

Modern Worldviews Of Marriage: Biblical Response

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Abstract: Marriage is an important institution set up by God, and is the foundation of a society and a nation. The ground on which marriage is founded should thus be firm. In the recent decades, however, many marriages have been founded based on worldviews that are unbiblical, unworthy and misleading, giving rise to societies with weak values. This explains why nations are disintegrating. The Biblical view of marriage is that God who is the founder also defines marriage and gives it purpose. Some common worldviews of marriage is seeing this institution as a “goldmine” to harvest resources; as “kingship,” where somebody enters to be served; as “laboratory” where people enter to test what works; or as “bush” where people hide. As a result of having wrong worldviews many marriages are struggling with permanence/contract challenge, headship/submission challenge, parenting challenge and financial challenges. To correct the problem, Christians need to turn back to the Biblical teachings of love, sacrifice, and submission. Furthermore, biblical guidance on staying together in marriage, parenting and financial management should be emphasized.

I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is an important institution instituted by God that give rise to a family. Family as a unit lays strong foundation in which a strong church and by extension a nation is built on. Many marriages however, are founded on wrong worldviews, and as a result, have become places to endure not places to enjoy. The influence of diverse worldview on marriage has affected how Christian marital challenges are dealt with. This paper therefore seeks to discuss ways on how marital challenges can be dealt with in a Christian perspective based on God’s word.

II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

A. WORLD VIEW

World view is our perspective on how we see things. Del Tacket defines world view as “the framework from which we view reality and make sense of life and the world.” This brings to the fore the fact that our response to different issues and things in life is different because of our world view. Wilbur asserts that world view has to do with how a person views and interprets what is happening in the world around him/her (Wilbur, 1996).

B. CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Marriage in itself is the coming together of a man and a woman, living together as husband and wife. However, Christian marriage has a different aspect that of being spiritual. Kamau, G, Kimathi, J, Osotsi, M, Kathii, H, Wafula, E, and Wagana, G. describes Christian marriage as having “...very deep spiritual significance. Man and woman are not only physical, they are also spiritual. Marriage unites two people into one body and one spirit.” This relationship will be work out basing on the teachings of Christ on marriage.

III. BIBLICAL VIEW ON MARRIAGE

Marriage is one of the earliest institutions to be established by God. The Bible in Genesis clearly explains how God instituted marriage on His own will. This marriage is clearly coming together of a man and a woman for the purpose of companionship and procreation. Donovan asserts that “From the beginning, marriage was God’s idea. It was not man’s idea. Marriage planned by God to meet the human need for companionship, love, mutual encouragement, practical help and sexual satisfaction.” (Donovan 1996, 277) Biblical view therefore stands on the fact that God is the author of marriage and has to be lived as he has established. Regent University Law Review indicates that the union of a man and

woman is covenantal and its benefits goes beyond the physical but to the unity of flesh and spirit. (Brewer 1999, 129) This Biblical marriage will always be accompanied by the leaving and cleaving factor, leading to “becoming one flesh and standing totally transparent to one’s spouse...” (Trent 1985, 31)

IV. COMMON WORLDVIEWS OF MARRIAGE

These common worldviews in marriage often arise because of views, some which are distorted, on what marriage is. Iruoma (2010, 105) observes that “many marriages today breakdown due to wrong motives in marriage...when the wind of change marriage blows those motives away; the marriage is left with nothing to sustain it, hence marriage breakdown.”

A. MARRIAGE AS A GOLDMINE

This is one of the views that some people have on marriage. Marriage as a money making enterprise. For example, a lady may decide to get married not because of the true love she has but because of wealth or money the man has or vice versa. Henry Kyeyune in Step Magazine (1991) quotes Sylvia Wanjiru who said this pertaining her husband, “He was good looking, he had a good job and was earning enough to take care of me. He had a house and was born again Christian!” These are assumptions some people have is that if one partner has money, then everything will be fine. These kinds of people do not aim for the permanence of marriage. They get married to be rich and when their need is satisfied, they get off the marriage. According to an article by Together4 Ever; a Marriage Mentoring System (2012), “Some people marry solely to improve their financial status and to escape their current financial situations.”

B. MARRIAGE AS KINGSHIP

This worldview of marriage is based on the need to be served. This world view to a large extend is being effected by men who feel they need to get married so as to be served. This is a view that when the man marries for example, the wife will be at his disposal to do as he wishes with her. The rendering of service has to be done without question. It is an authoritative marriage where the one in authority calls the shots. As a king is served without question, one of the marriage partners will assume the role of a servant serving the King (one assumed to be in authority), carrying orders as commanded and questions later. This worldview of marriage makes one partner to be disadvantaged.

