



TUNDE AWOYELE

COURTSHIP

101

WHAT EVERY SINGLE NEEDS TO KNOW BEFORE MARRIAGE

FOREWORD BY
PASTOR DUNAMIS OKUNOWO

COURTSHIP 101

What Every Single Needs To Know Before Marriage

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my maker, my shepherd, my light, my shield, my all, my God.
Thank you Lord for bringing something out of my nothing. I am forever grateful.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I must first acknowledge the Almighty God, who loves me enough to give me a glorious future and to keep me in the path of destiny. I'm most grateful Lord!

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To my great friend, Chibuzor Nwankwo, you are more than a friend. I value you.

I would also like to celebrate my best friend – my fiancée, Rebecca Tega Agbragu, you have been a faithful assistant and a great encouragement to me in the pursuit of God's purpose for my life. Without you, this book would have been mere theoretical information, lacking practical touch. Thank you for giving me the privilege to experience, practise and model the truths in this book. You are the best. I love you.

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FOREWORD

We go to school and study different courses over the years after which we eventually graduate! In the school of marriage, you get the certificate first and then learning begins in a pragmatic form.

However, you can do some of the learning and fortify yourself for this great institution called marriage before and during courtship. The scriptures aptly say that a man of knowledge increases strength.

In Courtship 101, Tunde Awoyele has done a quintessential job in presenting eternal truths in simple ways that anybody can understand.

If I have my way, I would make this a compulsory course for all who intend to go into courtship and then marriage.

This book will enlighten you. Get one for yourself, one for your loved one and yet another for anybody whose life you want to touch. It is a worthy investment that will pay all through life. In three parts and nineteen chapters, Tunde Awoyele takes you on a journey of discovery that is intellectually profound and spiritually rewarding. Beyond the cognitive, the book is a spiritual adventure with balanced truths presented in a consistent and magnetic pace.

Having worked with singles and young people for over seventeen years, I am glad that a book like this is coming out at such times as now. The book addresses the most common questions that young minds have in this generation and succinctly provides balanced answers.

From the very first page, you will be glued as you discover wondrous truths. Be blessed as you read!

Dunamis Okunowo

Kisses and Huggs Club

www.kissesandhuggs.com

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INTRODUCTION

One of the things that give us an edge in life is knowledge. Knowledge is power, knowledge is life. We are responsible for what we know or don't know, because whether we like it or not, we bear the consequences of our ignorance and enjoy the dividends of our knowledge.

We are in the days when marriages and homes are breaking. Breakups and divorces are becoming the order of the day because of lack of knowledge or illusion of knowledge. The Bible says "my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4:6).

Many singles are having marital delay because they lack knowledge and many more are scared of making marital commitment because of the fear of a broken home.

The good news, however, is that an end has come to the oppression of the devil against our homes. God is set to intervene and raise for Himself godly homes that will demonstrate the love that exists between Christ and the Church. He is raising and equipping singles who will establish the standards and pave the way for the revolution that will happen in our home.

I believe the hour has come for relationships, marriages and homes to change for the better. God has always had it in mind because He is the founder of marriage. He is set to expound to you some life changing truths that will impact your life, relationship and marriage in a great way.

This book is not just information, it is impartation. It is a tool in the hand of the Almighty God to prepare youths for marital success. So sit back and relax as you go through this book. I believe the lessons therein will transform your relationship and marriage as they have transformed mine. Your life will never remain the same.

Welcome aboard. It's time to GET IT RIGHT and DO IT RIGHT!

Tunde Awoyele

June, 2015.

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PART I: UNDERSTANDING COURTSHIP

1. WHAT IS COURTSHIP?

Several authors and speakers have written and said a lot on relationship, courtship and the likes. Several persons have given different definitions of relationship which ranges from worldly and scriptural view. You need to know that Christian relationship is quite different from any other relationship. What the word of God teaches is courtship before marriage.

Christian courtship starts when a matured single man, after a clear conviction from God that a single lady is meant to be his wife, decides to propose his intention of marriage to the lady and the matured single lady also decides to accept his proposal after a clear conviction from God that the man is meant to be her husband. The period during which they relate together, knowing themselves more and planning their future together before marriage, is what is known as courtship.

From the definition of courtship above, it is important that we expound on some key words which include: (i) Conviction (ii) Intention of marriage

WHAT IS CONVICTION

Conviction means a knowing, a firm belief that is accompanied by an inner witness and inner peace that a person is your right partner (which must be as a result of your fellowship with God through prayers and constant study of His word).

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.” (See Genesis 2:23). This is simply conviction.

The Bible says further in Genesis 2:24 that “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” The adverb 'therefore' in verse 24 makes it clear that the reason marriage will take place is because of the conviction of the man in verse 23.

Many people start courtship and some even get married on the basis of mere feelings and other reasons without any conviction, only to find out that the relationship or marriage does not last. Any relationship or marriage that is not based on conviction may not last. It is conviction that sustains relationship and marriage. Other things (feelings, attraction etc.) may fail but conviction will keep the relationship and marriage going.

It is very important to seek God's will in marriage. Deciding who to marry is one of the important decisions to make in life! Let your primary reason for marriage be based on the CONVICTION that a particular person is GOD's WILL for you.

Marriage is not just a status or an event; it is a continuation of God's plan for your life. Your marriage is linked to your destiny; both of them are intricately connected. So when making this marital decision, you must ensure you consult God in prayer and have a clear conviction so that you don't make a mistake. You need to be sensitive and always be in tune with God so that He can direct you and show you HIS WILL.

For you to know the will of God for you, you need to first know God intimately. God wants you to know Him before you know the right man or woman for you. So take time to get closer to God. Intimacy with Him is ALL you need. Adam had a close relationship with God before God brought Eve to him. Jesus said, "SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS." Let your priority be to seek after God; first establish your relationship with God and let Him give you direction for your life, let Him form you and make you. Your intimacy with God is very important. Don't wait until you're ready to get married before you start seeking the face of God to know His will for you; you need to keep a close relationship with God even now.

The closer you are to God, the more you know the mind of God for you. You don't choose who to marry by sight, you choose by divine revelation. Your sight is limited, the human senses can only see the present; they can't see what the future holds. So you don't depend on your sight.

The Bible says "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Corinthians 2:9-10)

Therefore you need God to reveal your life partner to you. Many only depend on what they can see and what people say before they choose their life partner but you need to depend on what God says. I pray that you will not make a mistake in your marital life in Jesus name.

INTENTION OF MARRIAGE

The second keyword in the definition of courtship above is the intention of marriage. Any romantic relationship that does not have marriage as its end is a mere waste of time and resources. If you are not yet sure that the relationship will lead to marriage, then you have not started courtship. So before you start a relationship with anyone, be sure of the goal of the relationship. You need to know if he wants to marry you or if she has agreed to marry you. Many singles go into relationship to try their luck. They are not certain of what will become of the relationship. That is why conviction is very important. Conviction makes your heart to be at peace by virtue of the knowledge that the person is your right partner. So you are not trying your luck to know if it will lead to marriage. You already know that marriage is the goal and your coming together (courtship) is to know yourselves better and plan your future together.

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2. DATING, COURTSHIP AND BEING ENGAGED

Several persons have said that courtship and dating are the same while some others have refuted this, maintaining that the two are not the same. Consequently, I believe I need to shed light on these different types of relationship.

Dating is a type of relationship that starts when a guy feels he needs more than friendship from a lady and expresses his love or feelings to the lady. Most times, it is a guesswork to see if it could lead to marriage. Sometimes, it could even be without intention of marriage.

I have said before that courtship starts when a matured man, after strong conviction from God that a lady is meant to be his wife, decides to propose his intention of marriage to the lady and the lady also decides to accept his proposal after a strong conviction from God that the man is meant to be her husband. And it's a period they relate together, knowing each other more and planning their future together before marriage.

"Being engaged" means you have agreed to marry someone. For a Christian, you are "engaged" once you start a courtship with someone.

Dating is not courtship. We can describe dating as a process of getting to know each other to determine suitability, adaptability and complementarity. Usually there is no revelation knowledge or conviction involved and there is no clear commitment to get married. Courtship, on the other hand, is a relationship that starts after the man and the lady have agreed to get married. It is a commitment based on mutual conviction of each one's suitability for the other.

I believe that courtship is the Biblical model. We get some insight into this in Matthew 1:18 where the Bible talks about Mary being "espoused" to Joseph. The word "espoused" in this context suggests courtship.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost." (Matthew 1:18)

The difference between dating and courtship is that NO INTENTION OF MARRIAGE is stated in dating though they can later make their intention known after some years of 'checking' each other out. But you make your INTENTION OF MARRIAGE known in courtship.

Dating is a guesswork and it's usually using one's understanding to find the right partner. And the Bible says in Proverbs 3:5 that "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."

Courtship for Christians has to do with DEPENDING SOLELY ON GOD to show you your right partner and proposing your INTENTION OF MARRIAGE to the person after you must have prayed and had a STRONG CONVICTION about the person.

If you are a Christian, I will advise that you don't do a guess work with your marital life. There is a right person for you to marry. Don't use your brain to try to select a man or woman. Allow God to show you the person He has created to be your right man or woman. You don't need to keep dating every guy or lady in order to find the right one; all you need to do is seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness and all other things will be added to you, including the right person for you.

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3. SUITABILITY VERSUS COMPATIBILITY

The word compatibility is often used by people in relationship; so also is the word suitability from the root word “suitable” from the scripture Genesis 2:18 where God said He would make a help meet (suitable) for Adam.

The English dictionary defines the two words as follows:

SUITABILITY: The word “suitable” means being right or appropriate for a particular purpose or occasion.

