



Revival Time Ministry

Uganda

Strengthen the weak and uphold those who are on the way to death, oh hold them back. (Proverbs 24:11 NASB)

OUTREACH TEACHING SERVICE

THE COUPLES WORKSHOP

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The Effect of a Bad Marriage on The Family Welfare

TEXT: Malachi 2:13-16, 1 Peter 3:7

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INTRODUCTION:

The Book of Malachi was written at a time of great distress in Israel such has not been seen during the time of the prophets. Malachi was the last prophet before about 500 silent years. The Temple had already been built, but brought no change in peoples' ways of life. There was Adultery, perjury, oppression, discrimination, widespread marriage with unbelievers contrary to God's Command etc. The Clergy were grossly contemptuous to God's decrees and people did not acknowledge God as the sole giver by withholding tithes. There was great poverty, suffering and misfortunes among the people of God. The people were discouraged. As a result of great turmoil, people doubted the love of God and had become skeptical about God's promises (1:2, 3:14).

The book is framed in a question and answers form, addressing key areas of faults within the Israeli community: The suffering was attracted by a combination of factors which include gross irresponsibility of the clergy, bad marriages and withholding of God's dues, a divinely instituted tax policy. See them listed below:

- (1) How have we despised your name? (1:7).
The Priest were grossly disrespectful to God (1:8-14)
- (2) For what reason? (2:14).
Dealing treacherously with the wife of your youth (2:14-16)
- (3) How have we robbed you? (3:8).
In not paying tithes and offerings (3:8-12)

BAD MARRIAGE:

The children of Israel had disregarded the Lord's command not to marry from outside Israel. There were significantly poor family relationships in the communities leading to rampant unfaithfulness and divorce. The marital covenants were flouted, leading to a significant number of divorcees among Israeli women.

God has high regard for marriage and marital covenants.

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He expects the marital bliss to continue despite marital age (Proverbs 5:18-20).

The marital covenant does not fade with time as it is thought in the sinful-laded secular communities, but its permanency can only be stopped by death.

Neglect of marital issues will attract God's discipline and leads to withholding of prayer answers and blessings (1 Peter 3:7). This is happening but the victims may not know. Many families are going through challenges which could be a result of poor marital relationship rather than demonic attack, which is always a common conclusion among the Christian believers.

GOD & MARRIAGE:

Family is God's own project. He designed and initiated it (Genesis 2:18). He gave it to the first man, Adam, and Adam appreciated it. Marriage is a mystery that fuses two people of opposite sex into one body. Marital relationship is consummated by sexual fellowship. The Bible allows only people who are married to have sexual relationship with their spouses. Any sexual act outside marriage is sinful, and obviously carries a penalty before the Lord.

There are four clear reasons outlined in the Bible as to why God created marriage:

- (1) Companionship (Genesis 3:18): Couples are business partners, advisors, security agents etc
- (2) Fellowship (Intimate Communication). These include a confidant, a prayer partner, a counselor, friend etc
- (3) Recreation (Entertainment) (Deuteronomy 24:5): These include an entertainer, emotional exhilarant, physical comforter etc
- (4) Procreation (Genesis 1:22, 9:7): This means a partner with whom to raise a Godly family.

God's order and design of a family: A family is designed to have a "symbiotic" relationship rather than a "parasitic" one. The husband

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benefits from the wife (Proverbs 31:10-29), and the wife, likewise, benefits from her husband. (1 Timothy 5:8)

The family is headed by the husband (Ephesians 5:22-24) and the wife is expected to exercise voluntary (not forced) submission. The husband should not carry out his leadership role in an exacting manner, but with love, gentility and much consideration (Ephesians 5:25-33).

The family institution is under tremendous attack world-wide; the attack is based on the four reasons signifying the purpose of marriage above: The Christian family is no exception to this attack either.

(1) Attack on Companionship:

A need for a companion is present in every one. God has provided for greater inputs and strength is a partnership of more than one individual (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). A merger of different talents, endowments, capabilities etc brings a wonderful desired strength and resources. Women are blessed with a better developed sense of intuition, while men are endowed with objectivity. The blending of these natural endowments in marriage results in total completion.

However, the enemy has cleverly crept in and ripped off companionship in many Christian families today. Although the husband and wife may live under the same roof or sleep on the same bed, they more or less exist as separate entities, with a high degree of secrecy and loss of confidentiality with each other. They may not even be aware of it.

