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EQUIPPING CHURCH LEADERS FOR BIBLICAL MARRIAGE  
COUNSELING THROUGH REACH TANZANIA BIBLE  
SCHOOL IN DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Educational Ministry

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by  
Alyssa Noel Dunker  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

EQUIPPING CHURCH LEADERS FOR BIBLICAL MARRIAGE  
COUNSELING THROUGH REACH TANZANIA BIBLE  
SCHOOL IN DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA

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To my brothers and sisters in Tanzania and beyond

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## PREFACE

This project would not have been possible without the assistance of a community of people who loved me well. I am grateful to be the recipient of grace upon grace.

Growing up in a broken home, I did not know the beauty of marriage. To my delight, my children cannot say the same. My husband, Mark, exemplifies Jesus in his service and sacrifice to each of us. He has offered tireless support and encouragement while I have studied at SBTS, showing me a glimpse of the glories I will experience when I meet my eternal bridegroom.

My husband and I met under divine circumstances. During our first conversation, we discovered that we shared a dream to train church leaders outside of our passport country. Many years later, this dream connected us with a group of men and women at Reach Tanzania Bible School, who became both my students and teachers. They inspired this project, and, with the Lord's blessing, thanks to them, this work will benefit people in Tanzania and beyond.

As a ReachGlobal missionary, I am deeply grateful for mission leaders who supported my desire to pursue further training and our financial support team who provided my school fees and believed that I would be better equipped to teach others if I continued to learn. I do not take your generosity lightly. Thank you.

In 2017, I received the opportunity to travel to Kigali, Rwanda, and learn from the ministry of Mending the Soul. Little did I know how that one-week trip would begin a friendship with Dr. Steve and Celestia Tracy. They serve Christ by serving the suffering and have equipped many to follow in their footsteps. I am especially thankful for Steve's assistance with my curriculum and willingness to share his expertise.

In 2018, thanks to Overseas Instruction in Counseling, I was accepted into a MABC program at Kyiv Theological Seminary (KTS). I began bi-annual trips to beautiful Ukraine and made friends who dwell in my heart. I am grateful for the program director, Andriy Murzin, who aided the creation of my curriculum. During our last class, my female classmates gave me a personalized mug with a photo of their smiling faces. War has changed their lives. Many a late night, I drank from that mug and kept writing because I knew they would want me to finish.

In 2020, my dear friend and pastor of my church in Tanzania, Dr. Sheshangai Kaniki, wrote a reference letter to SBTS to advocate for my entry into this program. Sheshi fought the good fight, finished his race, and kept the faith. He is now at rest with Jesus. The continued good fruit and faith of his wife, Trudie, consistently motivated me to finish what I have started.

I am grateful to be part of a local body of Christ in the United States—Faith Church in Indianapolis. My pastors, Jeff Schultz, Joey Woestman, and Tom Macy, have each shepherded me well. Joey’s assistance with my curriculum and quick willingness to help me, even when he surely had other things to do, will not be forgotten.

My brother-in-Christ Dr. Scott Beattie is a statistician. Where I was weak, he was strong and greatly improved my quantitative analyses. His time was a gift.

Dismas Shekalaghe was a student in our first class in Tanzania in 2005. His work for the Lord is so extensive it astounds me. He is a missionary of missionaries. Somehow, he had time to serve as my cultural expert. I am blessed.

When I was a student at KTS, one of the visiting professors, a PhD student at SBTS, recommended “the best book” he had ever read about anger. In response, I bought a copy of *Uprooting Anger: Biblical Help for A Common Problem* by Robert D. Jones and subsequently used the book several times in various ministry settings. At that time, I had no way of knowing that I would be privileged to have Dr. Jones serve as my supervisor for this project. I am grateful for his efforts to improve my work.

Indeed, Jesus has abundantly given me grace upon grace. “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Tim 1:17 NIV).

Alyssa Dunker

Fishers, Indiana, and Nairobi, Kenya

December 2023

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) exists “to glorify God by multiplying transformational churches among all people.”<sup>1</sup> As the international mission arm of the EFCA, ReachGlobal seeks to accomplish this purpose through developing, empowering, and releasing disciple-makers. In 2013, ReachGlobal missionaries began a training center in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to equip church leaders to serve their communities more biblically. Using quality, affordable pastoral training, Reach Tanzania Bible School (RTBS) has developed and empowered disciples who are actively serving the local church. At this school, I trained two cohorts in biblical counseling. Students subsequently expressed a need for further equipping in biblical marriage counseling to guide couples more competently through challenges and toward Christian transformation. Consequently, RTBS decided to equip biblical marriage counselors to display the gospel through Christ-focused marriages.

