

The Power of Relationship

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Bible quotes are from the King James Version unless otherwise stated.

Appreciation

On December 6th, I was praying and thanking God for a wonderful year.

I believed that the year was over. And it was a wonderful year.

Then the Lord said the year must not end without a completion of the book 'The Power of Relationship'.

That was a tough mandate. Time was too short.

I quickly got the material together and gave it to my beloved wife, Joke.

It is really interesting to me that she could labouriously get the manuscript ready in spite of all odds.

For this, I am very, very grateful.

Meanwhile, human words may never be adequate to express my appreciation to my Lord Jesus. He chose to relate with me. And that has filled my life with joy.

When other relationships failed, I found healing with Him.

Thank you Jesus.

Finally, I want to express appreciation to my friend Chimezie Onyebilanma whose relationship brought assistance to my work.

Dedication

I want to dedicate the book to my mother-in-law who is also a mother to me.

Mrs. Esther Fadesola Adeyekun

Your love, care and commitment makes life fulfilling. Thanks.

May you live long. Amen

Chapter 1: Created to Relate

A few years ago, around 1975, when I was in my first class in the Secondary School, I was in the hostel. I had a very interesting experience.

Our school was quite close to the forest. Therefore it was not unusual to see snakes around in the school. However, on this particular day, I was passing through a road that went in between tall grasses. Suddenly, a green snake ran across the road. We all (my friends and I) jumped backwards. As we recovered from the initial shock, we discovered that the snake had disappeared into the tall grass on the other side. As we began to move forward again, another green snake, bigger than the first emerged again. It was in hot pursuit of the first.

This time, we all ran.

An elderly man later explained to us why they were in pursuit of one another. He said snakes are hostile creatures. As soon as a snake discovers the presence of another one, a fight starts. And the fight is not over until one had succeeded in eliminating the other.

From the way God made snakes, a snake does not need the other. It does not mate to reproduce. It does not communicate. It does not dance; therefore it does not need drummers. It does not need anyone to scratch its back.

Although no person can exist without relationships, yet we need to prioritise and coordinate our relationships.

Meanwhile, the snake is an exception. It is different from most other creatures.

Human beings are different. None is made complete. God made men to be complementary to one another.

And the LORD God said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

Genesis 2:18

At the first creation of man, he was all encompassing. But God said he was not good enough. And the problem was that he was alone. He was an island. And God did not like it, because it was 'not good'.

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

Genesis 2:21-23

On that day God broke man up. He removed some things and placed them in the woman. That is the reason why none of them can be fulfilled alone. Human beings are creatures of relationship. And they must relate together.

I have seen a few men who live alone. And I have seen a few women who live alone. And I am certain that it is an aberration.

In the contrary, I have also seen people in great relationships. And it is obvious that it is paradise on earth. I am sure that is God's plan for every man.

A large number of people who walk naked on the street would not have degenerated to that if they had good relationships. Criminals might not exist if we had enduring, fulfilling relationships.

What a pleasant thing life could be when there are very good relationships.

I have discovered that we are products of relationships we have had. I have also discovered that the relationships we have today will affect our destiny tomorrow. The relationship we have today may affect our eternity permanently.

I have seen a few men who live alone. And I have seen a few women who live alone. And I am certain that it is an aberration.

In relationships, opposites tend to attract each other more. The male tends to enjoy the company of the female and vice versa.

Unfortunately, people who did not pay attention to this fact fell headlong into relationships. They did not wait to think or plan. Resultantly, their relationships turned into a shameful thin. Some others became objects of agony.

Unfortunately, the novice as a result begins to consider relationships as a 'no go' area. Those that venture at all, do so with fear and distrust. Meanwhile, fear and distrust are poisons to all relationships. Thus, those relationships failed before they began.

This is the reason why this subject is coming up for a discussion here.

Although no person can exist without relationships, yet we need to prioritise and coordinate our relationships. This is because an uncoordinated relationship is like an untamed wild horse. Whereas a coordinated relationship is like a trained horse. It can achieve so much.

Chapter 2: Relationship Involves Commitment

If there will be a good relationship, there must be a strong commitment to each other.

A man will give his best to a woman, if he is sure that she is committed to him. And I know several men who are riding cars purchased by their wife's money. Some even build houses with their wife's money. And no one knows about it. And of course, it is not unusual.

Each party can go far in caring for the other if there is a certainty of total commitment.

I know several couples that bought landed properties together as a couple. I know several others who keep joint accounts so they can pool resources together and achieve so much. The connection point is total commitment.

In February this year I was in Togo on mission outreaches. I visited the Northern part of the country among the Anufo people. As soon as I completed my work in that area, I moved towards Lome. I wanted to do some work in Zangera.

Then I called home. And I was told that my Resident Pastor just had a baby. Praise God. It was very good news. But the timing was difficult. If the baby had waited one week more. Then I would complete my work in Togo and return home.

I was in a dilemma. What was the best step for me? To return home and name the child? Or to continue my work and let the Senior Pastor name the child.

In taking my decision I considered the fact that a first child is born only once, which means that I won't have another time like this with my Resident Pastor, who considers me a father. And I remembered that long before my father was born, people have been doing God's work and long after me, they will continue. Even I will still do a lot of work for God. And by next year I will be back in Togo.

My Resident Pastor was so excited when he saw me at the naming ceremony. He knew the sacrifice that brought me to the naming. And that expanded the scope of our relationship. That is commitment.

Every form of relationship needs commitment to thrive. Marital relationship will only thrive on commitment.

For instance if a person is sick and admitted in the hospital, the spouse is expected to take care of her. If it involves money, he should spend it. If it involves care, he should care for her.

It will be strange for him to abandon her there and go after another woman.

For instance a woman who is terribly beaten everyday, who is denied the best of life, who is kept as a slave in the house, will definitely behave like a lunatic. And it won't be her fault.

Be committed to your spouse. Develop him/her to your taste. I know some spouses who gave so much in terms of money, time and support to the other to become what they are today. One of such people is a Professor today. Another is a top civil servant in Enugu State of Nigeria.

That is the dividend of commitment.

Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, do ye not serve my gods, nor worship the golden image, which I have set up?

Now if ye be ready that at what time ye shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a fiery burning furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Daniel 3:14-18

This is the example of commitment on the part of men to God. And it is great. Imagine the grave danger to the lives of these men. Yet, they held on to their faith. They wanted only the will of God to stand. They were ready to die rather than disobey God.

That is commitment to God.

I have discovered that everyone is a product of circumstances around them. Human development is often affected by experiences of life. In essence, your spouse is like that because of what you do to her.

Unfortunately though, most of us are not that committed to God. We are ready to follow God when He offers comfort. When things are difficult we abandon God and go after the way of the devil.

Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.

Job 13:15

We must hold on to God. Even when we don't understand what He is doing.

Some years ago, a woman cried to me. She narrated her terrible ordeal. Her own grown up son had develop the habit of beating her up everyday. She had fresh wounds all over her body. I asked her what she wanted me to do. And she explained that she wanted me to pray and help change her son. And her response gladdened my heart. She was committed to her son. Some other parent will immediately begin to curse the son. Some will drive the son away into the waiting hands of armed robbers.

Today that woman has become one of the most envied women in Nigeria. God answered her prayers and the son is reformed. He later travelled abroad and is doing extremely well. And he is providing for the same mother.

When a person you are relating with makes mistakes, do not abandon them. Give them a chance to correct their errors. It is human to err. Solving those problems together is commitment. And that is the driving force of our relationship.

Sometimes it is the parent who errs. Sometimes it is the leader who makes mistakes. We must be able to identify our error, apologise and move forward. And the one on the receiving end should be eager to get over it. Learn to forgive and forget.

If the wrong person will not accept his/her fault and apologise, why don't you give him the benefit of doubt. Forgive him/her still.

That is commitment.

I remember the case of a woman counselee in 1996. She came to me every week. And each time she came to my office she always started her discussion with this statement. 'Daddy, I am going'. And I always asked her where she was going. And she would say, 'I want to pack to my uncle'.

One day, I shocked her with a question. 'You have had 3 children for your husband, how many will you have for your uncle?'

Then I told her that she was the problem of her own marriage. How can you be living with a man, and you are always thinking of packing away. Thank God she got the message. It is now over 7 years and their marriage is still doing fine.

In relationships, you must destroy the exit door. It must not be a consideration at all.
That is commitment.

Chapter 3: Relationship is Responsibility

In June 1985, I started a courtship with my wife. At that time we were both students of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

She was very intelligent. And she was one of the best students in her class. But she was a student almost on probation. That means her Grade Point Average was close to 1.00. And it could go farther down, in which case she would be told to withdraw from the University.

I paid close attention to this and I saw she was a first class material. However some forces overwhelmed her and it could have a devastating end result.

People around her were calling her a failure. But I did not. I stood by her. We prayed together consistently. Then we read together. I encouraged and challenged her ability. And I planned with her. At the end of it, she made a Second Class – Lower Division, which was a miracle.

That is what relationship demands: responsibility. We must be responsible for one another.

Parents do so many things for children, not because they have to do it, but because of responsibility.

For instance, I had to flog my daughter sometime ago. It was a day no one in the family could forget. She neglected her academics. And she would not copy her notes. She was a truant in the class. And she did this in all her subjects. Obviously she was into bad gangs in the school. Her teachers tried to correct her. Her mother tried to correct her. She ignored all of them. And I was the person who had to do it.

I first made sure that I had overcome my anger. Then I locked the doors and picked up the cane. I flogged her in such a way that every child in the house thought I was going to kill her. But the purpose was achieved. Then the process of loving began thereafter.

He that spareth the rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Proverbs 13:24

Responsibility is duty. We all have duties in every relationship we keep.

For instance a very good friend of mine lost his wife. And he called me on phone. It was my wife who picked the phone because I was ministering at that time. When I finished, she told me about it.