The mistrust between the two can be so grave that an outsider is considered a better source of certain information than the actual spouse. In some cases, the external confidant could be a non-relative who is a member of the opposite sex. This is obvious the recipe for adultery.

Marriage is not just physical, but emotional as well as psychological. When there is emotional and psychological break down in marriage, the desired physical response will be non-existent. This creates an unnecessary vacuum which can lead to a sinful outlet. The drifting apart of partners is not just created overnight, but progressively caused by persistence in an occurrence or even a combination of factors, some of which are suggested below:

- (a) Lack of prayer together or deteriorated faith in God by one member or both in the marriage partnership team.
- (b) The presence of the third party in a marriage (relatives and friends). External influence is equally detrimental. There is a great temptation of close relatives taking center stage in managing a marriage. The intentions may be genuine, but it is against the Biblical principles. (Psalms 45:10) and Genesis 2: 18-24).
- (c) New discoveries (Information which was supposed to have been voluntarily declared, but then it was discovered instead).
- (d) Suspicious behavior and undertakings.
- (e) Irresponsible and reckless tendencies.
- (f) Suppression of dialogue, or break down in communication.
- (g) Mismatched or inappropriate partnership. (Prevalence of superiority or inferiority)

How to deal with the problem of broken companionship:

The first need is to identify the causes of broken companionship. This is a key to tackling it and the work half done. This will require humility and transparency on both sides, and also the willingness to deal with the problem should be present in both members of the partnership

(husband and wife). Many couples tend to ignore this, and yet this could be a holdup to many of their blessings.

Some tough decisions may be needful especially when it involves friends, relatives, employee or employer. Any establishment that undermines the priority profile of family must be considered a threat to both parties and must be sorted out under that context.

(2) Attack on Fellowship:

Friendship is the basic need of every human being. Friends are people who have deep trust for each other. Friends have thorough knowledge about each other and often have common interest and goals. It is confirmed that marriages that develop from friendship are much stronger and binding than those whose foundation is anything else other than friendship.

Examples of true friendship in the Bible:

- (a) Abraham was considered a friend of God because of his close relationship with God, and because of his faithfulness (2 chronicals20:7), (James 2:23).

- (b) David and Jonathan, the son of King Saul became friends (1Samuel 18:1-3).

Some of the basic attributes of true friendship are applicable in marriage:

- (a) Trust
- (a) Faithfulness
- (b) Closeness
- (c) Understanding
- (d) Love
- (e) Support and care

In reality, couples who exhibit and practice the above qualities to each other are considered to be in strong fellowship, and therefore in strong marriage.

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True fellowship cannot exist between couples who mistrust each other, accuse or suspect each other to be unfaithful in areas of money, extra marital sex etc.

Closeness is not practical whenever there is an element of fear and or resentment. Fear and resentment could be a result of failure to forgive, failure to open up or generally a state of general mistrust. Inferiority or superiority often can distract transparency leading to stock piles of bitterness and revengeful tendency. This could also result from undisclosed sexual dissatisfaction and bad or poor childhood backgrounds. Stringent controls and poor communication skills could result in deep-seated resentment. Remote controls are signs of a sick marriage.

The solution to this loneliness within marriage, to many, is to find fulfillment outside marriage. This is obviously a bad decision, because this outlet will serve to hurt more than give the solution. No soul that commits adultery shall be at peace (Proverbs 6:32-33).

Many spouses may not even know that their partner is hurting. They may be thinking that all is fine, only to be shocked by a totally unexpected event without prior warning.

It is often better and much safer to have regular stock-taking in marriage. Stock-taking is a time taken exclusively by the couple to discuss their relationship. It is always better outside of their home for a few days. This is totally strange in an African culture, but I strongly encourage it. By taking stock, you as a couple, will discover choking areas and can off load the stock piles before they mature and the other spouse becomes resistant.

Good fellowship does not develop over night, it is a gradual process. It may have become a major problem as a result of neglect and recklessness. Ignoring issues that are considered trivial in many cultures could culminate into a disaster. Such issues as:

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(a) Time spent together is considered a minor issue in most cultures of the world, yet is almost a universal need by all women.

(b) Undermining sexual fellowship is common with many women folks, yet this is generally and universally a priority area for men.

There could probably be many others in the similar fashion, which if not carefully dealt with in their infancy stage could wreck havoc to marital establishment, Christian or non-Christian.

