duty of the husband to promote spiritual development of his family.

The second role of a husband is to love his wife as his own body just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. This implies that the husband must be patient with his wife, show kindness and sympathy to her feelings and actions. He must not envy his wife but be proud of her achievements. The third role of a husband is to honor his wife. This means that practically, the husband must marry his wife properly. He must show to her that she is valuable to him. Boakye (2014) further states that a husband should always show appreciation for his wife's support in his endeavours, and thank her for all the services she renders, including sexual

intercourse. Again, the husband needs to celebrate his marriage by recognizing birthdays, wedding anniversaries, and other occasions worth celebrating (pp. 61-68).

### The Wife/Mother

Proverbs 12:4 says, “An excellent wife is the crown of her husband.” It stands to reason that if the home must have a head, it also must have a heart. A good wife is the heart of the family. Recent studies in marriage and family relationships (Dederen, 2000) indicate that the wife and mother’s role is to serve as a child bearer and nurturer. She is the homemaker and also a partner in the marriage (p. 731). Boakye (2014) states that the first role of a wife is to accept the leadership of her husband and submit to him as a believer in Christ. She can do this by showing respect to her husband. A wife must consult her husband when making serious decisions. She must praise her husband for his abilities. The wife must show to her husband that she needs him and their relationship is an interdependent one. Another practical way is for the wife to be the husband’s best friend and enjoy pleasing him. As a sign of courtesy, the wife must respect her husband both in the home and outside the home.

The second role of a wife is to be a helpmate. A wife must trust her husband by being honest and loyal to him. She must make time for her husband by making him the first priority ahead of her children, friends, extended family members and work. A wife can practically make her husband her cheer leader, keep up with his schedule and be the attractive woman for the husband to feel good. A wife must also take good care of her household by making the place clean, be a good cook, helping to improve the income of the family, and be wise in handling money matters. A wife must be in good health and show great interest in sexual activity with the husband. Lastly, Boakye (2014) states that a wife must live a Christian lifestyle that will cause her husband to admire her (pp. 69-76). “He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor

from the LORD. A woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised” (Prov 31).

### Mutual Expectations

Both the husband and the wife expect the marriage to go on “till death do them part.” The secret in any successful marital relationship is daily reliance on God, and being faithful to the marriage relationship. According to Melgosa and Melgosa (2011), the Creator-Man-Woman triangle as a form of marriage relationship must always be maintained. It was explained further that experience has irrefutably shown that couples who exercise faith and believe in God, by depending on Him, show higher rates of stability than those who lack this transcendental spiritual base (p. 52).

### **Red Flags in Life Partner Selection**

Many people who enter into serious intimate relationship do not anticipate that their friendship could end without a marriage ceremony. In this world, the reality is that some of the intimate relationships can break when one of the partners recognizes some dangerous signs. Those who fail to take positive action when the signals are clear that the marriage will end in divorce or will have serious challenges, but go ahead to marry stand the risk of failure later in life.

Van Pelt (2002c) highlights some dangerous signals that need consideration when a partner has to break a relationship that is contemplating on marriage. The author mentions the following dangerous signals which must be carefully analysed and decisions taken (pp. 82-95):

1. Ineffectively dealing with conflict: The ability of partners to resolve conflicts is more important than love for one another or whether they are compatible. People normally divorce because of their inability to manage conflicts rather than any other issue. Any sign on the part of a partner(s) that shows lack of inability to manage conflicts will affect the marriage relationship in future.

2. Heavy physical involvement: If there is excessive pressure for physical presence with the partner, one needs to ask questions, if in the absence of physical presence, the relationship can still survive.

When a couple is not married, and sex or other heavy physical intimacies dominate the relationship, it is time to break up and begin afresh with someone else to achieve a balance in the emotional, physical, and spiritual development of a relationship. (p. 86)

3. Conflicting goals and values: Human beings tend to live by their goals, values and belief systems.

If one is deeply committed to God and the other is not, if one desires to serve humankind in a mission field and the other wants to make a million dollars in business, their values and goals are so different that no amount of compromise or prayer can help them solve the multitude of problems they will encounter. (Van Pelt, 2002c, p. 87)

4. Abuse: If a partner has the habit of physically abusing the other partner, even if the abusive partner easily apologizes, it is a dangerous signal. “Make it clear early in a relationship that you will not tolerate put-downs or negative remarks. If your partner refuses to stop, get out of the relationship before your self-worth is destroyed” (Van Pelt, 2002c, p. 88).

5. Lack of spiritual oneness: If one partner is a committed Christian but the other is not, such a relationship will not produce a stable, satisfying and long lasting relationship. A warning goes for a Spirit-filled Christian not to marry a nominal churchgoer or one who has a double lifestyle, because there will be a lack of spiritual oneness. Paul gives a strong warning for believers not to marry unbelievers when he stated that “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor 6:14-15).

6. Separation from one another: Physical separation that prevents partners to know themselves well is a hinder to persons who want to decide accurately, whether a partner will be a good spouse in future or not. A single young adult must of necessity use the character of the other partner, to decide whether to engage in any serious

intimate relationship, which is likely to lead into marriage. “A couple separated by distance must either arrange to get together more frequently to test their relationship, or go together for a longer period of time” (Van Pelt, 2002c, p. 93).

7. Better than nothing relationship: Some relationships are good for nothing and the longer one stays in, the more one wastes precious time. “If you are in a relationship that does not help you feel good about yourself, but instead eats away your time and your feelings of self-worth, it becomes critical to end it” (Pelt, 2002c, p. 94).

People who are unsuccessful in the business of selecting a life partner must pray to God for both physical and spiritual strength, in order that they could overcome the past experience. Such people need to have full recovery so that they could start a new relationship with another person, but must be guided by their mistakes in order not to select a wrong life partner.

### **Summary**

The materials reviewed are not the exhaustive list of literature in connection with premarital education. The literature selected are mainly those with reference to the issues that have direct bearing on the scope of this study. This document is to help the young adults prepare adequately for their future marriages. Scholarly works on premarital education in this chapter reveal the necessary preparation towards marriage, which includes the selection of a marriage partner. In the selection of a life partner, the compatibility factor must be taken into consideration. The characteristics like the negotiable and non-negotiable items must take the center stage.

The knowledge and application of the 10 presentations will more likely promote successful marriages. It is therefore imperative for premarital education to be at the doorsteps of every single young adult.

The application of these premarital guidelines helped me greatly when I decided to marry at age 27. At that time, I was a soldier in the Ghana Army. I got convinced to use the principle of endogamy, and saw the need to apply premarital guidelines from the marriage books I read. I also had conversation with marriage counsellors. So together with prayers for God's direction, I finally married a 23-year-old Adventist lady who was a school teacher. She is a Ghanaian lady who at the time of marriage was a single young woman. Alice, my best half, was also waiting patiently for God's time to find an Adventist Christian young man to marry as a life-partner.

My first son also benefitted from this premarital education because he followed the counsels I shared with him. As a parent, pastor and family life counsellor, I shared my knowledge in premarital education with my son Nathanael, especially on how to select a compatible life partner. He understood the meaning and purpose of marriage, and the need to build a good personality before marriage. He took his studies seriously and graduated to become a medical doctor. He gained employment in one of the leading hospitals in Ghana before considering marriage. He read some marriage books and had some premarital education sessions before finally choosing a life-partner. Nathanael selected Rita as his life partner who was his mate at University of Ghana, Legon, in Accra, Ghana. They got married after some months into their dating and courtship relationship.

These works form the project initiative that is outlined in chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 4

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PREMARITAL EDUCATION SEMINAR

#### **Introduction**

As part of the heritage given to humanity of which Seventh-day Adventist church members also enjoy, marriage is an intimate human relationship that the young adults must study carefully, in order to establish stable and successful families. It is well known that families are the foundation of the Christian Church and the nation. Even though premarital education prepares the young generation for future marriages and must be considered as important part of the marriage journey, the young adults hardly get such knowledge from their parents, their religious leaders and the society at large. In some churches, pastors and elders engage the young adults in counselling sessions when they are about to marry. With little knowledge about marriage, the characteristics of a life partner to be selected, coupled with lack of proper preparation, the young adults become deficient in their knowledge to critically analyse the relationships they enter. It is said that lack of knowledge is a recipe for doing the wrong thing.

Lack of insight concerning a spouse's influence to achieve marital satisfaction may sometimes cause marital problems. What this paper seeks to do is to guide the single young adults as they journey on the way before they finally take the marriage vow. The singles need good knowledge that go beyond just fixing a date with



somebody or starting a courtship with a partner. The objective of this project is to develop premarital education material to be used by church members.

This chapter has three main sections. The first section highlights the development of the premarital education seminar from a Christian background. The initiative described here is based on research and biblical standards as explained in Chapter 2. The second section describes the presentations and teaching strategy on adequate preparation for marriage. The third section basically is about the administration of the pre- and post-survey on the topics selected, and the follow-up meetings with one-on-one interactions and small groups meetings.

### **Development of the Seminar**

The idea of working out a project for the young adults about the preparatory stages in marriage and the need for adequate preparation, was conceived some years ago. It all started when two young partners who were going to marry came to me for counselling. As an ordained minister who has served the church since year 2001, without any prepared material for the counsellor and the counselees, I started to search for information that could be used as a guide, for both the single young adults and myself as a family life educator. After teaching these premarital educative lessons to the young adults in some churches, quite a number of them started to apply these simple instructions in their steps towards marriage.

The Bible says marriage will go on until the end of the world.

As the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be (Jesus Christ's Second Advent). For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark. (Matt 24:37-38)

Marriage as the foundation for building families in the society will definitely occupy people's attention. Some research about the negative factors that have influenced marriage, have demoralized a sizable number of single young adults to

distaste marriage. However, the larger majority of the young adults desire to marry. As such, this chapter discusses the issues connected with the field of eligibles for marriage, as presented in the seminar. The pre-survey sought to find out what the participants knew about marriage, building a strong foundation for families, and the characteristics of choosing one's closest partner.

### **Content for Seminar**

According to Strong et al. (2011), "both the need for commonality and the distrust of outsiders urge people to marry individuals like themselves" (p. 272), or people they can be comfortable with. It is also true that "Endogamy and exogamy interact to limit the field of eligibles. The field is further limited by society's encouragement of homogamy, the tendency to choose a mate (partner) whose personal or group characteristics are similar to ours" (p. 272). I engaged some couples with various marital issues, and that provided me the opportunity to collect some information about the important things to consider before one marries. For example, research show that "those who marry from different religious backgrounds do have greater risks of marital unhappiness, and divorce than those from similar religious backgrounds" (p. 275). I have worked several years as a gospel worker in some churches, and the level of marital issues that come to the church leadership for redress is worth talking about. As the church seeks the salvation of her members, she must as a matter of importance, adopt some working strategies to engage the young adults or the singles as they plan for their future marriages.

In developing a premarital education seminar for the young adults, I considered the advantages the single adults could enjoy, as they meet and discuss such information among themselves. The parents also could have some literature to instruct

their grown-up children, who will ask questions relating to the relevance of one's religious faith before marriage, and the advantages to enjoy from non-marital sex.

The threat to this initiative that could happen is the lukewarm attitude of some people towards new things. But in the case of marital issues, the risk will be very high if nothing is done to combat the post-modern trend of rushing to marry. Both spiritually and socially, the single young adults who will understand this premarital education will be able to prepare for their future marriages. This is likely to relieve themselves, their parents, the church and the world at large of much troubles.

### **Presentations and Teaching Strategy**

The seminar started with an introduction of the need to conduct a premarital education in the church for the single young adults. This initiative was aimed at reaching a target audience of young adults between ages 20 and 35. The presentations were done for eight consecutive days with the first and second Sabbaths scheduled for two presentations each. There were 10 presentations namely: The meaning and purpose of marriage; Culture and its mating rituals; Wholistic maturity; Communication and conflict management; Compatibility or equally yoked; Enjoying life responsibly; In-laws and living arrangements; Authentic human sexuality and family planning; Gender roles and mutual expectations, and the Red flags in life partner selection.

Each presentation covered a period of 2 hours with the first 30 minutes designed for the actual presentation of the chosen topic. After the presentation, there was Question and Answer time for about 10 to 15 minutes, and then a short break. A period of 20 to 30 minutes allotted for a video showing a particular case study. Each presentation ended with an open discussion on the watched video as case study.

## **Divinely Designed: Meaning and Purpose of Marriage (Presentation 1)**

Each topic presentation began with a song and a prayer for God's blessings. The first topic centered on why God created a special relationship for human beings called marriage. This special human union started with a man and a woman in an exclusive intimate relationship, normally referred to as monogamous marriage. God expects marriages to last permanently, so when people develop this special relationship, their marital union must reach the highest standard expected of a successful marriage. After the marriage is sealed, the husband and the wife must always show appreciation for one another. Adam said this when he saw Eve: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken out of Man" (Gen 2:23). The basis of this special relationship makes certain things exclusive to them alone—like sexual activity. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Gen 2:24-25). Marriage therefore, includes detachment from one's family of origin and attachment to an individual, to a spouse to start a completely new family.