Although, it was already very late in the night. I had to get to my friend immediately and access things. I had to be with him. That is what friendship means. It is responsibility.

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?

If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; not withstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body; what doth it profit?

Even so faith, if it be without works, is dead, being alone.

Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

You are responsible for your friend.

What about our children? It is our responsibility to take care of them. To love them. To give them the best care possible. And to give them the best education possible. It is our duty.

And society expects me to take care of my parents. Not just the human society. Even God expects that. It is my duty to ensure that my parents are cared for. They have done their duties to care for me, when I was young. Now that they have become aged, posterity will never forgive me, if I abandon them.

It is my responsibility to visit them as often as possible. I have even discovered that those visits are more important to them than the money. If they fall sick (which is not unusual in old age), I should take them to the hospital.

It is responsibility. It is relationship.

Also if I worship in a particular church, I should be involved in service in the church. I should have something I do for God. I should be glad to go to the house of my Father. I should consider it a thing of joy to do some work in the church. I should give in the church. And take part in any commanded assignment in the church. I should also speak for God.

It is my responsibility to God.

If I have a relationship with a Pastor as my spiritual leader, then I have a responsibility to listen to him. It is also my duty to take care of him materially. And God will hold me responsible if he fails in his calling just because of my lack. I should provide for him. So he can perform his own responsibilities to me.

Whenever it is Christmas, I have made it a personal duty to provide for (i) my biological parents (ii) my parents-in-law (iii) my spiritual parents.

That is a code of conduct I have developed for myself. And the bible is the base of this decision. And I follow these laws strictly.

For instance, I do not employ someone to do anything for me unless I have a way to pay the bills. Also, the wages must not fail at the right time.

Sometime ago, I wanted to do some work on the church site. I called a bricklayer to do the work. When he gave the bill, it was much higher than I budgeted for. Therefore I told him to leave the job till a later date. But he explained that we could pay him anytime we wanted; everyone does it.

But I would not do that. There is no law that says I must do the project today. What I cannot do today, I will do tomorrow. It is irresponsibility to employ a labourer you are not capable of maintaining.

I used to have a friend. But I cut off from him. He always spends beyond his means. He is perpetually in debt. He would invite big preachers to his small church. He would spend so much on hotel bills. And at the end of each programme, he was always in debt. He would hire a printer and could owe him for 3 years over just a job.

For God's sake, there is responsibility in relationship. Everyone has a duty. A labourer has the duty to complete your project just as you have a duty to pay him.

I can make a boast about that. There is no one who worked for me in the past or who is working for me today, who can claim that I owe him. I do not bite more than I can chew.

If you want that relationship to last, if you want to benefit from that relationship, then you need to identify your own responsibilities in the relationship and do it.

Relationship involves responsibility.

Relationship must be mutually beneficial.

Chapter 4: Relationship is Love

These things I command you, that ye love one another.

John 15:17

*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.
He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.
Whosoever hateth his brother is a murdered: and ye know that no murdered hath
eternal life abiding in him.*

1 John 3:14-15

*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a
resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.*

*If I have the gift of prophecy, and can fathom all mysteries, and all knowledge, and
if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.*

*If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to flames, but have not
love, I gain nothing.*

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

*It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily-angered, it does not keep a
record of wrongs.*

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

*Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are
tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.*

1 Corinthians 13:1-8 (NIV)

From verse 4 to verse 8 in the scripture quoted above, fifteen qualities of love were listed. If you want to build your relationships, you should pay attention to each of them. I will list them for your consideration.

(i) Love suffers long

This is a type of sacrifice. It means to be patient with our lover or friend. He may not be in the best state. And that may cause you a lot of heartaches. Bear it for as long as it takes.

George Mueller was a preacher. He also had an orphanage. He was very consistent with God. But one of his children despised him. The son was very hostile to his father and the gospel. But Mueller continued to love his son. The more the son stayed away from the father, the more the father prayed for him.

He suffered until he died. When the son was told about the demise of his father, he broke down and wept uncontrollably. Then he gave his life to Christ.

(ii) Love is Kind

We must be kind in our relationships. It is not kindness for a man to beat up his wife. Neither is it kindness to divulge the secrets of someone you are in relationship with. Look at the example of Joseph in the bible.

Now the birth of Jesus was in this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child of the Holy Ghost.

Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

Matthew 1:18-19

Some men will insist that such a woman who was found to be pregnant be stoned to death. He had a right under the law of Moses to do that. But Joseph was kind to Mary. He did not want to expose her to ridicule.

If our relationships will become what they should be, we need kindness towards one another.

(iii) Love envies not.

If you want to develop relationships you will clear envy from your heart. That is because envy is the twin brother of hatred. They travel together. And you cannot develop a relationship with someone you hate.

The problem in the house of Jacob started with envy and it grew into hatred. When Jacob bought the coat of many colours for Joseph, the other brothers envied him. As he received all the love of their father, all his brothers envied him the more.

As soon as they had an opportunity, they eliminated him.

Your friend may make more progress than you do. Leave envy out.

A husband and his wife can be in the same kind of job. And the wife is making progress well above the husband. Such a woman will need a lot of humility to maintain her relationship. Else she will end up with progress in the career and failure in the home.

(iv) Love does not boast

Boasting is not the way of love. And relationships do not grow by boasting at each other. As a matter of fact comparison is a dangerous game. God hates it. And relationship abhors it.

(v) Love is not proud

As one person makes progress over and above the other, he has to be careful. Life is an interesting place. Many times the rate of progress is not equal.

A husband and his wife can be in the same kind of job. And the wife making progress well above the husband. Such a woman will need a lot of humility to maintain her relationship. Else she will end up with progress in the career and failure in the home.

Unfortunately though, most times the party making progress is not proud, nor boastful, it is the one at the lower ebb that is over-reactive.

(vi) Love is not rude

No, not at all. If you love a person you will not be rude to him or her. Backbiting is rude. Beating one another is rude. Raping is rude. Nagging is rude.

A staff who insults his boss, should not be surprised if he/she receives the boot.

I am a strong preacher against wife beating. But I wonder about so many Christian women who are rude to their husbands. You do not need to wait until he beats you before you give him his honour.

A man once told me that he took permission from God to give his wife a dirty slap. Of course that is wrong. But nagging, shouting and husband rough-handling is equally rude.

(vii) Love is not self-seeking

Love considers the other party first. If your relationship will work, you must be eager to see the progress of your friend.

A man should not stop his wife's career because she can make more progress than himself.

Each party should be eager to apologise to the other when they misunderstand each other.

I remember an experience in my marriage. In 1993, we both travelled to Benin to take part in the wedding of a very good friend. During the reception, both of us had a time of discussion with some old friends. Then we left Benin.

On our way, I suddenly observed that my wife was unusually quiet. And I asked what the matter was. I was really shocked when she started crying. She said I insulted her in Benin. Apparently, I had made a comment that she misunderstood.

Initially I tried to defend myself. But I realised that that was not the correct thing to do. Whether I was actually wrong or not, is not the issue. The problem is that my sister has something against me.

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Matthew 5:23-24

I apologised to her, and our relationship became stronger.

(viii) Love is not easily angered

It will be foolish to assume that if your relationship is in order, you will not have experiences of anger. As a matter of fact, there are occasions when an individual is angry with himself. How much more another person?

Meanwhile, you need to develop the attitude of overlooking faults. Learn to give your friend the benefit of doubt.

You may be annoyed with your friend, but you must never get to a point when you take a decision based on anger.

Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

Neither give place to the devil.

Ephesians 4:26-27

(ix) Love does not keep records of wrongs

About 17 years ago, I had to intervene in settling a quarrel between a man and his wife. At that time, their marriage was about twenty-five years old.

Unfortunately, the rift was so bad. And it was really unsolvable for all. Then I called the woman aside and asked her why she was proving so difficult. Then the real problem manifested. Her eyes were red with tears. She said, 'that man is a useless man. 20 years ago, he abandoned me and impregnated a girl. Three years later he married her. Although that one has left him now. Now that no one is interested in him, he now wants a loving wife here. I can never forgive him.'

Unfortunately some of our diaries only record wrongs. It is dangerous. The way of God is the way of forgiveness.

*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you:
But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly father forgive you.*

Matthew 6:14-15

Although it is compulsory to communicate our feelings, yet we must be fast to forgive. It may not be easy. But if it was not possible, God will not ask us to do it. You are not God. Do not play God. It is human to err.

(x) Love does not delight in evil

How do you react when a bad thing happens to a person you are in relationship with? Even in the hidden places. You should not be delighted. Sometimes, the bad thing may be as a result of failure of the person in question to listen to advice. Yet it is devilish to rejoice at evil. Even with your enemies.

Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth:

Proverbs 24:17

And whenever someone has a breakthrough around you, you should celebrate with him. If you want to keep relationships, you must be eager to celebrate every progress around you. Not the fake kind of human celebrations. But genuine celebration from the heart.

(xi) Love protects

The whole beauty of relationship is that it protects.

Look at the story of David and Jonathan. The life of David was in danger and Jonathan was positioned to help with information. And that was exactly what he did.

And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept with one another, until David exceeded.

And Jonathan said unto David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed forever. And he arose and departed and Jonathan went into the city.

1 Samuel 20:41-42

Another person who protected David was his wife Michal.

Saul also sent, messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to night, to morrow thou shalt be slain.

So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped.

And Michal took an image, and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth.

And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He is sick.

And Saul sent messengers again to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him.

And when the messengers were come in, behold, there was an image in the bed, with a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster.

1 Samuel 19:11-16

I guess that that was one of the reasons why David could not forget Michal.

That is the reason why a number of young people can never really forgive their parents who failed to protect them at the right time of need.