COMPATIBILITY: The ability of people or things to live or exist together without problems.

There have been a lot of mix-ups between these two words and there are many relationships that are breaking up or not working because of these mix-ups. You hear people make statements like “We are not compatible and cannot marry.”.

From Genesis 2:18, God was much more interested in the suitability of the man and woman. God is more interested in somebody that is right for you and not just somebody you can live with. What makes you suitable for somebody is when you both fit into your purpose. Remember Eve was a help suitable for Adam. So it is very important that you discover your purpose and allow God to bring you the man or lady who will be suitable for that purpose.

You can be compatible with somebody and not be suitable or right for that person but you can't be suitable with somebody and not be compatible with that person. Compatibility doesn't just happen naturally; it takes work. The truth that a particular person is right or the will of God for you will make you to work towards compatibility.

The most important area in which you need compatibility is in your FAITH and belief in the Son of God (Jesus Christ). An unbeliever cannot be suitable for you and you cannot be compatible (you cannot live together without problems because there won't be agreement between the two of you and you will have different ideologies and beliefs about God). So the most important thing to check in your compatibility is your FAITH. Once you are suitable and compatible in your faith, you can learn to live together in other areas.

From Genesis chapter 2, Suitability comes first before the man cleaved to his wife (compatibility).

One of the things I've learnt about relationship is that compatibility does not happen naturally; you only work out your differences day by day so as to attain compatibility.

Suitability is meeting the right man or woman at the right time for the right purpose.
Compatibility is two different people coming together to work on their differences for the fulfilment of purpose.

Our upbringing, values, perspective etc. may make us different from each other and that is why courtship is very important before marriage. Courtship helps you to work on your differences so that you will be able to work in agreement in marriage.

Who you need is the SUITABLE person for you. Stop using your level of compatibility as yardstick for measuring the right person for you. Allow God to show you the right person like He did for Adam.

NOTE: You can be compatible and not suitable (meaning you can learn to work out your differences without being right for each other and that will definitely bring frustration and disappointment). But when you are SUITABLE, it becomes easy to be compatible as you work on yourselves and iron out your differences.

Suitability precedes compatibility when it comes to choosing who to marry.

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4. FRIENDSHIP TO COURTSHIP

Tayo and Tope had been friends for eight years, with Tayo being Tope's closest friend and confidant. He had been so caring and loving throughout the eight years of their friendship.

He later expressed his mind and professed his love for her. He proposed marriage to her and she was very happy to have found love from her best friend.

Their relationship started and lasted for just a year. She found out she never knew him all through the eight years of friendship. He used to shout, beat and maltreat her. She got pregnant and discovered that he was only interested in having sex with her. Hmmm what a pity!

Though I teach and advise that friendship before relationship is very important because love grows out of friendship, please know that the fact that you are close friends doesn't mean he or she is the right person for you. Some people are better as friends.

One of my spiritual fathers, Pastor Segun Obadje (of God's Love Tabernacle Int'l Church, Ile-Ife, Nigeria) said "Don't let friendship lead you to conviction, rather let conviction lead you to friendship."

What this means is that let the truth that you have a conviction about a person make you become friends with that person (to know the person before starting the relationship).

Don't fall in love because you are friends. Let your reason for being in love with the person be that you are sure he/she is the right person for you.

The fact that you are also convinced that she's your right partner doesn't mean that you should propose to her without knowing her. First build friendship with her. Move close to her and get to know her well. This will help you when proposing to her. Friendship strengthens love and helps you build chemistry that will be needed in your courtship and marriage. Don't propose or accept a proposal from someone you don't know. Take time to establish friendship with the person to know who the person really is.

I have counselled several singles who asked me what to do because they don't 'love' the person whom God revealed to them as their right partner. They told me they do not even have any feelings for the person.

What I usually ask them is "What is love?" in order to know if they understand what love really is. I also ask if they know the person after which I advise them to try and get close to the person and establish friendship. The more they know and get closer to the person, the more they love the person.

Though love is not a feeling, it sometimes involves a feeling. Love is a decision. That is why you must not make a marital decision based on feelings. Feelings don't last; they change with time.

You don't just appear from nowhere and say "Thus says the Lord, you are my wife". Even the "most spiritual" sister will not accept you. She won't even want to pray about it. You don't use God or your conviction to propose to a lady. You use your friendship to win her love and back it up with your conviction.

I love what my relationship mentor, Pastor Dunamis Okunowo (President of Kisses and Huggs Club) shared with us in one of our singles' programmes. He said that "proposing to a lady doesn't have to be formal like you are going for a job interview". You don't need to suit up or wear expensive perfume to propose to a lady. You may only want to impress the lady with that especially if she doesn't know you. But proposing to your friend is very simple. You can do that in the middle of a conversation you are having with her and just say it without much stress.

Therefore, ensure you build friendship with her and be best of friends before proposing. You don't need to rush to propose or accept a proposal except you are led by God to do that. Just take your time and enjoy your friendship with him or her.

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5. PURPOSE BEFORE PROPOSAL

I believe one thing that we cannot afford not to understand in life is purpose. Purpose is what gives us direction in life. There is a purpose for everything. Our existence in life is for a purpose. God created us because He has something in mind that He wants us to do for Him and that thing is our purpose for life. This purpose determines a lot of things that we do in life and also determines who we should settle with as our life partner.

Before you propose or accept a marriage proposal, ensure you know where you are going in life. Know and understand your purpose. Adam had a purpose before God brought Eve to him. “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.” (Genesis 2:15). It was after Adam had found purpose that God said “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.” (Genesis 2:18). So I believe purpose should come before proposal.

Pastor Dunamis Okunowo (President of Kisses and Huggs Club) also said in one of our singles’ programmes that “You don’t need a life partner if you don’t have a life.” First get a life. Purpose is what gives you a life. You don’t need a helper if there is nothing you are doing. If you have not discovered your purpose, your first prayer should not be “Oh Lord show me my life partner” but “Oh Lord what will you have me do.” Discovering your purpose early will help whichever lady God is bringing into your life to fit into such purpose and also prepare herself for the purpose. Remember she's meant to be a help suitable for you. (Genesis 2:18)

Rick Warren (author of the book Purpose Driven Life) said, “Nothing matters more than knowing God’s purpose for your life and nothing can compensate you for not knowing – not success, wealth, fame, or pleasure. Without purpose, life is a motion without meaning, activity without direction and event without reason. Without purpose, life is trivial, petty and pointless”. You see, a good marriage too will not compensate for not discovering God’s purpose for your life. You need to discover your purpose.

How then do you discover your purpose, you might ask? I will share with you what my mentor and father in the Lord Pastor Demola Awoyele shared in his book (Maximizing Campus Life) on how to discover God’s purpose for your life.

1. Ask the manufacturer: God is your maker. He knows what was in His heart when He created you. He told Jeremiah,

“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you” (Jeremiah 1:5). “I know the plans I have for you says the Lord...” (Jeremiah 29:11). “Call on me and I will answer you and I will show you great and mighty things which you know not.” (Jeremiah 33:3).

So, ask God in prayer and don't expect Him to speak to you only in an audible voice. He speaks via several means. It could be an awareness in your heart, or through a picture of yourself in the future impressed on your mind, or some other way. Whichever way it is, He will speak. Just be expectant for His message to you.

2. Check the manufacturer's manual: Almost every product (or machine) comes with a manual where you see the product's purpose, and other details about the product. The Bible is the manufacturer's manual for life. When God packaged us here as a product, He gave us a manual to consult. The Bible is our manual for living. As you check the Bible, you see the future. Jesus had to read His purpose from the Scriptures in Luke Chapter Four. There is a "Luke Chapter Four" written concerning your own life too. You only need to trust God to lead you to where it is written and open your eyes to see it (see Luke 4:17-20, Ephesians 1:17).

3. Get involved with life and activities, especially godly activities: Activities that are centred around God and what God is doing open you up to His purpose for your life. There, God begins to show you the connection between your unique experiences, and what His purpose for your life is. Your gifts and abilities are pointers to your purpose in life. It is as you get involved with life that God begins to show you these connections. You can't just sit and expect to discover your purpose. Start getting involved, don't sit idle. Start by doing small things in church, your community and wherever you find yourself and one day you will connect to His purpose for your life.

As you discover your purpose, strive to develop expertise in that area of purpose. It is your expertise in it that distinguishes you in life, making you significant. This expertise comes through learning, studying, training, consistency in excellence and commitment to personal growth. Remember, "When purpose is not known, abuse is inevitable", and you cannot find true meaning and fulfilment in life until you discover and walk in the purpose of God for your life.

Apart from your individual purpose, you also need to know the purpose for which God is bringing you and your spouse (or intended) together. It is the purpose that will keep the relationship going.

God is a God of purpose and everything He does or orchestrates is for a purpose. The primary purpose of any godly relationship must be for marriage (So don't even start any relationship you know will not lead to marriage). There are also other reasons for which God is prompting you to start a relationship; you must be dutiful enough to inquire these reasons of God. If you check this scripture "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." (Acts 8:29), you will discover that the reason God orchestrated the relationship between the eunuch and Philip was to help the eunuch. So also one of the reasons God lead us into a relationship is to help us get better, prepare us for the future and to fulfil His purpose for our lives.

Ladies, it is very important you ask from any man that proposes to you his purpose and the reason he wants to marry you and so on.

Purpose also helps you to be focused and to overcome challenges that may show up along the way in the relationship. It was purpose that made Jesus to endure the challenges/shame he faced (Hebrew 12:2)

Finally, I will advise that if you are yet to discover your purpose, don't think of starting a relationship. Starting a relationship without discovering your purpose is like boarding a bus without knowing your destination. And if you are already in a relationship but yet to discover purpose, it's not too late. You can still trust and ask God to reveal your purpose to you.

