

The image features a dark, atmospheric background. In the center, a bright sun is partially obscured by a silhouette of a bird in flight, creating a halo effect. The sky is filled with wispy clouds. In the foreground, a dark silhouette of a landscape, possibly a hill or a body of water, is visible against the horizon.

CHINYERE A. CUMMINGS

KEYS
TO A SUCCESSFUL
MARRIAGE

KEYS TO A
SUCCESSFUL
MARRIAGE

ADA CHINYERE CUMMINGS

Copyright © 2020 Ada Chinyere Cummings

All rights reserved.

CONTENTS

1	True Love	1
2	Respect	4
3	Understanding	6
4	Endurance	7
5	Managing Anger	8
6	Kind Words	10
7	Trust	12
8	Forgiveness	14
9	Sexuality	16
10	Adultery	17
11	Communication	18
12	Listening	20
13	Grudges	22
14	Money Management in Marriage	23
15	Neatness	26
16	Change	28
17	Character	30
18	Some of my encounters as a Marriage counsellor	31

Marriage is a sacred union ordained by God to last for a life time. In His mind, there was no indication that it would be time bound, but the Corruptor keep finding its way through just to destroy it. It was meant to last indefinitely in happiness till death does the parting, and for it to be so, the following must ensure:

TRUE LOVE

True love is a calm and profound passion that exists without prejudice. it's longsuffering and holds strongly onto forgiveness. It looks beyond the physical and it's attracted by qualities. Its affection is genuine and timeless.

In falling in love, something of who you are has to go: a part of you have to go and be replaced with a part of the other, or even your whole self be completely replaced with the other and only then there is a love affair. This essentially means the person is as important to you as you are to yourself. It's more or less a fusion than a just union.

Love is a perfect bond for a lasting marriage. It's a selfless unconditional concern for doing to the other what you'll do to yourself; right and good. It covers millions of wrongs and mistakes, but does not eliminate them because "Man" is imperfect, but love covers that imperfection in "Man".

If such love is cultivated by married couples, they will have a lasting and happy marriage.

An old woman once told me that in a real marriage bonded by true love, a husband is like a wife's baby she nurtures with tender care. Baffled by what I mistook for a cynical irony, I asked;

“What do you mean by that, Nne?”

It was a cool evening and I did not have much to do. I honestly was not in the mood for a lecture on marriage but something told me that I was going to profit from the rustic gourd of her quaint knowledge.

"There are different reasons why people go into marriage", she continued. "There are marriages of convenience, of sympathy, and help. When the frothy and ephemeral foundations or reasons crumbles, they usually head for the rocks.

She adjusted her raggedly one-piece wrapper around her waist and seemed to lapse into a reverie. She must have been very attractive once. The ravages of time and hardship have abused the alluring curve she spotted as a young woman.

"Some others go into marriage just because they want their lineage to continue. They need a male child to carry the name of the family. Some are forced or force themselves to marry because their mates have all gotten married and they need to be like others. It does not take time before the desire or funfair wears out and the thorny issues of irreconcilable differences will surface. Minor issues will lead to altercations and squabbling and when the question of divorce creeps in, mending fences become almost impossible.

The only marriage that stands the test of time is the one founded on true love and this is the marriage I'm telling you about" She smiled coyly and took a surreptitious glance at her wiry hands.

"As I was saying, the same way the wife pets and care for her baby is the same way she should treat her husband to get the best human spirit out of him. If a woman wakes up in the morning, the first thing she should do is to give her husband a kiss on his forehead, which means, 'I care about you' which is far better than a mere good morning. She then takes care of his immediate needs."

"Make him breakfast, of course?" I asked. She squinted a bit and peeped cautiously into the empty.

"No, not that," she responded.

"Then, what Nne?"

She looked quizzically at me and asked, "how old are u, my daughter?"

"16 years, Nne."

"Meh, this delicacy can only be savoured by the wife and her husband

with the greatest amount of relish in the morning. But do not trouble yourself, when the time comes, you will remember today and will understand."

I wondered what the special delicacy was that could not bear naming.

"As he is having his bath to get ready for work, the wife is preparing breakfast for him. With such care and love, there will always be peace in the home"

"But what if both of them are working, and she needs to do all those in the morning, when will she go to her workplace?"

"It's not the best arrangement. The man should go to work while the woman gets herself busy with a business. This is for the woman to have time to run her home rightly. She must have enough time in her hands to take care of the children herself with the same spirit she and her husband share and also take care of her husband-manage the home very well. But times have changed and wives want to work too. Well, a woman who falls within this category should learn to wake up earlier and tend to her husband's need so as to put the right spirit in him, for him to willingly assist her in house chores.

But if the two of them leave early to work, who will take care of the kids and take them to school? Don't tell me a house help can do it, because bringing in a third party in the name of house help is dicey. Some will teach the children a different attitude and input in them a different spirit, and not to mention a devilish desire for the madam's husband. My daughter, as much as possible, avoid bringing in house help into your home".

She said it with such vehemence that I wondered if she had had an unpleasant experience with house helps in the past.

"Nne, but one is needed to help out in house chores."

She puckered her lips and looked sullenly at me.

I smile and said, "I was only joking Nne."

"One more thing, she must make sure she prepares good food for her husband to keep him home.

If you put this in practice when the time comes, you will have a lasting excellent home."

"I meela Nne, anwuchule" (thank you Nne, may you live long)

It was like a folktale and it keeps playing over and over in my head. I am waiting to pass this gourd of rustic knowledge to my daughter and to all who cares to listen and It will, of course, be spiced with the best aromatic tincture and nuances of the present age.