(xii) Love trusts

There is no relationship without trust. Both of you must trust one another. Parents should trust their children. The children should trust their parents. Lovers should be able to trust each other. Ministers should trust the laity and the laity should be able to trust the clergy.

I remember praying so hard for hours for a woman. Then the Lord told me some information about the issue. When I told her, I received a rude shock when she said it was not correct. It did not tally with what another prophet had told her. She needed many prophets because she did not trust a minister. And that is why relationships do not last. No one trusts the other. Unfortunately, she later regretted her conclusion.

Begin to trust.

Of course, you will be disappointed a few times, but still you will finally enjoy it.

(xiii) Love hopes

Love has a good expectation. And without such a good expectation you cannot maintain relationships.

There must be a conviction that there is a better time ahead in that relationship.

Things may not be alright now, but there is an understanding that things will get better.

For instance in marriage, a lot happens. I know a woman who had been married for 32 years. Only the first three years were delightful. The remaining 29 years were horrible. But she continued in the relationship all the same.

The man was a drunk. He was a womaniser. He was a bully. And does not even care about God. The only place where he does not care for people is in his house. If he boarded a taxi, he could pay the fare for everyone in it. Including strangers. But his family was unkempt. She went on with the relationship because she had a hope that things would change. And it eventually did. She now has a reason to rejoice.

(xiv) Love perseveres

Love endures. If there is no perseverance, most relationships will be destroyed. I have discovered that most good things are painful. Injection is painful, but it saves lives. Therefore when painful things happen in relationships we should be able to endure and continue.

(xv) Love never fails

Let us build our relationship on love. Do not build it on money. Do not build it on history. Do not build relationships on pleasure. Do not build upon duty. Do not build the relationship on fame. Do not build it on programmes and activities. Do not build on any other thing. Love is it.

I know a couple. They married recently, but they have serious marital crisis.

During their courtship, the lady came to see me once and we got talking. She said she was afraid about the scheduled marriage. She had a strong dislike for the man, but she felt compelled to marry him. And that was because God had said she must marry him.

I tried so hard to convince her otherwise, but she still felt God was punishing her for some error of the past, by making her marry a man she hated.

Do not build a home on prophecy. Build it upon love.

Even your relationship with God and His servants should be based on love. If you do not love God and me, you cannot be in the church I lead. And of course, if you love me, you must love my spouse and my family.

Chapter 5: The Best Relationship

I have discovered that out of all relationships a person can keep on the earth, the greatest of all is the relationship with God.

It is a vertical relationship. And it supersedes every other relationship. As a matter of fact, it is the stabiliser and energiser of all the other types of relationships.

We need to know God. He created us and knows more about man than we can ever know

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.

Psalm 14:1a

Any man who does not develop a relationship with God is equally saying that there is no God. He is the fool.

I wonder how a person can dwell on earth in this wicked and perverse generation and ignore God. God is the friend who never fails. He is the person who helps consistently.

In 1984, I had a discussion with a young man. And I suggested to him to surrender his life to Christ, and be born again. But he shocked me with his response. He said 'I don't need God'. He was a Final year student of a University at that time. But unfortunately up till today he has not completed that course. He lost his senses that same year and up till now he is still a lunatic in the asylum.

We all need God all the time.

In the same year, 1984, I was with an uncle of mine and I shared with him about a relationship with God. But he was not interested. He had quite a comfortable life. And everything was working for him. He declined. He had no interest in a commitment to Christ, because that would deny him of fun.

Unfortunately, a few years later, he woke from a deep sleep and noticed a pain in one of his legs. He went everywhere else to seek help but there was no help there. Money failed. Friends failed. But he had no relationship with God, who could never fail. It is a very sad thing that he died in his prime.

Your real enemy is the devil, and he will do just anything to wipe you out. And you have no power of your own to confront the devil. Only God's power is able and available to help you destroy the antics of the devil in your life.

Human beings are deceptive. This is the reason why no other relationship can be compared with a relationship with God. He is faithful. He is true at all times. Most people will claim they love you. But the truth is that every man is selfish. Only God loves you genuinely. And it is such a person we can rely on completely.

It is God, and only God, who can make you in life. That is why it pays to keep a good relationship with God. He has enormous strength to help you and to make you happy in life.

He is the only one who can give you a vision. He will explain the vision to you. Then He will bring other people to work with you to accomplish the vision. He is the one who will accomplish the vision of your life for you.

Meanwhile, God is a person. He is not an object or a talisman. And we need to cultivate a relationship with Him before His enormous resources can be available for us.

Everyone needs God desperately. We all need to develop a relationship with Him.

To develop a relationship, we need to do the following:

a. Seek For Him

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29:11-13

God is everywhere. But no one sees Him. He has the prerogative of deciding who sees Him. And it is those who search diligently for Him who find Him.

Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Mathew 7:7-8

There must be a genuine desire in the heart of a person before He can find the Lord.

If we will seek the Lord the way we seek for money. If only we will pursue Him the way we pursue a career, if we will desire Him the way we desire fame and honour. Then a relationship with Him will be so easy.

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

Psalms 42:1

Our heart should seek for Him and not what we want from Him. Not miracles, not money, not our personal lacks or anything we can get from Him. We need to seek for Him, as a person.

b. You Must Be Born Again

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, Verily, I say unto thee. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

John 3:3

If you cannot see the Kingdom of God, you cannot see God. And that means that you cannot enjoy a relationship with God. The reason why this issue is very important is because man lost his glory so many years ago. He chose to honour and worship the devil rather than God. And he became a slave to the devil. He also became a slave to sin. And earn the wage of spiritual and physical death.

Since the fall of man, he could not relate with God because he was impure. He needed intermediaries to reach God. And then he became hostile to God. He became an enemy of God.

And then God made an arrangement to reconcile man with Himself. That arrangement was that the Son of God would come as a man. He would be accused wrongly and crucified for the sins of the world. And everyone who believed Him would find peace with God.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

John 1:12

Therefore if any man be born again, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.

2 Corinthians 5:17

The only way to start a Son and Father relationship with God is to be born again. Period.

c. Run Away From Sin

For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.

Psalms 5:4

Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

Psalms 24:3-4

Now that you have started a relationship with God, you will need to understand the nature of God.

God is pure. He is holy. And He will not tolerate a drop of sin. Although you were full of sin before, now you have become pure by the washing of the blood of Jesus. And it is expected that you will prove yourself worthy of that relationship.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Romans 6:1-2

Meanwhile, you now have the power to live above sin if you so desire. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Romans 6:14

But if you choose to live under the control of sin, then you will not be worthy of a relationship with God. He does not cast His pearls before the swine.

d. Set Your Love upon the Lord

Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him.

With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

Psalm 91:14-16

Anything you love automatically takes the right of position in your life. If you love the Lord, He will become Number 1 in your life. You will try everything to please Him.

Commitment to God will be so easy for you. When you love a person, you won't need much pressure to visit him.

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!

My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee.

Psalm 84:1-4

I expect also that you will be eager to defend your lover. If God becomes your lover it will be easy for you to talk to others about Him either in defence or in conviction. You will seek to please Him in all matters.

Your zeal for Him will be vivid for all to see. Every one is eager to labour for someone he loves. And God appreciates our labour of love.

Actually, you cannot relate with someone you do not love.

e. Be Obedient and Humbly Follow His Word

If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured by the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Isaiah 1:19-20

If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures.

But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge.

Job 36:11-12

He is God. He is not a colleague. Neither is He a servant. We need to place God in His rightful position at all times. Do not take Him for granted. He is bigger and greater than all. When he comes into relationship with a person, He retains His identity. His words are commands not suggestions.

We need to relate with Him in humility. You are from the dust of the earth. Yet He has honoured you with a relationship. We must prove worthy of that honour.

As a matter of fact, God told Joshua that his success or failure is determined by what He does with the Word of God.

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Joshua 1:8

It does not matter whether God's instruction comes through discovery in the scriptures, or if it comes by revelations, in dreams or prophecy. The moment you have ascertained the will of God, just obey. Meanwhile, your life may hang on a simple obedience at one point in time.

f. Walk in Faith

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

For by it the elders obtained a good report.

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Hebrews 11:1-2, 6

In John 8 we read about a certain woman who was caught in the real act of adultery. And she was brought out for stoning. Jesus told her accusers to let the sinless cast the first stone. They all absconded. Then He told the adulteress to go and sin no more. And she left as a sinless woman.

Meanwhile, I wonder what would have happened if the woman rejected Christ's pardon, and she says 'Who are you to forgive me?'

Unfortunately that is what we are experiencing today.

Moses told the Israelites to do ridiculous things, like looking at the serpent made of bronze and receiving healing from snakebite. And they obeyed in faith. No wonder they had great testimonies.

So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again unto thee, and thou shalt be clean.

But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.

And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith unto thee, Wash and be clean?

Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

2 Kings 5:9-14

Relationship with Him is hooked upon faith. You need faith to move with Him. Without it you cannot please Him.

Just believe that He is not a liar. And that He is committed to do what He promised. Place your actions and thoughts upon this confidence in Him.

Chapter 6: Relationship with Your Pastor

I have observed that in the church there are all kinds of people. There are people who were involved in idol worship before conversion. They travelled long distances to see the priests of demons. There are people who were converted from Catholicism where only the Priest was everything. The Reverend Father was the one who could forgive sin and instruct penance. There are believers who were converted from the Orthodox churches where the Priests were employed by the people, and kept at the mercy of the people. And of course there are people who are freethinkers. They had no regard for any man. I guess that is why we have all kinds of reactions to Ministers.

The history of the church has also been very volatile. All kinds of leaders have emerged. And a lot of them have behaved contrary to the expected standard.

Resultantly, church leaders are presently treated shabbily.

Unfortunately that is why the church is failing to enjoy God's best for her.

And they rose early in the morning, and went into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

2 Chronicles 20:20

God is a leader. He honours leadership. As a matter of fact, He is the one who sets leadership. And anyone who despises leadership can never be a friend of God.