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6. THE QUESTION OF WHAT AGE TO START COURTSHIP

Several youths have asked me about the proper age to start courtship and I will like to share with you what should determine the time you start courtship.

Let me say that there is no precise chronological age to start courtship. However, courtship is not for boys and girls. It is for matured people. Being advanced in age does not connote maturity. A man or woman can be thirty or forty years and still be behaving like a sixteen-year-old. Three things should determine the time to start courtship. They are:

i. Divine Leading: I believe that this should be the major determinant of when you go into courtship. God works with timing and there are times and seasons of our lives that we must understand (Ecclesiastics 3:1). I Chronicles 12:32 talks about “Men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do” (NIV). Jesus also understood His divine timing. He didn’t do anything until the right time. He said in John 7:6 that “My time has not yet come”. So courtship also has to do with divine timing. Allow God to lead you and wait for the right timing before you start your courtship.

ii. Readiness for Marriage: I believe courtship should not last for more than two to three years. If you know that you won’t be ready for marriage in the next three years, don’t start courtship. If you are still a student in secondary school or in your first or second year in university, don’t start courtship. There is time for everything. First face your studies so that you can excel without any distraction. You may just be enjoying your friendship with the person till the time you are ready for marriage. You also need to be ready to make commitments that courtship demands before thinking of starting courtship. “Don't excite love, don't stir it up, until the time is ripe — and you're ready.” Songs of Solomon 2:7 (The Message).

iii. Maturity: This is very important. Maturity is what helps you to handle some certain things in courtship. Age does not connote maturity. You become mature when you start living life independently with God, when you can take responsibility for your actions and when you start looking beyond the present. This maturity includes: spiritual maturity, physical maturity, emotional maturity, social maturity, financial maturity, moral maturity, intellectual maturity, mental maturity and domestic maturity.

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7. THE ROLE OF MENTORS, PASTORS AND PARENTS IN COURTSHIP

"And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Jeremiah 3:15

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for 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" Hebrew 13:17

Making a marital decision is not something you can decide on your own. You need to involve the authorities that God has placed over you. Seek their consent, approval and counsel. Marital decision is one of the major decisions to make in life and you need fathers and mentors who have gone ahead of you and are spiritually sound who will be able to guide and counsel you.

It is the approval of your mentors, pastors and parents that validates a Christian courtship. Don't start a relationship with someone who doesn't have a Godly spiritual father or pastor who he or she is accountable to. It is very important. And don't go into a secret relationship. Courtship is not a secret affair. If the man or lady you are in relationship with doesn't want you to tell your pastor and doesn't want you to see his or her pastor, something is wrong.

Before you propose or accept a proposal, make sure you inform your church pastor and mentor and follow the rules that govern courtship in your church. The rule may be that you need to see the marriage planning committee of your church and answer some certain questions. You need to obey it.

For people in the same church, your pastor knows his members more than you do because he is a spiritual covering over them. So when you inform your pastor about a sister or brother before proposing to her or accepting his proposal, it keeps you safe as you would have opened up to true counsel from your pastor.

Even if the sister or brother is not in the same church with you, ensure you inform your pastor/mentor before you propose or accept the proposal. They will guide you and pray along with you. Don't be afraid. They are ordained by God to watch over your soul. They will give account to God. So allow them to give you godly counsel.

Some brothers and sisters are wolves in sheep's clothing. They are sent by the devil to destroy your life but your pastor and spiritual mentor will be able to see what you can't see because of being blinded by "love". Don't disobey the authorities God has placed over your life.

Your parents' approval and blessing is important too. Don't hide your relationship from them. Let them know the sister or brother you are courting. Don't say their approval is not important since God is involved in the relationship. You need to honour your parents by giving them the respect due them. God's word declares in Ephesians 6:1-3 that:

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. 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".

When you obey and honour your parents, you prosper and live long. Don't say they wouldn't understand. Even if they seem not to accept the person who is the will of God for you, don't react by disrespecting them. All you need to do is go to God and pray that God will touch their hearts. God will surely touch their hearts so that His will shall come to pass. Don't rebel against your parents. Some parents, especially fathers, want their daughters to concentrate on their studies and complete their first degree or second degree before going into any relationship just because they want the best for their daughters. Understand with them. If you perceive God wants you to start the relationship while on campus, all you need to do is tell God to touch their hearts. He will.

Genesis 26:34-35 explains that Esau married a daughter of Beeri the Hittite which made his parents (Isaac and Rebekah) very sad and in Genesis 28:1-9, Esau saw that Isaac blessed Jacob and told him not to marry from the daughters of Canaan but should go to Padanaram where his uncle Laban lived to take a wife. So Esau also went to marry the daughter of Ishmael. Jacob received his parent's approval and blessings.

Rebekah also received the approval of her family when she was to marry Isaac and they blessed her.

"And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them". Genesis 24:60

Ensure you don't go without their blessing. It doesn't matter who they are – believers or unbelievers – they are your parents. Obey them and give them the respect they deserve.

Involving your parents and mentors will make you committed to the courtship because you have people that you are accountable to who will ask you critical questions that will help the health of your courtship.

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PART II: WHAT TO DO IN COURTSHIP

8. WHAT TO DISCUSS IN COURTSHIP

Certain things are meant to be asked, addressed and discussed during courtship. These things are crucial and will help your courtship and marriage to succeed. Pastor Bimbo Odukoya said “Courtship is for interview, not intercourse.” So ask and discuss critical issues.

We shall look at eight important things to discuss during courtship.

1. TALK ABOUT YOURSELVES

You will agree with me that nobody can know you more than you know yourself. And for you to understand yourselves in courtship and marriage, you need to know each other. The best person to tell your fiancé or fiancée about you is you.

So courtship time is a time to let your fiancé or fiancée know you, a time to teach him or her about you so that he or she can understand your person.

Discuss your likes, dislikes, what you love and hate, your values, integrity, what interests you, your faith and many more.

You also need to discuss your past, your present and your future. There is nothing to hide. But I will encourage that before you reveal your past, let him or her know about the new you (your present) and your future that God has shown you. He or she needs to know and accept your past. The more you know each other the closer and friendlier you become.

Don't assume he or she should know you. Tell him or her about you and ensure you keep to heart those things you are learning about each other because this knowledge will help the way you relate.

Apart from your person, you also need to discuss your family. Let him or her know about your family and your friends. And try as much as possible to be real. You don't have to lie about anything. Let him or her accept you the way you are. Being truthful will help you and help your partner to understand you better.

Another thing you also need to discuss is your vision for life – your PURPOSE. This is very important because that's the major reason God has brought you together. You need to let him or her know those things God has called you to do so that he or she can help you and support you in fulfilling God's purpose for your life. This presupposes that you need to discover your purpose before you try to propose or accept a proposal.

2. DISCUSS WHEN YOU WANT TO GET MARRIED.

Another thing that is important to discuss in courtship is the time you want to settle down and get married. If you recall from my definition of courtship, I mentioned that the INTENTION OF MARRIAGE is stated. Since marriage is the goal, you need to discuss it.

Discussing this makes you to both know your mind and plans about marriage and also try to reach an agreement after you might have considered a lot of factors together.

The first thing you need to agree on is the year. The month and date can be discussed later on because some certain things need to be considered before choosing a wedding month and date.

Discussing and agreeing on the year you want to get married doesn't mean that you must get married that year. It can be earlier or later than that depending on what comes up but discussing and agreeing on the year gives you something to work with. It's like a goal you have set that you are running with.

But let me remind you that getting married also has to do with divine leading. Always pray for your set time and allow God to lead you. Timing is very important. So please wait on God and trust God for your right time. Let what you discuss align with what God has communicated to you. That's why your relationship with God is CRUCIAL. Don't joke with it.

And remember, the reason for this discussion is not to broadcast it and start sharing it on all social media platforms that you are getting married in a particular year. In fact nobody needs to know except your mentor, pastor and your parents if they ask you (It will make them know that you are serious). The goal is to help you have a target and what you are working with.

I remember a lady ran to me for counsel some time ago. She had been in a relationship for more than three years and she wished to get married soon but the man she was in a relationship with wasn't saying anything about marriage. She consulted me because she wanted to know how to bring up the issue without appearing desperate.

Before I gave her some tips to apply, I asked her if the man had ever told her he wanted to marry her and to my surprise, they had never talked about marriage all through the three years of being together. You can imagine!

Ladies, if you are in relationship close to six months and your man has never talked about his plan for marriage, you need to review that relationship. If marriage is not the goal, then the relationship is a mere waste of time and resources. So talk about your plans for marriage.

3. DISCUSS WHERE YOU WANT TO LIVE AND RAISE YOUR FAMILY.

One of the most crucial things a man of destiny needs to know is his DIVINE LOCATION.

A man of God said "If you are not in your divine location, you will miss your divine allocation."

There are some things you will miss and lose if you are not rightly positioned. And not being in your right placement can lead to a life of struggle when you get married. So you need to seek God's face and know where He wants you to stay.

By destiny, some people are meant to be in Lagos, some in Abuja, some in Abeokuta, some in Oshogbo, UK, USA and so on. And for you to fulfill God's purpose for your life, you need to know where God wants you to stay. The place of settlement can be an issue for intending couples if they don't discuss it during courtship. She may want to stay in Abuja whereas God has told the man to settle in Oshogbo; he may feel like staying in Lagos whereas the woman has perceived that God wants them to stay in Ibadan. To avoid this, you need to discuss it and always spend time together to pray about it.

The wife is meant to follow her husband to wherever he goes so it is important to talk about it so that she can start preparing herself for that place.