C. MARRIAGE AS A LABORATORY

In this worldview, marriage is only a place to have children. Companionship is given a lesser or no importance at all. This can be the driving factor as to why some men marry more than one wife because his worldview of marriage is children- no children no marriage. Some communities in Kenya can only allow formal marriage to proceed if a lady has proven that she can bear children.

D. MARRIAGE AS A BUSH

This view sees marriage as a perfect place to hide from challenges of life. If one partner feels that he/she is pressed in life, he/she can decide to get married in order to be shelved from such challenges. In this kind of marriage one of the partner is innocent of such intention. The one with such intention knows that he/she is in that marriage just for a season and when the condition is favorable, he/she can find an excuse to opt out of it. This is a marriage of convenience or consolation.

V. PROBLEMS ARISING OUT OF WRONG WORLDVIEWS

A. CONTRACT OR PERMANENCE CHALLENGE

Traditionally and biblically, marriage has often been viewed as permanent. That is, when a man and a woman enters into marriage they know that it is for life and nothing can come in between. However, there are those who believe that marriage is not to be permanent (arising from the bush worldview). They believe that a contract has to be written to clearly stipulate the terms of the marriage and in this case, the time of its existence. Nancy Pearly calls this kind of marriage social contract theory where “we agree in a relationship when they meet our needs. Relationships are essentially redefined as product of enlightened self-interest. Thus if marriage relationship is not meeting my needs then I can choose to leave.” However, it is a fact in marriage that not all our needs will ever be met by our spouses; there will always be time of insufficiencies. The question therefore will be, if a man or a woman is seeking all of his/her needs to be met, how many ‘marriages’ will he/she have to enter to be satisfied? This kind of contract marriages will always cause havoc and uncertainty in marriage. Every spouse will be uncommitted because of the uncertainty of the future. Children will be affected too. According to Kimathi (1990), “marriage is a permanent affair which calls for total commitment. Commitment means concentrating on the wife you have. It means working on your marriage on daily basis.” Not for the husband to concentrate on the wife but also the wife to the husband. This permanence factor is what those who hold to this contract view object. They claim that permanence breeds boredom. They want a marriage where they can opt out of it at will with no strings attached. But such view has caused irreparable damages to emotions of many people. Therefore permanence has greater value than contractual. Permanence breeds confidence in your spouse, learning to accommodate, and forgiveness over each other’s short comings.

B. HEADSHIP AND SUBMISSION CHALLENGE

In the recent times the headship factor in marriage has becoming a point of contention. Who has a say in marriage? Is it the husband or wife or both? Traditionally, headship has always been viewed as a man’s domain. Some people cite this headship and submission as a challenge in marriage. Men have over time used this privilege of being the head to abuse their

wives. According to E. Baloyi (2008, 1) in giving a case study of South Africa says, "The most worrying issue is that even though the country is trying its best to integrate women in our society, some African Churches and Christian males are still dominating women, using some biblical passages to defend their actions." Man naturally feels that he is the one who is to provide leadership role and not vice versa largely because of his role as the provider of the family. When this authority is usurped from them they feel that manhood has been taken away from them. However, this is not a justification for a man to use this headship role for domination and abuse. However, in our current set up another challenge touching on headship and submission has risen: If a woman is well educated and earns more than the man, should she submit to the husband? This issue is where most of the contention emanates. This has often led to separations and in other situation divorce.

C. PARENTING CHALLENGE

There is a saying in Swahili "kuzaa si kazi, kazi ni kulea". That is, giving birth is easier compared to nurturing the children. This view comes into play when one partner views the marriage as a place to get children while the other is not for the view. Those holding to this worldview of marriage as a factory are always surprised to know the fact that marriage is not only "making children" but a place where concerted effort between husband and the wife is required. According to Sutton (2007), from the time children are born, how they talk and character are shaped by their parents whether knowingly or unknowingly. This therefore will often lead to hard times in nurturing because one partner would want to blame the other for the children born. This will lead to constant quarrelling and even separation.

D. FINANCIAL CHALLENGE

Since marriage was entered into purely for monetary terms, when hard times hit, the marriage is shaken. Together 4Ever: A marriage Mentoring System (2012) terms as "... the most selfish reason to marry someone. Marrying for financial gain is a recipe for disaster and will almost always result in divorce with serious ramifications. Money cannot buy love neither can it guarantee happiness." Though finance plays a crucial role in marriage it is never the foundation in which to lay your marriage on, it is "sinking sand." Things can happen in life that can destabilize your financial security and eventually the truth will come out. Iruoma (2010, 96) posits that "The choice is when an individual allows himself/herself to be influenced by those factors that are not binding, that would hardly meet with the test of time; those things that time could change easily..." Money can be one these temporary factors. Iruoma (2010, 97) goes on to state that " wrong choice could be called emotional love motivated by money, beauty, tallness, fatness, education, oration, talents, popularity., profession etc."