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch over your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

Hebrews 13:17

Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

Romans 13:1-2

In the Old Testament, the church was very different from the New Testament Church. In the Old Testament, God set up Priests to represent the church in worship. At that time, man was in a fallen position and he could not relate with God. Therefore he needed an intermediary. He needed someone to pray for him. He needed someone else (a priest) to offer his sacrifice for him. He could not enter the temple of God. As a matter of fact, he had to stay far away from God. He was impure. That is the reason why everything he did was a sin. And all the laws were against him.

However with the death of Jesus, all of these have changed. Every believer has found favour with God. He has become God's righteousness in Christ Jesus. He does not have any condemnation in the heart again. Whether a Jew or a Gentile does not matter again. He is a Priest and a King.

For these reasons, some believers think there is no need for ministers again. I guess they are wiser than God and the Head of the church, Jesus Christ, who continues to set Ministers and leaders in the church.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Till we all come in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

Ephesians 4:11-13

Although the responsibilities have changed, leaders are still very important in the church. That is why God keeps calling people into such responsibilities.

- a) They minister to God directly at all times
- b) They are gifted by God to do uncommon things for God.
- c) They are commissioned to prepare God's people for works of service to God.
- d) They are commissioned to lead God's people in works of service to God.
- e) They are assigned to build up (or to lead the building-up of) the body of Christ
- f) They are to pursue unity in the body of Christ.
- g) They are to expose the mysteries of the knowledge of the Son of God.
- h) They have the responsibility for the maturation of the body of Christ.
- i) To become a rallying point for the entire church.
- j) To be a strong pointer, showing the way of The Truth to the church and the world.

They are close to God and therefore get to know hidden information that can be helpful to the living.

An angel woke me up one night, and told me. 'Mr A., who was your church member in 1994, is in danger. He will die tomorrow if you do nothing about it.' I got up and prayed. It took several hours. But he is still alive today. I never told him anything.

On another occasion it was a cat that made noise around me and the Lord said in my spirit 'Baby C. is in danger, pray!' Therefore, I took a good time to pray. It took almost a whole day. In the evening of the same day, I received a phone call that the child was admitted in the hospital and he needed prayers. I just smiled. The Holy Ghost is faster than the devil.

Some years ago, I went to attend a programme. A couple saw me as I alighted from my car. They quickly got up to come and honour me. We exchanged pleasantries. The Holy Spirit told me to pray for them against terrible abdominal pains. And I did. Praise God, I did.

The next day, the husband came searching for me. Their son was admitted in the hospital for terrible abdominal pains and he wanted me to come and pray again. That boy could have died without the prompt response of God. He would have died long before the father found me.

God still honours His servants. And He uses them to solve so many problems. The unfortunate part of it is that we often fail to listen to them, to our detriment.

I remember one of the young ladies in a church I pastored around 1997. We finished late in the church. And we were driving home. She joined my car, because her parents' house was close

to mine. Just as I was driving, she stopped me and requested to drop off. I asked her why and she explained that she had promised a friend that she would visit her and stay the night. As soon as she said that, I found myself very hostile to the idea. And I said No! But she insisted that she wanted to drop off. And since I don't want any church member to think that I was controlling their lives, I reluctantly released her. I regretted it, when I saw her the next day. Just as she left us, she fell into the hands of a rapist and had some nasty experiences. This is very unfortunate. But it could have been avoided if she had listened.

Of course I am not saying you should listen to everyone who calls himself a minister. No! But there are some whom God had ordained to help you in life. For some it is their Pastor. For some others it could include another person. But certainly your Pastor is included. Everyone needs to maintain relationship with a spiritual leader who will help him to know the will of God and to have more spiritual understanding of life. Of course, such a person must be better than you. He must know more than you do.

Ministers are not colleagues. Particularly when God arranges for you to be a parishioner under them. Such a minister is a blessing to you.

He should be a prayer partner with you. Your prayer session may not be long. But he must pray with you, particularly when you are taking any major step in life.

If (or when) he gives a direction (or suggestion), you don't have to follow it. But you must consider the idea prayerfully before dropping it. Of course, he can make mistakes. He is a man. But his ideas may be the will of God.

That is not the kind of person to lie to. If you do, you are digging your own grave.

He is very important in your life. He is the determinant factor of your blessing. Since he is your leader, he must show you what to do for God. And when you do what he challenged you to do, your blessing will be triggered up. For instance, when God told me to relocate the headquarters of our Ministry to Ogundepo, in Ibadan. It was a tough decision. It included a lot of spending and much of building.

I began to challenge my people to participate. And as it happens everywhere, some responded, some did not. Today, things have changed for those who responded. Some of them never expected that they could become landowners, car owners and so on. But today, they have.

It all started from my obedience.

You must be committed to the well-being of this Man of God. If he is blessing you, or he had blessed you before, he must not suffer. He must be provided for. You must provide for him and his family. That is just normal.

Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?

For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for the oxen?

Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

If we have sown to you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

If others be partakers of this power over you, are we not rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

Do ye not know that they which minister holy things live of the things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

1 Corinthians 9:7-14

The more you take care of him, the more God will bless you.

You also have a responsibility to keep him holy. Avoid getting too close to him. Familiarity breeds contempt. And it could introduce sin between you. Oftentimes, pastors have committed adultery with their parishioners. That can be terrible. I have discovered that every woman who committed adultery with a real servant of God may never really fulfil her original destiny in life. Oftentimes, such women never recover from it.

And you too must pray for him.

He has a responsibility to be a blessing at all times. He must make himself a repository of knowledge. And to do this, he must give a good portion of his time to seeking the Lord, from whom all blessings flow.

Unfortunately, it is not every man who calls himself so, that is a man of God. At least 75% of those who claim to be, are unknown to God.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into world.

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is in the world.

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

1 John 4:1-5

Check up their emphasis. Is it Christ? Or Self? Or money? Or Structures? Or fame? Or activities? Or what? Does the minister love the Lord? Check up their fruits. Does it look like scriptures? What does he do when he is annoyed? What choice does he make when he has an option? How does he arrive at his choice? How does he treat people around him? Do you see Christ in him at all? How does he treat people working for him or with him?

Do not give excuses. Do not give the benefit of doubt. If there is any doubt about a man of God, avoid him.

In this generation, you must learn to avoid or run away from some 'men of God'. Even if you have become an ordained, or strong member of the church, it is not withstanding. Please relocate if you have doubts about him. Do not stay back with the hope or plan to reform him.

However, you must never fight, despise, dishonour, start or join a rebellion against a man of God. Whether he is genuine or fake. As long as you have questions, just relocate. That is more serious if he is actually a genuine servant of God. Don't even backbite against him.

I ministered to a lady some years ago. She has a terrible heart condition and the Lord used me to heal her. About 10 years later, she came to see me for prayers again on the same issue. I was

unhappy, how could I have to pray on the same problem again? Doesn't God solve problems permanently?

As I was troubled about that, God opened my eyes and I saw this lady with another person. They spoke for several hours about me. They were despising and dishonouring me. Then God explained to me that when a person bites the fingers that fed her, it is a more serious problem in the spiritual. Unfortunately, I could not solve the problem for her.

Chapter 7: Marital Relationship

Long before I got married, I read an article on marriage. And that article affected my understanding of marriage. Really, it was just a sentence in the article that stuck to my memory. He said 'Marriage is a necessary evil.'

Then I wondered about this. If marriage is evil, why does everyone rush into it? And I concluded that human beings are crazy. Why rush into marriage and then jump out through divorce?

However, when I got into a relationship with God, my understanding changed. I asked several questions and I discovered so many things about marriage.

By the time I got into courtship in 1985, my expectations were high. Then I got married in 1990. And I discovered that marriage is a good thing. Of course, I got a few disappointments in marriage. But that was human error. I made mistakes and my wife made mistakes because we are human beings. Both my wife and I have come to the conclusion that apart from our salvation, marriage is the greatest thing that ever happened to both of us.

Most people get married around the age 25. Assuming they die at age 70, they would have spent 45 years of their existence together. You spend a longer period of your life in marriage. That is one of the reasons why marriage is so important.

This kind of relationship is without restraint. It is the only kind of relationship where you are supposed to go all out with one another. You are not expected to conceal any part of your life from your spouse.

We must note however that it was God who instituted marriage. Thus it belongs to Him.

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2:18, 21-25

When you purchase an equipment, a manual comes with it. In the same way, the manufacturer of marriage (God) had given us a manual in the scripture above.

If you fail to study the manual of your car, you may make the mistake of driving it without oil in the engine. Then you will have a serious problem with the engine. That is the reason why we see so many broken homes. Several hearts are broken. Several children grow up into maniacs because they were born in an atmosphere of hatred.

If we do it God's way, we will all rejoice.

I have been married for 13 years now. I have no regrets. In fact, I find joy in my home everyday. Of course, we have had several disagreements. We have also had several challenges. We had wronged each other. We had even quarrelled. But none of us could

consider a life without the other. As a matter of fact, it looks like all the arguments and disagreements team together to make life exciting.

I need to say, that marriage is a large topic. I cannot discuss everything in a chapter of a book. (I have some books on marriage). Therefore all I want to do in this chapter is to consider the aspect of relationship in marriage.

First of all, the choice of a marital partner is very important. This is important because it takes two people of common interests to dance. If you will enjoy your marital relationship then you have to make a sensible choice. And you are personally responsible for the choice you make. God may advise you. Family members may suggest. Friends and well wishers may urge you on. Church members or Pastors may insist on the will of God. But you are personally responsible for who you marry. And of course, no one will stay in a marital relationship with you. The choice is yours.

To make this choice, please note the following points.

a) Not a Canaanite

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?