Now get this clear, the Bible says:

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" Gen 2:24

You are not permitted to settle down in your father's house. You need to leave your parents and start your own family with your wife.

Psalms 45:10 also says to the woman

"Listen, daughter! Consider and pay attention. Forget your people and your father's house."

The woman is also expected to leave her family the same way the man is expected to leave his father and mother. No matter the wealth of your parents, you must be willing to forget and stick to your husband.

One of the advantages of discussing this is that it prepares your hearts and also makes you see and maximise any opportunities [in that place] that comes your way even before you get married.

Please ensure you pray very well and get direction from God about your place of settlement.

4. DISCUSS THE CHURCH YOU WILL BE ATTENDING (PLACE OF WORSHIP).

I so much believe that there is a plan of God for your life and if you must become ALL that God has in mind for you, you must be an ardent seeker of God so that you can know HIS WILL for you per time.

Either as single or married, there is a right church for you to attend. You don't choose your place of worship based on your feelings or likeness; it must be as the Spirit leads.

One of my fathers in the Lord Reverend Olusola A. Areogun (of the Life Oasis International Church, Oshogbo, Nigeria) said "God plants your root in a church where you soak in nutrients for your spiritual growth and also for the fulfillment of your destiny."

You need to discuss your place of worship so that you can settle some certain things before you get married.

The norm is that the husband's church should be the place of worship and the would-be wife must be ready to attend the church but if there's anything she doesn't like or probably she prefers her church, they need to settle it and agree on it before getting married.

From my research, I've discovered that couples who attend the same church stay closer and last longer than those who worship separately. For the sake of your marriage and spiritual growth, it's better you agree to worship at the same church. By this, you will be open to same teachings and spiritual atmosphere that will help your union. What God has joined together let no 'church' put asunder.

5. DISCUSS WHEN YOU WANT TO START HAVING CHILDREN AND THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN.

No doubt, God is the one that gives children and He will give you your own children to fulfil His declaration of fruitfulness and multiplication in Genesis 1:28.

You need to also plan ahead for these children so that you will be able to train them up in the way of the Lord even as you provide for their basic needs for life and growth.

If you want to start having children the year after you get married or you want to wait for a year or two after you get married before you start having children, you need to discuss it and agree on it.

You also need to talk about the number of children you want to have while considering the resources in your possession and the economy of your country. There is no point having a dozen children when you don't have the capacity and resources to raise those children. Please, wisdom is profitable to direct.

There is nothing wrong in family planning. Just get a good bible-believing Christian family doctor who will be able to give you godly counsel and advice on the best method (which doesn't negate God's word) that you can adopt.

6. TALK ABOUT MONEY (YOUR FINANCES)

Money is good and it is very important in marriage. Openness and transparency in financial issues is also very important in marriage.

Now that you are still courting, it will be good to let your fiancé /fiancée know about your finances (your salary, savings and financial goal).

Wait; don't be scared, God will not give you a partner that will ruin your life. Trust is CRUCIAL for the success of any relationship and marriage. You need to TRUST God who has given you your partner and also TRUST the partner God has given you.

Brothers, I know what you may be thinking by now. The truth is a virtuous woman is a good finance manager [she will help you manage your money] and she won't "over-demand" if she knows your financial status. Don't lie about your finances, just be real and let her accept you the way you are.

Ever since I declared my financial status and goal to my fiancée, She has been helping me in managing it. Sometimes, I will have to quote Scriptures before she can accept money from me. I know husbands are givers, so I ensure I give during courtship so that it will be easy to give in marriage.

Yes, I know women love spending; some even said men are meant to work while their wives spend the money. But I also know that some women are considerate in their spending. They don't just think about spending the money but they also think about how the money can increase. So try and be open about your finances.

Another thing you need to discuss as regards your finances is whether you want to have a joint account or you want to operate separate accounts.

Since the two of you have become one, everything about you should also become one including your finances. Though some people still don't like the idea of joint account, many people are enjoying it. So please discuss and agree on the one you want.

Reverend Sam Adeyemi (of the Daystar Christian Centre, Lagos, Nigeria) said "There is nothing like 'my money' in marriage" even if you are the one working, it is 'our money'. I believe this will help the couple to be accountable – there won't be any major spending without the knowledge of the spouse and this will ultimately help the intimacy of the couple. So please, talk about your finances and how you intend to go about it in marriage.

7. DISCUSS SEX

YES, I mean you need to talk about sex.

I remember the first time we discussed sex in my courtship; my fiancée shouted 'Praise the Lord!' Interesting! Isn't it?

Then she opened up that she had been wondering if I had ever found her sexually attractive because I didn't look like it. She said I always looked official, spiritual and serious. Can you imagine! She told me she had to pray and tell God about it and she was happy we talked about it.

She explained further that being a psychologist, she has done a lot of research and written reports on human sexuality and she's looking forward to that day when she will enjoy sexual fulfillment with her husband as a form of worship to God.

I just smiled and said "THANK GOD FOR SELF CONTROL." (You know what I mean).

There are certain things you need to discuss and agree on as regards sex.

Courtship is not the time to talk about what turns you on and your weak points. It's not the time to be talking in a sexy tone or with sexual undertones. Please it can be very dangerous to pure courtship.

The major thing to talk about is your stand on sexual purity. There are many sexual perversions that some people practise these days. Even some Christian couples have given the devil a place in their home all in the name of sexual fulfillment.

I recall a story I heard about a Christian couple; the husband believed since they were married, they could watch pornography to help their sex life while the wife disagreed because she knew it is wrong. It almost became an issue in their marriage but thank God for divine intervention.

So discuss sex and hear your partner's views about it so that it won't be an issue in your marriage.

There are many Christian books on sex that you can read few weeks to your wedding that will give you the right perspective about SEX and God's mind about sex while also preparing you for sex in marriage.

Please NOTE: Sex is not something you discuss every time in your courtship and it is not what you discuss when you are alone in the room and on the bed. Don't tempt the devil to tempt you. You can be anywhere in the public and still have a private discussion. Don't give room for the devil.

7. DISCUSS YOUR EXPECTATIONS

People get married with a bag full of expectations. Even singles have their expectations for marriage. I also have mine which I had thoroughly discussed with my fiancée and also listened to hers.

One of the causes of frustrations in marriage is unmet expectations. The heart gets depressed when our expectations are not met. The reasons for these unmet expectations are not because the concerned partner doesn't want to do them but because many of these expectations are not well communicated. People assume things will naturally happen just the way they imagined: "My husband will help me wash the dishes," "My wife will be a full house wife."

Most of our expectations are usually formed by what we observed in our home while growing up and what we see in movies. But because your spouse's observations may be much different from yours, you need to discuss these expectations so that you can both begin to blend together before marriage.

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9. RIGHT SEEDS TO SOW IN COURTSHIP

“While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest shall not cease.” (Genesis 8:22).

There are laws and principles that govern life. One of such laws is the law of sowing and reaping. For every harvest, there is a seed to sow.

People who are enjoying and harvesting good fruits in their marriage are people who had sown the right seeds during courtship. To enjoy your marriage and be happy, you must be willing to sow the right seeds. Nothing good happens by chance. It must be consciously, deliberately and adequately prepared for. Courtship is a time to consciously sow the right seeds if you must enjoy your marriage.

Right seeds to sow include:

1. Prayer

Courtship is a time to pray. Pray for your marriage, your children and family. It's a time to pray against negative ancestral flow from both families that may want to recur in your marriage. It is a time to team up with your fiancé or fiancée and prophesy positive things into your future (finance, health, happiness and all good things). Doing this helps you to even continue in marriage. Learn to pray together now. Couples that pray together stay together and last forever. Please don't pray in a secret place. Choose the venue of your prayer wisely and don't do vigil together alone. Don't tempt the devil to tempt you.

2. Word of God

No marriage succeeds without the word of God. The word of God is the manual that contains the principles and instructions needed to succeed in marriage. Courtship time is also a time to consciously sow the seed of the word of God through constant study of the word with your fiancé or fiancée. Setting a time for Bible study in your courtship helps you to grow spiritually and affords you the opportunity to share some of the things God has revealed to you through His word in your personal quiet time and fellowship with God. This also helps your faith to grow together as the Holy Spirit reveals the true meaning of God's word to you. Doing this in courtship makes it easy for you to continue in marriage.

3. Acceptance

Acceptance is very important in marriage. One of the elements of love is acceptance. You need to start sowing the seed of acceptance in your courtship. Accept your fiancé or fiancée and make him or her know he or she is accepted. The Bible says "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). God showed He loved us by accepting us even when we were yet to be who He wanted us to be.

When we weren't doing what He liked, he still accepted us and gave us His son. It is this knowledge of our acceptance that makes us to love and accept Him as our Lord and savior.

So you need to accept your fiancé or fiancée the way he or she is. His or her knowledge of your acceptance can help make him or her better but you must first accept him or her. True Love accepts and bears all things (1Corinthians 13:7). Acceptance doesn't mean you won't correct your fiancé or fiancée when he or she is wrong; neither does it mean you can't make him or her better by telling him or her to change some of his or bad behaviours but you must do it with love and not by comparing him or her with someone or wishing he or she was like someone else.

Make your fiancé or fiancée feel accepted by complimenting him or her and telling him or her that you love everything about him or her.

4. Faithfulness

To be faithful in marriage, you must start sowing the seed in your courtship. If you're still involved in double-dealing (like trying to work out a relationship with two or more people at the same time) and think you're having a good time, then you are destroying your marriage inadvertently. Don't think you can change in marriage. Wedding day is not a magic day. It's what you do during courtship that translates into marriage. No matter what happens, you must decide to stay truthful and faithful to your fiancé or fiancée. Many men or ladies will want to date you even after knowing you are engaged but you must know how to say NO. This will help you to keep your marriage vow when you get married.