Ideally each family is quite unique with unique challenges. It is up to the couples to establish the challenges and work together to rid the family of bottlenecks. Obviously, if not attended to, they will grow and clog the fellowship. Two people may be sharing one bed but be complete strangers or 'Islands' to each other. A good indicator is the frequent and uncontrollable fights. When this is allowed to continue unchecked or ignored, it will create insulation against answers to prayers and blessings. Such a couple also becomes vulnerable to attack and could easily fall prey to the devil and could be completely destroyed.

Peace and solidarity gives added immunity to marriage (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). Fights and competitions are controllable if the couple is mature, and are dedicated to the word of God. Priority areas, common values and goals need to be agreed upon with high consideration to the other's interest. Selflessness is the key to understanding each other (Philippians 2:1-5).

A conflict can occur, but the way it is handled really matters. The skilled couples usually minimize the damage that accrues from any conflict. However, the immature and fleshly ones allow for a spill over even to children and non-stakeholders. My conclusion is that there is no better external counsel than the couple themselves in conflict resolution.

(3)Attack on Recreation: Recreation and entertainment is a robust industry the world over. The man's need of being exhilarated cannot

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be over-emphasized. God has made a provision for that in the form of sexual fellowship within the limits of marriage. The different design of a man from a woman is not a divine error as sexual perverts would like to believe it. Human sexuality is a gift from God and must be treated as sacred.

Sexual fellowship is the engine of marriage. Any marital arrangement with limping/weak sexual fellowship or dissatisfaction is seated on a time bomb. A couple must know that one of their primary marital obligations is to satisfy each other sexually (1 Corinthians 7:2-5). The only reasons stated in the scripture for a time of sexual halt are:

- (i) Mutual consent due to Purposes of Prayer with fasting (NT) (1Corinthians 7:5).
- (ii) During the period of time of the woman's impurity (discharge of blood (OT) (Leviticus 18: 19; 15:19).

But common sense also dictates that the times of severe illness for either member should be considered as a time of hardship. However, a couple may mutually agree on circumstances under which sex is considered inappropriate and should be given leave. Such times as burial for close relative have been put aside as stressful moment and therefore the luxury of sex is not needed.

Today the enemy has created other ways to strangle sexual fellowship in families in order to strain the other person. Some of the bad reasons are listed below:

- (i) Cultural taboos. In Teso for example, a woman was not permitted by a cultural taboo to meet her husband sexually after child birth till the baby walks. The minimum period for the ban is two years. This is obviously impossible and recipe for polygamy.
- (ii) As a means of family planning. Many women stressed by the continuous flow of babies resort to strict sex rationing method. Many men who are victims of this weird and burdensome act have

found illegal means to gratify their natural desires. This puts the family at a bigger risk of disease.

(iii) Using sex as a tool of bargain. Many spouses use sex as a means to achieving a desired goal. Stringent conditions are set to be met prior to sexual favor. Sex is not a favor but a right of married man or woman. Conjugal rights are equal for each party in a marital establishment.

(iv) For punishment. The use of sex as a chastisement tool is sad, and it breeds resentment and violence. There are far better ways to settle an argument rather than a sex slamming ban. Dangling sexual favor as bait to conflict resolution doesn't simply work: It aggravates the conflict rather than alleviating it.

(iv) The absence of privacy. Children and extended family members, congregating in the same bedroom with couple or living within unsafe proximity, chokes sexual interest. Women, specially, are more sensitive to privacy related issues than their counterparts, the men. A couple should plan accommodation while considering the privacy. Children should be kept in their own bedroom as early as two years. This is also good for their own protection from divulging into mature issues at inappropriate age.

Sex is quite complex and delicate, being controlled by variety of factors. Some of the factor includes:

- (a) Past experiences. An adventure with multiple partners sets one at a disadvantage in marriage. This has been proven scientifically by research. Couples who started as virgins tend to stick together more firmly than those who had some experiences before.
- (b) Emotions and moods. Sex is triggered and controlled by barricade of hormones. Anything that upsets this balance

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immediately affects the sexual mood. Frequent arguments are disastrous to sexual fellowship in a family

- (c) Health: Health related challenges play a big role in killing sexual fellowship.
- (d) Pressure from work. Most employers and business people always want to maximize the profits. The employees are driven and threatened by deadlines, outputs, career development, competitions etc. This has a huge toll in marriage. The family priority profile has been upset. Japan demonstrated the most rapid economic growth. Japanese are noted to be the poorest love makers in the world.
- (e) Ignorance and low interest in sexual matters. Women and men function somehow differently in response to sexual approach. In women self esteem is a very crucial factor. Understanding of your spouse's natural body function is quite important in improving sexual life.