#### **Context**

At RTBS, “Biblical Counseling and Practical Theology” functioned as the capstone course, after students completed nineteen biblical, theological, and pastoral units. This holistic education prepared ministry leaders to synthesize knowledge and application as they learned a biblical approach to care for others. As students grasped the process of biblical counseling, they began to apply God’s truth with love to people going through challenges. They identified the goal of inner transformation and spiritual

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<sup>1</sup> Evangelical Free Church of America, “Home,” accessed July 17, 2023, <http://www.efca.org>.

maturity for the glory of God as far superior to attempts to fix problems before the next wave of trouble arose. With this new set of eyes, many students admitted they previously counseled from more of a cultural perspective rather than a biblical one. In 2018 and 2019, the RTBS cohorts began to ask themselves and their teacher how to apply these new concepts to marriage issues among Christians in their churches.

The Tanzanian church places a high value on marriage, and preparation is a community affair. Commonly, contract negotiations begin before the engagement, with the extended family playing a decisive role in the prospective match. Future grooms must collect the agreed-upon bride price, causing some engagements to span years as men gather financial resources. As the wedding date approaches, training the bride to take care of her husband's sexual needs becomes a preeminent premarital task. At a "kitchen party," which is a celebration for the bride-to-be, older women teach the bride what she must do to please her husband, sometimes employing graphic depiction or pornography.<sup>2</sup> Formal premarital counseling may include a few pastoral meetings where the couple receives instruction regarding marriage roles. The new couple's instructors see themselves as teaching biblical submission and leadership, informing the bride that her husband is like a king, and she must meet his desires. Such premarital training is brief and primarily cultural, rarely employing the contextual use of Scripture.

The family of origin typically retains significant influence over the newly married couple. In-laws hold powerful sway over the husband and wife, and their pressure on the couple can be overbearing. Newlyweds commonly try to have their first baby as quickly as possible to prove their fertility and please their families. Once they become parents, society considers the man and woman to be complete adults. The wife's

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<sup>2</sup> Flora Peter Myamba, "Domestic Violence Rights Movement in Tanzania: An Exploration" (PhD diss., Western Michigan University, 2009), 45; Katrina Daly Thompson, "Zanzibari Women's Discursive and Sexual Agency: Violating Gendered Speech Prohibitions through Talk about Supernatural Sex," *Discourse and Society* 22, no. 1 (2011): 6, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42889718>. While Thompson references Muslim women on Tanzania's largest island, note that 99 percent of Zanzibaris are Muslim, and the "kitchen party," along with its sexual instruction, is a cultural, not religious, event.

family, however, continues to hold strong influence over the woman. The man, likewise, often retains loyalty to his family of origin, as the future inheritor of ancestral land and close companion of his parents. His blood relatives often have a sense of ownership of the wife. Both the families and the couple commonly view the marriage bond as contractual rather than covenantal.

Many churches ignore the biblical command that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Culturally, the man can say whatever he wants and live however he chooses since he is the head. He may sit while the woman takes care of the children, cooks, washes the clothes by hand, farms, and gathers firewood. His model is the tribal chief rather than Jesus Christ. He can walk into a room at any point of the day and demand his biblical conjugal rights. Male headship usurps other biblical teachings, such as the command not to commit adultery. For example, a Christian man may say he is the husband of one wife according to the letter of the law; meanwhile, he might enjoy intermittent illicit sex or keep a permanent mistress in a *nyumba ndogo*.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, some wives secretly commit adultery as an act of revenge against their husbands or as an avenue to gain increased financial security. As affairs are ordinary, the extended family or church leadership is cautious to intervene unless the adulterous person egregiously shames the community. Such a response is typical even when the sinning spouse is the pastor of the church.

The syncretism of African Traditional Religions (ATR) and Christianity significantly impacts marriages and must not be underestimated. People commonly believe that everything manifesting in the physical realm first exists in the spiritual realm, assuming demonic influence, witchcraft, or curses to be the source of problems. Christ is often functionally viewed as similar to a shaman; his blood is a metaphorical power object that breaks evil. For example, if people have children outside of marriage, then

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<sup>3</sup> This is Swahili for the phrase “small house” and is a common term for a mistress.



they have possibly made a covenant with hell. That covenant must be broken through deliverance, mediated by the blood of Jesus, or the covenant maker will continue to have illegitimate children. A lack of personal responsibility for sin profoundly impacts believers' sanctification and relationships. The belief in spirit spouses further complicates marriages. If there is a marital problem, people may blame the trouble on a demonic spirit-spouse who visits at night or possesses the husband or wife. This focus on the spirit world distracts the couple from confronting their legitimate marital issues and creates fear and shame.