Jesus Christ affirmed this intimate relationship of marriage as a lifelong, loving relationship between a man and a woman, which could only be dissolved because of death or marital unfaithfulness. Jesus said "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matt 19:5). And since the first couple transitioned into a family, marriage has become the launching pad for single young adults, to leave their individual families to form their own. Grunlan (1999) states, "Marriage is a means of having regular companionship" (p. 75). "Two are better than one, because they have good reward for their labour" (Eccl 4:9). Marriages

promote companionship among couples.

Marriage is the foundation and security of society in general. In addition, the purpose of marriage is for procreation and socialization of children. It is considered as one relationship that has the capacity to fulfill some specific needs of human beings. The fulfilment of human needs become clear when the wife provides the food, and the husband irons the clothing. In the home, some physical and spiritual needs of a man can only be met by his wife and vice-versa. This supports the idea why God made marriage - for completeness. Marriage also serves as a spiritual nurture to prepare people for salvation. In confirming the importance of marriage, Paul raised some questions: “Do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?” (1 Cor 7:16). God purposed that marriage will last until one dies. “A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the LORD” (1 Cor 7:39). Apart from death and unfaithfulness, God said to Israel that He hates divorce (Mal 2:16). In fact, from the experiences of very successful marriages, divorce is not something the couples think of. Such partners enjoying long, lasting relationships and make up their minds to solve problems together. Couples who behave this which way, accommodating one another’s views, and do compromising where necessary.

### **Culture: Mating Rituals, Dating and Courtship (Presentation 2)**

In every society, there are some acceptable ways that young people are introduced into marriage. In Ghana, marriage is arranged in either the traditional way, the Christian way or the Islamic way. The families of the couple-to-be play major part in organizing marriages because it is believed that, the extended family has a

responsibility towards a successful marriage. And so, from the beginning of the process—making a choice of a life partner to the day of celebrating the marriage, parents, relatives, friends and one's religious associates play their part.

In the case of the arranged marriage, after one's parents accept a partner as a suitable candidate for marriage, the marriage preparations could go on if the young man or woman agrees with his parents' choice. In preparing for the marriage to be consummated, especially from the young man's family, they select some family members who take the initiative to make a marriage proposal to the single lady's family. With the individual's free choice, the man or woman consults the parents for approval. In some cases, if a woman admires a young man to be considered as a future husband, she may have to work through friends of the man or some influential people in the church or in the community, to get the young man to accept her proposal. In situations where the parents are not in agreement, it becomes difficult for the young adults to marry. Only few people are able to marry successfully without parental support. If both parents agree to the life partner selection, the families engage in some meetings to prepare the way for the marriage ceremony. Once the woman's family agrees to the proposal, the partners get the green light to start the marriage preparation, which automatically ushers in the courtship stage. At this stage, partners close the path of selecting a life partner or end the dating process.

### Stages in Courtship Relationships

Many people agree that friendship making or group dating is the beginning stage in many relationships. Meeting people of the opposite sexes in educational institutions, in a neighborhood, at social gatherings, during religious meetings and cultural functions, to interact is a fruitful experience that many people enjoy. As the young generation mingle with other people on one-on-one basis, and communicate

their feelings and goals in life, at the marriageable age one must be intentional to get acquainted with people of the opposite sex. So, for the youth in their early twenties or mid-twenties, it is a good practice to start communicating and making friends.

Van Pelt (2002c) outlines the various stages of dating and courtship. The friendship stage means that there is no one particular person who is in a serious relationship with the individual. From the friendship stage, a young adult must daily trust in the LORD God and acknowledge Him always, as God has promised to direct one's path (Prov 3:5-6). Since marriage has a spiritual component, a good spiritual connection with God will help the single young adult to select the best suitor. The single is to remain in touch with the friend(s) selected and continue the relationship to the next stage called casual dating. The casual stage is characterized by the two friends spending more time on each other and asking questions about one's family and background history. During this first few weeks, one needs to take notice of the other person's character—including how the individual relates to males and females in general. If there is more than one friend, the young adult must focus on selecting only one of them as a life partner.

The third stage of singles' relationships is called special dating. During this stage, a young adult must know some details about the other partner. Partners in this stage might have known themselves for not less than three months. Here one must be aware of the other's religious faith, age, educational background, profession or occupation, some likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, the friend's verbal and non-verbal communication skills, among others. During this stage, a single adult must decide if the relationship will continue further or not. It will be safer to end the relationship if there is an integrity crises or issues about compatibility. This is where partners need to tell their parents all they know about the other partner. The partners as friends must

arrange to visit each other's parents. During this same period, one must consult with a Christian counsellor or a family life educator to discuss his or her future marriage plans. After frankly discussing issues with one's parents and/or a counsellor, one should pray to God for a revelation if there is any hidden defect in the friend's lifestyle that can disturb the marriage in future. A medical examination to show the health conditions of the two friends is very important at this stage. If everything points to a successful marriage, then the process could continue but if not, the two partners must remain as ordinary friends.

The next stage begins the courtship period if a young adult's partner is accepted by one's parents. Now, it is assumed that the partners know more about themselves. At this stage, the partners commit themselves to establishing a marriage relationship. If they get the necessary parental support, having an on-going counseling sessions with a counsellor, they can promise themselves of marriage, all things being equal. The fifth stage which is a continuous process of courtship is called the pre-engagement stage. At this stage, a partner might have known the other partner for close to one year or more. Here the partners start to think about their plans for their future marriage, a possible date of the marriage ceremony, a small or big wedding, and officially inform one's religious denomination of their intention to marry.

It is difficult to break relationships or engagements but in various stages of courtship, if there is any major issue(s) that can generate a divorce in future, the partner who is not comfortable with the new developments can discuss with his or her parents, and a good marriage counselor for a possible break in the relationship.

According to White (2001b), the young adults must be careful and even if

an engagement has been entered into without a full understanding of the character of the one with whom you intend to unite, do not think that the engagement makes it a positive necessity for you to take upon yourself the marriage vow and link yourself for life to one whom you cannot love and respect. (p. 48)



She continues to say, “break the engagement before marriage than separate afterward, as many do” (p. 48). Partners need to know that if there is any issue that has the tendency to cause divorce in future, it would be advisable to break at the pre-engagement stage. Partners could move to the engagement stage or see themselves as ordinary friends not suitable to form a marriage union with one another.

Van Pelt (2002c) states that the engagement stage is where public announcement is made that a couple is about to marry. Family members, friends, church leadership and all those who matter in the process towards the marriage ceremony, must be consulted for their roles towards a successful marriage ceremony (pp. 49-58).

The courtship ends with the actual marriage consummated. It has been observed that partners who skip going through the various stages by jumping to the advanced phase of courtship (pre-engagement), and ignore the need to start from the friendship stage tend to have problem(s) called ‘rush-to-marry syndrome’. So, it is a best practice for partners to take time to prepare for marriage, and cooperate with God in selecting a life partner, and go through the courtship process.

### **Identity and Wholistic Maturity: Self-image and Self-esteem (Presentation 3)**

Self-image is explained as one’s view of a person’s own self. One’s self-image can be positive or negative. A positive self-image creates the awareness of a person’s strengths and potentials and the realization of one’s inabilities. Self-image is linked to an individual’s ability to talk and reflect on issues. However, if one feels and thinks in a negative way, it affects the individual’s self-image. By focusing on one’s own weaknesses or inabilities, a person can be described as having a negative self-image.

A single young adult who is preparing for marriage needs to work on his or her self-image. Improving one’s self-image takes some time and determination on the part

of the person with low self-image. According to Adu-Yeboah and Obiri-Yeboah (2008), the following suggestions are helpful in working on one's self-image:

1. Appreciate the personality God created you and have fellowship with a faith-community group.
2. Take notice and work on comments by family members, friends, and work associates.
3. Determine to change your attitude in the way you relate to others, and make sure your appearances in public places are presentable.
4. Work on your communication skills and endeavor to have positive influence on others.

Self-esteem is associated with one's maturity level. Self-esteem is different from self-image. "Self-esteem is based on how you see your worth as a human being" (p. 5). A person's self-esteem is developed throughout one's life time. An individual with a high sense of self-esteem has a positive view of oneself. The realization of self-esteem is a reflection of one's personality on how one thinks others see him or her—an assessment of one's sense of identity (pp. 5-6). Young adults need wholistic maturity as they grow in years and desire marriage. Persons preparing for marriage need to know the effects of both positive and negative self-esteem.

Young adults need to pursue a high sense of self-esteem by accepting responsibility for whatever action they take or whatever they say. There should be deliberate attempt to protect oneself from harm and danger and other social evils. Adu-Yeboah and Obiri-Yeboah (2008) reveal that people with positive self-esteem avoid the use of illicit drugs, people with bad influence, and shun away from non-marital sexual activity that could result in unwanted pregnancies, and sexually-transmitted diseases (pp. 5-8).

Again, people with positive self-esteem fight with determination to achieve success. Such individuals strive to relate well in their relationships. Young adults with positive self-esteem, pursue programs with the intention to have a career to support themselves economically for future life.

It is better for single young adults to work on their lifestyle in order to prevent the cultivation of low self-esteem. People with low self-esteem are not satisfied with themselves and sometimes engage in illicit drugs, develop problems with relatives and friends, and lack self-control. Such people normally choose to worry and experience depressive mood during certain periods of the day. So, young adults need to build positive self-esteem by learning to be realistic, work on their weaknesses and try to improve their strengths (pp. 5-6).

#### **Good Fight: Communication and Conflict Management (Presentation 4)**

According to Melgosa and Melgosa (2011), “Communication is undoubtedly the center of interpersonal relations” (p. 62). Communication is part and parcel of human life. People cannot live as normal creatures without it. It is through communication that conflicts are managed or resolved. Couples use it to exchange messages. Any message delivered is more than what is uttered orally. One must code his or her message and the receiver must use the same code to interpret. In some cases, the messages carry strong emotions, and one’s non-verbal actions must be observed to understand the message. The content of most messages has some corresponding ideas. Another important feature of sending and receiving messages depends on the level of communication between persons in a relationship (pp. 62-64).

In communicating with people, one must know the levels of communication for effective interaction. In their book, the Melgosa and Melgosa (2011) outlined these levels: The first level is the cliché conversation—only greetings. The next is the

factual information level which concentrate on giving information about people and events. The third level is personal ideas and judgement—a conversation with one's own ideas and assessment. The fourth is feelings and emotions—where a partner shares his or her true self. The fifth level is the personal commitment which is a deep form of communication, which is deep in standard and accept the other person (p. 67).

Strong et al. (2011) write, “When we communicate face-to-face, the messages we send and receive contain both verbal and nonverbal components. Verbal communication expresses the basic content of the message, whereas nonverbal communication reflects more of the relationship part of the message” (p. 223). There will definitely be communication between two or more people who interact on daily basis. Even when people keep silent, they are communicating. Communication has various forms including the use of oral, written, and body language. Some of the nonverbal communication includes eye contact, touching and the closeness of two or more people, whether they sit down or stand up. Life goes on because of the various aspects of communication.

In other to minimize conflict, barriers to communication must be reduced to the barest minimum. Self-disclosure helps to prevent conflict among partners and friends. Self-disclosure must be reciprocal between partners. It has been found that self-disclosure builds trust and if people refrain from it, there will be lack of trust. For effective communication, there must be feedback—a continuous process that involves the participants and their messages with the purpose of understanding issues among themselves. It is a fact that people cannot live without communication.

### Managing Conflicts

The best way of managing conflicts includes supporting one's partner by becoming an active listener, keeping focus on the topic under conversation, and

discussing solutions to problems or challenges. Strong et al. (2011) find that conflicts can be managed through negotiation in three ways: agreement as a gift, bargaining and coexistence (p. 254). People who stay in peace manage to resolve conflicts. They practice the act of forgiveness by reducing negative feelings, and develop increase in positive feelings towards the other person. Research has proven that forgiveness has a long term physical and mental benefits for the forgiving person. In fact, forgiveness is an essential part of married life and an important segment of efforts to restore trust and harmony, in a relationship after there is a transgression (p. 255).

### **Compatibility: Equally Yoked or Negotiable versus Non-negotiable Items (Presentation 5)**

Research shows that people who marry from similar backgrounds do achieve a higher level of marital success. When young adults see marriage as an important part of life, and so commit themselves to prepare adequately, that is a good beginning. Marriage depends on cooperation and teamwork. As such a male and a female who want to establish this relationship, must be persons who share common values. In order to secure emotional intimacy, marital satisfaction and spiritual connection with God, the couple must practice unity and oneness in life. Studies in the area of marriage (Dederen, 2000) reveal that “For the Christian, a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between partners who share a common faith” (p. 746).