RESPECT

Respect:- In my opinion, respect is giving consideration and honor to each other: respecting one's dignity and expressed views. It's obvious that two people cannot have exactly the same view on every matter: the wife's opinion may be different from the husband's and what is important to one may not be applicable to the other, but respect stands as the arbiter between them.

Respect tends to eliminate demeaning comments and insulting words from one another and fills their hearts with honour for each other.

How to maintain respect in marriage:-

- Do not talk down on your spouse
 - Stop feeling you are superior to your spouse
 - Stop overestimating your value and underestimating his/her value.
 - Respond honourably when you are spoken to, not with yelling or murmuring
 - Have it in mind to always say "Thank you" "Please" and "I'm sorry" when needed.
 - You must continually dwell on your spouse's positive qualities.
- Disrespect often results from keeping in mind your spouse's negative qualities to the exclusion of their positive ones.
- Focus on your spouse's strengths, encourage him/her in a time of weakness, and respect will grow.
 - Be a part of your spouse's successes. Assist your spouse in accomplishing his/her goals and dreams.

ON THE ROAD TO MARRIAGE

- Remember, you respect what you value. When you fail to respect your spouse, you are only communicating, "you do not value him/her."

It's often said, 'men need respect and women need love', but the truth is, both men and women need love and respect.

When respect is destroyed in marriage, divorce is not far behind.

Respect brings about understanding one's way of reasoning and communication. A partner in a union may be oblivious to the customs and norms of how the other thinks, feels, and see life. Consequently, he or she may inadvertently disrespect the other without realizing or even intending to do so, and this is where understanding comes in.

UNDERSTANDING

Understanding:- This is a very important point in a marriage that must be done. In understanding the other, one needs to adjust his/her reasoning- the way each thinks, and way of life just to consider the other partner. By doing this, one is trying to incorporate the other's way of doing things: the way he/she thinks, his/her approach to views, idea and to life itself, his use of words, and manners into one's own. It's like a learning process which must be done, I mean, must, just for the union to last.

Understanding is the conciliator of every relationship; it plays a very important role in marriage. With it, one can look away from the fault in the other's life and still remain in love with the other. To understand each other, you must listen attentively to one another with your mind not just your ears. You must be attentive to understand the spirit working in your partner at any time. Once you can discern the spirit, you will know how best to approach or react to your partner's actions or words for the most peaceful living.

ENDURANCE

Endurance:- Is one of the most difficult disciplines in marriage. It requires tolerating discomforts, abuses, challenges, or hardship. To keep to the principles of endurance, it then means that you must remain steadfast even through criticism, adverse times, and discouraging odds.

The truth is, I do not believe in endurance when it comes to marriage, and I do not subscribe to it because it's negatively bad when it stops holding faith. When endurance fails, which of course will someday, when its cup is filled up, its outburst is often unimaginable.

In many traditions, men are designed as untouchables and demigods. It's often said in Igbo land, "Ikpe adighi ama nwoke" (The man-kind does no wrong). And in another, "Di wu ndidi" transliterated as "husbanding is patience.

I am opposed to the tradition of subjection and will not subject anyone to such. Endurance grows into anger and it's often very difficult to contain with anger that came from endurance

Understanding is meant for a lasting relationship, not endurance. When endurance fails, anger and irritation take over and the union is one step away from break up. In true love, you understand, you don't endure. Try to understand your partner and accept him/her the way the person is, ie, if you cannot change the very thing in your spouse that is not pleasing to you. Remember, true love conquers all

MANAGING ANGER

Managing Anger:- When anger ensues in marriage as it sometimes does, the only way to stop it is for one of the partners to play the fool and be calm and quiet- not lashing back or trying to prove that he or she is right. When anger is treated with calmness, it dies away in no time. The one who plays the fool is not a fool, but the wiser of the two and that is why I preach true love in marriage. I will advise the wife to play the role of a virtuous woman and be calm/quiet when the husband is exerting his authority as the head of the house as they often do. It doesn't make her a lesser being, rather a great woman of substance.

Calmness and composure in the face of provocation is the measure of a wise person's strength.

Avoiding getting angry is the ultimate thing. It's well known that real management of anger occurs in the mind, your thinking. Couples should learn to change the way they think to be able to interpret situations in a way that diffuses bad feelings rather than encouraging them.

You have to begin with training yourself to think of your spouse as your eternal friend not enemy, even when he or she is holding onto a position you don't like, just try your best to learn to avoid expressing yourself in a way that would send a bad or an enemy message.

Always standing on a defensive ground is not healthy in marriage,

ON THE ROAD TO MARRIAGE

is an example of a behaviour that could send an enemy message to your spouse.

Couples should learn to avoid talking when angry, there is always a better time to express your mind- a time you can be reasonable and sincere. You can't take a word back when it has already been spoken. It is said, " When the leg goes to war, it often comes back, but when the mouth goes, it never comes back."

You can apologize later, you can say you never meant what you said, but the memory of your voice saying something bad, hateful or unkind will last forever. Stop before you say something that will hurt your partner. Sometimes this may be hard, but you will NEVER regret it.

Don't walk out on your spouse when he or she is talking, it's bad. Walking away either says you don't care or you don't respect your spouse enough to listen.

Finally, remember the words of our saviour Jesus Christ, ' don't let the sun go down on your anger'. Try your best to resolve your differences as soon as possible.

KIND WORDS

It is said, "Good words soothes the heart". A woman should learn to use kind words on her husband and she does not necessarily need to tell the husband to do the same to her because it's reciprocated. A woman who uses good words on her husband increases the love in her husband's heart for her and she gets everything she needs from him if he has it.

The wife should try never to use abusive words on her husband because the more she does that, the more she hates him and vice versa. Let the mind she has for her husband be godly and let her mouth speak blessings unto him, not curses. The words of our mouth are capable of destroying or saving our marriages.