As RTBS students strengthened their biblical, theological, and pastoral expertise throughout their program of study, they noticed a gap between gospel truths and their application within the marriage relationship. Recognizing the power of God through biblical counseling to generate personal transformation, these pastors and ministry leaders asked themselves, "How do we biblically counsel married couples?"<sup>4</sup> Within RTBS students' churches and ministries, several significant issues were troubling Christian marriages, but training in marriage counseling remained a rare opportunity with few contextualized and biblically focused resources. Therefore, equipping seasoned ministry leaders through RTBS to biblically counsel hurting couples met compelling needs among those served by the RTBS network in Tanzania.

### **Rationale**

Jesus connected the unity of believers with the world's ability to believe that the Father sent him (John 17:20-23). Marriage is the smallest community within the church, and a disunified couple hinders the gospel message. God progressively revealed that marriage displays the mysterious unity of Christ and the church and symbolically communicates the message of his salvation through two fallible people. Under his

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<sup>4</sup> While premarital counseling is a foundational part of marriage preparation, this project focused on restorative marriage counseling. One action point that developed from this project was the need to create premarital counseling materials, as noted in chapter 5.

leadership and love, the Lord portrays the sacrifice he made to buy back his bride from her captors (Eph 5:25, 31-32). God does not call all believers to marry, but he calls all married believers to Christ-centered marriages that display unity, thus proclaiming to the world that the Father sent the Son.

Godly marriages bring stability to the family and church and portend hope for future generations. Discipleship begins in the home, and a Christ-centered marriage protects and equips children as they move toward adulthood. Parents with healthy marriages offer their children security and a roadmap. When multiple God-honoring marriages flourish within a church body, such marriages can bring life to the larger community as church members are free to express the gospel to those around them rather than be mired in relational pain.

The churches served by RTBS students primarily define marriage according to culture rather than its biblical design. Sermons proclaiming Christ's command to love others are rare; rarer still is the sermon declaring a husband should love his wife.<sup>5</sup> Biblical preaching is needed to disciple, but private instruction of the Word brings additional benefits. Unlike preaching, the conversational and protracted nature of counseling brings to light the personal challenges troubling a couple. From this position, wise counselors seek to discern the longings of the heart and directly apply Scripture to these areas, aiming for a reorientation toward God and the other spouse. Such an informed and loving application of truth, in conjunction with accountability, creates a fertile environment for spiritual growth.

RTBS students have a growing desire to meet the needs of their churches and communities by strengthening marriages through counseling. They completed a marriage

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<sup>5</sup> For example, a student once chose Ephesians 5:25-28 for a personal growth assignment. Recognizing that he rarely spoke with his wife, he arranged to listen to her for one hour per week. When he discovered that his wife was interesting and that their marriage was improving, he doubled their weekly time and decided to preach about husbands loving their wives. His wife begged him not to teach this text, fearing that her parents and fellow church members would accuse her of bewitching her husband. He encouraged his wife and courageously preached that God commands husbands to love their wives.

and family class in their first year of studies, where they studied a biblical view of marriage, self-examined their marriages, and completed personal projects to strengthen them. In their second-year courses, students studied biblical counseling and practiced counseling through a five-step process model. While marriage counseling is part of biblical counseling, it requires additional training to offer qualified help. Thus, teaching an intensive marriage counseling class to a group of RTBS alumni empowered these leaders to more skillfully apply wisdom and hope to hurting marriages.

It is only with caution and humility that a cultural outsider should consider addressing such a nuanced relationship as marriage in a foreign context. Yet Scripture has much to say about this most important human relationship, providing instruction that does not shift throughout generations or cultures. To reduce creating negative cultural consequences, I restricted my influence to a small group of leaders. Through long-term relationships, they have learned that I am open to feedback and necessary course corrections. As cultural insiders, these leaders have been implementing marriage counseling ministry within their communities. Until the church in Dar es Salaam has numerous Christ-centered marriages and biblical marriage counselors, there remains a biblical and societal rationale for equipping leaders to meet this vital need.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to equip church leaders for biblical marriage counseling through Reach Tanzania Bible School in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

### **Goals**

The subsequent goals were necessary to accomplish the purpose of equipping church leaders to counsel married couples biblically. While the first goal assessed present competencies, the second goal created training to address weaknesses. The application of the third goal transferred knowledge and aimed to address participants' affective learning.

The fourth goal assessed the growth of participants' counseling skills. The fifth and final goal ensured that the curriculum would be available for the use of other equippers.