2 Corinthians 6:14

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

Psalms 1:1

In Genesis chapter 24, we read the story of the choice of a wife for Isaac, the son of covenant. One of the principal considerations is that the wife must not be a Canaanite. Although Abraham did not state the reasons for this. I suspect that it has to do with two things (i) the Canaanites are cursed, and being prepared for destruction and (ii) It is possible, and much easier for the person on a lower pedestal to pull down the one on a higher pedestal. Abraham knew it was possible for the Canaanite women to lure his son into idol worship.

In some later scriptures, God warned the Israelites generally not to intermarry with unbelievers.

It is not surprising therefore that this same law came up in the New Testament.

If you are a believer, and you marry an unbeliever either by choice or by mistake, you will regret it till death. Therefore, you need to patiently ascertain that the person you are dating is a believer like yourself.

b) Pray

The choice is not as easy as it looks. Several people claim to be born again. In fact, it is more fashionable now to be born again, than otherwise. As a result, many people only make the claims. They are not genuine.

Besides, no one knows tomorrow. Only God does. Only God knows who will make life easy for you.

Therefore, we need to consult God about our marital plans, and get His opinion. In fact you must get a firm word from Him.

c) **Good Qualities**

Some people assume that we should close our eyes and allow God to choose for us. Unfortunately, when they close their eyes someone else made a choice for them and they assumed it was God. That is why several homes have problems today.

Open your eyes wide. What are the qualities you desire in your spouse? Observe your suitor and find out if he has them. Oftentimes he may not have everything you desire yet. But make sure he has some. That is one of the reasons you cannot rush. There must be a period of courtship when you are studying and getting to know one another.

In the story of the choice of Rebekah for Isaac in Genesis chapter 24, I noticed the following qualities in her.

- i) Hardworking – not a lazy person
- ii) Hospitable – must be able to take care of guests
- iii) Humility - must be humble
- iv) Considerate – not a self-centred person
- v) Loving – caring and supportive, must be interested in you.
- vi) Generous – can give anything he has.
- vii) Good parentage – look at the home he/she hails from, it will affect him/her.
- viii) Pure – chaste. Not someone who is eager to commit sin.

You too can look for these qualities in your suitor. When he/she becomes your spouse in the future you will be glad that you made a good choice. Otherwise you will regret.

d) **Compatibility**

Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

Amos 3:3

Of course, before you consider marriage, I expect that you must have discovered yourself. You should know your interests, your vision, your ambition, your academic level, achievements, your tolerance level and your taste.

Now, you must choose a person who will be compatible with you. For instance I had always wanted a home where the language of communication would be English. It would be foolish of me to marry a woman who could not speak fluent English. I will only tolerate her until I reach boiling point. And then trouble starts.

A Professor who marries an illiterate may not enjoy his home. The two of them may never be good discussion partners.

Cross Cultural marriages often end in trouble because of this same problem. For instance, a Yoruba man who is married to a Chinese woman may experience a cultural shock when she prepares a delicacy for him with toads.

However, the two may not be alike. They may be different from each other but each has qualities that complement the other.

Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.

Proverbs 18:22

Haven spoken about the choice of a marriage partner, I will now make a few comments about the 3 responsibilities of marriage. That is, there are three reasons why God instituted marriage. If you succeed in these three areas you are not likely to have problems in your marital relationship.

(i) Companionship

The closest person to me on earth is my spouse. I discovered that something was taken from me to make her. Therefore, together we make a whole. When I stay away from her, I am incomplete.

Most people who live alone, either because of widowhood or divorce, or even prolonged delay before marriage behave strange. And this is because a lonely life can never be fulfilling. It is an aberration.

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

Genesis 2:18

If God says it is not good. Then it is not good. God made a spouse for you to be your companion.

a) *A companion is a standby*

He is someone who stays with you at all times. Someone you are certain of his/her availability for you.

Married people should stand by their spouses. Stay together.

Unfortunately, young career women want independence because they have money and they are used to power at work. They drive their spouses completely away or put him in the moribund. Meanwhile, the independence phase of a woman is very short. By age 35 or 40 she enters her dependence phase, when she needs a man to rest upon. And by that time, she may have destroyed her marital relationship. That is the reason why most career women do not have homes.

Do not abandon your home for anything else. Stay together.

b) *A companion is a comforter*

She is someone who comforts you when things fail to work the way you desire. In life, there are so many odds. It may come in the career. It may come in the larger family. It may come from your properties. It may manifest from the investments. Or from anywhere. When odds come up, they generate pains and agony in the heart.

At such times you need someone to bear the pain and agony of heart with you. That is the place of your spouse. Someone who feels your pain the same way (or almost the same way) with you.

c) *A companion is a counsellor*

He brings suggestions from a different perspective from yours.

Both of you have grown up in different places and circumstances. You have both had different experiences in life. Since these issues affect our reasoning, his or her suggestions bring up other dimensions to issues. But it is genuine.

Unfortunately some individuals have been advised, like I was, just before marriage to keep whatever is on their minds secret from their spouse. I was told that a woman could not be trusted. But that is not true with a child of God. She can be trusted.

For the reason stated above, some husbands will never discuss their plans, purposes and pursuits with their wives. That is the reason they make all kinds of mistakes.

When I discuss with my wife, she brings some other dimensions to the issue. Such suggestions often bail me out of trouble.

d) *A companion is a helpmeet.*

That is he/she must be a suitable help to the spouse. In marital relationship you must be of great assistance to one another.

You need someone to scratch your back for you. You need someone to wash your back for you in the bathroom. You need someone to massage your back with care. Someone to kiss your beautiful lips.

Life itself is burdensome. And no one can single-handedly carry the burden of life. He will be crushed. You need someone to carry the burden of your life with you. And of course, you will share his/her burden too.

Life is exciting when you have a spouse.

Most successful people who care to say it will state clearly that the input of their wife cannot be easily over-emphasised.

For instance my wife has been a great help in my own life and ministry. She typesets most of my literatures. She attends my meetings as much as possible. She jointly finances the ministry. And vice versa.

e) *A companion is an advocate*

He must be a solicitor for the spouse. You must defend one another.

I witnessed a discussion once and it is quite revealing. An elderly woman was speaking with her married daughter. She said 'your husband is a foolish man'. And the daughter said 'don't mind the useless man. He is cursed. He can never make it in life.' I was amazed. How can someone say that about her own husband?

Many people will never understand your spouse, and why he/she does what. And they do not have to. It is your duty to defend him or her. Sometimes, you may not even agree with him/her. Yet you must defend him/her.

When I got married, the Pastor who joined us together gave me an instruction. He told me to hold my wife with my left hand. And he said the reason for that is so that my right hand will be free to fight. In case anyone comes up against my wife, then I could use my right hand to fight for her. Anyone at all.

f) *A companion is an intercessor*

You must be ready to intercede for one another. Just like you argue the case of your spouse before men, you must also do the same before God. Learn to pray for one another. God answers prayers.

A while ago, I noticed my wife was in a bad state. And it lingered for a while. She woke up with a quarrel and slept with another. If she was not quarrelling with me, it was with one or all of the children or even a church member.

I tried to talk her out of it. But the more I spoke, the worse it became.

Then I mentioned it to my father-in-law (God). He said 'can't you see that she is under demonic pressure, you better pray for her.' And I did. Within 3 days, things changed. Her spirit was lifted and she began to sing and dance again.

There is almost nothing that prayer cannot do. Therefore, there is almost nothing that an intercessor cannot do in the life of the spouse.

Unfortunately we often wait until it is almost too late before we begin to pray.

For instance, a woman noticed that her husband was not happy at home. She said nothing. Neither did she pray. She expected him to come back to his senses. Then the man started telling lies and coming home late. She even observed that he was actually seeing some other women. Rather than pray, she began to fight him. She won't give him food at the right time. She would not even talk to him in the house. She snapped at him each time he tried to be nice. She even told him to get lost each time he wanted sex with her.

And all of this lasted for six years.

At the end of six years, the woman woke up one day and noticed festivities all around her. Her husband was celebrating something. After much investigation, she realised that it was a marriage ceremony. The man was performing the rites of marriage on the other woman outside. And then the woman moved in with the three boys she had for the man.

The man was not even satisfied. He wanted her to move out with her two daughters.

That was when she began to pray. Where do we start from?

g) A companion must be a strengthener

When your partner is weak and falling, you should be strong to lift him/her up.

Unfortunately a lot of us fail about this. When your spouse is tired of serving God and he is complaining, you should go in the other direction. Encourage him to go on. That is not something to agree about.

It was such failure that killed Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5.

It may even be on his career or academics.

Do not allow discouragements. Encourage one another. Even when it looks as if God will not answer your prayers, encourage one another to continue.

h) A good companion is a good friend

My wife is my best friend. At least we have maintained a love relationship for about 19 years.

No other friendship can compare with this.

ii) Sexual Satisfaction

AIDS is by all means the worst problem of the world today. And it is a baby of sexual immoralities. If we had allowed sex to stay where God placed it, AIDS would never have occurred.

A school of thought believes that womanhood is evil. And that any sexual involvement with a woman is the way down to hell.

This view is shared by highly placed people in all ages. In fact, John Milton shared this view in his epic 'Paradise Lost'. He claimed that the forbidden fruit shared between the devil and the woman, and on the other hand between the woman and the man was sex.

I disagree with this idea, because it has no basis in the scriptures. The bible is not known for concealing truths. It is one of the most explicit literatures of all ages.

The bible did not call sex a sin. After all God made all the sexual organs. And He instructed them to 'be fruitful and multiply', long before they fell into sin. As a matter of fact I have reasons to believe that God actually wants us to enjoy sex to the maximum with our spouses.

Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife and let every woman have her own husband.

For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, another after that.

I say therefore to the unmarried and to widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

1 Corinthians 7:1-2, 7-9

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2:24-25

Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.

Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breast satisfy you at all times; and be thou ravished with her love.