5. Forgiveness

Another seed you must sow in your courtship is forgiveness. Marriage is for two 'forgivers'. Offences will surely come but you must learn to forgive. There are times your fiancé or fiancée may upset you and do things you hate the most but you must be able to forgive. Forgiveness is the best form of love. I've made the decision to forgive no matter what.

6. Self-Control

Courtship time is also a time to master your emotions. Self-control is very important in life and it is one of the attributes of maturity. If you can't control your feelings and emotions (e.g. anger and hunger) now, it will affect you in marriage. As a man, learn to control your anger (if you slap, beat and abuse your fiancée in courtship, you will do worse in marriage). A real man protects his woman. As a lady, also learn to control your anger (if you insult and shout at your fiancé during courtship, you will do worse in marriage).

Courtship time is also a time to control your hunger for sex. If you can't control yourself now, you won't in marriage. If you keep sleeping around in courtship, you are sowing seed of adultery in your marriage. Say "No" to every form of sexual sin and be sexually pure.

7. Service

Marriage is a call to serve. You will need to serve your spouse, children and family. So take time to start showing the heart of service in your courtship. True love seeks to serve not to be served. The question should be “What can I do for you?” not “What can you do for me?” Marriage can only be sweet when the spouses have a servant’s heart towards each other. Though it is God that rewards our service, your partner too will be obliged to reciprocate and treat you well. You should start doing this in your courtship so that it will be easy to continue in marriage.

8. Trust and Openness

Trust is very important in relationship and marriage. You need to build trust in your courtship. Let your actions show you can be trusted, move with people who are trustworthy and be a man or woman of your word. One of the things that kill trust in relationship is secrecy. Be open to your fiancé or fiancée. There are many that believe that their partner shouldn't have access to their phones. It is a wrong belief. If he or she feels like checking your phone, let him or her check it. And if there is anything that is not clear to him or her, be humble enough to explain. Be free to pick your call in his or her presence and let him or her know who calls upon request. Openness is one of the ways to earn trust in your relationship. Be open, there is nothing like 'its personal' in courtship. Don't say 'we are not yet married, why should I be open'. It is what you do in courtship that follows you into marriage. Courtship is the first stage of marriage. If you are not open in your courtship, you can't be open in marriage.

George MacDonald says “To be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved.” So build trust in your courtship. It is very easy to love the people you trust and to be loved when you are trustworthy.

9. Commitment

The success of any marriage and even your courtship lies on the mutual commitment of both parties. Commitment is what keeps every marriage going. Marriage demands commitment of the spirit, soul and body. The couple must be willing to give everything into the marriage to make it work. You need to also give everything to make your courtship work and continue the commitment in marriage. You need to be committed spiritually in prayers, financially and emotionally. Be committed now in courtship. Don't wait till marriage. Give all it takes to make this work out for you.

10. Love and Submission

One of the instructions and commandments in the Bible on marriage is love and submission (Ephesians 5:22-33). Husbands are commanded to love their wives as Christ loves the church and the wives are commanded to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord.

Courtship is a period to start showing love for your fiancé or fiancée. Shower him/her lots of love and affection. Try to learn and understand her love language and start speaking the language. Show him respect and submit to him. Doing this in courtship makes it easy for you to continue in marriage. Don't let the wrong belief that a man shouldn't love a woman too

much make you disobey the word of God. Don't let feminism and women's liberation scheme make you believe that submitting to your man makes you a slave or insignificant. Irrespective of your title and accomplishments, ensure you respect and submit to your man. Your relationship and marriage will definitely blossom if you learn to love your woman and submit to your man genuinely.

Finally, don't be deceived; no one makes a fool of God. Whatever you plant is what you will harvest (Galatians 6:7). Start sowing right seeds today!

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10. MAINTAINING A PURE COURTSHIP

The desire of God for us in courtship is to be pure and I believe there are many people who also desire to have a courtship without immoralities. Having a pure courtship must be more than a mere wish; you need to make a decision to stay pure. The Bible says that Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the portion of the king's meat. His decision made him to put some measures in place in order to stay undefiled. (Read Daniel 1:8-9).

Research has shown that most of the people who start a proper courtship in Christ never have the intention to fornicate before marriage, but they just discover that they have fallen into sexual sin because they did not put some measures in place.

For you to maintain purity in your courtship you need to set boundaries and avoid the dark and the secluded places! Avoid staying together in dark and secluded places. The devil thrives in secrecy. Always let your meeting point be an open place like eatery, church, etc. Not just any open place but a place that doesn't permit immorality. I understand that privacy is needed in relationship but it must not be secluded.

You can be in the public and still be having a private discussion with your fiancé or fiancée. Also make sure you have a detailed list of important things you want to do and discuss about your courtship, marriage and your future together when you meet. Don't meet just to stare at each other's face alone or just to hold hands. The moment you notice there is nothing more to discuss and all you do is watch each other's face, you know it's time to depart! This will help you not to waste your precious time but to invest it in planning for the future.

Also, don't "leave your spirit at home" when meeting with your fiancé or fiancée. Galatians 5:16 says "Walk in the spirit and you won't fulfill the lust of the flesh". Never forget to keep God's word in your heart. His word guides and strengthens you at all times. Meditate on it at all times in order to succeed in your courtship! One of the ways to overcome sexual pressure is to always walk in the spirit. You can start your meeting with prayers and that gives you the consciousness of God's presence in your meeting. One of the things I've learnt in relationship is that when you pray with your fiancé/fiancée, it increases your love for each other and brings your hearts closer. So don't joke with prayers. You can have prayer meetings together and sow seeds into your future.

You are to help each other to stand. Brothers, you are to stand as man and resist the devil in your midst. Even if she appears weak emotionally, know how to build her up and ensure that you both stand for Christ. Sister, you also need to help him to stand and help him to help you. Mind the way you dress and what you do when you visit him. Don't seduce him either consciously or unconsciously. You don't need to reveal the sensitive parts of your body to show you are beautiful. Beauty is an inward thing; the hidden man of the heart, a meek and quiet spirit.

“But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of a great price.” (I Peter 3:4).

Maintaining purity in your courtship doesn't mean that your courtship will be boring. That's why you need to build friendship and be friends before courtship. There are a lot of things you can do to catch fun without fornicating in your courtship. Things you can do include the following:

- i. Attending seminars and conferences together, both on spiritual matters and on life issues in general.
- ii. You can go on a date, go shopping, go see movies together at the cinema, visit the museum together, and go to the beach with your friends. If you are both sport fans, go to a stadium, visit viewing centres to watch live football matches and discuss sports. Play video games together and many more.
- iii. You can attend social functions together like wedding ceremonies, dinner parties, and award ceremonies.
- iv. You can also catch fun by sharing life experiences together. Talking about yourselves and how life has been for you and your family can be fun.
- v. Visiting your pastors and mentors together and learning from them can be fun too.
- vi. Read quality books together and share your thoughts.
- vii. Studying God's word, praying and fasting together can be fun too since you are doing it with the person you love.

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11. ENJOYING A SPIRIT-GUIDED COURTSHIP

Courtship is God's idea and God is so much interested in the success of our courtship.

If I were to ask for your definition of a godly courtship I'm sure your answer would have been something like "A godly courtship is the one that exists between a Christian brother and sister after knowing that each of them is the will of God for the other"

As good as that answer is, it is not totally correct; a godly courtship is a Spirit-guided courtship. It is not just about being the will of God or being a Christian; it is about allowing God to be at the centre of the courtship.

There are many people who claim to be in a godly courtship probably because they are Christians or because God led them to start the courtship. But it is not just being in a courtship with a Christian brother or sister that makes your courtship godly neither is it because God led you to start the courtship. Though a godly courtship starts with knowing God's will and accepting it, it does not end there.

A godly courtship is a Spirit-guided relationship; a courtship in which every activity is guided by the Holy Spirit, a courtship that glorifies God.

Romans 8:14 says "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God".

Who is leading you in your courtship? Is it your feelings or flesh or the Spirit of God?

If you still kiss and do all sorts of immorality in your courtship, you are not in a godly courtship; the Holy Spirit will not lead you to kiss a brother or sister you are not married to. What can lead you to do that is the flesh and the flesh is an enemy of God. The flesh produces sexual immorality, anger, malice and selfish ambition. The reason you are still having sex in your courtship is because your flesh has taken over and once you start doing the desires of the flesh, your courtship becomes ungodly, making it open up for the devil to access.

When you yield yourselves and your courtship to the Holy Spirit, you will experience love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness and self-control. The Holy Spirit will produce all these qualities in you and make your courtship to follow the pattern God wants. You will experience peace and security. You will have self-control over sexual urge and anger. You will be able to treat each other with kindness, goodness and will also be faithful to each other.

BENEFITS OF A SPIRIT-GUIDED COURTSHIP

- It saves you from trying your luck in order to find the right partner

People who keep dating every Dick, Tom and Harry are people who haven't yielded to the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit reveals the right partner to you with STRONG CONVICTION and confirmations.

- It helps you follow the right pattern

The Holy Spirit shows you the way and pattern God designed for godly courtship via the word of God. You don't go astray. A Spirit-guided courtship also helps you to love your fiancé or fiancée genuinely.

- It gives you peace and security

You are guaranteed that you won't be abandoned one day. Many relationships outside God lack security. People are scared of being jilted and heartbroken; hence, many resort to double dealing as backup in case they are jilted. But a Spirit-guided courtship gives you peace and security beyond all understanding.