The Bible supports the idea that partners must be compatible and equally yoked. In the marriage market, the single young adults are confronted with the choice of life partners. According to Strong et al. (2011), homogamy factors like race, ethnicity, religious faith, family background, education, occupation, age, and personality are the characteristics that have to be considered. The principles of both endogamy and

exogamy interact to limit the field of eligibles for the youth (p. 272). In order to find a suitor who is compatible and equally yoked, it is advisable to classify the characteristics for partner selection into two distinct groups: negotiable and non-negotiable items. The non-negotiable items are the factors associated with serious consequences when life partners are chosen, without deep consideration of the major factors that make or break marriages. These include: (a) personality and character traits, (b) religious faith, (c) age, and (d) one's attitude to work or occupation. These are important characteristics that people disregard to their own misery. The negotiable items are the factors that can be tolerated with the hope of future improvement or likely changes in status: (a) Socioeconomic level, (b) Educational background, (c) Residential propinquity, (d) Body structure and others.

In choosing a life partner, one's character must be considered as of prime importance. "Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For the two, He says shall be one flesh" (1 Cor 6:16). So, one's character and personality is a non-negotiable item that can seriously affect the future marriage. A show of good character will assure the young adult that the best marriageable partner has been selected.

Another non-negotiable item is one's religious faith. The LORD God warned the people of Israel not to intermarry with people who serve different gods. "Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me (God), to serve other gods" (Deut 7:3-4). The apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:14 says that "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers." So, the Bible condemns inter-faith marriages.

Paul cautions people to abstain from immoral practices, "I have written to you

not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, not even to eat with such a person” (1 Cor 5:11). A good character and religious faith are non-negotiable items, period. As such if one considers choosing a partner within the same religious faith, by eliminating those with the above-mentioned character defects, one can select a life partner who is a committed Christian, and somebody who is willing to live by the principles for successful marriage.

Age is another non-negotiable factor. Marriage is for grown-ups so young adults must reach the marriageable age in order to achieve some level of maturity. Adam and Eve were full grown young adults in the same age group. Their age difference was not more than ten years and not less than one day. Abraham was older than Sarah his wife, but it was not more than ten years. Research suggest that age difference between partners that is within five years is the best, within ten years is good but more than ten years, the gap must be considered critically because of incompatibility challenges.

The fourth non-negotiable item is one’s occupation and attitude to work—one’s ability to use hands and mind to achieve economic success. God in His commandment introduced a six-day attitude to work. The educational level of the person shows the type of work the individual will do. “Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh-day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work” (Exod 20:9). Single young adults need to work in order to sustain their marriages economically. “Go to the ant, you sluggard. Consider her ways and be wise which having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer and gathers her food in the harvest” (Prov 6:6-8). A diligent spouse “makes linen garments and sells them and supplies sashes for the merchants” (Prov 31:24). A lazy person or one who deals in narcotics, illicit drugs, engages in dangerous trade or works with corrupt

people cannot contribute to the success of one's marriage.

The negotiable items include different dimensions of socioeconomic status like family background and social class. With the level of increasing education, many people consider educational homogamy as strong support in choosing a life partner. Melgosa and Melgosa (2011) state, "Any relationship between two people includes an important intellectual component involving conversations, objectives and activities, which become more difficult when there are large differences between partners in terms of educational levels" (p. 29).

There is not adequate data showing the percentages of marriages between people of the same ethnic groups in Ghana. However, from observation, because the ethnic groups consider it safe to allow people to marry according to the principle of endogamy, and the culture here also accepts marriages among themselves, one may assume that the percentages will be on the high side. Strong et al. (2011) reveal that most marriages are between members of the same race, but there are those who go in for interracial marriages. The percentage of same race is between 95% and 98%. "Of nearly 55 million married couples in the United States in year 2000, 98% of them consisted of husbands and wives of the same race" (p. 272). Generally, it is safe to consider marrying from the same race and ethnicity. The negotiable items like proximity of dwelling places, physical attraction, and one's economic status or a partner's type of occupation are factors that can be carefully analyzed. Partners have the opportunity to know much of other person during the courtship period. If sharp differences arise, partners have the chance to decide either to marry or quit.

### **Enjoying Life Responsibly: Resource Management (Presentation 6)**

In order to enjoy married life responsibly, partners should plan to manage all



their resources well. Borkar (2013), explains management this way: “It is a process which utilizes resources in order to accomplish individual or family goals.

Management involves a process consisting of three steps: planning, implementing and evaluating the use of resources in order to attain desired goals.”

Marriage brings in a lot of life’s responsibilities. In marriage, money is important for the running of any family. Therefore, it is appropriate for partners to plan and manage all their resources well, including their human resources. A husband and wife as well as their children, if any, are the human resources in the family unit. Olson (2016) affirms that marriage works better when resources are tapped for the common goal of the family unit, and designed to accomplish individual goals. With Borkar’s (2013) explanations on management, the young adults planning to marry must find means of working and saving money for future use. When such young adults get married, they must utilize resources not selfishly, but in a loving way towards one’s spouse and children, in order to accomplish individual or family goals.

### Concept of Management

Borkar (2013) states that management is an “integral part of human life” since individuals or families always try to achieve various goals. She explains, “Most of the time, it is essential for family members to take wise decisions regarding education, career, marriage of family members, depending on their values and goals.” In her perception, two specific concepts regarding family management exist and they are the human concept and materialistic concept. There must be a balance between the two.

### Human Concept and Materialistic Concept

Borkar (2013) says that the human concept of management places emphasis and significance on the overall development of each individual in the family unit.

Therefore, the resources are made available to each member at a maximum use in order to meet various human needs. In this paradigm, the standards are usually adjusted many times on a situation-by-situation basis. On the other hand, the materialistic concept of home management emphasizes set standards, which must be met in order to improve quality of work, and achieve some higher levels of perfection in the home. In the home as compared to an organization, according to Robbins and Judge (2011) “When employees perceive that human resources management decisions and procedures are fair and satisfactory, they can be expected to repay the organization by forming positive attitudes towards it” (p. 615). It is true that if the individuals in the family are well motivated, they will contribute effectively and efficiently in improving the resources in the family for the benefit of all to enjoy.

#### **Genesis 2:24 versus the Fifth Commandment: In-Laws and Living Arrangements (Presentation 7)**

Marriage from God is the monogamous marriage. So, God through His prophet Moses said, “Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). The marriage union supports the physical leaving of the young couple from their parents to form a new family, or to establish their own home. This biblical injunction also allows the married partners to cleave together by having exclusive intimacy in sexual relationship.

The establishment of a new family by the married couple can sometimes bring in a possible conflict between the young couple and their parents, if they stay in the same apartment for a long time. The fifth Commandments says, “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you” (Exod 20:12). Whilst the Bible enjoins children to obey and respect their parents and other adults, the same Bible shows the way in obeying one’s

parents. “Children, obey your parents in the LORD” (Eph 6:1). Even though new couples are encouraged to live separately from their parents, couples must be aware that they enter into marriage with all four parents deeply imprinted on them. Family of origin influences, messages, attitudes, beliefs and values seep into our hearts and minds. Our perspective is shaped by family background, cultural heritage, religious persuasions, experiences in childhood, and parental and sibling relationships. Family dynamics will most often become part of every couple’s life experiences. Spouses who have good relationship with their parents and siblings enter marriage with a fairly clean slate, and little emotional baggage to bog them down. All partners bring with them recollections and experiences from their family of origin.

Living arrangements for would-be couples are necessary for their marital satisfaction and marital stability. It is appropriate for single young adults to find a living place that will help them to enjoy physical comfort, for themselves and the safety of their future children. A separate living home will release them from the burden of always depending on their parents.

### **Oneness: Healthy Intimacy and Family Planning (Presentation 8)**

God made a man and a woman who were joined together as husband and wife, with legitimate access to authentic human sexuality. The Bible states “Marriage is honourable among all, and the bed (sexuality) undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb 13:4). Men have different sexual organs from women. Men and women need to enjoy sexuality “to fulfil all righteousness” and to give glory to God. Therefore, it is a misnomer for human beings to have sex with animals, dead bodies, engage in sexual fantasies with non-animate objects, or with themselves by masturbating, or engaging in viewing pornographic materials.

For couples to enjoy themselves sexually, there must be mutual intimate loving relationship with one another. Human sexuality is part of human life and we develop it as social beings from formal and informal study. God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. By this order, human beings procreate through sexual activity with the penetration of an erected man's penis into a lubricated woman's vagina (coitus). This may or may not result in pregnancy. If there is conception, a child is delivered when there are no health complications. Problems associated with male or female reproduction system may result in infertility.

The marital relationship between a man and a woman is bonded by the desire of both partners to engage in sexual pleasure. "Because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband" (1 Cor 7:2). From a biblical point of view, human sexuality is not just a physical act. It involves the emotional, social, mental and spiritual dimensions of a person's life. The Bible through Paul asks some questions like: "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For the two shall become one flesh" (1 Cor 6:15-18). Non-marital sexual intercourse is a sin.

Sexuality brings the highest form of human connectedness in an exclusive intimate human relationship. Sexual activity supports God's idea of cementing a couple's relationship to become one flesh. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife and were not ashamed" (Gen 2:24-25). Human sexuality is God's special gift for men and women in covenanted marriages. Every young adult needs to know some important points about sex. According to Melgosa

and Melgosa (2011), the important points one needs to know are: (a) Genital differences and the reproduction systems, (b) Develop an authentic sexuality by understanding the sexual response cycle. Sexual intercourse is more than the positions couple adopt in any sexual activity. For sexual satisfaction, a spouse must adapt to the other partner's specific needs that are healthful. Couples need to plan and prepare for sex by making sexual encounters more refreshing (pp. 58-9).

Family planning is the act of using any method to defer pregnancy or avoid child bearing. This can be achieved by a natural or an artificial method. The natural method adopts an abstinence of sexual intercourse during some days before and after ovulation according to the woman's calendar cycle. An artificial method for birth control is directed or mostly performed with the help of health professionals. It is better for husbands and wives to deliberately plan their family size.

### **The Script: Gender Roles and Mutual Expectations (Presentation 9)**

Both the husband and the wife expect the marriage to go on "till death do them part." The secret in any successful marital relationship is daily reliance on God. Melgosa and Melgosa (2011) claim that the Creator-Man-Woman triangle must always be maintained in order to enjoy a stable and successful marriage (p. 52).

#### **The Husband/Father**

Information available (Dederen, 2000) supports the idea that, "the husband or father fulfills several important roles. The man functions as priest, provider, protector, parent, lover and friend" (p. 729). He heads or leads the family with his influence as a role model. As a servant-leader, the husband must provide security to the wife and his children, if any. He must have a clear direction for his family. The husband must take mutual decisions with the wife and also promote spiritual development of his family.

In his study, Boakye (2014) states that the second role of a husband is to love his wife as his own body just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. This implies that the husband must be patient with his wife, show kindness and be sympathetic to the wife's feelings and actions. He must not envy his wife, but be proud of her achievements (pp. 61-68). The husband's third role is to honor his wife by marrying her properly. The man must reveal how valuable the wife is to him through words and deeds. The appreciation by a husband for his wife's support and services, including sexual activity strengthens their oneness. Again, the husband needs to celebrate his marriage by recognizing birthdays, wedding anniversaries, and significant occasions (p. 66).

#### The Wife/Mother

Solomon says, "An excellent wife is the crown of her husband" (Prov 12:4). As the man is head of the home, so a good wife is the heart of the home. Studies in family relationships (Dederen, 2000) support the idea that a wife and mother's role is to serve as a child bearer and nurturer. She is the homemaker and a partner in the marriage (p. 731). Boakye (2014) also states that the wife's first role is to accept her husband as the leader and submit to him as a believer in Christ. She must respect her husband and consult him when taking any serious decision. The wife must love her husband as her best friend, and play her part in their interdependent relationship. She must enjoy pleasing him (p. 69).

With the second role as a helpmate, the woman must be honest and loyal to her husband. She must have time for the husband by making him the first priority ahead of her children, friends, extended family members and sometimes work. A wife must do all in her power to make her husband the leader he needs to be. She must keep up with his schedule and be an attractive woman. The wife must contribute to make the

house clean, be a good cook, help to improve the income of the family by doing some work. She must be wise in handling money matters. Good health practices will help her enjoy sexual activity with the husband (p. 75).

A wife must have a good spiritual relationship with God that will cause her husband to say: “He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD. A woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised” (Prov 31:10,30). Such valuable women show respect and kindness to their husbands and other people.

### **Red Flags (Presentation 10)**

In some situations, some partners in serious intimate relationship must break off and start a new relationship. It is true that breaking up any relationship is difficult to do, but it becomes so critical when there are some danger signs which can destroy the future marriage. The reality is that some of the intimate relationships can break when one of the partners recognizes some dangerous signals. It is advisable to take a firm decision not to continue a relationship that have strong weaknesses and bad signals, which will cause the marriage to end in divorce. Likewise, if a partner detects or experiences serious challenges in their relationship, that is the time a serious person has to decide to break the engagement.