1. The first goal was to assess the current level of biblical marriage counseling competency among RTBS affiliated students.
2. The second goal was to write a marriage counseling course to equip the students to counsel married couples biblically.
3. The third goal was to implement the training and increase participants' competency for biblical marriage counseling.
4. The fourth goal was to evaluate participants' biblical counseling skills after taking the course.
5. The fifth goal was to integrate new information learned from the participants into revised teacher and student editions of the curriculum shared within the RTBS network.

As these goals needed to be measurable to ensure the successful implementation of the project, appropriate scientific research methodology was constructed and is explained in the following section.<sup>6</sup>

### **Research Methodology**

Five goals formed the framework for the successful outcome of this project. The first goal was to assess the current level of biblical marriage counseling competency among RTBS affiliated students. After identifying a minimum of ten students who had completed biblical counseling and marriage and family classes, participants engaged in a Marriage Beliefs Interview (MBI),<sup>7</sup> a Marriage Beliefs Survey (MBS),<sup>8</sup> and a Counseling Case Study (CCS),<sup>9</sup> assessing pre-course understanding of biblical marriage counseling and biblical versus cultural views of marriage. These tools followed a mixed methods

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<sup>6</sup> All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

<sup>7</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>8</sup> See appendices 2 and 3.

<sup>9</sup> See appendix 5.

approach that fit the cross-cultural context and specific topic of marriage counseling. The MBI was administered either in person or by phone via semi-formal interview. The MBS was translated into Swahili through a backward and forward translation process and was pilot tested to assess validity. Anticipating the survey would skew positive, respondents chose personal identifying markers to create anonymity. The MBS was completed online, and a paper version was administered to verify responses. The six-point Likert scale forced a positive or negative response to isolate biblical, cultural, and gender specific responses. The Counseling Case Study (CCS) was translated into Swahili, and participants submitted their answers via a text messaging app or voice recording.

This first part of this goal was successfully met when a minimum of ten individuals had completed the MBI, the interviews were transcribed, and the data was analyzed with the assistance of MAXQDA.<sup>10</sup> The second part of this goal was achieved when a minimum of ten respondents completed the online survey, the data was analyzed and evaluated, and a paper version was re-administered to all participants at the beginning of the first class. The third part of this goal was attained when a minimum of ten participants completed the CCS and the data was transcribed and prepared for analysis and evaluation.

The second goal was to write a thirty-hour marriage counseling course to equip participants to counsel married couples biblically.<sup>11</sup> The MBI data informed the curriculum, which included biblical texts responsive to the cultural context and allocated time for practical application. This goal was measured by a panel of four people who used a rubric to measure the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and

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<sup>10</sup> MAXQDA is a qualitative and mixed methods data analysis software that aides the coding process.

<sup>11</sup> See appendix 6.

cultural applicability of the curriculum.<sup>12</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level.<sup>13</sup>

The third goal was to implement the training and increase participants' competency for biblical marriage counseling. The first part of this goal was measured by re-administering the MBS immediately after participants completed the course. This portion of the goal was achieved when the post-instruction MBS demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference compared to the pre-course survey data, and the qualitative data was analyzed and evaluated.

The fourth goal was to evaluate participants' biblical counseling skills after completing the course. The CCS was readministered, the results were analyzed, and changes to each individual's counseling approach were noted. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of ten participants had returned a second CCS via text messaging or voice recording and the data had been transcribed, analyzed, and evaluated in context of the pre-instruction CCS.

The fifth goal was to integrate new information learned from the participants through classroom contributions and course evaluations into revised teacher and student editions of the curriculum shared within the RTBS church leaders' network.<sup>14</sup> This goal was planned to be measured in two parts. First, one theological expert and one cultural expert verified the biblical and cultural appropriateness of the revision. Second, the RTBS Director gave final approval and acceptance of the marriage counseling course into the RTBS program. This goal was considered successfully met when 90 percent of the

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<sup>12</sup> Panelists consisted of an American pastor (ThM), an American seminary professor with experience in East Africa (PhD in New Testament), a seminary program director of an MA in Biblical Counseling (ThM from a Southern Baptist school), and a Tanzanian ministry leader with a seminary degree.

<sup>13</sup> See appendix 7.

<sup>14</sup> See appendix 8.

evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level and the RTBS Director had uploaded the curriculum to the student access site.

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

This ministry project used the following key terms as defined below.

*Biblical counseling.* Biblical counseling is interpersonal ministry, using God's Word in the process of "wisely speaking what is true and constructive" in such a way that it encourages a person to rely upon Christ.<sup>15</sup> Robert Jones's definition adds further clarity. Biblical counseling "is the Christlike, caring, person-to-person ministry of God's Word to people struggling with personal and interpersonal problems to help them know and follow Jesus Christ in heart and behavior amid their struggles."<sup>16</sup> This type of counseling is a ministry that leads people to love God and love others. Since biblical counseling is based on Scripture and since Christ is the apex of Scripture, for counseling to be biblical, it must point toward Christ.