It is written, "Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way. The tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself.

People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison. Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right!" James 3:2-10.

ON THE ROAD TO MARRIAGE

Men should also learn to praise their wives, using words like this:-

- Meeting you is a blessing.
- God wanted me to be happy, that's why He made you my wife.
- You give a lot, and I appreciate how much you give.
- You are beautiful.
- I like spending time with you.
- You make me want to be a better man.
- Thanks for your faithfulness to our family.
- You are a godly woman.
- Thanks for your diligence in running our home
- You are a fantastic person.
- My favourite place to be is with you. Etc etc.

When you use words like these, you make her/him want to do more.

TRUST

Trust:- It's placing complete confidence in one's partner, believing that one would never intentionally do anything to sadden the other- betray he/she emotionally or physically,

Trust in marriage is extremely vital for your marriage to thrive: trusting your spouse is key to a happy, lasting, and healthy marriage. Without trust, a healthy marriage can not exist.

Trust does not listen to hearsay, no matter who from. Even when caught with evidence, keep faith and never lose trust, with the intention that it was done inadvertently. Keeping in mind the imperfect nature of man and with love, forgiveness is pertinent.

Make your heart believe whatsoever that will not hurt you to be happy and live long. Keeping things that'll impinge on your health and relationship is not good for the heart. It kills one and the relationship gradually.

Trust and truth go hand in hand. That is why deception of any sort is the biggest trust killer. There is no such thing as a white lie. Being honest with your spouse includes telling the truth about everything. Many marriages have been saved because both spouses committed to being honest, even if it involved painful truths.

For trust to reign supreme in your marriage, start by simply being honest with your spouse.

A wise man once said:-

“Deception damages a relationship. The act of lying is much more damaging than the things that are being lied about because lying undermines the knowing of one another and the connection itself.

Therefore, your trust for each other must be nurtured and protected continually.”

You mustn't betray trust in the first place, because It's very hard to rebuild it in marriage when it has been broken. Respect the trust your spouse has for you. Never take it for granted.

“A marriage without trust is like a car without gas, you can stay in it as long as you want but it won't go anywhere.”

FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness: Considering man's imperfect nature, mistakes are somewhat inevitable, and where true love exists, forgiveness is needed to keep the love going.

Couples should learn to forgive one another with a sincere heart so the pain won't tarry and give birth to hatred

The sin of unforgiveness puts many people on the path to hell. If God can forgive you for your many sins, why can't you forgive others for the smallest things? You repent and ask God to forgive you, but you can't do the same to others. If you can't forgive, then stop saying the "Lord's Prayer, Our Father", because you are actually telling God to forgive you only when you forgive others.

Matthew 6:14-15 says, "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

The simple truth is that forgiveness can sincerely take place if we can identify the real enemy when there are offense and conflict in our marriages. We often see the physical perpetrators as the real enemy, but no, that's not true. Our partners are not the enemy. It's only when we learn who the real enemy is, only then we can effectively fight the battles springing up in our marriages successfully. Do you remember what Christ said to Judas Iscariot when he ate the bread? "

"As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

So Jesus told him, "What you are about to do, do quickly."

If you are looking at this statement with the physical eyes and understanding, you will think that Jesus was actually talking to Judas, but no, not at all, He was talking to the very one who has taken over him, Satan the devil. So, the very enemy in our marriages is not any of the couples, but Satan himself, who has vowed to destroy mankind.

Forgiveness can be quite painful when it involves someone you are truly in love with. In marriage, forgiveness is not "Don't worry about what you did, I'm fine with it and we all make mistakes." It sounds so great coming out of our mouths, but inside, we are struggling with the pain, the anger. Forgiveness is far more than our mere words. True forgiveness comes from the deeper part of our hearts, looking into the very heart of the offender and seeing that, let alone, he/she will never do such a thing, then your mind will be free of the pain and true forgiveness will take place.

Note this:- For true forgiveness to take place, one must completely take pride out. A proud heart will never truly forgive. The truth is, genuine forgiveness comes even when repentance is not expressed. You can only begin to know how strong you are until you forgive someone who wasn't sorry and accepts an apology you never received. That's in the neighbourhood of Christ's heart and it's the sweetest heart -a forgiving heart.

SEXUALITY

Sexuality has often been the center of every marriage. The scripture in 1 Cor. 7: 3- 5 says, "A man should fulfill his duty as a husband and a woman should fulfill her duty as a wife, and **EACH SHOULD SATISFY THE OTHER'S NEEDS**. A wife is not the master of her own body, but her husband is. In the same way, a husband is not the master of his body, but his wife is. **DO NOT DENY YOURSELVES TO EACH OTHER**, unless you first agree to do so for a while in order to spend your time in prayer; but then resume normal marital relations. In this way, you will be kept from giving in to Satan's temptation because of a lack of self-control."

But some women pray and fast very often and by so doing, deny their husband their body, which very often sends the man to the next available woman. It's said, there is time for everything.

SATISFY THE OTHER'S NEEDS: Each one has his/her need and satisfaction. The man should do his duty rightly, making sure the wife is satisfied alongside himself, so he will not push his wife to the next man.

I'm an advocate of true love, which brings about self-control. If true love abides between a couple, none of them will desire to cheat on the other. But the truth is if you can't discharge your duty very well, get help by reconstructing your mindset, or from an authority. Sometimes too, the woman's behavior kills or weakens the man's desire, so we should check ourselves and make the marriage work. We can do this and we need to do it for love's sake.