Dealing with the challenges affecting the Christian marriage.

VI. DEALING WITH THE WORLDVIEW PROBLEM

A. BIBLICAL TEACHINGS ON MARRIAGE

a. SACRIFICE

Genuine love always entails sacrifice. Hampton Kelly (2004) Bible.org 9/07/16 defines sacrifice in marriage as being "Sacrifice means I'm prepared to do those acts of kindness like watch the kids, clean the house on Tuesday and Thursday. That may free her to pursue things outside of our relationship like having her own business. That will help her grow in ways I couldn't. She will encounter new challenges and encounter blind spots in her life that I don't even see. She will have confrontation among her peers that will be different than what we experience within the marriage." Entering a marriage is sacrifice in itself. Your right to do something will often be shelved for the common good of your marriage. Sacrifice involves emptying ourselves of our position to be served but to serve. A husband can be having a right to be cooked for, but when the wife is sick or tired, that right ceases for the sake of serving his wife and children. Maintaining your right at such instances will serve to bring discord in marriage. In Ephesians 5:28, Apostle Paul exhorts husbands to "...love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself." This love entails sacrifice. Sacrificial love will make you do that which you would not have done.

b. LOVE

Love is the engine which keeps the marriage running. For two people from different backgrounds and characters to live together it takes love to unite. This love in marriage is far much deeper than the normal word love. This love is sacrificially oriented not materialistic. A man and a wife can get married not for pure love but love of money or other temporary things. This is what most of the worldview is based on. But Christian worldview is rooted in the sacrificial example of Christ loving the church (Ephesians 5:25). In this verse also, husbands are exhorted to love their wives unconditionally. In 1 Corinthians 13:1-8, Apostle Paul goes deeper in explaining what love is and what it entails. Paul list all characteristics of love: patient, kind, not envious, not proud, not rude, not self-seeking, not easily angered, keeps no records of wrong, trusts, hopes, perseveres and never fails. What view of love do we have as Christians? Is it in line with Paul's characteristics or do we have a distorted view? Christian marriages shall be entered to and will last only on the basis of true love.

c. SUBMISSION

Though the Bible has clearly outlined in Ephesians 5:21 the requirements of submission in marriage, many Christians are still struggling with this issue. For submission to occur, there must be an authority. Littleton (1988) defines the word head as relating to authority "the same word was used of a capstone or keystone in an arch, of a capital city, and of a rank in an organization. The "head" was he with whom the buck stopped. He had the final say, but he also had the final

responsibility.” Lou and Toni (1975,17) states that “Submission begins with obedience to God....and it brings spiritual power. Submission, simply stated, is this: In obedience to God, a wife accepts her place in the family under her husband to function in his responsibility with her full support, she permits him to make final decisions....if you are rebelling against your husband you are actually rebelling against God.” Other worldviews see this kind of submission as foolishness and subject to abuse. However, to a Christian couple, this is an imperative to implement in love. Husbands should not however celebrate their “lordship” over their wives. Getz (1977, 121) holds to the view that submission is not for women alone. Getz states “wives were not the only ones who were to practice submission. Paul, before exhorting wives to submit to their husbands, exhorted all believers to “submit to one another out reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21)” Therefore, this submission though directed to wives is not limited to the only but cuts across all believers and that include husbands too.

B. DEALING WITH MARRIAGE PROBLEMS

a. BIBLICAL GUIDANCE ON LIVING TOGETHER

Living together in marriage as husband and wife is to be enjoyed rather than to be endured. It is unfortunate that couples sometimes forced to be in marriage for the sake of children when the love that brought them together has been quenched. However, the initial plan of God for marriage was not so. In Genesis, God sees Adam as being lonely and in need of a helper, a companion who would make his life more enjoyable. Adam and Eve were not ashamed of each other rather they treasured one another. Their relationship was deemed to be lifelong and not contractual. In living together as a couple in marriage there is one overriding principle; covenant. According to Jeff, covenant is defined as “... a solemn, sacred agreement, in which persons bind themselves to obligations, swearing an oath and signifying in a ceremony the total commitment to fulfill the obligations. The promise is made under God’s watchful eye.” Marriage is also termed as a covenant because before a man and women come together as one, a sacred covenant has to be made publicly that they are going to live together. It is this covenant with its elements that will keep the marriage going no matter what happens. Jeff (2005, 99) describes the elements of a covenant as, (i) Intent – the partners entering into marriage are to be fully aware of what is required of each other. This means that obligations required of each couple should not be a surprise but that which was looked forward to in marriage. If a husband is to love, his love has to be unconditional and the husband is aware of this and ready to fulfill it. (ii) Vow –it is an enforcement of the vow. You swear that you live in your marriage each couple ready to fulfill his/her part without compulsion. However, it is unfortunate that many Christian couples even after swearing to live together for life, within no time they are separated. In this instance there is likelihood that they swore unknowingly of what is required of them. (iii) Presence of God –these swearing is done before God as witness of what we have pledged to fulfill to one another. (iv) Sign–this is what shows that you are going to live by what you have sworn. It