*Church leaders.* All RTBS students have held some ministry role, including but not limited to that of senior pastor, associate pastor, church planter, evangelist, elder, counselor, children's Sunday school teacher, Bible teacher, or parachurch ministry leader.

*Spirit spouse.* A spirit spouse is a type of gendered "love spirit" that temporarily possesses and has sexual intercourse with opposite gendered humans.<sup>17</sup> Some people believe they experience a long-term relationship with this type of spirit, which can impregnate women and force them to nurse offspring.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> David Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love: Counsel in Community*, VantagePoint (Winston-Salem, NC: Punch Press, 2005), 5, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Robert D. Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, and Rob Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives: An Introduction to Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2021), 20.

<sup>17</sup> Thompson, "Zanzibari Women's Discursive and Sexual Agency," 8.

<sup>18</sup> Lotta Gammelín, "Gendered Narratives of Illness and Healing: Experiences of Spirit Possession in a Charismatic Church Community in Tanzania," in *Faith in African Lived Christianity: Bridging Anthropological and Theological Perspectives*, ed. Karen Lauterbach and Mika Vähäkangas (Boston: Brill, 2019), 321-22.

Several limitations applied to this project. First, this project was cross-cultural, and as traditional post-secondary education in Tanzania is conducted in English, most participants were learning in a secondary language. To mitigate miscommunication, I worked with people with whom I have relational history, encouraged counseling in their first language, and suggested they take counseling notes in that language. Second, multiple challenges prevented in-person pre-instruction assessments. To mitigate low participation, I conducted the MBI by phone interview and used messaging services to administer the MBS and CCS. Third, Tanzanian culture is shame-based; individuals do not want to lose face or disappoint authority figures. To mitigate this, I refrained from including personal questions on the MBI and made the MBS anonymous. Fourth, I could not be present to assess pre- and post-counseling skills as originally planned. To mitigate this limitation, students completed the CCS. Fifth, RTBS closed in mid-2020 due to foreign worker visa challenges and complications from the global pandemic. At the beginning of this project, it was unknown if the school would reopen. This instability could have demotivated participation. To mitigate this, I remained actively connected to potential participants. Sixth, due to transportation expenses, unforeseeable traffic jams, and family or church emergencies, some students could not attend every session. To mitigate this, as is common cultural practice, students in need received transport fees and make-up sessions. Seventh, participants needed competency in biblical counseling and marriage theology prior to studying marriage counseling. While participants were expected to have completed these prerequisites, many had done so in the distant past. To mitigate this, I created a ten-lesson biblical counseling refresher course<sup>19</sup> and collaborated with my husband to produce a seven-lesson marriage theology video series.<sup>20</sup> Participants

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<sup>19</sup> The “Introduction to Biblical Counseling Coursework” document is available at this link: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1t3II891k04IrfFYTIK0Q9X8ECn94nFMo3dbADRh3L1A/edit>.

<sup>20</sup> The “Marriage Theology Review” document is available at this link: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/17LCGKjnNDRZ7VIUVzvJM02bjVmga0PC\\_gIoGDA1Qyqk/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/17LCGKjnNDRZ7VIUVzvJM02bjVmga0PC_gIoGDA1Qyqk/edit).



were required to complete these courses before the beginning of the marriage counseling training course.

Two delimitations applied to this project. First, this project included only persons who had completed both biblical counseling and marriage and family courses through RTBS. Practicing biblical marriage counseling requires a foundational knowledge of biblical counseling principles and a scriptural understanding of marriage. Second, the course neither exhaustively covered marriage and family counseling issues nor provided unlimited time for counseling practice.

### **Conclusion**

God tells the story of redemption through marriage. Since all married people are sinners, every spouse needs gospel transformation. The church leaders who studied marriage counseling at RTBS have been equipped to help marriages reflect more Christ and less culture. Chapter 2 will present the biblical rationale for marriage counseling, showing how the reorientation of married people's hearts to Christ will concurrently create love for their spouses, their closest "one another." Chapter 3 will explain why effectively teaching marriage counseling in Tanzania necessitates understanding and addressing cultural beliefs that contradict biblical values. Chapter 4 will detail the implementation of the project and the research findings. Chapter 5 will evaluate the efficacy of the project by its measurable goals.