ADULTERY

A wise man once said, "Be faithful to your wife and give your love to her alone. Be happy with your wife and find your joy with her. Let her charms keep you happy; let her surround you with her love. Why should you give your love to another woman, my son? The skirt of a wicked woman is a trap. The foolish man gets caught in it because he has no self-control. His utter stupidity will send him to his grave and to hellfire." I guess this applies to women too.

Adultery has been man's undoing from time and the desire for it is becoming greater than the desire for sinless sex: a man desiring the other woman than his wife and a woman desiring the other man than her husband - evil! This evil is wrecking marriages today with ease: beclouding one's sense of reasoning and judgment, and also destroying one's physical and spiritual life.

One major problem I noticed as a Marriage counselor is, wives are being too decent, playing according to the olden day's format, but these men, all of them love "rough play," I mean the close-door-game, and the girls, the ones they're cheating with is mesmerizing them on bed and giving them no second to think about their wives at home.

Wives up your game. Remove a certain level of decency when with your husband. Keep their minds busy with your thought.

Pray for a cheating husband and play your part very well.

It's written, "faith without work is dead" James 2: 20

My humble advice

COMMUNICATION

Couples must learn to communicate with one another in a respectful manner. Good communication is the foundation of a strong marriage and a key to enhancing a cordial relationship. Many marriages will be saved if spouses improved the ways they communicate with each other. In a great relationship, couples talk freely, openly, and feel safe sharing their most private thoughts: good or bad and it helps in building trust.

Communication helps to stop third-party blackmail and gossip.

If couples do not communicate, the devil is likely to sow lies and other wicked thoughts into their minds. Talking things over together will avoid many blunders that could destroy your marriage.

If you are expecting your spouse to read your mind and meet your needs without error, then you are setting your spouse up for failure and yourself up for disappointment. Do not expect your spouse to become mind reader as a way to prove his/her true love and devotion, rather learn to communicate effectively with your spouse and make your marriage a truly lovely union.

State your points and needs clearly and directly without anger, grudges, or accusations.

Practice kindness as if your marriage depended on it. When you are unkind to your spouse, all messages become distorted and communication becomes derailed.

It's imperative for couples to exchange competition with communication.

ON THE ROAD TO MARRIAGE

Couples who compete for dominance or superiority end up in a complete communication breakdown, which is very unhealthy for a relationship. When the goal of communication becomes winning, both partners end up losing, then, anger and resentment will set in.

You can begin today to learn how to communicate with your spouse. Just restructure your mind and accept your spouse as yourself and communication will become easy. I know you can do it.

LISTENING

Listening aids communication. It's only when you listen, you will understand. You must be able to feel, understand and share your spouse's experience and emotions

You must listen to your spouse with a good mind and attentively, trying to understand what your partner is saying with empathy rather than looking for what's wrong in what your partner has to say or dismissing what is heard, even if you have a different perspective.

'A wise man once said,
I speak because I know my mind,
I speak with hesitation because I know not yours.
My words come from my life's experiences
Your understanding comes from yours.
Because of this, what I say,
And what you hear, may not be the same.
So if you will listen carefully,
Not only with your ears,
But with your eyes and with your heart,
Maybe, somehow, we can communicate.'

You are not just to Listen with the ears alone, but also with the eyes and the heart: keeping watch the mood and understanding your spouse's feelings in the most passionate way. Communication problems could be resolved if spouses spent more time listening than they do interrupting one another.

ON THE ROAD TO MARRIAGE

These statements have often been made by partners: "You're not listening to me!"... "Why don't you let me finish what I'm saying?"... "If you only let me, I'll tell you!"... "You just don't understand!"... "But that's not what I said!" Etc etc.

If you hear any of these comments coming from your spouse or anyone else, it then means you are really not listening. By listening, you are trying to connect with another person so you can fully understand what he/she is saying and feeling.

Listening is a vital and necessary point needed in maintaining a marriage.

If we can just listen, communication will be made easy and peaceful coexistence will be made possible.

GRUDGES

Grudges should be eliminated in marriages. Couples should learn to resist holding grudges and bringing up the past. They should remember that they married an imperfect person and learn to keep an open mind. Once forgiveness is given, the deed should be forgotten. Keeping grudges/malice diminish the love you have for your spouse and in turn, affects the marriage adversely. Couples should pray to have a heart that forgives and a mind that forgets the pain.

love is based on a couple's vows of commitment: "For better or for worse" — when it feels good and when it doesn't.

Couples should destroy the mindset of "someone else will make me happy". They should learn to put their energy into making themselves and their marriage better.

A crisis doesn't mean the marriage is over. Crises are like storms: sometimes very scary, but to get through a storm, you have to keep sailing- adjusting your sail: you don't stop, you don't quit, and you don't turn back, rather, you manage it, find a way to get past it and with prayers, the good Lord will see you through.

MONEY MANAGEMENT IN MARRIAGE:

Marriage is a union of two. The husband and the wife lose their individual identity and become one. "I" is dropped from marriage vocabulary and replaced with "We." The married couple no longer uses "my", but "our" and this includes finances. All income and possessions should be "Ours" not "Mine" or "Yours"

Couples should be reasonable in money matters, they should learn to manage their resources wisely. A husband's and wife's incomes in marriage should be merged and shared and whatever funds there are should be held mutually. This will require a lot of faith in the Lord, as well as in your spouse. 1 Cor. 13:5 says, "Love is not ill-mannered or selfish."

The husband should provide a regular amount for his wife to run the home. It should be cheerfully provided instead of grudgingly released under protest. 2 Cor. 9:7 says "God loves a cheerful giver."

A wise man once said:- "A miserly husband usually angers his wife into being a spender, just as a wasteful husband makes a wife stingy."

Caution and moderation should be the watchword in marriage.