And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman and embrace the bosom of a stranger?

For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth his goings.

Proverbs 5:18-21

If God did not have sex on mind, He would have created another man to join Adam in the Garden of Eden. Rather than that, He created a woman for him. Meanwhile, it is God who created the sexual organs, not the devil. Since everything God made is good, that means sexual organs are good.

From the scriptures we have noticed that sex is not just fun. It is a responsibility of the two.

Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

The wife hath not power of her body, but the husband: likewise the husband hath not power of his body, but the wife.

Defraud ye not one of the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

1 Corinthians 7:3-5

Each spouse has a responsibility both to agree to have sex when the other party desires it and to make sure that the other party enjoys sex.

In our society, the woman is the underdog. She is the one that is considered as unimportant. In some places her clitoris is mutilated in the name of clitorigeomy (or circumcision). And she is hampered for life. Such a woman can never really enjoy sex. In other societies she may not be circumcised, but she is denied a right to sex at will or desire. In fact when she has a desire, she is regarded as a prostitute. It is the man who could have sexual pleasure whenever he wants it. And that is why he builds a harem of several wives and sleeps with them at his will.

For nine months when the woman is pregnant, she is not allowed to have sex. Then she begins to breastfeed. This may last for another two years, within which she must not have sex. A process of about three years altogether. This is unfair and unfortunate.

Medically and all things being equal, there is nothing stopping a woman from having sex in pregnancy. Neither is there any danger in having sex when she is breastfeeding. There is actually no time the woman cannot have sex.

Every husband should make it a point of duty to make sure that his wife enjoys sex equally (if not more than himself). I have discovered that women are made to enjoy sex more than men. But that will not happen unless both parties see sex as an assignment, of great importance. And they labour at it.

In addition, I will say that sex between married couples is not a thing of shame. You should not be ashamed of having sex with your spouse. Every sane person does. Talking about it between you is also good. It will help you to enjoy it better the next time. And if there is a problem you should feel free to discuss it.

If you take sex as an important part of your marriage relationship you will shut the door against unfaithfulness, unhappiness and so on. But it all hangs upon a determination to stay together and do everything possible to make a success of the home.

iii) Reproduction

In Africa, the subject of reproduction is rated as the number 1 essence of marriage. But in the bible, it is not. I have rated it number 3, after companionship and sexual satisfaction.

Reproduction is another word for procreation. It is very important and I pray that every one reading this book now will be fruitful in life. But it is not as important as companionship and sex between couples.

This is the reason why several families in Africa have problems. The children have failed to come. And the society believes that the child is the meaning of marriage. In some other cases, they even have some children but not boys.

The male child is considered the best of children, since they will retain the family name in marriage, and have the upper claim to children born from such a union. The children will bear the man's surname.

As a result, you see marriages crumbling, because the children are delayed. Some others crumble because 'the woman has not been able to produce a male child' who will inherit the father's wealth.

Meanwhile, it has been proven medically that the man is responsible for the sex of the child.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Genesis 1:28

*Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle.
And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee.*

Deuteronomy 7:14-15

God wants us to have children. Just wait for Him.

In a few cases, there may be one delay or the other. That does not mean that the person involved is a sinner or an enemy of God. Sometimes it is a medical problem, which you need to correct in the hospital. Some other times, it may be a spiritual problem for which you need to consult servants of God. Sometimes it could be psychological in which case you need psychotherapy.

The bottom line is that the bible says no child of God shall be barren. So do not give up. God will perform the miracle. That is not the time to blame each other. Nor is it a time to begin to try sex with other partners. Wait for God.

Finally, we must make our children responsibly.

When we got married in 1990, I was a businessman, producing and selling 'akara' (bean cake). And the business was at the beginning stages. We were not sure that our income could carry a child. Therefore to avoid any unnecessary tension, my wife and I decided to delay conception for two years while we stabilised. And we were glad we did.

We could do that because we knew the number of children we wanted, and we wanted to space them by three years each.

This is what is called family planning. Planning is very important for just anything you want to do.

*For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?
Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him.
Saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish it.*

Luke 14:28-30

Family planning is very, very important. It is preventing conception.

We need to give birth to children who we can care for financially, spiritually, psychologically, economically and socially. It is a curse to give birth to children you cannot care for. And you will suffer terribly for this. Also it is a sin to bring children to life and then hand them over to a relative to bring up.

Meanwhile, I cannot tell you the kind of family planning to embark on. This is because what will benefit a couple may not benefit another. You will discover the best one for you by consulting Family Planning clinics.

However terminating pregnancy is not the same thing. Abortion is equal to killing. And it is a terrible sin in the sight of God.

In summary, whatever you want to do in your relationship, both of you should discuss it and agree together about it.

Chapter 8: Children: Your Heritage

Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchmen waketh but in vain.

It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.

Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are the children of the youth.

Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

Psalm 127:1-5

Blessed is everyone who feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways.

For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.

Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round thy table.

Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed of the LORD.

The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.

Yea, thou shalt see your children's children, and peace upon Israel.

Psalm 128:1-6

One of the greatest joys of mankind is to give birth to children who look exactly like themselves. It is a great blessing. The process of birth is painful. And the sacrifice of upbringing is enormous. But it is a worthy venture.

Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.

Psalm 127:3

Children are a heritage from the LORD to each family.

In essence, they are a form of resources that are very powerful. And the relationship with these children is one of the greatest relationships in life. It is very interesting how a child grows from one stage to another, directly under your care.

About two years ago, I went to visit my parents. Then we got talking about their friends. I began to mention names, finding out their state of health. Then I mentioned a particular woman. I was shocked when they said, she had gone to London for the past six months and will not be back for the next one year.

Nobody expected such an illiterate to go to London. And she was in her sixties. I could not imagine any surprises at that stage.

However, her daughter married a man who was in London. She relocated to London. And then she had a baby. And she needed a babysitter. Getting her mother to come was better and cheaper than hiring another. They booked a visa for her and with ease she got her visa.

That is what the bible means when it says they are like arrows in the hands of a warrior. They have enormous potentials. As a matter of fact I believe tomorrow is for our children. Meanwhile since they are gifts from God, that means we will give an account to God on each child we succeed in bringing to the world. Therefore, we must raise them with a sense of responsibility.

You cannot have them anyhow. You need to plan for them. Spacing them very well i.e. creating at least 2 or 3 years between each of your children is great. It will make them healthy and psychologically sound.

- i) ***Provide for them.*** As much as lies in your power, you must provide for them. It is irresponsibility for a man to fail to provide for his own children. It is unfortunate that some men roam the streets lavishing all they have on women of easy virtue while their family suffers.

But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

1 Timothy 5:8

- ii) ***Send them to the best school you can afford.*** Give them adequate health care. Provide good shelter for them. Expose them to very good relationships. Teach them to worship and honour God.
- iii) ***Give them discipline.*** Do it as a matter of life and death. Else you will regret it. Every child has traits of negative behaviours and it is the responsibility of the parent to straighten the child.

If you deny them discipline now that they are young, you may be popular with them. But in the future they will curse you.

Discipline is not wickedness, it is correction. And God ordained it.

He that spareth the rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Proverbs 13:24

But you must start very early, when it is meaningful. Not after the age of 12 when the character of the child is formed. I start from age 1 with my children. By the time they are 12, they need limited discipline.

- iv) ***Love them.*** Children need so much of love. They need parents who will give them love, and that is your responsibility in the relationship. Hug them. Kiss them. Laugh with them. Have fun with them. Take them out. Play with them. When things fail, don't hide it from them. Children are so understanding and accommodating. Do not neglect them. Do not abandon them. Many parents ignore their children when they are very young. Some even abandon them. And they expect the same children to become friendly to them, at their old age. It does not work like that. Everyone reaps what he had sowed.

- v) ***Build a sound character in them.*** As you give them your own example, as you relate continually with them, your children will soon develop a sound character. And you will be proud of them.

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

It will be a terrible thing. It will be a shameful thing for you to become parents of criminals. It will be a terrible failure of relationship for your children to become problems in human society.

Chapter 9: Relationship with Your Parents

*Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;
That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.*

Ephesians 6:2-3

Parents and Parents-in-law fall into the same category.

Parents are very important in the life of an individual. They gave us life. And the first contact we had with human existence was from them.

Most of the things you have today are by inheritance from them: your blood group, your name, your health, your skin colour, your height, your nationality and so on.

Besides parents often spend so much and make several sacrifices for their children. All of these come together to make the children into great men and women.

Therefore, they deserve great honour.

Meanwhile it is a scriptural injunction to honour them. The bible even says you will prolong your days if you honour your parents.

When you are young and under parental guidance, you must obey all instructions given by them. Sometimes you may not understand them or their instructions. It does not matter. Just obey.

Do not wrong any of them for any reason. Be their friends.

Do not side with one against the other, in times of quarrel. Their fight is not your own. Their quarrels lie between them. It is a foolish parent that involves children in marital rifts. Even when they have separated and you have to live with one of them, you must ensure that you avoid siding one against the other.

You need blessings from both of them.

Sometimes a parent may do something that annoyed you. And maybe you have grown up enough to handle him in a physical contest. You must never lift up your hand to beat your parent. Neither can you abuse or curse your parent. It has a negative impact on your destiny.

As you grow up, and become an income earner, the responsibility of the upkeep of your parents becomes your own. They should never suffer lack or neglect. You must take care of them as much as you can.

It is a terrible curse on the child who abandons a sick parent. You must take care of them in their sickness. And if death comes, you should bury them.

Burials do not have to be elaborate. But it must be done and friend and well-wishers fed.

Someone once told me the reason why he decided along with his sister to abandon their mother, was because they discovered that she was a witch. And they did not want to die.

No one wants you to die, but scriptures must be obeyed. And if death follows your obedience, then such a death is honourable.