Van Pelt (2002b) outlines some dangerous signals that a single young adult who is contemplating marriage must critically consider. Some of the dangerous signals are (pp. 62-64):

1. Extreme arguing and fighting where conversation about love is lip-service and not reflected in one's character.
2. Extreme physical involvement where a partner always wants to be present with the other partner, as if that person cannot live without the other partner. Some even demand sexual favours because of the extreme physical presence.

3. Conflicting goals and values, as well as different religious belief systems normally reveal that the partners are not compatible. Because human beings live according to their goals, values and religious beliefs, it will be difficult if partners continue to engage one another without any compromises.

4. Abuse either physically or verbally have one thing in common. The abusive person is only saying that he/she wants more than what the other partner is able to give. Abusive people tend not to be satisfied with the conduct of their partners. Such relationship must not continue.

5. When there is separation, there is physical absence from one another. Physical separation that prevents partners to know one another's character well is a hindrance. In a way, this physical distance prevents partners from critically examining the other partner to know if the future spouse will be a good one or not. A single young adult must use a partner's character to decide whether to engage in any serious relationship that will lead to marriage (pp. 62-64). Van Pelt (2002c) also suggests, "A couple separated by distance must either arrange to get together more frequently to test their relationship, or go together for a longer period of time" (p. 93).

6. Poor combination of Personalities. Every single adult must ask this question: Will I be better off if I continue with this relationship? What is the other partner bringing to make this relationship turn into an enjoying and satisfying marriage? If the answers to these questions are positive, then it may mean that the two personalities can adjust well to each other (Van Pelt, 2002b, p. 64).

If there is any single young adult who is not successful in the business of selecting a life partner, that person must not lose hope. The one must continue to look for God's guidance and consult good marriage counsellors. One must continue to pray to God for both physical and spiritual strength, so that he or she will be able to



overcome the past, and experience full recovery from the past break-ups. A single young adult can then start a new relationship, bearing in mind the mistakes from previous encounters.

### **Summary**

A premarital education seminar for the single young adults has the focus of helping the young adults to prepare adequately for their future marriages. The presentations included the selection of a marriage partner—the consideration of negotiable and non-negotiable items, the meaning and purpose of marriage and the cultural match-making rituals in marriage, as in the Ghanaian context. Other topics discussed were effective communication to manage conflicts, wholistic maturity involving self-image and self-esteem, and resource management in the home. The remaining topics discussed were separate living arrangements, and healthy sexuality among couples as a gift from God, gender roles for husbands and wives and when there are red flags in partner selection.

I personally benefited from the application of these premarital education guidelines before I decided to marry at age 27, whilst my wife was 23. I considered the principles of both endogamy and homogamy when I did not have much knowledge about premarital education. I saw the need to read marriage books, and also had contacts with two marriage counsellors. I understood the non-negotiable and negotiable items before choosing my spouse.

My motivation to conduct this premarital education seminar for the single young adults increased, when my first son followed these premarital lessons before he chose his wife. Again, a young couple who approached me for premarital education and counselling gave me food for thought. In addition, by observing challenges in couples' marriages, I saw the problems as a challenge in the ministry and I started

developing interest and passion for the family ministry.

### **Pre-Survey**

Before the start of the presentations and the teaching strategy to equip the single young adults with the premarital education materials, a pre-survey was conducted. This was to test the level of understanding the young adults have on each selected marriage presentation. There was a brief introductory remark to explain the entire seminar to the participants before the survey was administered. The pre-survey took five minutes to administer before the presentation during each session. The participants for the nightly presentations numbered between 90 and 95 singles. The respondents to the questionnaire were participants invited to Abuakwa Seventh-day Adventist church in Ghana. The Seminar started on the first Sabbath, through the week days until the second Sabbath. The eight-day long Premarital Education Seminar was well organized. The total number of Respondents were 90 during the pre-survey, but dropped to 89 during the administration of the post survey, which included 41 young men and 48 young women (Refer to Appendix C for the Pre- and the Post-Survey Questionnaires). Both the first and the second Sabbaths were used to cover four sessions. There was one session every evening from Sunday to Friday and the seminar ended on the second Sabbath evening.

### **Post-Survey**

After each premarital education session, the single young adults gave their responses to the questionnaire. The total respondents for the post-survey were 89, which comprised of 48 young ladies and 41 young men. It is important to note that all the participants were present throughout the eight (8) days of the seminar. The young adults had the opportunity to share their learning experiences after the

seminar. (Refer to Appendix C for Pre- and Post-Survey Questionnaires).

### **Follow-Up Meetings: One-on-One Basis and in Small Groups**

The follow-up meetings with the implementer were requested by individuals who needed personal interaction. The one-on-one encounters with the researcher were granted to those who needed further clarifications. The time for small group activities was used as review to discuss issues like (a) characteristics of a best life-partner, (b) the effective way of involving parents and church elders in making final decisions in the life partner selection, (c) improvement in one's communication skills, (d) the need for medical examinations, (e) and how to organize a simple wedding. The implementer took part in the small group meetings after the seminar.

### **Scoring and Data Analysis**

The questionnaire for this Premarital Education Seminar that was used for both the pre-survey and post-survey was drafted by the researcher to suit the data that were collected. The surveys were conducted at Abuakwa Seventh-day Adventist church, one of the largest churches in the Central Ghana Conference (CHGC) with a population of about 420 regular church members. The pre-survey questionnaire distributed were 100 copies during each session but 90 were answered. When the post-survey was administered after each session, 89 respondents submitted their response. The results were analyzed by using Statistical Package of Social Scientists (SPSS).

## CHAPTER 5

### NARRATIVE OF THE SEMINAR IMPLEMENTATION

#### **Introduction**

This chapter narrates the learnings and experiences gained by the participants after the project was implemented. It became clear that the single young adults needed guidelines or clear instructions on preparations towards marriage. During the lecture presentations, the young adults participated fully by asking and texting questions, contributing to discussion on the presentations, and gave their comments on the video clips that were selected as case studies. Compatibility issues concerning life partner selection, separate living apartment, communication and conflict management, gender roles and authentic human sexuality were part of the deliberations. The chapter is a description of the responses from participants, in both the pre-survey and the post-survey administration during the eight-day seminar.

This is a concise narrative of the precise chronological implementation of the premarital education seminar. The objective of this seminar was mainly to guide the young adults to have a good foundation for their future marriages, in order to avoid some of the serious challenges associated with marital relationships because people lack knowledge, or are ill-prepared towards marriage. This intervention emphasises the steps towards achieving the establishment of a strong marriage foundation, in reference to the Theological Reflection in chapter 2. The aim of the project implementer and researcher is to guide the young adults to do their part, to avoid situations that could possibly cause divorce cases in their future marriages. One of the

challenges that confront the young adults is their inability to obtain good reading materials to address the premarital education issues. As part of the solution, this project intervention will be turned into a book on premarital education for the single young adults. It can also serve as a reading material that parents, teachers, religious leaders and counsellors can use as guide in their teachings with the singles. The project implementer used eight days to finish the seminar.

**Pre-marital Education Seminar  
(March 12-19, 2016)**

Table 2

*Respondents in Pre-survey Administration Showing the Gender of Participants in the Premarital Education Seminar*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid MALE	41	45.6	45.6	45.6
FEMALE	49	54.4	54.4	100.0
Total	90	100.0	100.0	

A sample of the questionnaire was administered to 10 single young adults comprising of five men and five women who took between three and five minutes to give their responses. Upon the feedback from their responses, the same questionnaire was adopted for the seminar. The period for each day's seminar was two hours and it included the following items: (a) 5 minutes pre-survey (b) 25-30 minutes presentation of one selected topic; (c) 10-15 minutes questions and text messages; (d) 10-15 minutes snack or water break; (e) 20-30 minutes video case study; and (f) 20-30 minutes discussion on the case study (g) socializing to end each day's presentation.

What is involved in premarital education that makes it different from premarital counselling? Can one stay uninvolved in social activities and expect to receive his or her life partner from a vision or through dreams? What are the major factors that point to the selection of one's best life partner? At what marriageable age should one marry? Searching for answers to such questions by the youth brought them to the education seminar. The seminar was designed to prepare the young adults for marriage with the intention to equip them know the purpose and meaning of marriage, and all the needed preparation that go into making a successfully and satisfying relationship. At the end of each presentation, the same pre-survey questionnaire was used as the post-survey questionnaire, and was administered to the participants. Handouts of the 10 session presentations were given out to the participants.

### **Divinely Designed: Meaning and Purpose of Marriage**

It was observed that most of the young participants had some ideas about the topic: Divinely Designed: meaning and purpose of marriage. They showed their knowledge when they expressed their views after the presentation that God intentionally instituted the ordinance of marriage. The single young adults showed their interest in learning about the marriage relationship.

Table 3

*Pre-survey Responses to the Statement: People are More Likely to Marry Within the Same Social Class Because of the Principle of Endogamy and Homogamy*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	39	43.3	43.3	43.3
Agree	32	35.6	35.6	78.9
Don't know	7	7.8	7.8	86.7
Disagree	10	11.1	11.1	97.8
Strongly disagree	2	2.2	2.2	100.0
Total	90	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 shows the general results from the respondents when the pre-survey was administered. The statement in the pre-survey questionnaire was that: “People are more likely to marry within the same social class because of the principle of endogamy and homogamy.” Among the 90 participants, 71 respondents strongly agreed and agreed that people marry from similar background and values which represented 78.9%, while 12 respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed, which represented 13.3%.

During the break, one lady boldly asked this question: “Why is it that non-commitment to a marriage vow is not considered as part of the biblical reason for divorce?” She explained further that in some marriages, after some years into the marriage, a partner may choose to be unfaithful in money matters. An answer was given that seek to encourage the other faithful spouse to do everything in his or her power, both physically and spiritually to help save the marriage from collapse.

Another participant had this to say: “I think marriage between couples who

understand the meaning and purpose of marriage will live to enjoy long and lasting marital relationship. I promise to glorify God with my lifestyle in marriage.” The young adults in their comments confirmed their belief in monogamous marriage between a man and a woman, as they rejected homosexuality and lesbianism, the sexual union between same-sex partners for men and women respectively. It was agreed that people are free to make their own choices.

Another young man commented that he used to think that “women were subordinates to men, but I now know that God created men and women in unique ways, simply to complement one another.” The young man acknowledged his understanding of what the LORD God said: “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him” (Gen 2:18). One young lady asked a question and answered herself this way: “Why did God intentionally blessed marriage between a biological man and a biological woman? It stands to reason that without a male and a female union sexually, there will be no children. This Earth cannot exist without procreation.” It was agreed that there are blessings for marriages contracted in accordance with the instructions from the Holy Scriptures. The single young adults were made to understand that the standard of the marriage unity is that of the unity in the Godhead—God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.



Table 4

*Post-survey Responses to the Statement: People are More Likely to Marry Within the Same Social Class Because of the Principles of Endogamy and Homogamy*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strong agree	37	41.6	41.6	41.6
Agree	40	44.9	44.9	86.5
Don't know	0	0.0	0.0	86.5
Disagree	9	10.1	10.1	96.6
Strongly disagree	3	3.4	3.4	100.0
Total	89	100.0	100.0	

The responses to the post-survey questionnaires in Table 4 showed an improved understanding of marriage by the participants. This is so because 86.5% of the participants strongly agreed and agreed that it is advisable to marry from groups that have similar lifestyle and beliefs. However, there were 12 respondents who disagreed and strongly disagreed. During the break, a young man said, ‘God’s creation of marriage was for a specific purpose and the purpose cannot be fulfilled if the partners have different lifestyle with divergent theology’.

A lady remarked, “There must be a strong foundation before the marriage relationship is built on. Marriage is honourable and so husbands and wives will be honoured and blessed if they are united in lifestyle practises.” This statement is in line with Amos 3:3 that posed the question: Can two walk together, unless they are agreed? The results from the post-survey was an overwhelming support for marriages that are based on the principles of endogamy and homogamy.

## Culture: Mating Rituals, Dating and Courtship

Table 5

*Pre-survey Responses to the Statement: A Promise by a Partner to Marry You Within the First Few Days During the Dating Period Points to a Premature Marriage*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	11	12.2	12.2	12.2
Agree	17	18.9	18.9	31.1
Don't know	18	20.0	20.0	51.1
Disagree	34	37.8	37.8	88.9
Strongly disagree	10	11.1	11.1	100.0
Total	90	100.0	100.0	

In administering the pre-survey questionnaire, Table 5 shows that 44 respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the question. From the pre-survey questionnaire, it became evident that some of the young adults were willing to rush to marry if they felt that their partners love them. An early proposal for marriage was not a problem to these participants. 18 of the participants indicated that they “do not know” what to do in such situation. To a question why some want to propose marriage in the first few days, some answered that it tends to block other people from making proposals to their partners. From those who want to delay the proposal, they are of the view that since love grows, they hold a strong belief that if it is the plan of God for them to marry, no matter the length of time, the marriage union would come on. The conversations by the participants after the seminar presentation showed that there is a gap between the present-day youth and their older generation, concerning the understanding and practice of some cultural norms. It surfaced that the young

adults spend most of their time in schools and outside parental influence. It was revealed that the younger generation lack knowledge in cultural practices, regarding the initial stages towards marriage. The cultural rituals that are associated with any of the three types of marriage, namely traditional, Christian and Islam became part of the discussion after the presentation. However, concerning the two types of partner selection, very few single adults knew that there are two types of life partner selection for marriage, known as the “arranged marriage” and the “individual free choice marriage.” The trend changing so the young adults choose their own partners from different sources, and so are not aware of the arranged method by parents.