Couples should invite God into their financial lives because He has some amazing things he can do with our finances if we allow him to enter into the process. Marriage is always a joint relationship between husband, wife, and God.

Ask God to guide you in how he wants the funds used and distributed.

Plead with Him to give you the wisdom to manage your finances James 1:5 says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."

15th Point. Make God our creator the head of your home and pray together:-

The scripture in 127: verse '1a' says, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." The husband and the wife should let God be the head and build the home for them, consulting Him in all things.

Verse '1b' says, " Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." If God is not guarding the love you found in each other, the evil one will sow a seed of discord, and the love you think you can protect all by yourselves will be brewing with hate and irritation. Seek the Lord.

It is written, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy part" Proverbs 3:6. You can never do a thing without God's help, seek him, "And the Spirit of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" Philipians 4: 7.

The scripture in Isaiah 55: 6 says, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." It's better to begin now there is peace in your home to seek the Lord, do not wait until the seed of discord is sown.

The saying: "The family that prays together, stays together," is rather to me, divine, for it is written, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matthew 18:20 . If Christ is in your midst, then, tell me how the evil one will find his way in to destroy it?

In Matthew 18:19, it is written, "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask,

ON THE ROAD TO MARRIAGE

it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." So what else is needed than to pray together as husband and wife and as a family?

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Colossians 3:16
"For with God nothing shall be impossible". Luke 1:37.

May God bless your home.

NEATNESS

Couples should maintain a high level of neatness that will endear one to the other. A dirty spouse is like a soured food which can never be appetizing.

Maintaining personal neatness is crucial in marriage. This is imperative on the side of the wife, not leaving the husband aside. A dirty wife is likely not to be attractive and appealing to her husband and this, most likely, can push the man's desire outside his matrimonial home. (I'm most certainly not encouraging philandering, no, not at all, after all, marriage is for better for worse). It is my considered opinion that a wife should employ every safe means to keep her husband home to herself alone. The same applies to the man.

The neatness of the body runs hand in hand with my first point, LOVE. The simple truth is, no matter how much a man loves his wife, he is also conscious of her neatness. If he wants to slake a desire and she is unkempt, he will have mixed feelings. If he goes closer and perceives a bad smell from her, it will definitely put him off. Such can never encourage a more intimate relationship. The same is also applicable to the man.

If it's said, "Cleanliness is nearest to godliness", I guess it's also nearest to husbandliness / wifeliness (pardon my coinage).

If you lack inward and outward neatness, your husband can lose respect and love for you and can easily fall into the hands of the next available woman. The husband should also maintain a high level of neatness for the marriage to be enjoyed.

ON THE ROAD TO MARRIAGE

Those who are more fleshly endowed should endeavor to bathe close to three times a day, because they are likely to perspire more, and should learn to use nice body spray,

Couples should draw attention to their countenances and appearances. They should learn to wear a sincerely happy, joyful expression on their faces. They should also look desirable at all times. All these are to make for a healthy and successful marriage.

CHANGE

There is need for constant change if a marriage must remain successful

The statement, "This is my way of life, my attitude," cannot make for a successful marriage. You must change to suit your spouse, and this is mostly done where the marriage is founded on true love. If you are not prepared to make a complete turnaround, then you have to meet your spouse halfway just to make your marriage work. Change in behavior is as important as change in one's attitude to marriage. Be flexible and ready to adapt to positive ideas. If your spouse is not comfortable with your attitude, it's instructive you reconstruct your mindset and come to terms with the said change. If the old self keeps creeping up and seems to get in the way, it never hurts to say "I'm sorry". It is a soothing balm that calms an angry mind.

There may be things you want to be done in the home which your spouse is not used to, effect the change and your spouse will follow suit. If your spouse is slow in following your trend, bend a bit, just to allow your spouse's time to adjust and accommodate the change. Continue encouraging him/her in the best loving way to grow into your idea. No one is an emporium of knowledge and no one is perfect. Considering the imperfect nature of man, we must strive to understand and put every good deed in motion for a peaceful living.

A good husband should nudge his wife into being the very person he wants her to be.

I take myself as a test case. I grew up in a rural village setting. I never cultivated the habit of dressing my bed in the morning. There were many other more important preoccupations and errands for my mother which I attended in the morning. Going to the stream very early in the morning to fetch water was usually the first call of the day. This is closely followed by the cleaning of the kitchen, sweeping the rooms and compound, and preparing breakfast. By the time these chores are done, I barely have time to brush my teeth, take a quick bath, rustle a little breakfast, and hurry off to school. My village school is located a couple of miles from my home and I must run to not be late. Dressing of bed every morning wasn't talked about and was not considered important.

When I got married, the case was not the same. My husband is such a man who loves his bed well dressed in the morning. He called my attention to it a couple of times, but it often escaped my mind, so he began doing it himself. But each time I see him dressing the bed, I will join him and we will finish it together. As time went on, it became a part of me. Now, I can't even sleep on a rough bedsheet as it feels to me like a dirty bedsheet. This situation should be applied in every aspect of the marriage for a peaceful and cordial living.

Shouting or humiliating your wife because she is not meeting up with little things you expect of her is not proper. On the other hand, disrespecting or insulting your husband is very wrong. Marriage is a sacred institution where you learn every day and grow by the things learned.

If everyone sticks to their gun, the marriage is likely to fall apart and this is why true love and understanding are needed in marriage.

Couples should learn to give different approaches to problems to get suitable results. If you do what you always do, you will get the same result, so change is needed, but if the approach you give brings a suitable and acceptable result, then continue in it.

We need to make our marriages successful to put a stop to divorce, my candid advice.