CHAPTER 2  
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR  
BIBLICAL MARRIAGE COUNSELING

Wedding days are joyful. While not all newlyweds anticipate an easy life, they hope to be happily married. But what happens when life turns sideways and a marriage needs help? Biblical marriage counseling is a theologically and biblically sound practice that redirects two spouses toward God and one another. Biblical marriage counseling recognizes that Christ reveals the story of humanity's redemption through the marriage covenant. However, redeemed people need a reorientation to Christ to experience unity in marriage. When a couple becomes intent on loving God, they simultaneously love their closest neighbor, their spouse. Through a process, biblical marriage counseling points to Christ to reorient a spouse to love God and one's closest neighbor.

**The Story of Humanity's Redemption Heard through  
the Marriage Covenant: Genesis 2:18-24  
in Ephesians 5:21-33**

Ephesians 5:21-33 contains marriage instructions. Throughout the text, however, Paul interweaves revelation about Christ and his redeemed bride, demonstrating a greater purpose. Within the Greco-Roman world, laws and cultural norms delineated appropriate family structures. Challenging the male head-of-household (*paterfamilias*) structure could destabilize the whole community.<sup>1</sup> Thus, societal leaders periodically detailed familial responsibilities in written household codes. While Paul worked within the genre, he refashioned household codes to reflect Christ's kingdom values rather than

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 352, 358.

traditional Greco-Roman patriarchy.<sup>2</sup> Unlike Aristotle, whose household instructions were based on inherent male superiority,<sup>3</sup> Paul was the first to address wives as “independent moral agents,” granting them dignity “unparalleled in the ancient world.”<sup>4</sup> Contra to Roman culture, Paul commands husbands to love their wives sacrificially because that is how Jesus loves his bride. In Ephesians 5:21-33, Paul’s teaching morphs into a profound revelation about the bride of Christ that ultimately illustrates through the marriage covenant the story of humanity’s redemption.

While the entirety of 5:22-6:9 consists of household codes, the literary structure is occasionally ambiguous and requires mention. In 5:18, the main verb “be filled” is an imperative, followed by five participles that convey actions that spring from the filling of the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup> Although the last participle (“be subject” in 5:21) is often separated from the main verb in translation, grammatically this “subjection” directly results from being “filled with the Spirit.”<sup>6</sup> Shifting his focus to household instructions, Paul omits the finite verb, requiring the preceding participle to supply the verbal idea (Eph 5:22). Stylistically, Paul utilizes literary devices that further cohere 5:21-33. He frames the passage by beginning and ending with “fear,” creating an *inclusio*. Furthermore, the chiasmic structure with the turning point at 5:28a and 5:28b emphasizes

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<sup>2</sup> While the household codes provide practical instruction about marriage, parenting, and slavery, slavery is outside of a biblical worldview. For a brief position against slavery, see Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 296-97, Kindle.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Modern Library New York, 1943), 1.12.1259a (pp. 174-75), <https://www.bard.edu/library/arendt/pdfs/Aristotle-Politics.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 10 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 357, 370.

<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the *New International Version* (NIV 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2001), 639.

the new household command for a husband to love his wife sacrificially.<sup>7</sup> Considering the sum of these grammatical indicators, 5:21 is best understood as a hinge connecting 5:15-20 and 5:22-6:9 that would have been “ringing in the ears” of those who read the subsequent instructions for households.<sup>8</sup>

### **Submission in the Church and in Marriage: Ephesians 5:21**

Shortly after revealing how the Ephesian church are members of one another (Eph 4:15-16), Paul speaks of submission. The verb ὑποτάσσω “refers to the ordering of something underneath something else,”<sup>9</sup> by taking a subordinate role within a social order.<sup>10</sup> In 5:21, it presents as a participle, best understood in the middle voice, showing “volitional self-involvement”<sup>11</sup> that creates “the sense of voluntary yielding in love.”<sup>12</sup> As there is debate regarding the meaning and application of ὑποτάσσω in 5:21 and its potential implications on the subsequent marriage codes, a brief survey of ὑποτάσσω in the marital relationship is warranted.

In Colossians 3:18, wives are commanded to submit to their husbands. Paul’s imperative addresses the wife, not the husband. The husband cannot demand his wife’s submission, which would have been a cultural shift.<sup>13</sup> The phrase “as is fitting in the

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<sup>7</sup> William J. Larkin, *Ephesians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 129, 143. Larkin notes the pattern from 5:21 to 5:33 as A, B, C, D, E, E', D', C', B', A'.

<sup>8</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 651. Wallace (651n99) includes the lack of a conjunction as an additional reason that 5:21 introduces 5:22-6:9.

<sup>9</sup> Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 372.

<sup>10</sup> Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 517.

<sup>11</sup> Larkin, *Ephesians*, 129. The middle/passive voice of the verb, as used in 5:21, can refer to the voluntary “submission” of one person to another.

<sup>12</sup> Frederick W. Danker et al., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “ὑποτάσσω” (p. 1042).