(4) Attack on Procreation: The Bible declares children as gifts from the Lord (Psalms127:3). Normally gifts are not a right of the beneficiary, but depend entirely on the discretion of the giver. The absence of children should not be allowed to undermine the marital establishment.

In the Bible times, and in developing economies today such as Africa, there is a great value attached to children. Lack of children in marriage is considered a disgrace, and mainly a woman's crime. This ought not to be. This erodes a woman's confidence in society. Women often become the victims of circumstance and wholly carry the blame for no good reason. The third party involvement even tars the family and on many occasions completely destroys it.

The couples intending marriage, should determine from the very onset, not to permit the presence or absence of children to be the determinant of the stability in their marital relationship. Both, and

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more especially husbands, should have the backbone to defend their partners from external aggressors and intruders most of whom are constituted by parents, close relatives and employers. This may not

apply to only lack of children, but also other issues that easily attract or solicit sympathy from a third party.

When a couple is blessed with children, it is their God-given responsibility to bring up the children in the Lord (Proverbs 22:6).

Bringing up Children in the Lord:

What does this entail? Basically it entails protection and discipline. A child must be secure at home and trained in right ways. The child needs both parents to grow properly and establish a better foundation in life.

A child needs the mother's as well as the father's love and care. The father must try to demonstrate the attributes of God such as:

- (a) God is love
- (b) God is always present
- (c) God hates evil
- (d) God provides
- (e) God protects
- (f) God is trustworthy and many others.

The imperfection in human parents affects the child's attitude toward God the father.

Women by nature are closer or nearer to children and they ought to be careful how they shape the attitudes of children towards their father and towards God.

Some women have unknowingly used the children as a tool of war against their husbands. Pitting the child against his or her own father, or an extensive campaign to win favor from the child serves to destroy the child instead. Grownup children, especially boys, should

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not be regarded as a security agent against the father. The husband plays the protective role to his wife till death separates them.

Whereas, the parents must exhibit love for their children, in the similar manner, they must be firm in disciplining children (Proverbs 23:13), Proverbs 13:24). The bitter fact is that some values are enforced. The “child-right” movements and advocates have done a commendable job to tame reckless parents. However, a big point has been missed in mode of administering discipline. The removal of a cane or a stick is no discipline at all. The Bible recommends a stick and that must be it.

The hands are used for loving the child and not for disciplining the child. Boxing and kicking the child around is not discipline either, but cruelty and torture, which are clear signs of indiscipline on the side of the parent.

There is an on going debate among the strict evangelicals and Bible adherents as to whether a man with rogue children should be allowed to lead the church of Christ. The arguments follow the lines of Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Paul’s letters to Timothy and extinction of Eli’s priestly lineage as a result of divine displeasure provoked by the conduct of Eli’s children.

Scripture References:

Against a leader with bad children leading the church of Christ
(1 Timothy 3:1-3)
(Titus 1:5-9)
(1 Samuel 3:10-15).

Dissociating a man from the works of his children
(Jeremiah 31:29-30)
(Ezekiel 18:2-13)

I believe that the correct answer lies within the effort put forth by the parent in ensuring that the children are trained in the right way. God

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did not seem to take interest the weakness of Samuel's children (1 Samuel 8:3-4).

It is quite difficult to ascertain as to why God seemingly took less interest in the corruption of Samuel's children. Perhaps He did by the taking away the Kingdom desired by Israel from coming from Samuel's lineage. However, It can be correctly assumed that Samuel must have labored to bring up children in the Godly ways compared to Eli.

Same sex practice is a direct attack against the perpetuation of human species. Same-sex relationship is not an orientation but a perversion, a gross error. Victims of this stronghold from the devil deserve sympathy and not stigmatization. The support given should not be to encourage the sin, but help them come out from this grief.

The same sex spirit is quite demanding but strong prayer, faith and counseling can combat it. The sex urge in opposite direction can be stronger than normal urge. For examples, the homosexuals pressed on to having sex with Lot's visitor against all odds. The Blinding did not deter them. The same spirit is in operation in the same sex practitioners.

Amen!

If you would like this marriage seminar conducted in your church, please contact Pastor Isaac Oyako to make arrangements;
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