During the break, most of the participants indicated that they were not aware of the arranged marriage method by family members. Some participants were yet to inform their parents of their choice of partners as likely marriage partners. One lady asked if it is proper for a young adult to go ahead to marry, if one’s parent do not approve of the marriage union. The general agreement was that such marriage unions could face many challenges, from the beginning of the marriage till the time of some changes or compromises. There were some who had selected their preferred partners, and it came to light that such participants used the ‘individual free choice’ method. When asked what motivated them in their sole sourcing approach for selecting the life partners, some young adults answered that they used the length of friendship and physical attraction. Other participants responded that they relied on social class, age group and educational qualifications. The conservatives among the participants had religious faith as their top priority in selecting their partners.

Table 6

*Post-survey Responses to the Statement: A Promise by a Partner to Marry You Within the First Few Days During the Dating Period Points to a Premature Marriage*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	30	33.7	33.7	33.7
Agree	31	34.8	34.8	68.5
Don't know	0	0	0	68.5
Disagree	24	27.0	27.0	95.5
Strongly disagree	4	4.5	4.5	100.0
Total	89	100.0	100.0	

The interactions with the participants confirmed that some had gain understanding about the various stages in dating and courtship. From Table 6 when the post-survey was administered, a total of 61 respondents among the participants answered to show their dislike of premature marriage. Those who did not see anything wrong with early proposal leading to premature marriage were those who strongly disagreed and disagreed and their percentage stood at a total of 31.5%. This means that after the presentation, a little below one-third of the group were still interested in proposing or accepting proposal to early marriages. However, in simple terms, there were some changes in their knowledge because in the pre-survey, a probably figure of 68.9% whose responses included “do not know,” accepted the early marriage proposal leading to premature marriage. Now if this percentage reduces to 31.5%, it means that the presentation had influenced some changes. The learning that took place signifies that many of them adopted the view that it is not safe for an individual who desires marriage to another person, to propose marriage within the first few days, or to accept

such a proposal.

### **Identity and Wholistic Maturity: Self-image and Self-esteem**

Table 7

*Pre-survey Responses to the Statement: When a Partner Insists to Change the Other Spouse's Behaviour According to the Partner's Perceived Wishes, it is an Indicator of a Stable Marriage*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	16	17.8	17.8	17.8
Agree	17	18.9	18.9	36.7
Don't know	16	17.8	17.8	54.5
Disagree	30	33.3	33.3	87.8
Strongly disagree	11	12.2	12.2	100.0
Total	90	100.0	100.0	

In administering the pre-survey, the participants' level of maturity was put to the test with a question: "When a partner insists to change the other partner's behaviour according to the individual's perceived wishes, it is an indicator of a stable marriage." Table 7 shows that the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed as well as those who did not know totaled 54.5%. This group of respondents showed that they accept the prevailing situation where in some marriages, one of the couple tend to force the other partner to change religious faith or a particular lifestyle. One lady was not happy with the attitude of some husbands in her community who look down on their wives. She complained that some couples do not encourage their spouses to participate in social or marriage enrichment programs, which have the effect of improving one's self-image. What came out of the presentation was a reformed group

of young people who saw the need to do everything possible to improve their self-image, and develop ways of cultivating self-respect for themselves first as well as respect for other people.

Table 8

*Post-survey Responses to the Statement: When a Partner Insist to Change the Other Spouse's Behaviour According to the Partner's Perceived Wishes, it is an Indicator of a Stable Marriage*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	13	14.6	14.6	14.6
Agree	12	13.5	13.5	28.1
Don't know	1	1.1	1.1	29.2
Disagree	32	36.0	36.0	65.2
Strongly disagree	31	34.8	34.8	100.0
Total	89	100.0	100.0	

The feedback from the single young adults during one of the discussions revealed an admission that, partners who are considering getting married need to identify their own unique personalities, acquired through hereditary and cultivated tendencies. After the presentation, in some conversation with the young adults, there was a suggestion to ask the project implementer to consider designing some form of personality check for would-be couples to achieve the following: (a) To identify the reasons why each individual was differently designed by God, and (b) To help partners recognize the different approaches a partner can best adjust and accommodate the other partner without any of the partners feeling embarrassed. The participants agreed after the lecture presentation to nurture their self-image and have self-esteem for themselves. As one young man put it, “without proper self-esteem it

will be difficult to communicate effectively with other people.”

At the end of the day’s session, with reference to Table 8, when the post-survey was administered, the percentage that disagreed and strongly disagreed increased to 70.8% whilst those who in the pre-survey disagreed and strongly disagreed stood at 45.6%. This means that majority of the participants changed their view and resolved that a marriage partner need not force the other partner to change a particular way of living.

### **Good Fight: Communication and Conflict Management**

Table 9

*Pre-survey Responses to The Statement: Studies Suggest That Couples Who Achieve the Highest Level of Marital Satisfaction Tend to be More Open in Their Communication Than Those Who Are Not Happy*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	33	36.7	36.7	36.7
Agree	34	37.8	37.8	74.4
Don't know	9	10.0	10.0	84.4
Disagree	14	15.6	15.6	100.0
Total	90	100.0	100.0	

Many people recognize that communication is of vital importance to any relationship. This presentation gave the young participants the needed education in effective communication and skills in conflict resolution. To a question during the administration of the pre-survey questionnaire: “Studies suggest that couples who achieve the highest level of marital satisfaction tend to be more open in their communication than those who are not happy,” Table 9 shows that more than half of

the number present, 67 young adults which represents 74.4% strongly agreed and agreed that communication is essential for marital satisfaction. Less than 20% of the participants either responded “do not know” or disagreed. It was interesting to note that from the pre-survey, the young adults were interested to learn more in good communication, as they recognized this topic as an important key to marital success. In general, many people agree that communication is an integral part of human life. In 2004, Craig commented that “communicating with others is a wonderful gift, and it provides the key to understanding, friendship, and intimacy” (p. 71).

In the course of the presentation, during one of the breaks, a would-be couple who seem to have some challenges in their courtship relationship confronted me, with an inquiry about how long they could stay in a family apartment. They finally agreed to move out and settle in their own living place, as soon as their own apartment would be available for use. The presentation pointed out that there cannot be effective communication if the receiving end is not attentive or generating good listening habit. It was noted that both the verbal and non-verbal barriers to communication needed to be worked upon, to allow the free flow of any message with much understanding. The point was made that communication skills are learned, and improved with practise through daily interactions with people, and acquired also by gaining some experiences in conflict resolution. There were some participants who could not easily interact with the opposite sexes, and so intentionally, after the video presentation, the participants were divided into groups that included both males and females, to discuss the fundamentals of improving communication in any type of relationship.

The video presentation generally illustrated the need for people to use communication in the most efficient way, in order not to miss opportunities in employment, education, relationships and any other human interactions. An important



part of the video that need some comments is the unproductive nature of people with poor communication skills. A lady who missed an opportunity to marry a partner, simply because she failed to connect with her partner was a prominent feature of the video. The presentation had the objective of imparting knowledge on utilizing good communication skills to resolve issues, to meet challenges in a friendly way, and to use one's communication skills to improve relationships.

When the post-survey was administered, the results showed a clear evidence of learning and interest in the topic on the part of the participants. The responses from Table 10 below showed that those who associated good communication with marital success was on the high side. The young adults appreciated the need for improved communication skills, as a strong contributing factor for the success of marriages and achieving marital satisfaction. It was agreed that communication is needed daily.

Table 10

*Post-survey Responses to The Statement: Studies Suggest That Couples Who Achieve the Highest Level of Marital Satisfaction Tend to be More Open in Their Communication Than Those Who Are Not Happy*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	46	51.7	51.7	51.7
Agree	40	44.9	44.9	96.6
Don't know	1	1.1	1.1	97.8
Disagree	1	1.1	1.1	98.9
Strongly disagree	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
Total	89	100.0	100.0	

From Table 10, it is clear that those who strongly agreed and those who agreed were 96.6%. In this post-survey table, those who disagreed, strongly disagreed or

answered “I do not know” were less than 4%. This means that the participants realized that good communication is of vital importance to every human relationship, and specifically in the context of dating, courtship and marriage.

**Compatibility: Equally Yoked or Negotiable  
versus Non-negotiable Items**

As people grow from adolescent to young adulthood, the desire to discuss marriage issues become inevitable. One may question the best way to prepare the single young adults for marriage. There is not one straight answer. It is a collective effort to be done by the single adult, one’s family, studies in an academic setting, through conversations with peers and friends, studies in a religious environment and in the society where one lives and works. From the questions that were asked during the presentation, it came to light that quite a sizable number of the single young adults were comfortable with interfaith marriages and saw nothing wrong with that.

Table 11

*Pre-survey Responses to the Statement: Religious Faith Has Long Been a Significant Factor in Marital Choice and is Consistently Linked to Marital Quality and Stability*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	30	33.3	33.3	33.3
Agree	23	25.6	25.6	58.9
Don't know	11	12.2	12.2	71.1
Disagree	17	18.9	18.9	90.0
Strongly disagree	9	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	90	100.0	100.0	

Table 11 shows the results as an evidence when the pre-survey questionnaire was administered to the participants. To a question: “Religious faith has long been a

significant factor in marital choice and is consistently linked to marital quality and stability,” the total percentage of respondents who disagreed, strongly disagreed or answered “do not know” was equal to 41.1%. Those who responded agreed and strongly agreed equalled 58.9%. During the time for questions and text messages, some of the singles argued that some fellow Adventists had disappointed them in spite of promises to marry them. Even though the single young adults could not support their argument with any empirical data, some cited marriages between couples of different religious faiths that were successful without divorce cases. References were made to Bible quotations and Ellen G. White comments on interfaith marriages as forbidden by God. Mention was made in reference to research findings where couples in interfaith marriages did not enjoy marital satisfaction and stability. In fact, a video presentation for this session was very educative, and it contributed in a positive way to bring some understanding to effect changes. After the presentation, some perceived ideas of downplaying the significant role of marrying from the same religious faith were changed. These were revealed in the respondents’ feedback in the post-survey.

Table 12

*Post-survey Responses to The Statement: Religious Faith Has Long Been a Significant Factor in Marital Choice and is Consistently Linked to Marital Quality and Stability*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	39	43.8	43.8	43.8
Agree	40	44.9	44.9	88.7
Don't know	1	1.1	1.1	89.8
Disagree	7	7.9	7.9	97.7
Strongly disagree	2	2.3	2.3	100.0
Total	89	100.0	100.0	

At the end of the presentation when the post-survey was administered, the changes in their responses showed that learning had taken place. A young teacher who before the session had a different idea about interfaith marriages, later had a change of mind responded positively in a discussion. After post-survey he remarked that, “it makes sense to choose a life partner who shares the same religious faith and goals for marital success and satisfaction.” Of course, it was noted that religious faith is not the only measure for partner selection.

With this particular topic, the young adults expressed their frustration as some of them were very emotional about it, because they felt that the religious condition was delaying their marriage plans. So, it was not surprising that there were quite a sizable number of the participants who before the presentation, argued that the religious condition was not necessary. In their responses before the session to the questionnaire, 58.9% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed to this statement in the pre-survey response. However, from Table 12, the participants who strongly agreed or agreed that religious faith is a significant factor increased to 88.7% when the young adults responded to the same questionnaire in the post-survey evaluation. A young man wanted to know what was wrong with marrying a partner, and doing your best to win the spouse to your faith. The advantages of heeding to counsels from the Bible and Ellen White’s writings were stressed. There were quotes from research findings which also support the religious consideration as contributing to marital satisfaction. The main complaint of some participants was that they could not find their partners with similar beliefs and lifestyle in the Adventist church. This presentation provided a review of the first topic about marriage, divinely designed: meaning and purpose of marriage. The discussions on the presentation contributed to

impact good knowledge and understanding about marriage, which corrected some of the distorted views of the single young adults.