<sup>13</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 412.

Lord” limited the breadth of a husband’s authority to those things deemed appropriate for believers, consequently protecting wives in the Greco-Roman age.<sup>14</sup>

Paul’s household instructions to Titus follow a different order than Colossians, providing lengthy instructions addressing wives yet none for husbands. Among other attributes, in Titus 2:4-5, older women in Crete were to teach younger women “to be subject” (ὕποτασσομένας) to their husbands. Paul desired no one in the Christian community to “malign the word of God,” and this goal required wifely submission.<sup>15</sup>

The text of 1 Peter 3:1-6 presents more complex interpretive issues. Unlike Paul, who wrote to believers living in Christian household relationships,<sup>16</sup> Peter was concerned with the oppressed, suffering in unjust and hostile situations. In 2:12, the apostle expresses his end goal, that God would use the witness of believers’ good lives to save pagans. To accomplish this, he instructs believers in 2:13 to “submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority.” His subsequent instructions express household codes, understandably divergent from Pauline forms due to Peter’s context (1 Pet 2:18-3:7). Peter addresses the slave, not the master, and ignores parents and children.<sup>17</sup> Wives receive six verses of instruction while husbands only one, “indicating the author’s consistent interest in the ‘subordinate’ or potentially oppressed partner in any given relationship.”<sup>18</sup> One of Peter’s concerns was for Christian women who were

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<sup>14</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 162-63.

<sup>15</sup> Philip H. Towner, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, IVP New Testament Commentary 14 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 239.

<sup>16</sup> Best, *Ephesians*, 115, 525.

<sup>17</sup> J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 49 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 443-45, epub. Because early Christianity introduced a new human equality, the church likely had more slaves than masters. When Paul and Peter wrote to “slaves,” they were writing to their brothers and sisters. Note that Colossians 3:22-25, Titus 2:9-10, Ephesians 6:5-8, and 1 Peter 2:18-25 all provide more numerous instructions for slaves than masters. Children traditionally followed their fathers’ religion. As Peter’s concern was with conversion, addressing fathers and children was unrelated.

<sup>18</sup> Michaels, *1 Peter*, 443, 514.

“insubordinate just by virtue of their Christian commitment” and sought to help them win their unbelieving husbands to Christ through their ὑποτάσσω (1 Pet 3:1).<sup>19</sup>

After instructing these women “to submit to” their husbands, he expresses his desire that their behavior and appearance contrast with the world’s values for the consistent purpose of winsome evangelism. Peter refers to the esteemed holy women in the past who hoped in the Lord while submitting to their husbands. Although Peter uses ὑπακούω (to obey) in verse 6, the New Testament household codes consistently speak of a wife’s submission, not obedience. Rather than creating a theology of wifely obedience, Sarah offers a descriptive example from the “greater to the lesser. If Sarah ‘obeyed’ Abraham and called him ‘Lord,’ the Christian wives in Asia should at least treat their husbands with deference and respect.”<sup>20</sup> Peter’s imperatival participle, “do what is right,” defines his use of ὑποτάσσω (1 Pet 3:6). A woman’s submission to her husband, including Sarah’s, is evidenced through her “doing good” to him. Such behavior, according to Peter, could win over a pagan man.<sup>21</sup>

In these passages, the New Testament instructs and expects wives to submit to their husbands. Both Paul and Peter connect ethical Christian behavior, including wifely submission, to the spread of the gospel. Therefore, Paul’s discussion of the ὑποτάσσω of wives in Ephesians 5:22 and 24 is unsurprising.

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<sup>19</sup> Michaels, *1 Peter*, 443-45, 518. Greco-Roman law placed a wife under her husband’s authority, including his right to choose the family’s religion, so believing men would expect to have believing wives, and pagan men, likewise, pagan wives. According to Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 163, the phrase Ὁμοίως (“in the same way”) is better translated “correspondingly” (compare to the usage in 3:7 and 5:5). Peter does not appear to create parallel responsibilities but associated ones, preventing an interpretation that requires wives to submit to harsh husbands (1 Pet 2:18).

<sup>20</sup> Michaels, *1 Peter*, 535-37.

<sup>21</sup> Michaels, *1 Peter*, 537-39.