- It reveals the future to you.

In a Spirit-guided courtship, the Holy Spirit reveals the things God has prepared for you. He shows you the mind of God for the future. (I Corinthians 2:9-10). The purpose for the courtship is also being revealed to you and you are empowered to fulfil it.

- It helps you to engage in spiritual activities

Spiritual activities like praying, studying the Bible and having fellowship with God will help you grow spiritually and in the knowledge of God.

- It helps you to have self-control

When you yield yourselves to the Holy Spirit, you will be able to have control over your emotions. It helps you to deal with your anger and sexual urge. The reason many people still struggle with anger and sexual sin is because they have not yielded to the Holy Spirit.

Allow the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your courtship and you will continue to enjoy healthy relationship. All you need do is invite Him, surrender your courtship to Him and always be conscious of His presence.

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12. WORKING OUT YOUR COURTSHIP

I have seen many people give up on their relationship so soon just because of a little challenge. Even people who were supposedly sure the relationship was of God give up so soon and start thinking that perhaps God did not lead them to the relationship in the first place.

A successful relationship doesn't just happen. It requires work and prayer.

The fact that he or she is God's will for you doesn't mean that challenges will not come or that the relationship will succeed automatically. The devil is always looking for godly relationships to destroy; you must not allow him.

Jesus said "...I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18). Even Jesus admits that the gates of hell, challenges, opposition will attack what he builds (your relationship) but the good news is that no matter the attack or challenge, it won't prevail. Even the house built on the rock that Jesus talked about in Matthew 7:25 experienced a lot of challenges but it didn't fall.

There are times that your fiancé or fiancée will just misbehave or probably do things you don't expect from him or her. He or she may not even call you for days or do as if he or she loves you anymore; this can be an attack of the devil against your relationship. Don't react by doing the same or shouting; rather take time to pray and call him or her to order. There are times you just need to sit him or her down and discuss issues bothering you and the way forward, and it may be a time to settle everything in the place of prayer.

The importance of praying for your relationship cannot be overemphasised. It is not only during crisis or challenges that you pray; you need to pray always even when all is going on fine.

If you've not imbibed the habit of praying together with your fiancé or fiancée in your relationship, I will advise you that you start now. Plan to pray and study the Bible together when you meet. Don't just be financially or emotionally committed to the relationship, be committed spiritually through prayers and study of God's word.

Do a regular appraisal of your relationship; ask questions, look for productive things to do that will enhance your lives. Spend time together, communicate often. Set boundaries for yourselves; don't allow your emotion to dictate what you do in your relationship. Be 'righteously romantic' and spirit-led. Don't give up; start working out your relationship and God will help you out.

NOTE: To be romantic means having, showing, expressive of, or conducive to feelings of love. To be righteously romantic means having it in mind that you are a righteous being and

you must not do it the way of the world. Having it in mind that there are limits and boundaries you mustn't exceed as you try to be romantic. It's simply doing it God's way.

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13. APPRAISING YOUR COURTSHIP

I will like to share with you a practice that I believe will help your courtship get better by the day. This practice is what I called "APPRAISAL". An appraisal according to the dictionary is a judgment of the value, performance or nature of somebody or something.

Most organisations/companies usually do staff/performance appraisal in order to see how they can improve in their performance and how to serve their clients better. In my quest to know how to succeed in courtship and marriage, God opened my eyes to see the reason I also need to appraise my courtship. I have since then been enjoying a sweet and flourishing courtship.

Many people are still oblivious of this truth. Many just keep sailing in their relationship without a mechanism to check the well-being of their relationship.

Do you appraise your relationship?

Appraisal time is a time to sit and discuss issues, a time to appreciate your fiancé or fiancée for what he or she has been doing, a time to also let him/her know what you expect him/her to be doing and has failed to do. It is a time to discuss what you don't like and what you like, it is also a time to measure the success of the goals you've set for your courtship and also set new goals as you plan ahead.

As a relationship coach, I've discovered that meeting your need or your spouse's need can best be realised by communicating those needs. A lot of people assume their spouse knows what they need, but this is often not true. If you don't communicate it, he or she may not know and that can be a problem.

One of the things I love asking my fiancée – who is a psychologist – during our appraisal time is what she wants me to do that I've not been doing. I also don't fail to communicate what I want her to do that she's not been doing. I don't expect her to know it all because she's a psychologist and she doesn't expect me to know everything either.

Regular appraisal has helped our courtship a lot as it helped us to improve and get better. If you've not started appraising your courtship, I will advise that you start it now. It will help your courtship and marriage to thrive and also help you perform better than you are doing.

FOUR THINGS APPRAISAL WILL DO FOR YOU

1. It will help you to express your mind and accurately share your innermost feelings and thoughts about your courtship and marriage.

2. It will help you share ideas together on how to be the best and how to serve each other better.
3. It will help you settle conflicts: issues and problems get worse when we don't talk about them! Appraisal helps to resolve issues and uncover potential problems.
4. It will help you to connect emotionally and your love for each other will grow stronger.

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PART III: GETTING SET FOR MARRIAGE AND THE FUTURE

14. PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE

Preparation, they say, is the mother of manifestation. Preparation will save you from error and failure. To succeed in life we must be committed to discipline and adequate preparation. Success does not come by chance or luck, it comes by preparing for it.

People who are enjoying and succeeding in marriage are those who took time to prepare and plan for their marital life. You don't prepare in marriage, you prepare for marriage. Marriage is not a wedding ceremony that you can start preparing for few weeks/months to the date. For you to succeed in marriage you must start preparing for it early enough. My desire is to see marriages succeed and godly families raised especially in this generation.

After reading many of my articles, one of my subscribers was forced to ask if I am married. When I answered "No", she was surprised.

"Wow! You aren't married, yet you know a lot about relationship and marriage?"

I smiled and replied that what I know and teach about relationship are products of the inspired messages I receive from the Holy Spirit through my fellowship with Him, studying and meditating on God's word and what I've learnt from books, seminars and conferences about relationship and marriage. In fact, I never knew I would have to write and coach people on love and relationship, my aim was for personal consumption because I desire a successful and blissful marriage.

A great marriage doesn't just happen; it is a product of a prepared man and prepared woman coming together. My question for you is: Are you preparing for marriage?

You don't have to be ready before you start preparing for marriage. In fact, you don't need to be in any relationship before you start preparing for marriage. Start now! Peradventure you haven't started preparing for marriage before you started your courtship. You can start preparing for it now in courtship. Many only think and plan for their wedding during courtship without preparing for the main thing, marriage.

As a man, you need to prepare and learn. Learn how to be a good husband and father. Learn how to be a good leader. No woman wants a ruler or dictator for a husband, every woman wants a leader. Learn how to make a woman happy, learn how to give – husbands are not stingy, they are givers. Learn how to save and learn how to raise godly kids.

Learn how to have multiple streams of income because when you get married, you may need more than a source of income to cater for your family. Cultivate a close relationship with God now and learn how to hear from God. God always speaks to the head/leader about what He

wants to do. “And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” (Genesis 18:17).

As a lady, start cultivating a daily prayer life; a good wife intercedes for her family (Remember Abigail in 1Samuel 25:18-28), start cultivating the character of a virtuous woman (Proverbs 31:10-31); start learning how to be submissive to your dad, elders and authorities because you'll need to submit to your husband, start learning how to wake up early (a good wife is an early riser), start learning how to multi-task and how to prepare different kinds of food, learn how to carry babies and play with them (You may not have babies now but you can learn with your sisters' neighbours' etc.)

Learn how to make a man happy, read books about men and what they want. These are the things that make a wife, not the wedding ring. Remember the Bible says “He who finds a wife...” (Proverbs 18:22) not he who finds a lady or woman. What every man is looking for is a wife and wives are made from their mothers' house not in a man's house. So learn and prepare for that man that will find you.

As I conclude on this, I will admonish that you allow God to prepare you. God is always willing to prepare us for what He has prepared for us. Maintain a close relationship with God and let Him keep moulding you as clay in the potter's hand. Never rush out of the divine making process of God. Everything God is making you to pass through is to prepare you to become the person He created you to be. If you submit yourself to God, He will enable you to be ready for marriage when that wonderful day arrives.

It is better to prepare for marriage than to repair your marriage.

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15. WANT A HAPPY HOME? COUNT THE COST

Suppose you want to build a house, what is the first thing you will do? Won't you sit down and figure out how much it will cost and if you have enough money to pay for it?

When it comes to building, the best approach is to plan before getting started. After deciding to build a house and consulting an architect to design it for you, the next thing is to consult a quantity surveyor – a cost expert – who will help you calculate the total cost to complete the house, taking into account the costs of materials, labour, equipment and every other thing needed for the project.

Knowing this will help you to know if you can afford to build the house and also help you to see how your money will be spent on the project. I would like you to bear it in mind that the cost is usually broken down into the different stages of the construction process.

There are so many uncompleted projects around today because many are ignorant of the total cost of completing the project and as soon as they start and continue with the project, they realise that they don't have enough money to finance the project.

The same principles apply to relationship and marriage. Before you start a relationship and commit yourself to the marriage covenant, you need to count the cost and examine yourself to see if you have the spiritual, emotional and financial resources to sustain the relationship/marriage.

Just like the uncompleted projects, the reason for so many breakups and divorces today is the ignorance of what relationship/marriage entails and demands. The Good Book says that "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." A lot of relationships and marriages have also been destroyed because of ignorance.

When some Pharisees came to question Jesus about marriage, He simply asked them, "Have you not read?" This implies that we are expected to read in order to understand what relationship and the marriage covenant entail.