### **Enjoying Life Responsibly: Resource Management**

Table 13

*Pre-survey Responses to the Statement: Within the Family Structure, the Child(ren) and the Mother are Considered as Valuable Human Resources Who Need More Material Investment*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	25	27.8	27.8	27.8
Agree	26	28.9	28.9	56.7
Don't know	15	16.7	16.7	73.3
Disagree	20	22.2	22.2	95.6
Strongly disagree	4	4.4	4.4	100.0
Total	90	100.0	100.0	

Some of the questions the participants asked were about how the women who become nursing mothers could continue their education. Brief answers were given that provision should be made to relief the women for them to enjoy education. The responses they gave to the questionnaire that “Within the family structure, the child(ren) and the mother are considered as valuable human resources who need more material investment,” For the pre-survey, Table 13 shows that 56.7% of the participants agreed and strongly agreed that women and child(ren) must be educated, to give them the needed knowledge and skills, in order for them to work and gain some income. It was generally agreed that children should not be denied the access of going to school, to acquire the basic knowledge that every human being needs in

order to survive.

Table 14

*Post-survey Responses to the Statement: Within the Family Structure, the Child(ren) And the Mother are Considered as Valuable Human Resources Who Need More Material Investment*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	30	33.7	33.7	33.7
Agree	40	44.9	44.9	78.6
Don't know	1	1.1	1.1	79.7
Disagree	15	16.9	16.9	96.6
Strongly disagree	3	3.4	3.4	100.0
Total	89	100.0	100.0	

Table 14 shows that when the post-survey was administered, the respondents who strongly agreed and agreed increased to 78.6%. This is an increase from the pre-survey evaluation of 56.7%, and this explains the fact that the presentation produced some learning experiences. The respondents who disagreed and strongly disagreed reduced to show a change in the mentality of the young adults.

**Genesis 2:24 versus the Fifth Commandment: In-laws  
and Living Arrangement**

Table 15

*Pre-survey Responses to the Statement: Both the Social Pressures to Marry and the Necessity to Own a Separate Living Arrangement Have Greatly Increased the Young Adults' Desire for Marriage*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	22	24.4	24.4	24.4
Agree	20	22.2	22.2	46.6
Don't know	13	14.4	14.4	61.0
Disagree	24	26.7	26.7	87.7
Strongly disagree	11	12.2	12.2	100.0
Total	90	100.0	100.0	

It is the wish of newly married couples to find their own apartment to live in. The participants expressed their desire to have their separate apartments after they get married, because they will be establishing their own homes and families. Before the start of the day's session, Table 15 shows that when the pre-survey was administered, a total figure of 46.7% agreed and strongly agreed that "Both the social pressures to marry and the necessity to own a separate living arrangement have greatly increased the young adults' desire for marriage." The remaining respondents including those who strongly disagreed, who disagreed or answered "do not know" were 53.3%. In the lecture presentation, the leaving and cleaving aspects of Genesis 2:24 were explained. In the same way, the fifth commandment as recorded in Exodus 20:12 and Ephesians 6:1-3 were all part of the study. What came out during the time for discussion were two strong points the young adults raised. They argued that: (a) it is

mandatory for them to obey the word of God in Genesis 2:24 which enjoins them to leave their parents and cleave to their marital partners, and (b) after marriage the couples are uncomfortable to stay with their in-law parents, because they also want to establish their new family and enjoy their marital intimacy.

During the break, the participants engaged their colleagues in conversations on the possible and the best ways to make arrangements for a separate living apartment, when they are planning for their wedding. Those who anticipated a situation where newly-wedded couples will need the financial support of their parents before settling for their own apartments, were counselled not to depend on their parents for a long time. In general terms, after taking the marriage vow, many married couples are uncomfortable to stay in the same apartment with their in-laws. In most cases, grown-up children who marry need their independence from the elderly people, in order to manage their marriage and family life.

The presentation on separate living arrangements revealed some connections with one's economic status. The respondents who were employed or in good business were the first to talk about moving to stay at one's own apartment, supporting their argument with biblical quotations. They encouraged themselves to save in order to find the financial resources to enable them to rent their own apartment.



Table 16

*Post-survey Responses to The Statement: Both the Social Pressures to Marry and the Necessity to Own a Separate Living Arrangement Have Greatly Increased the Young Adults' Desire for Marriage*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	24	27.0	27.0	27.0
Agree	36	40.4	40.4	67.4
Don't know	1	1.1	1.1	68.5
Disagree	24	27.0	27.0	95.5
Strongly disagree	4	4.5	4.5	100.0
Total	89	100.0	100.0	

In administering the post-survey, Table 16 shows that the participants who agreed and strongly agreed to the questionnaire was 67.5%. This means that those who had a strong view that couples need to have their own living apartment had risen, while those who 'do not know', disagreed and strongly disagreed reduced to 32.5%. The respondents in the disagreement group could be the single young adults who needed some financial assistance. This fact came to light when the participants gave their responses after the presentation. At the end of the session, the conversation went on for some time as most of them discussed the need for young couples to make arrangement to have separate living apartment, even if it is in close proximity to their in-law parents, rather than staying in the same apartment that could cause some marital challenges.

### **Oneness: Healthy Sexual Intimacy and Family Planning**

Human sexuality has long been associated with intimate human relationships, and specifically in marriages where couples legally engage in sexual activity. Before the lecture presentation, a pre-survey was administered to the young adults that put their moral character to the test. The questionnaire was like this: “The advantages of non-marital sexual intercourse outweighs the disadvantages.” In Table 17, the participants who agreed and those who strongly agreed in the pre-survey were a total of 56.7%, whilst the participants who responded that they “do not know,” disagree and strongly disagreed was 43.3%.

Table 17

*Pre-survey Responses to the Statement: The Advantages of Non-marital Sexual Intercourse Outweighs the Disadvantages*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	31	34.5	34.5	34.5
Agree	20	22.2	22.2	56.7
Don't know	12	13.3	13.3	70.0
Disagree	18	20.0	20.0	90.0
Strongly disagree	9	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	90	100.0	100.0	

There was a near balance between those who appreciated the advantages of sexual activity before marriage and those who rejected any sexual activity before marriage, because of the several disadvantages associated with it. Among this group of single young adults, it came to light that some of them had knowledge about sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and had strong moral conviction to abstain from

premarital sex. The lecture focussed on tackling the upsurge of human sexuality among the young generation, with emphasis on highlighting some disadvantages and advantages about the issue surrounding non-marital sexual activity.

As it is with discussions on human sexuality, some did not speak out either for or against during the 30 minutes time for discussions. A video clip was part of the presentation and it contributed in a significant way, as many of them resolved to stay without any sexual contact or avoid sexually-related materials with friends. This change of mind came to light after the relevant information was given to the participants. It reflected also during the administration of the post-survey through the responses by the participants.

Table 18

*Post-survey Responses to the Statement: The Advantages of Non-marital Sexual Intercourse Outweighs the Disadvantages*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	14	15.7	15.7	15.7
Agree	9	10.1	10.1	25.8
Don't know	2	2.3	2.3	28.1
Disagree	33	37.1	37.1	65.2
Strongly disagree	31	34.8	34.8	100.0
Total	89	100.0	100.0	

At the end of the presentation when the post-survey was administered, Table 18 shows that the respondents who strongly disagreed and disagreed rose to 71.9%, but those who strongly agreed and agreed to non-marital sexual intercourse dropped to 25.8%. Here, the video presentation also helped to project the high risks involved with unsafe sexual activity. A participant confided in me that some singles engage in

sexual activities because of their association with friends who desire sex. Some of them resolved to commit their individual lives to reflect Christian standards.

### **The Script: Gender Roles and Mutual Expectations**

Table 19

*Pre-survey Responses to the Statement: Within the Marriage Relationship, Husbands and Wives are Relatively Equal in Their Household Roles and Authority*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	29	32.2	32.2	32.2
Agree	25	27.8	27.8	60.0
Don't know	5	5.6	5.6	65.6
Disagree	25	27.8	27.8	93.3
Strongly disagree	6	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	90	100.0	100.0	

The lecture presentation had the objective of helping would-be couples to know the responsibilities associated with marriage. Before the presentation, a pre-survey was administered on the participants which reads: “Within the marriage relationship, husbands and wives are relatively equal in their household roles and authority.” In Table 19 the respondents who agreed and those who strongly agreed were 60%, and those who disagreed, strongly disagreed and answered “do not know” were 40%. The reason for the 60% agreement before the presentation is that the single young adults are gradually changing their worldview to accept gender balance. In many Ghanaian homes, the women do many of the household activities. And because some of the young adults still have this mentality, the content of the presentation was designed to address this challenge to this target audience.

The lecture highlighted the roles of the husband/father and that of the wife/mother. Paul counsels from Eph 5:25-29 which encourage the husbands to cleanse, nourish and cherish their wives were selected. Husbands are to imitate Christ's love. The wife's role as a spouse and the admonitions from Eph 5:22-24 were used in the presentation. It was noted that the wife was to submit and respect the husband, in the same way a woman will possibly do for Jesus Christ in human form. Depending 5:21, there must be mutual submission from both the man and the woman.

Table 20

*Post-survey Responses to the Statement: Within the Marriage Relationship, Husbands and Wives are Relatively Equal in Their Household Roles and Authority*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	34	38.2	38.2	38.2
Agree	33	37.1	37.1	75.3
Don't know	2	2.3	2.3	77.6
Disagree	10	11.3	11.2	88.8
Strongly disagree	10	11.3	11.2	100.0
Total	89	100.0	100.0	

A video clip selected was very relevant to the presentation. At the end of the session, when the post-survey was administered, Table 20 shows that those who agreed and strongly agreed totalled 75.3%. But those who disagreed, strongly disagreed or answered 'do not know' reduced drastically to 24.7%. This shows that there were some learning experiences that influenced the participants.

### **Red Flags in Life Partner Selection**

In administering the pre-survey, the participants gave their responses to the

statement: “Breaking an engagement is a sign of unfinished business in the process of selecting a marriage partner.” Table 21 shows that the respondents who agreed and those who strongly agreed stood at 71.1%. In the course of the presentation, it was made clear that if a marriage proposal fails to materialize, such people should consider those break-ups in relationships as part of normal life, and begin afresh to search for other marriage partners. During one of the breaks, the project implementer heard stories of two friends who testified that they had been able to survive two previous broken engagements, which did not result in a marriage union. This situation is an unfinished life partner selection business.

Table 21

*Pre-survey Responses to the Statement: Breaking an Engagement is a Sign of Unfinished Business in the Process of Selecting a Marriage Partner*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	33	36.7	36.7	36.7
Agree	31	34.4	34.4	71.1
Don't know	8	8.9	8.9	80.0
Disagree	12	13.3	13.3	93.3
Strongly disagree	6	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	90	100.0	100.0	

The single young adults at Abuakwa Seventh-day Adventist church have interest in marrying, and some of them have seen evidences of failure in marriage relationships that results in divorce cases. From the responses shown in Table 21 to the statement: “Breaking an engagement is a sign of unfinished business in the process of selecting a marriage partner” about 71.1% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed. I realized that the respondents in this group were guided by numerous

relationship break-ups and unfaithfulness on the part of some partners. However, from their conversations, the singles were not interested in breaking their engagements, and were happy with the knowledge acquired which will help them in their selecting their partners. One man confessed that he can now select his best partner for marriage.

Table 22

*Post-survey Responses to the Statement: Breaking an Engagement is a Sign of Unfinished Business in the Process of Selecting a Marriage Partner*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	37	41.6	41.6	41.6
Agree	42	47.2	47.2	88.8
Don't know	0	0	0	0
Disagree	6	6.7	6.7	95.5
Strongly disagree	4	4.5	4.5	100.0
Total	89	100.0	100.0	

Table 22 shows the results from the post-survey questionnaire which indicated that 88.8% of the respondents understood that there could be situations which could possibly break an engagement. Less than 12% disagreed and strongly disagreed. The respondents to both the pre-survey and the post-survey questionnaires agreed that they had acquired some knowledge, and gave their feedback to evaluate their learning experiences during the premarital educational seminar. Throughout the period of the seminar, the participants willingly attended the program for eight consecutive days. The figures in Table 23 show the correct responses from the administration of both the pre-survey and the post-survey questionnaires as a form of evaluation.

### **Conclusion**

In order to show the positive effect of the premarital education presentations and the real impact on the single young adults, a final table (Table 23) which

summarizes the correct responses from the participants is shown. The results highlight in crystal clear figures showing the differences between the pre-survey and the post-survey responses, for each one of the 10 questionnaires. The table shows in percentage terms the respondents who got the correct answers during the administration of both the pre-survey and post-surveys questionnaires.

Table 23

*The Comparison Between the Pre-survey Results and the Post-survey Results in Percentages by Using the Respondents Who Answered Correctly*

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
Pre-survey %	78.9	31.1	45.6	74.4	58.9	56.7	46.7	30	60	71.1
Post-survey %	86.5	68.5	70.8	96.6	88.8	78.6	67.4	72	75.3	88.8
Difference in %	7.6	37.4	25.2	22.2	29.9	21.9	20.7	42	15.3	17.7

In the end, Table 23 shows that the seminar really had a great impact on the single young adults, because the respondents who answered correctly Q1- Q10 when the post-survey was administered, increased in percentage terms.