important to note that though living together is covenantal, it has to be lived out in love not just a command to be fulfilled.

b. BIBLICAL GUIDANCE ON PARENTING

There is always anticipation in every couple entering marriage that they are going to be blessed children. Iruoma (2010, 97) supports this view by saying that “one of the reasons and blessings of marriage is child bearing or procreation.” However, parenting has proved over the years that it requires commitment and hard work. The Bible exhorts parents to nurture their children in the way of the Lord. One such verse is Proverbs 22:6, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” In training a child, which is part of parenting Annie (n.d, 25) recommends that a child has to be taught in four areas: Teaching the word of God, teaching to obey, teaching them to work and teaching discipline. These are key areas in which the Bible teaches as part of biblical guidance. In Deuteronomy 6:7, God through Moses instructs parents to teach the word of to their children in whatever available opportunity. Not just when the time is convenient but every time. Simmons(2008, 22) in commending verses seven of Deuteronomy six says that “Notice we are to teach God’s word to our children throughout the day and wherever we go! In order to accomplish this effectively you need to be with your child as much as possible. It’s not just quality time together; it is quantity if you are going to be intentional in training your child.” However, in this first paced society, parents really ought to be intentional for this training in God’s word can easily slip out of hands. Few parents take time in the evening to study God’s word with their children. But the truth is that if our children are to receive training that will stand the test of time; it has to be in God’s word. The other aspect of training is to be obedient. Obedience as attested by Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:1 can bring a lot of blessings to our children. Are we teaching obedience as parents? Are our children living by the jungle law where they do as they wish irrespective of the laid down rules? As a way of showing his displeasure Piper (2013) on parenting, says “I am moved to write this by watching young children pay no attention to their parents’ request, with no consequences. Parents tell a child two or three times to sit or stop and come, or go, and after the third disobedience, they laughingly bribe the child.” This may be a common occurrence to many parents. The fact is the lives of our children is at stake when obedience is not taught. The aspect of training as stated by Annie (n.d, 25) is teaching children to work. Our children in order to be responsible people need to be taught the value of working hard. The book of Proverbs 6:6 is an instruction to be hard working. Apostle Paul in I Thessalonians 3:10 says that a person who not work must not eat. When we do not teach the children to work hard in life, whom will they rely on when they will be on their own?

c. BIBLICAL GUIDANCE ON FINANCE

The issue of money in marriage is a critical one. Most of things to be done in the family will revolve on finance. To eat is finance; to clothe finance; to school finance and other things. This calls for hard work. Huffman (1975, 49) says that

“In the economy of God there is no place for a lazy Christian.” This means that both the husband and wife must be ready to work. However, Biblically the person demanded to provide for the family is the husband; he has full mandate from God. 1 Timothy 5:8, describes a Christian husband who cannot provide for his family as being worse than a non-believer. Alice and Robert (1984, 137), holds to the view that “Earning a living is the fundamental responsibility of the husband, even though in our present culture millions of women work in order to supplement the family income, or because they desire some activity outside home.” Therefore, husbands must strengthen themselves to provide for the family. However management of money need to be discussed so as to bring freedom and not disunity in the family. (Alice & Robert 1984, 63).

V. CONCLUSION

Marriage and how its challenges are dealt with encompasses varied worldviews that may not provide the desired results. However, marital challenges can best be dealt with in a Christian perspective; that of relying on the word of God as a guide to stable marriage that can stand the storms of life. God’s word has got all the principles that are needed to make every marriage to fulfill the divine purpose of being a place of companionship and procreation devoid of separation or divorce that constantly come as a consequence emanating from the wrong marital views as discussed in this paper. It important to conclude with the words of Olukoya (2011) that “A bad marriage is a bad marriage, no matter what is done to give it a good coloring. If there be an area where people ought to look before they leap, it in the arena of marriage. Beloved, you can jump into marriage but you cannot jump out of it.” Therefore, having a right perspective in marriage is crucial as to entering into it.

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