CHARACTER

A wise man once said, "Be faithful to your wife and give your love to her alone. Be happy with your wife and find your joy with her. Let her charms keep you happy; let her surround you with her love. Why should you give your love to another woman, my son? The skirt of a wicked woman is a trap. The foolish man gets caught in it because he has no self-control. His utter stupidity will send him to his grave and to hellfire." I guess this applies to women too.

Adultery has been man's undoing from time and the desire for it is becoming greater than the desire for sinless sex: a man desiring the other woman than his wife and a woman desiring the other man than her husband - evil! This evil is wrecking marriages today with ease: beclouding one's sense of reasoning and judgment, and also destroying one's physical and spiritual life.

One major problem I noticed as a Marriage counselor is, wives are being too decent, playing according to the olden day's format, but these men, all of them love "rough play," I mean the close-door-game, and the girls, the ones they're cheating with is mesmerizing them on bed and giving them no second to think about their wives at home.

Wives up your game. Remove a certain level of decency when with your husband. Keep their minds busy with your thought.

Pray for a cheating husband and play your part very well.

It's written, "faith without work is dead" James 2: 20

My humble advice

SOME OF MY ENCOUNTERS AS A MARRIAGE COUNSELLOR

Case One:-

A young lady sent me a message on 'The Marriage Counsellor' saying, "My husband is cheating on me, I feel like leaving him because it shows he has no regard for me and a friend of mine advised me to leave him also."

Then I asked her, "how old is your marriage and how many kids do you have?"

"3yrs with two kids. Two boys." She said.

"You caught him in the act or someone told you?" I asked.

"My friend saw him and the girl coming out of a hotel laughing and she took pictures of them together." She said.

Then I said, "First, your so-called friend, is not your friend, she is the devil's assistant. Do away with her. Tell her to never come to your house again. You do not need such a friend.

Secondly, If you leave your home, that so-called friend will be the first to take over your husband. Understood?" But she did not respond. I smiled. I guess she didn't take it kindly.

When your husband got home," I continued. "Did you first welcome him with a good mind, serve his food, and ask him how his day went?"

"No, of course. I'm aware of how his day went." She responded angrily.

"So what did you do?"

"I lashed out at him the moment he got back and quarrel ensued." She said.

"Just as I know it will," I thought. "What was his explanation?"

"He said it was a business discussion. Then I asked him if business discussions now take place in a hotel room?" She said.

"But your informant did not tell you it was in a hotel room," I asked

"The same thing! They are all the same thing". A show of anger in her response.

"I can see you are still very angry. But my little advice is, stay in your home and take care of it. It will be better you take your husband's explanation than that of your friend. You are taking your husband's words over your friend's words because you want to remain happy and once you lose your happiness you will begin to lose yourself.

If you leave your home with your two kids, after training them, they will look for their Dad, they are boys, remember. If you leave them with their dad, another woman will come in and treat them as second class citizens.

Again, you do not know who and what the next man you will come in contact with will do to you, ie, if you decide to go into another relationship.

Stay back and manage your home. If there is an unusual happening in your home talk it over peacefully and pray to God, who is ever there for you and He will always solve the problem."

She kept quiet for a while and later said, "Thank you, I will try to agree with you because I love him so much."

I kept quiet too and did not respond. After a while she wrote, "Are you there?"

"Yes, I'm here," I responded.

"What if he is lying and he is cheating on me?"

"There is no need thinking in that direction, it will only hurt you. Think of the things that will make you happy so you will live a stress-free life for you to live long." I answered.

"Thank you, once again. I will try." She concluded.

"And may God help you. Stay blessed." I added

Case Two:-

My little advice for men:-

Do not listen to your wife's utterances when she is in an angry mood, even if you are hearing her, overwrite them with her words in her good mood. Better still, overlook them, because, at that point, the evil one is hovering around trying to cause disunity. As Satan is prompting her to use bad words on you, he is also inciting you to react wrongly. We know the wiles of the evil one, so we should try to desist from walking his path.

I'm saying this to stop wife battery. There is an issue I'm trying to proffer solution to. This man was once very rich and established a good business for his wife. Somewhere along the line, things went bad for the man and the wife became the breadwinner. After about a year, the woman began using bad words on him anytime there is a misunderstanding in the house. So, in one of their altercations, the woman said, "Useless man, don't go out and look for something to do, sit back here and let me be feeding you. Layabout!" Her husband got angry and slapped her with his pained heart and she concussed. When she came around, she packed her things and left. As she left, her husband went and double-locked her boutique and asked someone to watch over it to stop her from entering it.

Now, her husband wants her back, but she is refusing, so he saw my page and contacted me.

When he narrated the matter to me, I told him clearly that her statement was bad and that he should swallow his pride and let her be.

The truth is, I don't like getting involved when it comes to wife battery, because some have led to death, but the man said it was his first time to lay his hands on his wife in ten years of their marriage.

I called his wife, though at first, she was not interested in what I was saying, she even offed her phone on me. A couple of days later, I sent her an SMS, then she called me back, and as we were talking, I said to her,

"1st, your husband's business has an extension in your business, so it did not go down as you think. He established the very business you are doing today with his money, so it is his business too.

You people are one so whatever you have is his too.

Secondly, your words were very bad, they aren't Godly at all. Whatever you say to him, you are referring to yourself also, because

the two of you are one flesh, that was the vow you took in the presence of God and man."

"But he slapped me so badly that I almost passed out." She said.

"Because you riled him so much and his human nature took over him as yours took over you.."

"You are supporting him? She cut in.