The focus of chapter 5 is the narration of how the project was implemented. The responses from the young adults to the presentations were very encouraging. Their comments reflected what they learned and the real issues of marriage preparation they experienced. The participants came to realized that the task of marriage preparation demands some time to choose a partner, time to know and study one's partner very well, and the general preparation for marriage which include saving financial resources. Throughout the seminar, it was realized that the most important thing the young adults could do as they start the marriage journey, is how to



select the best partner. The point was made that in order to find the best life partner, the single young adult must be the right partner himself or herself, and must cooperate with parents and obey God's word.

The premarital education seminar involved 90 young adults who were respondents from the beginning, but during the administration of the post-survey at the end of each day's presentation, the number of respondents was reduced to 89. The ages of the young adults who took part in the seminar ranges from 20 to 35. When the seminar was over, the researcher managed to collect some feedback from the single young adults. They gave their comments and suggestions. The main objective of the seminar was achieved because the feedback proved that the young adults gained some learning experiences from all the sessions.

## CHAPTER 6

### PROJECT EVALUATION AND LEARNINGS

#### **Summary of the Project Manuscript**

This project has the objective of helping the single young adults who had the desire to start the marriage journey on a strong foundation, by going through premarital education seminar at Abuakwa Seventh-day Adventist church in Ghana, West Africa. The participants were mainly young adults between the ages of 20 and 35, voluntarily attended all the presentations. The Premarital education seminar was designed with the young adults as the target audience. The teaching strategy for providing the premarital education included relevant videos, 10 lecture presentations, periods for questions or text messaging and time for discussions. The young adults were encouraged to make use of the knowledge learned by adopting them into practical life, in order to model the way for their junior brothers or sisters, and other young people who may need to learn from their experiences.

The presentation series included topics like: The meaning and purpose of marriage; culture and its mating rituals; wholistic maturity; communication and conflict management; compatibility or equally yoked; enjoying life responsibly; in-laws and living arrangements; authentic human sexuality and family planning; gender roles and mutual expectations, and red flags in partner selection. The knowledge acquired during the premarital education seminar equipped the single young adults to respond very well to the post-survey, when it was administered.

The 90 young adults who participated in the seminar showed their enthusiasm,

when they later read through the handouts that were given to them after the program. Through several calls to the project implementer, they gave their feedback as they expressed joy because of the change in lifestyle, and when they started applying the knowledge acquired. From the feedback and the post-seminar information collected, it was revealed that the singles will need premarital counselling to complete their marriage foundation plan.

### **Description of the Evaluation**

This part of the project is a description of how the data from the intervention in the previous chapter (chapter 5) was evaluated and interpreted, together with a report of the resulting conclusions and outcomes.

### **Evaluation Method**

This study used the qualitative method of evaluating the data collected through the administration of both the pre-survey and the post-survey questionnaires for the analysis. In addition, the implementer used the handouts prepared for the seminar and the data generated from the participants' responses.

### **Interpretation of Data (Chapter 5)**

The data collected during the administration of the pre-survey showed some challenges the young generation have, in matters relating to building a strong foundation for marriage. Some of the young adults were ignorant of their own cultural practices and there is the need for them to learn from their parents, teachers, and community leaders. During the seminar, it came to light that some of the young adults did not know the important items to be considered in preparing for marriage. In the course of the presentations, the implementer of the premarital education seminar had to explain the difference between the non-negotiable items and that of the negotiable

items, in the context of life partner selection to the participants. In simple terms, the lecture series systematically and intentionally guided the singles to plan towards their future marriages, by focusing on the major factors that motivate marriages to survive, before considering the minor items that are not too important, and which could be worked on later in life. The participants became aware of the minor issues that could be work on after the couples are settled in their intimate relationships. These minor issues were part of the negotiable items.

### **Conclusions Drawn From the Data (Chapter 5)**

The responses from the pre-survey showed that the young adults relied on conversations with friends, what they see on television and hear on the radio to make most of their decisions. These types of information are normally not the best teachings to promote healthy marriage and family life. The single young adults appreciated the need for them to have premarital education, so they could be aware of what should be done in starting the marriage journey. This group of young adults came to the seminar with good intentions of learning how to better manage their lives, with good beginnings from their marriage preparation.

The singles who attended the seminar with different parental background of religious beliefs initially challenged the principle of endogamy and non-negotiable items. However, those young adults left the seminar with better understanding about the need for couples to marry partners of similar religious faith and familiar background. It also came to light that some of the single young adults who harboured the worldview of rushing into marriage, with the excuse that one's partner is travelling outside one's country, had change of mind. A conclusion was drawn that would-be partners need not rush into marriage. The young adults recognized the need

not to rush into marriage and that during any stage of courtship, a young adult must at all times focus only on one partner.

Among these single young adults were those who did not see the necessity of renting a separate living apartment from that of their parents. The biblical injunction from Genesis 2:24 that newly-married couple must leave parents, and stay in separate living apartment was a challenge to their financial income. Such singles later realized that it was advisable for each partner to work, and financially support their marriages to overcome poverty.

In our part of the world, there is male dominance in many areas. The participants who held the initial belief that husbands and wives are not equal in marriage, had a different view about partners in marriage at the end of the seminar. The singles were clear on this point that men are the leaders in the marriage union, while the women are their assistants. Partners are helpmates in a teamwork.

Some participants came with challenges in not agreeing with their parents in areas of selecting their life partners. The young adults from homes with conservative parents, were struggling whether to agree with their parents to use the arranged method for partner selection, or go their own way and use the individual free choice method. At the end of the seminar, the singles had transforming lives that were made known with their resolve to cooperate with their parents, and determined to apply all the principles involved in life partner selection. The presentations encouraged the young adults to strive for successful and enjoyable marriage life.

### **Outcomes of the Intervention**

This project involved the young adults who voluntarily participated throughout the seminar. The pre-survey and the post-survey questionnaires, together with the video presentations, texting, questions and discussions among the

participants contributed tremendously towards the success of the premarital education seminar. From the feedback that came from the participants, it was realized that the single young adults were eager to put their learnings into practice, in order for them to start strong marriage foundations.

The second of the outcomes is my desire to work with the young generation by counselling and preparing them, to know how to start the marriage journey. As a result of this intervention, I have teamed up with another pastor to form a single meeting group, to continue the premarital education once every month.

The third outcome is the interest generated by the young adults who have resolved to start the marriage relationship, by cooperating with their parents to select their best life partners. I have seen that some of the young adults engage their partners for some time through the courtship stage, to the wedding ceremony in a longer period. The fourth outcome is that these single young adults who participated in the education seminar are displaying spiritual growth, abstaining from premarital sex, and are searching for jobs to earn income, before they finally engage the services of marriage counsellors in preparation for marriage.

### **Summary of Other Conclusions**

Apart from the summary of the intervention in chapter 5, there are brief summaries of Chapters 2, 3, and 4 that support the overall conclusions of the project intervention.

### **Theological Conclusions—Chapter 2**

Chapter 2 of this project paper is basically a theological reflection by considering the marriages of Isaac and Rebekah, and that of Samson and his Philistine wives, as recorded in the Bible. Specifically, Genesis 24 was used as part of the theology to prepare for the premarital education seminar. The theological foundation

for selecting a good life partner for marriage was highlighted. The Writings of Ellen G. White in guiding the single young adults towards marriage preparation were included. It was generally accepted that because marriage is a life-long, intimate relationship between a biological man and a biological woman, when this relationship grows into marital union, it can only break if there is death, adultery or infidelity.

The theology of this project document took into consideration the views of other Christian Theologians and Scholars. The theological reflections and principles of marriage that seek to prevent divorce cases were mentioned. Based on the theological reflections, the single young adults were counselled to plan and work with good Christian parents, from the friendship stages through the courtship process, until the final date of the marriage ceremony. It must be noted that the Bible has examples of marital relationships that stood the test of time, of which the young adults can take some lessons from.

This theological reflection revealed that any preparation towards marriage that rely on God, praying for God's direction in choosing a life partner, specifically asking God for sign(s) to accept or reject a marriage proposal, has a good beginning. It was emphasised that the single young adults needed more time, to have full knowledge of the character of the life partner selected. It was realized that many young people do not have any roadmap in selecting a life partner. Because of the emotional, physical, mental and spiritual consequences associated with divorce cases, premarital education was stressed as very important component of the marriage journey.

As part of the spiritual foundation, the young adults were encouraged to intentionally commit themselves to obeying the word of God, and abstain from sexual immoral practices. Theologically speaking, because converted Adventist young adults are God's people, they were encouraged do proper background checks on their

selected partners, go through medical examination, and attend premarital counselling sessions. The singles will need spiritual support and must team-up with well-balanced Christian parents and leaders, who will help them to prepare adequately for marriage. Before being joined together with their partners, parents must be contacted for their cooperation. From the *Holy Bible*, young man Isaac, Abraham and the servant worked together as a team in search of a life partner for Isaac.

### **Theoretical Conclusions—Chapter 3**

There was a good review of premarital education programs and their links to marital outcomes, which justify the need for premarital education for the single young adults. Research studies showing the impact of premarital education on marriages, marital stability and satisfaction enriched the seminar. The knowledge gained confirmed the researcher's conclusions that, it is better for an unmarried person to take the necessary step to find a partner, who will not disturb the marriage union in future, but exhibit true love from the heart and mind and not infatuation—fake love. The literature that were cited with focus on premarital education cautioned the single young adults to slow down, and not to rush into marriage. Most of the literature revealed some guiding principles for attaining satisfying marital unions. Some important characteristics for spouse selection, courtship and marriage preparation which cannot be overlooked were included. The young adults were supplied with literature that contain good knowledge of which, when they refuse to apply in their lives, will cause them to regret later in their marriage relationships.

The literature review supported the theoretical approach—the lecture presentations that included questions and answers, discussion on selected materials that promoted the idea of premarital education before counselling, as the best thing to do before choosing a life partner. The review considered the cultural rituals, partners'



compatibility in life partner selection, respecting in-laws and securing separate living apartment after marriage. The literature also explained the influences of human sexuality on marital stability and happiness.

The review from the social science area also highlighted the understanding of oneness through healthy sexual intimacy, gender roles and mutual expectations by would-be husbands and wives. These were studied as materials which relate to building a good marriage foundation. In the review, mention was made of divorce cases and their causes. Some factors that could result in divorce cases were enumerated as societal factors, demographic factors, life course factors, and family relationships. Because of the information gained by the review and the experiences of the writers, the literature presented in the chapter gave warnings against marrying partners of different religious beliefs and different lifestyles.

Some of the conclusions drawn included the consideration of marrying from the same age group, and one's social class. Marriage was projected to be an intimate relationship that also depends on financial stability. The literature reviewed suggested that the single young adults, contemplating to marry must acquire some skills, and the ability to work. In order to gain some income to sustain the establishment of a new family unit, the couple must work. There is some connection between this theoretical review (chapter 3) and the theological reflection (chapter 2) of this project document.

#### **Methodological Conclusions—Chapter 4**

After conducting the seminar for the single young adults, from my personal experiences in teaching the young adults about the steps towards marriage and its preparations, I came to the conclusion that this premarital education seminar must be organised regularly. After analysing the responses from the participants, the young

generation were counselled to consider the important issues in marriage, which need attention before any individual decides to marry.

In the course of developing the questionnaire for both the pre- and post-surveys, I combined the theological and theoretical insights gained from working on chapters 2 and 3. I also concluded that a qualitative method would be used for the intervention. It was decided that eight days will be used for the seminar, including two Sabbath days and the evenings of the remaining days. The single young adults who willingly participated in the seminar were between the ages of 20 and 35. In all, 90 young adults actively participated with exception of only one participant who was absent, during the administration of the post-survey.

### **Overarching Conclusions**

The conclusions drawn from Chapters 2, 3, and 4, excluding Chapter 1, and the conclusions from Chapter 5, the following overarching conclusions were taken from this project. The first positive impact of the premarital education which was talked about came from the young adults themselves who participated in the seminar. They accepted the teachings and requested that these presentations be conducted in the local churches regularly. It was their conviction that such teachings could help to promote healthy start for marriages. The presentations during the seminar emphasised the importance of the theological foundation, on which the marriage relationships are built, which must not be overlooked. It was noted that many young adults had the childish idea that, by going through the counselling sessions, some character defects could be changed in their partners. This idea is debatable and was challenged because not all the negative behaviour of a person will change during the counselling sessions. Therefore, the characteristics of selecting one's life partner was stressed as the needed

issue to start with. Therefore, it is advisable to choose a matured, diligent, loving and lovable, God-fearing partner, attractive and a person with good character.