But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

1 Timothy 5:8

If your mother is a witch or your father has a negative story, they still remain your parents. You cannot abandon them.

A witch who carried you in her womb for nine months. Who gave you her breast for 2 years. Who carried you on her back for about 2 years or more. You ate the food she cooked for 15-20 years. And she did not kill you at that time, when you were a defenceless baby. At that time, you were most vulnerable. She could have bewitched you but she did not.

I wonder why it took so long to discover that she was a witch. You could put up with her throughout the time you needed her. Now, that she needs you, you discovered she was a witch. I call that wickedness.

Honour your aged ones. Do everything to care for your aged ones. And let the special blessing in their mouth flow to you.

Chapter 10: Relationship with People Ahead of You

Whatever work you do in life, there must be someone who is ahead of you in the work. You can be in business. You can be in the academics. You can be in the civil service. You can be in ministry. You can be an artisan. You can be in politics. Whatever you do. Some people have been in it before you. But they exist somewhere.

It will be a terrible error to place yourself ahead of everyone else. It is pride.

If there is someone who had done what you are labouring at before, then you need to make friends with him. Start a relationship with such a person. He can become a source of encouragement and inspiration to you. He is like a mentor to you.

We need to recognise those who did it before us. Appreciate them and honour them. When you do, you are not worshipping men, you are obeying scriptures and sowing a seed for yourself.

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they that labour in the word and doctrine.

Really there is almost nothing that someone else has not done before. Even if that particular thing had not been done, something similar had been done.

Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.

1 Timothy 5:17 & 19

When you learn from them, it becomes possible for you to avoid the errors they fell into. The greatest error an individual can make in life is to repeat the error of another, when it can be avoided.

Besides, true achievement is improving on the success of those ahead of you. And not repeating their success.

Personally I have about 3 or 4 of them that I relate with. I introduce them as my fathers. And I treat them as such. I spend time listening to them. I avoid talking when with them so that I can assimilate more.

Not everything they say is right. But a lot of it is.

Your boss at work also falls into this category. He may not be a mentor, but he must be honoured and respected.

When I put a person in this class, I treat him the way I will treat my biological parent.

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch over your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

Hebrews 13:17

Absolute power corrupts. Therefore I want to suggest that you should have someone you recognise and listen to as a leader. This is more serious for people who are at the pinnacle of authority organizations. You need to look for someone you respect and submit to him openly.

I remember a certain Pastor who had a serious intractable problem. He was the President and Founder of his own ministry. His wife was also committed to the ministry. But they had no other member. They held church services in their house. But only their family attended.

Several years earlier, when he was not ordained and his wife was fully into business. I was their spiritual leader. And they both respected me. The wife respected me more for a number of reasons.

However when they started ministry, they ignored and despised every servant of God ahead of them. The man made it a point of duty to criticise all his spiritual leaders along with his wife.

Since they did not fellowship anywhere. They had no new contacts. And they despised the old. Meanwhile their own church was moribund.

After a while, they started to fight in the church. The wife would pick a chorus and the husband would shout her down. And the woman would walk out of the sitting room church. It was very easy since only their children were present.

Eventually the church ceased to exist.

Then Pastor observed that his wife was involved with some other men in adulterous relationship. He confronted her. And she confirmed it. But she insisted that she could sleep with whomsoever she wanted.

When he realised that he could not solve his marital problem, he tried to involve others. But everyone failed. Then he remembered that his wife used to respect me. And he consulted me. But I could not help him. He had exorcised respect from the heart of his wife. And he planted hatred, rebellion and contempt in replacement.

Up till now, no one has been able to help them.

We all need people we respect who can solve our crises for us in case they show up.

Importantly though, we need to take care of them. Just like we care for our biological parents we must do the same. We must give to them, as God provided for us. In special seasons of the year, we must give to them. We must honour them. And make people around us honour them likewise.

Chapter 11: Relationship with Friends and Colleagues

I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

Psalm 119:63

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

Psalm 1:1

Let me begin by sounding a note of warning. Partnership is dangerous. In business, do not be in a hurry to go into partnership. People do change as they grow. Even when the would-be partner agrees fully with you today, that status may change tomorrow.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?

2 Corinthians 6:14

Partnership with a person who does not believe in God like you is sinful and dangerous. Run away from it.

However you need friends. And there are people of like minds who can be your friend. You need to choose them. It is not by chance. It is by choice.

Also you must beware of deep relationship with a member of the opposite sex who is not your spouse. For instance, there is no need of keeping a prayer partner of the opposite sex who is not your spouse. Even when you have a colleague at work that is of the opposite sex, you should reduce your involvement with him/ her. Such a relationship can bring you shame and sorrow.

Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

Amos 3:3

Your friend must have a lot in common with you. Else he/she will not be a blessing to you. I think it is foolishness to hold hands with a man heading for Port Harcourt, when I am bound for Kaduna.

Meanwhile, do not be in strong relationship with people who are ducks unless you are one. They will pull you down and keep you down. Look for eagles, and you will not only be in the sky, but in the high heavens and on top of mountains.

There was a fellow who wanted to be my friend. He was also a Pastor. He visited me quite often. But each time he came he had some negative story to tell me about some other ministry. 'Have you heard what that fellow did again?'

Initially I was trying to honour him. But he kept on with it. Therefore one day I told him off. I will be glad to hear testimonies about what you are doing for/with God. I will also be glad to share with you about the faithfulness of God in my ministry. We can share scriptures. And we can pray together. You can even tell me testimonies of what some people are doing right.

I have no time for backbiting or backbiters. Neither do I have a place for busybodies. I used to have a very close friend who deviated into adulterous relationship. When I challenged him, he confirmed it, but insisted that it was a minor problem. And I should look elsewhere. Therefore I cut off from him and his sins. That is my best way of looking elsewhere.

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Proverbs 13:20

I have a few friends. And I am proud of each of them. I know what they believe. We do not agree totally on every issue, but we agree on principal issues. And I know they can bear me up in case I have a problem. They all have a determination to please God.

Friendship is by choice, not by force.

The fact that we have worked together in a place, does not make us friends, we are only colleagues. The fact that we attended the same school only makes us alumni of the school.

Friends have mutual interests.

Chapter 12: Relationship with Subordinates

Just as you must recognise those who are ahead of you, you need to understand that there are people who do not have as much grace and honour as you do. They are the ones we refer to as subordinates.

In business, in ministry or at work, we always have people who are below us. It does not matter whether you like it or not. And it is not humility to ignore them.

Some of them are your personal staff. Some of them are your younger ones. Some of them are smaller people that God brings to you to learn one thing or another. A number of them may stay with you permanently. But most of them will only pass on their way after a little while.

Their lives probably depend on you. At least you pay their salaries. Or they receive financial, material or spiritual assistance from you. And it appears that you don't have much to gain from them.

Beware how you take decisions about (or behave with) such people. They don't have power but God is behind them. Besides that particular person may not stay with you forever. But you will certainly meet again. I only pray that power will not have shifted position, as it often does.

I discover that just an action you consider as being unimportant can cause people in this category a lot of heartaches. Your actions can make their home a place of joy or sorrow. A small gift can do a great deal for them. And a sack letter from you can stop his/her children from going to a good school; and end an ambition.

Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your mysteries that shall come upon you.

Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten.

Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your heart, as in a day of slaughter.

Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.

James 5:1-6

They do not have great connections or enormous power. But God is behind them. For instance, David was so powerful that he could take the wife of Uriah and kill the husband. And no human being could ask him a question. But God dealt with him in a terrible way.

Besides I have discovered that even though people like this look insignificant, they are very important. For instance, the cook decides your meal. If he chooses to administer a small poison in the food, you are dead. The driver can also cause an accident that could claim your life or the life of someone close to you. Even the househelp can bring up a story that could give you years of agony and heartaches or even break your home. The messenger can hide a file and make you lose your job or something more serious.

The greatest strength of any great person is human resources. If you succeed in building enormous human resources, then no one would be able to challenge your greatness.

Visions cannot be accomplished without men. No one goes to war all alone. You need men. And you will always need men.

Meanwhile, it is better to keep what you have than changing them. You need to keep your men. And you can only do this by taking good care of them. It is prodigal of you to dole out assistance to unknown people outside, or people who are not useful to you and the ones taking care of you are unkempt.

Their wages must not fail. Make it as good as possible. And keep on improving their lives, as God is blessing you. Show them that they are valuable to you. And you will be surprised with the result.

Make it a habit to give generously to them. It is a part of your duty to God and then to them. Give money other than their salaries. Give materials and so on. When you travel out, and you are buying things for your immediate family, buy for them also. It shows them that they too are important to you.

Do not treat people as slaves because they are working for/with you. Appreciate them and honour them as much as possible.

Even when they are wrong, do not take decisions that you will regret for life.

Sometime ago, I was the Director of a company. And I had some Sales Officers, whose job it was to go all over the nation (divided within them on zones) and sell their products.

Although they make sales and handle cash, it is considered wrong for them to spend the money. But they were allowed to take a particular amount as their maintenance allowance.

One of the Sales Officers overspent his allowance. And I reprimanded him for this. And promised to make him pay for it if it happens again.

There and then, he promised me that it would happen again because he does not know how I expected them to do all the work I gave them, without spending more.

To cut the long story short, in the following month, he did exactly the same thing. And I instructed the Accounts department to make deductions from his salary.

He was so annoyed, and he bursted into my office and yapped at me. He told me how I was employed and how much power I had. And that he was going to take my case up with the Chairman of the company. (He had been a staff in that company before I came in, and I had only been there about 3 or 4 months).

I decided to give him a sack letter because I was not going to tolerate indiscipline. The Chairman tried to convince me to reduce the punishment. But he could not convince me. And since he did not want to side a staff against the Director more so a staff who was very wrong.

I had my way, but I lost my joy.