"No, I'm supporting no one. What people must understand is, marriage is ruled by God and Love. Where there is no love satan comes in and where there is no God, satan rules. You were controlled by your human nature, and so was he and the scripture in Romans 8: 6-9 says,

"To be controlled by human nature results in death; to be controlled by the Spirit results in life and peace. And so a person becomes an enemy of God when he is controlled by his human nature; for he does not obey God's law, and he cannot obey it. Those who obey their human nature cannot please God. But you do not live as your human nature tells you to; instead, you live as the Spirit tells you to - if, in fact, God's Spirit lives in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him."

"I'm not the one who wrote this, it's the word of God, and I can't support him. He was ruled by pride and pride begets anger and the two are offsprings of the evil one and the evil one works with our human nature and that's the reason you are separated today. Go and mend your home and let the Spirit of God that brings life and peace reign in your home. He is very sorry for what he did and has promised not to do it again."

She paused for a while and said, "I will think about it. Thank you. I'm sorry for the way I treated you the first time you called me. Very sorry."

"It's nothing, thanks and God bless you. Bye," I responded. (I referred her to my page www.facebook.com/themarriagecounselor3 to read the 5th and 6th point to be observed in marriage: "Managing Anger and Kind Words" and she promised to check it out.)

Wife battery is bad and devilish and abusive words are also bad and devilish. We can decide to let the Spirit rule us.

God bless you.

Case Three:-

I was leaning over at my balcony when my neighbor's wife rushed out of the house in an unpleasant mood and sat down outside their fence. Imagining what was going on, her husband walked out to her and said, "what are you doing out here?" But she did not respond. Midway walking away, he stopped and said, "I'm hungry, I want to eat." She still did not say a word. Her husband glanced around, maybe checking if someone was looking, at that point, I looked away. Noticing my presence, he walked inside with his face facing down(I supposed, in shame) His wife took a stroll on the street and we had eye contact and she greeted, I responded and walked inside my house.

A few minutes later, there was a knock at my gate and I asked my daughter to check and open the gate, and lo, it was her. She came in and said she just wanted to say hello. I took a quick glance at her and looked away without saying a word. I later asked my daughter to offer her something but she refused to take anything so I continued seeing the movie: The Good Wife, I was seeing before she came in. A few minutes later I asked, "how is your husband?" I don't know. Mhe he should be fine." She said. I smiled and returned my attention to the movie. "Aunt, my husband is cheating on me," she said. "How are you sure of that?" I asked. "As we were coming back from somewhere, my husband abruptly stopped the car by the roadside, excused himself and rushed to a lady standing by the roadside, they hugged warmly and charted excitedly. Later, he came into the car and drove off," she said. "And that was your conclusion of cheating on you?" I asked. "Yes, of course. What could be the meaning to that if they are not friends?" "I don't know. But did he introduce you to the lady as his wife?" "I'm not interested in that", she said angrily. I did not want to tell her that she was being rude to me by answering in that manner, because she was visibly angry. I kept quiet for a while and said, I thought I overheard him telling you he was hungry?" "He should go and make his food himself or better still, he should go and ask the lady to make food for him." I smiled and thought, "that's childish", but I know she will grow up someday. "So you will allow him to eat another woman's food? I asked. "I don't care." She responded sharply. It seems to me you are pregnant, say about three months and you have a boy of about a year old?" I asked. Yes, and he is ten months old," she said. "And you don't care about your

husband? Why did you come here to tell me about your husband when you do not care about him?" I asked. "Just to ease my mind and maybe seek your advice. But before I'll say anything to you, go and give him his food. My mother once told me something before I got married, she said, "no matter what the quarrel is between you and your husband, make sure you give him food, good food, never allow him to go outside to eat. So, I'm telling you the same now. Go back home and give him food, then you can come back for us to talk about the so-called cheating on you." I said. "You do not believe me?" She asked. "There is nothing to believe about now, just go first." She left but did not come back that day. The next day being Sunday, I saw the two of them in car charting and smiling while going to the church, I smiled and minded my business. That evening as I was getting ready to go to the saloon, they visited. "Thank you for yesterday, you saved a situation". Her husband said. "I thank God," I responded.

She actually made me very angry when she told me to go to hell, I never expected such from her, but before I finished the food she gave me, my mind was free." He said. "And he slapped me", his wife cut in. I do not want to sound 'feminist' either do I want to lose my natural trait of rationality. "But why are you cheating on her?" I asked him. "Is that what she said?" "Not really, but the hugging and the rest had a deep story to tell. I will only advise that the hugging should not be that intimate when next a hugging incident occurs so you won't hurt her feeling. For her words, I believe they were momentary. Then I told her a saying my father once told me "if the leg goes to war, it'll come back, but when the mouth goes, it stays." I advised her not to speak to him when she is very angry, she could regrate her words later and they could reduce his mind's feelings for her. And to the man I said, no one touches a pregnant woman, no matter how angry he is. They stayed awhile, thanked me, and left.

Case Four

A Facebook friend sent me a message saying, 'Hi Ada, some people fall into some kind of sin, not because they want to, but because they are pushed into it. The wife I married is trying to be a saint in my house: she prays and fasts every day, not letting me get a feel of her- of what God has given me freely, though I paid her brideprice. Well, I have decided to look for a young girl who will help me. I'm saying this in connection with what u wrote on ur Facebook wall.'

I was visibly elated by what he said: someone got touched by my post. Then I responded, if u need my help, then tell her that u people's Pastor or Rev Fr. said u should tell her to read 1Cort. 7:3-5, which says, "a man should fulfill his duty as a husband, and a woman should fulfill her duty as a wife, and each should satisfy the other's need. A wife is not the master of her own body, but her husband is; in the same way a husband is not the master of his own body, but his wife is. Do not deny yourselves to each other, unless you first agree to do so for a while to spend your time in prayer and fasting; but then resume normal marital relations. In this way, you will be kept from giving in to Satan's temptation because of your lack of self-control. "

Then he said he'll give it a try.'