The second conclusion is that the materials presented at the seminar can be used by parents, religious leaders and premarital counsellors, who have a part to play in the single young adults' preparations towards marriage. In the absence of enough reading materials which focus on premarital education for the single young adults, the older people can use the information in this document to teach the needed knowledge about marriage relationships with the young adults.

The third conclusion is that after the project, it was generally accepted by my fellow pastors and church members that the content of the premarital education is worth sharing. The traditional way of entering into marriage that a partner does not know the other partner's character well, was seen as a practice that needed immediate change. There is the need for parental support to the young adults, in order to motivate them to go ahead with the courtship process, before one makes a final decision to marry or not. Cooperation from a young adult's parents can confirm whether a marriage proposal has God's blessings. A decision to marry a partner or not was noted as a very important part of the courtship steps, when one prepares to build a strong foundation for any new marriage.

Finally, the idea of texting or asking questions, in addition to group discussions about the various presentations, gave the participants encouragement to fully enjoy the presentations. In their feedback comments, there was a suggestion for the project implementer to consider designing some form of personality check list, which could help young partners to know their compatibility status.

In summary, it was concluded that such rich premarital education materials should also be taught in the tertiary institutions and colleges, to the general public

where the target audience are mostly young adults, and also to religious leaders, parents and counsellors who normally educate people on marriage preparations.

### **Personal Transformation**

As a minister of the gospel, a teacher and family life educator, I was very happy to start a project on an aspect of marriage, especially in the area of educating the young ones the best way to start. In fact, I have to confess that right from the beginning of the project to the end, the research had a great impact on my own life. There are eight areas that brought changes which I would like to mention. The first one is that my passion for marriage and family life issues have increased tremendously. This manifested itself in the numerous books and materials I bought which have connections with marriage and family issues.

The second change has to do with grouping the young adults and working with them on regular basis. This is done by educating them on selected marriage topics and guiding them in choosing their best life partners, whilst they themselves aspire to be the right partners. Because of this desire, I have joined hands with another pastor to conduct a young adults' meeting class. We meet once every month to discuss topics that relate to building strong, enjoyable marital and family relationships in this changing world.

Thirdly, because of the knowledge I gained during this period, I was able to write a paper on "The Theological Foundation for Life Partner Selection." This paper was presented as part of a workshop lecture on July 21, 2017 during one of the sessions for the Adventist Conference on Family Research and Practice, organized at Andrews University at Berrien Springs in Michigan, USA. Really, this workshop paper helped me to research and I wrote on the most important characteristics in life partner selection, which have the support of the Holy Scriptures.

The fourth change is that between the year 2014 and 2017, I had the opportunity of travelling to the United States of America from Ghana every year, during the summer. As a Ghanaian pastor, I came in contact with people from different countries and states, and gained some experiences because of my interaction with students of different nationality. I also acquired knowledge and understanding by studying under good professors who taught me in class. This has greatly improved my personal lifestyle and competence to educate others.

The fifth change that has influenced my personal transformation is that my second born was a participant in the premarital education seminar. As the researcher and implementer of this seminar, the challenge was on me to apply the premarital lessons in my family. After the program, my son applied the knowledge he acquired during the seminar, and he is now married to a young Adventist lady. From the beginning of his marriage preparation to the day of his wedding, I played my role as a father and a counsellor. That in a way made the marriage relationship to have a good beginning and one with parental support.

The sixth change is that, there had been great improvement upon how I now conduct premarital counselling for couples preparing for marriage. A typical example is the way I work with couples during the counselling sessions. I am able to give them home work and assignments, and go through with them on how they are to manage their birth orders. In effect, I have improved on the way I conduct counselling sessions. I am able to guide couples in their preparations for marriage, and also offer guidelines in meeting challenges they are likely to face, and how to overcome them.

The seventh transformation is the change in my personal life. This Doctor of Ministry Program and the project have helped me to improve in my love to God, my wife and my children. As a result, there is much understanding in my marriage and

family life. My daily goal is to exercise mutual love and submission to my spouse. I am always practicing a lifestyle that is promoting a stable, satisfying and selfless intimate relationship in marriage. I enjoy teamwork with my wife by sharing love and experiences with others.

Finally, my wife and I have decided to serve as family life counsellors, and we have also started grand parenting our first grandson.

### **Recommendations**

After implementing this project on premarital education for the single young adults, the following recommendations are listed for further action and research.

1. There is the need to prepare materials that will help the young adults to build strong marriage foundation. This can be done through research and other teaching strategies.
2. The older people need to assist the young ones to find employment. This will help the young adults to get some financial resources before they decide to marry.
3. Parents, teachers and religious leaders must actively take their social responsibility to encourage the single young adults to plan well for marriage.
4. Religious leaders must help nurture the spirituality of the young ones in order to establish good characters, which will make them to be suitable partners.
5. Researchers can study the financial challenges that the young adults are likely to face before getting married and few years after marriage.
6. The church has to assist the young adults by supporting them with clear premarital instructions, especially organizing educative seminars on premarital issues at least once every quarter.
7. The church has to motivate the young adults to read and study good books on marriage and family life.

## **A Final Word**

One may inquire as to the need for teaching premarital education to the young adults, before they get serious about marriage. The enemy of God, Satan, is seriously waiting to destroy any marital relationships, and he is even happy if marriages do not start on solid theological foundation. Experiences have shown that if parents, teachers, religious leaders and marriage counsellors do not participate in the marital issues of the young adults, some young adults keep on changing the partners they select. Before the young adults go in for premarital counselling, there is the need for premarital education that will position the young adults to know how to build a stable and enjoyable marriage life. The singles need to read good books and literature that promote strong and successful marriages.

The church and the society in general can do their part to help the young adults to choose life partners who match with them, or are compatible with their lifestyle. In these last days, marriages are bound to face challenges that sometimes result in divorce cases if couples fail to manage conflicts well; and people of marriageable age do not start their marriages well.

I have the belief that when the single young adults effectively interact with their parents, teachers and religious leaders, and plan well for their future marriages, they will achieve success. With counsels from the Holy Scriptures, they will enjoy their future relationships with partners who also understand marriage.

APPENDIX A



Seventh-Day Adventist Church  
CENTRAL GHANA CONFERENCE  
Abuakwa-Kumasi

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JULY 6, 2015

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
ANDREWS UNIVERSITY  
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U.S.A

Dear Sir,

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT PROJECT WORK**

On behalf of Abuakwa Seventh Day Adventist Church in Ghana, I write to grant permission to **PASTOR DANIEL OPOKU-ADJEI** to conduct his project work entitled;

***“PROVIDING A PRE-MARITAL EDUCATION SEMINAR FOR THE SINGLE YOUNG ADULTS OF ABUAKWA SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN GHANA”***

According to him, the project focuses on the single young adults in the church from 20 to 35 years. The youth will be allowed to participate in this pre-marital educational seminar.

The church will cooperate to make this project a success.

Thank you.

Sincerely

PASTOR BENARD ADJARE

cc:

1. Pastor Daniel Opoku-Adjei
2. The Church Secretary, Abuakwa S.D.A Church.



December 14, 2015

Daniel Opoku-Adjei  
Tel: 00122169477589  
Email: [pasdan2005@yahoo.com](mailto:pasdan2005@yahoo.com)

**RE: APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**  
IRB Protocol #: 15-177      Application Type: Original      Dept.: Doctor of Ministry  
Review Category: Expedited      Action Taken: Approved      Advisor: David Penno  
Title: Providing a pre-marital education seminar for the single young adults of Abuakwa Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana.

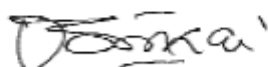
This letter is to advise you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your IRB application for research involving human subjects entitled: *"Providing a pre-marital education seminar for the single young adults of Abuakwa Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana"* IRB protocol number 15-177 under Expedited category. This approval is valid until December 14, 2016. If your research is not completed by the end of this period you must apply for an extension at least four weeks prior to the expiration date. We ask that you inform IRB whenever you complete your research. Please reference the protocol number in future correspondence regarding this study.

Any future changes (see IRB Handbook pages 10-11) made to the study design and/or consent form require prior approval from the IRB before such changes can be implemented. Please use the attached report form to request for modifications, extension and completion of your study.

While there appears to be no more than minimum risk with your study, should an incidence occur that results in a research-related adverse reaction and/or physical injury, (see IRB Handbook page 11) this must be reported immediately in writing to the IRB. Any project-related physical injury must also be reported immediately to the University physician, Dr. Reichert, by calling (269) 473-2222. Please feel free to contact our office if you have questions.

Best wishes in your research.

Sincerely



Mordekai Ongo  
Research Integrity & Compliance Officer

## APPENDIX B

### Andrews University

#### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I am conducting a research study as part of my Doctor of Ministry project, in partial fulfillment for my doctoral degree at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated.

**Research Title: PROVIDING A PRE-MARITAL EDUCATION SEMINAR FOR THE SINGLE YOUNG ADULTS OF ABUAKWA SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN GHANA.**

**Purpose of Study:** The purpose of this project is to develop, implement, and evaluate a premarital education ten-session seminar, designed to equip the single young adults of Abuakwa Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is to help them in their mate selection for a life-partner in their current pre-marital and future marital relationships. This project seeks to prepare the single young adults of this particular Ghanaian SDA church, with a biblical foundation and research findings concerning the Christian view on marriage and the need to prepare for it.

**Duration of participation in study:** I understand that I will be required to complete a survey which will take approximately 2 hours of my time

**Benefits:** Some of the benefits to the participants will be the informed knowledge they will acquire to help them to go into marriage on a strong biblical background.

**Risks:** Subjects will only come to the place of the Seminar and spent about two hours for the seminar.

**Voluntary Participation:** I have been informed that my participation in this study is completely voluntary. I am aware that there will be no penalty or loss of benefits I'm entitled to if I decide to cancel my participation in this study. And that there will be no cost to me for participating in this study

**Confidentiality:** I understand that my identity in this study will not be disclosed in any published document. And that researcher will keep the records on a password protected computer in my private room in my house. House.

**Contact:** I am aware that I can contact the supervisor of Dr. Romulus Chelbegean, 001-909-855-7830, or myself at 00233 202029120, [pasdan2005@yahoo.com](mailto:pasdan2005@yahoo.com) or [danielkofi599@gmail.com](mailto:danielkofi599@gmail.com) for answers to questions related to this study. I can also contact the Institutional Review Board at Andrews University at (269) 471-6361 or [irb@andrews.edu](mailto:irb@andrews.edu).

I have read the contents of this Consent and received verbal explanations to questions I had. My questions concerning this study have been answered satisfactorily. I hereby give my voluntary consent to participate in this study. I am fully aware that if I have any additional questions I can contact Pastor Daniel Opoku-Adjei on skype pasdan2005 or Daniel Opoku-Adjei, e-mail: pasdan2005@yahoo.com, or advisor on email: chelbegrandrews.edu

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature      (Subject)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Researcher Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

APPENDIX C

**PRE- & POST-SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES**

QUESTIONNAIRE ON PREMARITAL EDUCATION (CIRCLE YOUR ANSWER)

DATE OF BIRTH:.....SEX (M/F):.....

PLEASE, NO NAME. BE ASSURED THAT THE INFORMATION YOU GIVE OUT CANNOT BE TRACED TO YOU. THIS WILL BE USED AS PART OF RESEARCH WORK ON PREMARIATAL EDUCATION FOR SINGLE YOUNG ADULTS. THANKS.

**Q1.** People are more likely to marry within the same social class because of the principle of endogamy and homogamy.

(a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Don't know (d) Disagree (e) Strongly disagree

**Q2.** A promise by a partner to marry you within the first few days during the dating period points to a premature marriage.

(a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Don't know (d) Disagree (e) Strongly disagree

**Q3.** When a partner insists to change the other spouse's behaviour according to the partner's perceived wishes, it is an indicator of a stable marriage.

(a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Don't know (d) Disagree (e) Strongly disagree

**Q4.** Studies suggest that couples who achieve the highest level of marital satisfaction tend to be more open in their communication than those who are not happy.

(a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Don't know (d) Disagree (e) Strongly disagree

**Q5.** Religious faith has long been a significant factor in marital choice and is consistently linked to marital quality and stability.

(a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Don't know (d) Disagree (e) Strongly disagree

**Q6.** Within the family structure, the child(ren) and the mother are considered as valuable human resources who need more material investment.

(a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Don't know (d) Disagree (e) Strongly disagree

**Q7.** Both the social pressures to marry and the necessity to own a separate living arrangement have greatly increased the young adults' desire for marriage.

(a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Don't know (d) Disagree (e) Strongly disagree

**Q8.** The advantages of non-marital sexual intercourse outweigh the disadvantages.

(a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Don't know (d) Disagree (e) Strongly disagree

**Q9.** Within the marriage relationship, husbands and wives are relatively equal in their household roles and authority.

(a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Don't know (d) Disagree (e) Strongly disagree

**Q10.** Breaking an engagement is a sign of unfinished business in the process of selecting a marriage partner.

(a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Don't know (d) Disagree (e) Strongly disagree

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