Each time I saw him later, I felt guilty. I saw his wife and children once. And I regretted my action. Although what I did was right. But it was like killing a mosquito with a gun.

The more powerful you become, the less you demonstrate your strength.

King David was very successful in life because God gave him reliable men. You can read about these men in 2 Samuel 23. In fact there were some of them who were ready to die in the process of giving David fulfilment.

And three of the thirty chief went down, and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim.

And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem.

And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Betlehem, which is by the gate!

And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD.

2 Samuel 23:13-16

There is no way anyone could have men like this and be a failure. But you need to remember that none of them was that great when they joined David.

And everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him: and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.

1 Samuel 22:2

As they stayed with David, God was building David. And he was building his people. He maintained a great relationship with them. He overlooked their errors and showed them love.

So David and his men came to the city, and behold, it was burned with fire: and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives.

And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.

But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor.

Then answered all the wicked men and men of Belial, of those that were with David, and said, Because they were not with us, we will not give them ought of the spoil that we have recovered, save every man his wife and children, that hey may lead them away and depart.

Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the LORD hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hands.

1 Samuel 30:3,6,10, 22—23

That is one of the reasons why they were all committed to David throughout his life. I challenge you here now, go all out. Relate with your subordinates. You are building your own mission. And you may be laying foundations in their own destinies.

Chapter 13: How to Keep Relationships

Relationship is like a fire. When good firewood are in it, it will burn. But as soon as you begin to ignore it and you allow it, the fire will burn out. Every fire needs tending for sustenance.

I really do not consider myself as the best teacher on this subject but I want to list a few points on how to keep a relationship going.

i) Determination

You need determination to keep relationships. Without a strong determination, every relationship will die off. Both parties must be determined to keep the relationship.

It takes some determination to visit in this generation. Not to talk of giving assistance.

ii) Sacrifice

I remember once when I just came back from a journey. I was so tired. But my wife needed to discuss with me. Of course, I chose to respond to her. Afterall, there will always be another time to rest.

Even God had to sacrifice the blood of His Son to start a relationship with man. It takes sacrifice

iii) Commitment

If you want your relationship to continue you must always make a contact. If your policy is 'out of sight is out of mind' then you can never keep a relationship.

You need to find a way of making contact regularly.

Besides you must respond promptly to the invitation of the other.

iv) Communication

You must both discover a way of communicating with one another. There is no relationship without communication.

Sometimes this may be difficult, but that notwithstanding you must discover a way of communicating.

At other times, such communications can be very tough and painful. But it must be done.

v) Giving

Giving is God's way. And it is the way of relationship. Something must be going from you to your friend.

Then Peter arose, and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber; and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

Acts 9:39

Those widows were ready to cry their eyes out for the loss of Dorcas. And it was simply because she had made herself generous to them.

If you want to keep that relationship, then you must invest into it.
Give your time. Give your skill. Give your money. Give your materials. Give your energy.
Give it unreservedly.

vi) Prayers

If your relationship is getting sour, you will need to pray about it. God is the originator of relationships and when we allow Him, He can help us to maintain our relationships.
Besides, everything responds to prayer.

vii) Hardwork

Another word for this is diligence. You must work at your relationship.
I remember when I was courting my wife. There were a few instances I had to write her letters. My letters were quite voluminous. Some of them were up to 40 pages of foolscap paper. And I could write 3 or 4 like that in a week. It was quite obvious that everyone around her knew my letters when they arrived in the post.
Relationship is work..

viii) Forgiveness

As soon as you offend each other you must get over it. Forgive your friend faster than he offends you. Then the relationship will last. Do not expect him to be God. Allow him to make mistakes. And do not bind him to his faults.
Settle it before the day is over.

ix) Appreciate your friend

Everyone enjoys appreciation, but only a few give it. If you want your relationship to grow, appreciate one another. Appreciate him for who he is. Appreciate him for what he does. No matter how little.

x) Concentrate on the good side

Do not be critical of your friend. There is no one who is flawless. And the greatest error in relationships is to use either your flaws or his/her flaws as focal point. It will look bigger than it actually is.
Rather, overlook the flaws and concentrate on the good aspect of your relationship.
If your mother is a witch or a prostitute, do not place your emphasis there. Consider her greatness as a mother.

xi) Learn to laugh

Relationship is fun. Do not be too serious about it. Laugh at him. Laugh at yourself. And let your friend laugh at you.
Do not be uptight.

Make this Confession with me:

Dear father God, I have discovered in your Word that I am created for relationship. I am made in your image.

And you covet a relationship with men. So do I.
I confess it again. I will be like God. I will pursue a sound relationship with men around me.
I will achieve greatness on earth with the assistance of the enormous human relationships that God gave to me.

Commitment Prayer

Lord, please help me to build enduring relationships that will be a blessing to humanity. Give me all it takes. And help me to separate from relationships that will destroy me.
Show me what I need to do and I will do it. Thank you Father. In Jesus mighty name. Amen.

Chapter 14: Relationship is Powerful

I know people who are living abroad today. Some of them are there on the ticket of their spouses, who are citizens. That is the power of relationship.

I told you about an old woman. Everyone thought her case was over. But she is now in London. It was her daughter who got married to a citizen. Then they invited her. That is the power of relationship.

I have people all around me who have never travelled out of Nigeria. They are even considered as minors. But they hold British passports. They won't need a visa to travel abroad. Just because their parent was born in Britain. That is the power of relationship.

I once met a man who was a vulcanizer. He had a good car. And he lived in a cosy house. That was in 1988. how could he achieve such a feat? He met a white man who was in Nigeria for 2 years. They became friends. When he was leaving, he decided not to sell his personal things. Rather he gave them to his vulcanizer friend. That is the power of relationship.

If you want to understand the power of relationship, you should go to Western Union money transfer, particularly just before the yuletide seasons. And see people receiving large amounts of money. That is the power of relationship.

One of the reasons why wars are dangerous is the power of relationship. During the civil wars in Nigeria, the nation experienced it. The federal government and its army thought they could overrun Biafra in a few days. But it did not work out that way. Other nations took sides, and gave assistance to both sides. That is the power of relationship.

When we got the piece of land upon which our headquarters presently stands, and we needed money to pay. I was troubled. Where would I get 300,000 naira (the initial payment). Then God told me to mention it to a few very close people. Just about 5 people. And I did.

At the nick of time, one of these people just called me on phone and released 200,000 naira. And then the other one came. That is the power of relationship.

Later we built a place that was supposed to be an office. But God instructed me to move in there and establish His presence on the compound. And there was an urgency about it. So I did. Meanwhile, the house was yet to be completed. For instance, there were no louver blades on the windows.

A week later I travelled to do a crusade in Delta State. And a friend came to pray on the site. He observed that there were no louver blades and the rainy season was fast approaching. He left 50,000 naira for the louver blades. It is the power of relationship.

Three school girls left their school during school hours in Lagos. They stopped a taxi and told the driver to take them somewhere on the outskirts of the city.

They drove into a bushy road. And then stopped. They promised to pay and told the taxi driver to wait for them. And they all left.

After about 20 to 30 minutes, two of them returned. They entered the car and told the driver to go on. He asked about the third girl. And they replied that they had left her with her boyfriend. But the driver became restless. He looked at them in the mirror and saw that they were sharing a large amount of money. So he suspected a foul play.

He drove into a Police Station and alerted the Police. When they got back to the place. They saw the corpse of the other girl. Her head, breast and vagina had been removed.

That young girl died. She lost all her dreams. She became a source of pain to her family. Just because of relationship. That is the negative power of relationship. It has destroyed many lives.

No one can measure the strength of another. Unless he has no relationships.

Your strength is measured by the relationships you keep.

Another name for it is networking. Or better still connection.

Things are so bad in the world today that you almost cannot achieve anything unless you know one person or the other. Even in ministry, there are so many ministries and ministers that most people will not support you unless you have a personal relationship with them.

This is not limited to Nigeria. It is happening like that all over the world. Therefore, let us get into love relationships.

For me as a minister, it can be very involving, but it is worth it.

One day I was in the church and a young man walked up to me after service. He told me all his problems. He had a curse upon him. And there was no progress at all. He had a second degree in a very fine field. But he could not get a single job.

I prayed with him. We even fasted together. And eventually God established him. He now works with an oil company. He is far away from my base, but we maintain our relationship. He knows my account number and sends money to me from time to time.

Money was not the essence of our relationship. But it is the dividend. Money should not become the essence of relationships. Neither should it be because we want one thing or the other. Let us love people for who they are. Let us make friends for the fun of it. Let us take care of our children to make God happy with us. However, we need to know that there are dividends to it.

One of the strongest supporters of my ministry today is someone who was my friend in the secondary school within 1976 and 1980. We lost contact when we left school. Until we met again recently.

Both of us had gotten born again, and we both love the Lord. God gave him a mission to finance God's work. God gave me a large involving ministry.

We just picked up our relationship from where we left off. And he began to support my work.

When we started a relationship, it was not because I wanted a supporter. But God arranged it into what it is now.

For instance in Esther 2:21-23 when Mordecai reported Bigthan and Teresh to the king Ahasuerus, he did not know that a time will ever come when his own life will be hanging in the balance. But it was that incidence that God used to deliver Mordecai from Haman in Esther chapter 6.

Let us make it a point of duty to show love. People will take you for granted but it does not matter. At least you will satisfy God. And whenever God wants to honour you, He will contact those you have blessed before.

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

1 John 4:7-8

Once again, it is important for you to choose your friends. Friendship is not by force.

Have You Been Blessed?

I am excited that this book has blessed you.

Do you know you could support me to bless another person?

We have about 200 kids in The Answer Mission Nursery and Primary school, Ogundepo, Muslem, Ibadan; where tuition is free. It is our mission to our neighbourhood. You could give anything to support the school.

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He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given.

Proverbs 19:17

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