Furthermore, we also need to get wisdom and understanding. Wisdom is very important in life. Building a successful relationship/marriage requires wisdom. Wisdom gives you direction in life. Get wisdom and never despise it.

It baffles me when I see people who are succeeding in their academics, career and ministry but are failing in their relationship/marriage. In my quest to know the cause of these failed relationships and marriages, I have discovered that many don't pay attention to learning and acquiring knowledge about relationship/marriage like they do for their career and ministry.

Isn't it surprising that some people can pay millions to study some professional courses in their chosen career even after spending about 12 to 15 years of learning from elementary class to university level, but these same people can't pay a dime to learn and acquire knowledge about marriage and family life?

Some would even travel out of the country to study and attend business conferences for a career or business they will one day retire from, but they can't even attend a marriage seminar that is free and close to them for a marriage they cannot retire from (Marriage is a lifetime commitment that lasts till death).

Dear friends, how many books do you have on relationship, marriage, and parenting? And how many of them have you read? How many relationship conferences and marriage seminars have you attended? Reading books and attending relationship conferences and marriage seminars will help you to know the cost. It is like consulting the quantity surveyor in order to know the cost of your construction project. This will help you to know what relationship and marriage entails and demands, thereby counting the cost. If you want to have a happy home you need to count the cost.

Finally, we would do well to heed the words of King Solomon who said, "A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increases strength. For by wise counsel you shall make your war: and in multitude of counselors there is safety." Wisdom and knowledge make you strong. The wise counsels you get from books and marriage seminars make and keep you safe.

Just as honey from the comb is sweet on your tongue, knowledge and wisdom are good for your life. If you find them, then your future is secured, and what you hope for will not come to an end.

The good marriage, happy home and godly children you desire and hope for will come to pass when you seek wisdom and devote yourself to acquiring knowledge.

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16. BEFORE YOU SAY 'I DO'

Getting married is good. Many singles look forward to that day they will walk down the aisle and declare their marital vows in the presence of God and the people. The painful thing about this is that most people approach marriage with high expectations and low preparation; hence all they get is frustration.

You don't prepare in marriage, you prepare for marriage. Before saying 'I Do', there are certain things you need to understand.

Pastor Olumide Emmanuel (President of Truth of Calvary Ministries) shared the following 'musts' with us at Foursquare Gospel Church, Warri district headquarters during one of our youth week programmes: you must understand what marriage is, you must understand singleness, you must understand yourself, you must understand the male and female gender and you must have a divine conviction. These things he shared with us are explained below.

1. You must understand what marriage is

Many say "I DO" without knowing what they are to do. You need to understand marriage before you can succeed in marriage. God is the founder of marriage and He has given us a manual to help us understand His purpose for marriage. This manual is the Bible. Read your Bible and other Christian books on marriage. You can't succeed in marriage if you don't understand what marriage is.

2. You must understand singleness

A lot of people see being single as a sickness or a disease. There is nothing wrong in being single. Singleness has to do with being whole, being complete and being matured. We don't need to get married to be complete. Marriage is $1+1=1$. So embrace your singleness and work on yourself even as you prepare yourself for marriage.

3. You must understand yourself

Many people don't understand who they are, yet they expect their partner to understand them. When you understand yourself, you will be able to teach your partner about you and this will enable him/her to understand you more easily. So study yourself, know your areas of strength and weakness. Know what makes you unique and celebrate your uniqueness.

4. You must understand the male and female genders

You need to learn about the opposite sex and understand their differences. Men are different from women. Read books about the opposite sex and understand what makes them different from you. Women are known to be emotional while men are logical. Knowing this will help you to be able to relate well with your partner.

5. You must have a divine conviction

This is very crucial just like I have established from the beginning. Don't say "I DO" based on feelings. Let it be because you have a clear conviction that the person is your life partner. What sustains relationship and marriage is CONVICTION not mere feelings. Feelings can change anytime.

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17. WARNING SIGNALS IN COURTSHIP

Courtship is not for trial and error but you need to shine your eyes and use your brain. Whether you grow in love or fall in love; you should always use your brain. When you allow your heart to take a love journey without your brain, you will end up hurting yourself.

Warning signals in courtship are to make you aware of impending dangers in marriage. Many people are enduring their marriage today because they ignored the warning signals when they were still courting. These warning signals are sometimes ways that God uses to let you know that you are in relationship with a wrong person but due to the “feeling of love” many people have chosen to ignore these warning signals even when it was so obvious to people around them. Love is not blind when you use your brain.

Proverb 27:12 says “The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.” [NIV]

The warning signals that you must NOT ignore in courtship include:

1. ABUSE. This can be common to ladies. The men who claim to love them usually maltreat or disgrace them publicly. Some men even slap, beat and sometimes violate and defile them. The annoying part of it is that you'll still find these ladies running after the so-called man and hoping he would change all in the name of 'love'. That is not love; it is foolishness. Some ladies too can insult, curse and even slap the man they are courting and the man may choose to ignore this as well all in the name of 'love'. God will not give you a man or woman who will not respect you. God's thought and will for you is of good. Don't settle for anything less than good. If you get married to such man or woman, you are in for frustration. You need to run away from such person. A broken courtship is better than a broken marriage.

2. INFIDELITY. Another warning signal is unfaithfulness. Anyone who is not faithful when you are unmarried won't be faithful in marriage. If the man or lady with whom you are in courtship is unrepentantly unfaithful to you, it's a sign that he or she would be adulterous in marriage. They may claim that you are the one they love but it's not the truth. One of the tests of true love is faithfulness. If he or she can't be faithful to you, then he or she doesn't love you. Be wise

3. DISTRUST. Being trusted is a greater compliment than being loved. If your fiancé or fiancée doesn't trust you and always suspects you, you need to pause and think. The truth is trust is not a gift; it is earned by being sincere, truthful, not secretive and being open. If you are sincere and open but your fiancé or fiancée still finds it difficult to trust you, you need to first discuss it to know what's wrong and if it appears that he or she can't just trust you, you need to rethink before making marital commitment.

4. Being SELFISH and STINGY. Ladies, you need to pay attention to this very well. Some men can be very selfish and stingy. All they think about is what they can get not what they can give. It is very difficult for them to even pay your transport fare when you go out together. They are always complaining of lack even when it's obvious they have and they always look for ways to get from you. It is understandable when they don't have and still have a heart of giving. But if it's obvious they have but just can't give no matter how small, please you had better think twice. If he can't even pay his tithe or give reasonable offerings in church and can't offer monetary help to his friends, siblings and parents in time of need, such man will be a stingy husband in marriage.

Brothers, also pay attention to ladies that are experts in spending, that can't give or support you financially when you are in need and they have the money. All they know is to spend all the money on you till the last kobo. They don't care about your savings and financial goal. Money is their surname. Please think twice before you marry such person. She will ruin and frustrate you when you can no longer pay her bills. Be wise bro.

5. LACK OF FEAR OF THE LORD. Anyone that lacks the fear of the Lord and finds pleasure in going against God's word is a disaster waiting to happen. Many people always include that the person they will marry must be a God-fearing person but it's so surprising that many find it difficult to detach from such person when they find out that the person is not God-fearing like they had supposed. God will never give you someone who doesn't fear Him as life partner. His word even says we shouldn't be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. If you notice any sign that shows that your fiancé or fiancée doesn't fear the Lord, you need to quit your relationship with such person. It is the fear of the Lord in our heart that checks us from doing certain things that are against God's word. If he or she still enjoy the pleasures of this world and doesn't find pleasure in the things of God, please run for your life.

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18. MAINTAINING YOUR COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

Kurt Vonnegut, Hocus Pocus said "Another flaw in the human character is that everybody wants to build and nobody wants to do maintenance"

There are many people who are just interested in starting a relationship or getting married without thinking of how to maintain the relationship/marriage.

Falling in love, starting a relationship and getting married is easy but maintaining the love, relationship and marriage is the real work.

My final year project work as a Quantity Surveying student was on Facilities Management (FM) and I focused on maintenance aspect of FM because I noticed one of the problems facing the construction industry is poor maintenance.

I will be relating the findings in my project work to relationship and marriage since it's also about building and the principles of building are the same everywhere.

By simple definition, maintenance is the process of preserving a condition or situation. It can also mean the state of being preserved.

Research has shown that Africans have not imbibed maintenance culture and it's so disheartening that this poor attitude to maintenance is what is destroying many relationships and marriages today.

From my findings, I was able to discover some factors that are affecting maintenance in Nigeria. I will discuss two of these factors with us.

1. Lack of maintenance information manual: The maintenance manual provides the procedures and guidelines for carrying out maintenance of a building. Similarly, there is a relationship/marriage manual that God, the author of marriage, has given us to follow. He has also inspired some people to write books and teach on these principles and guidelines for blissful marriage. So to effectively maintain your relationship/marriage you need to read the manual. The Bible contains ALL you need to succeed in your relationship/marriage. The problem is that many people don't study the Bible while some study it but don't do what it says. Read your Bible, read books on relationship, marriage and family and attend marriage seminars. This sums up the manual you need to maintain your marriage and succeed in it.

2. Lack of Commitment to maintenance plans: Another factor affecting maintenance is lack of commitment. It is not enough to read the Bible, read other books and attend marriage seminars; you must be committed to doing all that you have learnt from them. It's not just the knowledge of the truth that sets you free, it is correct application of the truth.

Somebody says "Commitment is staying loyal to what you said you will do long after the mood you said it in has left you". So be committed to your relationship/marriage and do everything to make it work.