A week later, which was yesterday, he sent me another message saying, since then, I have been getting a fair share of the deal. I told her our Pastor gave her the scripture. '

I smiled and wanted to ask what's the deal? But a mind said to me, don't be stupid. So I decided not to be and said, we thank God it worked.

Some of my Facebook posts:-

(1) Marriage of convenience is very bad. When quarrel sets in, nothing holds the couple back from antagonizing one another: no

soft spot, no retreat, no mercy, divorce is always the end. It's better to marry for love. The mind will always be telling you when quarrel ensues "let him/her be, it's the devil that's doing this. I know he/she loves me." And in no time, they are back in love. How I wish the youths will listen.

(2) When we look at a situation from only our perspective or experience, we risk assigning wrong motives or misinterpretation of other people's feelings, actions, or reactions, but when we seek to put ourselves in their shoes, we gain an understanding that often helps us be more patient and supportive of others.

(3) There is an irrepressible conflict between truth and falsehood, as light and darkness can never harmonize. To uphold and defend one is to attack and overthrow the other. Stand-in for truth or you go down with falsehood. There is no sitting on the fence.

(4) Most men think that philandering is their birthright, not knowing that they are moving faster into destruction. Some women are fast embracing promiscuity and are dancing the spirit dance-'Surugede'

It's said, "The only thing that can destroy you is you", and I feel that the only thing that can save you from you is to keep the Commandments and teaching of Christ alive in your mind.

It is written, "To be controlled by human nature results in death; and to be controlled by the Spirit results in life and peace. Romans 8:6

(5) The most wonderful heart is the heart that knows how to appreciate, love, and forgive.

(6) About 12yrs into my marriage, in 2014, a young lady leaving at the back of my street walked into my house, greeted and said, "please aunty I'll like to speak with u". I gave her audience and she said, "I need your help, It seems I'm pregnant and we cannot afford to keep it: myself and my fiancé are not ready for a baby now. I don't

have a job; I'm still looking for one. My fiancé's workplace just closed down a couple of months ago and they've been owing him three months' salary before they finally packed up. We can't even feed ourselves let alone take care of pregnancy and a baby."

"So what do u want me to do?" I asked.

She went on her knees and said, "please I need 20,000."

"Sit down first and tell me what u need the money for," I responded

"I want to have an abortion, though I'm very scared because of all the bad things I've heard about it, like losing one's life or womb and others, that's the only positive thing in my mind now, please aunty. "

"Negative thing, you mean?" If you've heard all these, which of course I've heard too, why do you want to go ahead with it?" I asked.

"There is no other option and moreover, it's only introduction he has done. I can't keep it."

"But is he aware of this u are about to do?"

"Yes, he gave his consent."

"I won't help u till I hear from him, only then I'll ask my doctor to help."

"Ok aunty". Thank u very much."

She hurriedly left my house. About 30 minutes later, she came back with her fiancé and the two of them agreed to have the abortion. Then I told them that I'm not comfortable with D&C, but I'll talk to my doctor for an alternative. They were happy and left. That evening, I went to a pharmacy and bought some drugs: Fefol, B-Complex, and folic acid. I removed the Fefol from its packet and sent it for her. When she came, i told her that i have spoken to my doctor and he gave me some drugs that will gradually remove the pregnancy. I told her that the Fefol is the most important one and gave her all the prescriptions for about three months. I also told her that nausea, weakness, and feverish conditions are some of the side effects of the drugs. She was very happy, she thanked me and as she was about leaving, I gave her the 20,000 she had requested from me and said. "Those drugs are very strong, u need to eat well so you won't feel dizzy and slump." She appreciated it and left happily.

A month later, she came to me and said, "Aunty, I have not seen my menses till now".

"Yes, the doctor said something like that. He said the drugs are meant to dry up the embryo. It's a gradual process and the safest.

She was happy once again and as she was leaving, I gave her 5,000, though she didn't want to take it, I insisted. She collected it and told me that she used the 20,000 I gave her to start a small jewelry trade and that it's doing well. Nodding my head, I smiled and she left. I did not stop praying for God's mercy on them, because there will come a time when my lies will fail me. The days kept going and I was hopeful.

Two weeks later, I went to her myself and asked if she has noticed anything, but she said no. I then asked after her fiancé, she told me that he went for a job interview and that he has been going for job interviews but no headway. I just told her to be prayerful and I left.

One morning, she came to me and said, "Aunty the drugs will finish today and I have not noticed anything yet." I told her that I'll see the doctor and get more for her, which I did.

A week into the third month, as I was coming back from morning mass, I saw her husband leaving the house well dressed, I stopped and asked him where he was going that early, he told me he just got a new job and it was his first day. In my mind, I said, "thank u, Jesus." I wished him well and left. That afternoon, the lady came and told me the good news I had already heard, I thanked God for them. She then said, "if I had known, I would not have touched the pregnancy. By now the embryo must have been destroyed.

"You can't be sure of that. Try and go for a scan to find out the condition of the baby." I said

The next day, I guess she did and came to me that evening and said with teary eyes, "thank u, aunty, the doctor said that the child is in a good condition and that the drugs u were giving me are good drugs for pregnancy, especially the Fefol." I smiled and said we thank God who helped. Her fiancé too was very grateful. They later did all marriage rites and pack out from there to a better apartment.

This year is my 20th year in marriage and their 8th years and they have not been able to have another child. Maybe if they had removed the pregnancy then, they would have been childless till now. Well, I thank God for his mercy. Their only son just celebrated his 7th year birthday last week.