There are three types of maintenance:

i. Preventive maintenance: This is performed in an attempt to avoid failure or problems. Don't wait till there is crisis in your relationship/marriage before you start doing the right thing. Always ensure you prevent and avoid things that can cause problem. Deciding not to do what you know your partner hates is a form of preventive maintenance. It will help your relationship to thrive.

ii. Operational Maintenance: This is maintenance during usage. I call it "fix it now approach". Of a truth challenges and misunderstandings happen in relationship/marriage. In fact you cannot prevent some but you can fix them immediately you notice them. Don't wait till the situation gets worse before trying to fix it. If you notice anything unusual about your spouse, speak up and find out what the problem is. Don't even assume your spouse knows what's wrong. Say it out and get it resolved on time.

iii. Corrective Maintenance: This is a type that is required when there is complete breakdown – or when equipment or facilities are worn out – in order to bring them back to working order.

Many people in relationship/marriage usually get to this stage before trying to fix things. Don't wait till the point of breakup or divorce before you start fixing issues in your marriage. Many divorces today are a consequence of waiting till the issues get out of hand before seeking help and trying to settle things. The cost of corrective maintenance is far greater than preventive maintenance.

As we all know, prevention is better than cure. So don't wait till things get bad before you start praying for your marriage. Pray always and work things out.

As I conclude, I want to recommend that just like we have professionals in construction industry known as facility managers who can help clients/building owners carry out maintenance work and ensure the proper functioning of their building facilities, we also have relationship experts and marriage and family therapists who can as well help you in your relationship/marriage.

So get a marriage counsellor and mentor who you can open up to and who will advise and counsel you. It is not only when you want to get married that you need a marriage counsellor, you equally need one in your marriage.

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19. BUILT TO LAST – LAYING SOLID MARITAL FOUNDATION

When it comes to marital issues; there is little or nothing that one can do if one does not get it right from the start. Most of the problems people face in marriage result from a faulty foundation.

As an expert in the construction field, I can boldly tell you that FOUNDATION is a very important aspect of every building which you must not joke with or construct anyhow if you don't want the building to collapse. "If the foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3).

Foundation is the base of a building that carries the loads of the building. What determines if any building will last is the foundation. If you want a marriage that will last, you need to pay attention to the foundation. The foundation of a marriage talks about the beginning of the marriage. Courtship is the genesis or the beginning of a marriage. How the courtship starts and what you do in the courtship form the foundation you are laying for marriage.

God and His word should be the beginning of your courtship. Let your courtship start with God and continue by adhering strictly to the word of God. That's why you need to allow God to show you His will for you.

The type and purpose of the building you want will determine the foundation to be laid. The foundation for a skyscraper will be different from that of a bungalow. What determines the height of a building is the depth of the foundation. Similarly, the type of marriage you want will determine the foundation you are to build.

In construction, the contractor/builder you award your project to will also determine if your building will last. There are some criteria you consider before selecting a suitable contractor or builder. These include:

- 1: Technical Competence
- 2: Past proven performance

God is the only competent builder the world has ever known when it comes to marriage. Whatsoever God builds stands sure (2Timothy 2:19). Psalm 127:1 says "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it."

Also, God has a proven record of marriages that He has built and He is still building. So make God your builder if you want a marriage that will last. Don't let Nollywood, Hollywood and all sorts of magazines supply you wrong information about marriage (Many of the so called movie stars are having serious problems in their marriage). Get God's word and dig

deep into it. God's word contains all you need to know about relationship and marriage. You can also look for books by trusted authors.

For you to have a strong foundation, you must start with God, voraciously study God's word and apply it to your life.

TYPES OF FOUNDATION

i. **Faulty Foundation:** This is a dangerous type of foundation that you must not think of even though it is very common. There is no forgiveness, no trust, a lot of sexual immorality, no purity, God is absent in this foundation. It leads to heartbreaks and broken marriages.

ii. **Solid Foundation:** This is the type of foundation God expects of us. It is built by the word of God, prayer and godly counsel. God is present, there is purity, and it leads to joy and marital fulfillment. To have a great marriage that will last, you need to build a solid foundation.

HOW TO BUILD A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR A LASTING MARRIAGE

Many factors come into play when constructing a foundation for any building but time may fail me to explain the different stages and processes of the construction of a foundation. However, I will try to explain some and relate them to how we can build a lasting marital foundation.

1. Embrace Purity: The first thing to do when constructing a foundation for any building is what is called site preparation. It includes clearance and excavation. The land for the construction is cleared and freed of anything that will later affect the building that is to be constructed. In the same way, you need to embrace purity as you build your marital foundation. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 2:19 that “The foundation of the Lord stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows them that are His. And let everyone who belongs to Christ depart from iniquity.” You need to get rid of anything that will make you impure and that will take away God’s presence from you. God’s eyes cannot behold iniquity.

You need to avoid premarital sex and let your courtship be pure. Sexual purity is very important. Hebrews 13:4 says “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” God frowns at sexual sin. Sexual sin is not just sexual intercourse; it includes kissing, romancing, smooching etc., and you must not let all that filthiness be part of your foundation. Many homes are broken today even after 15 years of marriage because of premarital sex. Premarital sex is a great threat to your marriage. You need to flee just like the Bible admonishes: “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man does is without the body; but he that commits fornication sins against his own body” (1 Corinthian

6:18). Also 2 Timothy 2:22 says “Flee also youthful lust: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

2. Reinforce Yourselves Spiritually: Due to the loads that foundation will carry, the footings are usually made of very strong reinforced concrete and iron bars. You also need a foundation footing that is very strong so that the loads of marriage can be carried effectively. You need to fast, pray and study God’s word very well. The Bible says, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Jesus also told his disciples that some things can’t be done except by fasting and prayer (Matthew 17:21). There are some things in marriage that can only be accomplished by fasting and prayer, for instance, breaking free from negative ancestral flow that can destroy your home. So you can’t afford not to fast and pray. When you commit to spiritual exercise, it increases your strength. The Bible says “They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31). When you study God’s word and you allow it to dwell in you richly, it builds you up, increases your strength and gives you an inheritance of the kingdom (see Colossians 3:16 and Act 20:32).

3. Practise Forgiveness: During construction of foundation, a drain tile is introduced to collect subsurface water and move it away from the foundation to prevent flooding. In marriage, you need forgiveness to be able to discharge unwanted offences that may want to flood your marriage. You must start forgiving little and even big things in courtship in order to continue in marriage.

4. Love: Love is like the slab and sub slab. The sub slab is used to cover plumbing lines that goes into the foundation while the slab helps to stabilise the base of the foundation walls. Love is also needed in marriage to cover some certain things like your spouse’s weaknesses as well as to stabilise and sustain the marriage. The love I’m talking about is the God’s kind of love that is unconditional, sacrificial, selfless and lasts forever. Please read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 for details about this kind of love.

5. Submit to Spiritual Authorities: There is always a professional who is in charge of the construction from inception to completion of the project. The professional is referred to as construction manager. His duty is to supervise and manage the construction and ensure that things are done accordingly. In the same way, you need to submit to authorities such as pastors, mentors, and marriage counselors who will be able to help you right from the beginning of your courtship and also in marriage. These people are experienced like the construction manager and they will be able to advise, counsel and show you right things to do. Don’t despise them. The Bible says “A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increases strength. For by wise counsel you shall make your war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety.” Proverb 24:13-14. So submitting to spiritual authorities is for your own safety. It makes your courtship and marriage safe.

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FINAL WORDS

Dear friend, having read through all the truths shared in this book, I believe you have attained a depth of understanding, and I'm sure you are set to build a lasting marital foundation. All the truths in this book are time-proven and are sure to help you not miss it in your marital decision as they have helped me and several others.

All you need do is to apply yourself to these truths. The divine mandate upon my life is to equip singles and married with the knowledge they need to GET IT RIGHT and DO IT RIGHT in their marital relationship so that we can raise healthy relationships, build great marriages and godly homes. Please never underestimate the importance of the smallest of these truths. They are principles that will make you a principal in marital affairs.

Reading this book and applying yourself to the truths supplied is one of the greatest decisions you can make. So don't delay. Read, apply and recommend to your friends. Peradventure you are already married or a parent reading this book, you can help sow a seed into a youth or your children's life. Get some copies of this book for your loved ones who are still single. It is a worthy investment into their marriage and future. The change Nigeria, Africa and the world need is a change that must begin in every home.

All the problems facing the world today are because of the faulty foundation in the home. If things get better in the home and parents pay attention to their children by training them up in the way of the Lord as well as inculcating in them the fear of the Lord, integrity and the right values, the world will be a better place. I believe an end has come to the oppression of the devil against our homes. Homes will be healed and godly homes will be raised. The kingdom of God will be established in our homes in Jesus' name. I am part of the positive change. I hope you are too.

My marriage will succeed, your marriage will succeed. Nigeria and the nations of the world will succeed! Thank you and God bless you.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tunde Awoyele is a relationship and family life coach, author and conference speaker. A tireless advocate of godly relationship and sexual purity, I am committed to helping individuals, couples and organisations build valuable and lasting relationships.

I am the founder of LETAL Relationship Centre (LRC), a faith-based non-profit organisation that aims to empower, inspire and equip singles and married with the knowledge they need to GET IT RIGHT and DO IT RIGHT in their relationship and marriage.

LRC runs with a vision to raise healthy relationships, build great marriages and godly homes.

LETAL Relationship Centre provides consultancy and counseling services for marriage counselling, relationship counselling, couples counselling, family counselling, and individual counselling. LRC also organises relationship and marriage conferences for singles and married.

Tunde is a graduate of Quantity Surveying from the Federal University of Technology (FUTA), Akure. He currently resides in Lagos, Nigeria.

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Follow me on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/TundeAwoyele>

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Send me an email: <mailto:tundeawoyele@gmail.com>

Let's chat on WhatsApp: +2348060437618

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