Interpreting ὑποτάσσεσθαι ἀλλήλοις in  
Ephesians 5:21 and Its Application  
to Marriage

There are two ways to interpret the meaning of ὑποτάσσεσθαι ἀλλήλοις. The first view understands “submit to one another” as a general principle of proper submission to those in authority within the local church and considers the wife’s one-directional submission as an application of 5:21. The meaning of ἀλλήλων (one another) is interpreted as “some being subject to others.”<sup>22</sup> Due to the interpretation of ἀλλήλοις, this view differentiates the functionality of the last participle, “to submit,” from the previous four that apply to all believers. Daniel Doriani explains that the “passage tells the congregation as a whole that each member should yield in all relationships where someone has some authority over him or her.”<sup>23</sup> Submission is understood as extending from each believer to their proper authority. Supporters of this view generally agree that while 5:21-33 “partially redefines the meaning of submission in marriage,” by definition, ὑποτάσσω requires one to “yield to authority.” Paul cannot direct husbands to ὑποτάσσεσθαι without abrogating their God-given authority as κεφαλή (head) and without contradicting corollary passages of wifely submission.<sup>24</sup>

The second view interprets ὑποτάσσεσθαι ἀλλήλοις as the practice of “mutual” submission within the church. This view interprets ἀλλήλοις as a fully reciprocal pronoun, following the same usage in the near context of Ephesians 4:2, 25, and 32 and notes the participle’s dependence on the main verb in 5:18.<sup>25</sup> Addressing the possible

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<sup>22</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, “The Myth of Mutual Submission as an Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21,” in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Wayne A. Grudem, Foundations for the Family Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 224-27.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Doriani, “The Historical Novelty of Egalitarian Interpretations of Ephesians 5:21-22,” in Grudem, *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, 210.

<sup>24</sup> Doriani, “The Historical Novelty of Egalitarian Interpretations,” 209-10.

<sup>25</sup> Best, *Ephesians*, 516. While Best acknowledges ἀλλήλων is not always fully reciprocal, he notes that “the word carries the idea of equal mutuality in Ephesians 4:2, 25, 32 and in the vast majority of occurrences in the New Testament.” Thielman, in *Ephesians*, 373, agrees that Paul’s use of ἀλλήλων in 4:2, 25, 32 is fully reciprocal and “leads the letter’s readers to understand the pronoun here [5:21] in a fully reciprocal sense.”

interpretive contradiction of ὑποτάσσω outside traditional authority structures, George Knight suggests the New Testament authors are teaching bilateral humility. For instance, where the first view recognizes 1 Peter 5:5 as unidirectional, the second view finds that those who are younger are called to submit to the elders (authority) while simultaneously those elders are called to humility toward those who are younger (no authority). Peter communicates both ideas without abolishing authority structures. Similarly, Paul expresses “both/and” (bilateral and unilateral submission) in Ephesians 5:21-33.<sup>26</sup> The definition of ὑποτάσσω is not reinvented but understood as voluntarily placing oneself in a subordinate position that may not reflect societal roles, illustrated by Jesus, who washed his disciples’ feet.<sup>27</sup> Paul calls believers to lead lives marked by humility and love in keeping with the sacrificial pattern of Christ.<sup>28</sup> What is the motivation for mutual submission? According to the text, it is the φόβος (fear) of Christ, experienced not as terror of judgment but as grateful awe of an accepted heir.<sup>29</sup> Believers express this reverence by submitting to members of his body, imitating how Christ humbly sacrificed himself for others.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> George W. Knight, “Husbands and Wives as Analogues of Christ and the Church: Ephesians 5:21-33 and Colossians 3:18-19,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 162-63, epub. Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 161, holds that Ephesians 5:22-24, 33 and Colossians 3:18 specifically show the Christian wife’s “particular expression of the general duty of submissiveness which all Christians are encouraged to show one another.” Note that in the marital sexual relationship, neither the husband nor the wife has authority over his or her body (1 Cor 7:3-4), which is only possible if there is some mutuality in marriage.

<sup>27</sup> Best, *Ephesians*, 517-18. Piper and Grudem, in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 172n6, agree that viewing submission in this way is “consistent with the overall ethical teaching of Scripture that we should submit to one another . . . that is, to act in a loving, considerate, self-giving way toward one another.”

<sup>28</sup> See Eph 4:1, 2, 15-17, 25, 32; 5:2. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 363; Arnold, *Ephesians*, 363; and Lynn H. Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 341, 350-51, all recognize the significance of Paul’s placement of mutual submission directly before household instructions.

<sup>29</sup> Larkin, *Ephesians*, 129-30. Best, *Ephesians*, 518; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 366; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 374, also agree that reverence, not terror, is in mind.

<sup>30</sup> Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 340-41.



In light of the totality of hermeneutical challenges, mutual submission is the more suitable interpretation of 5:21.<sup>31</sup> While the semantic range of ἀλλήλων does occasionally limit reciprocity, the near context supports the common meaning. Limiting the application of ἀλλήλοις may be influenced by Western cultural shifts. Doriani notes that historically Ephesians 5:21 and 5:22 could “stand side by side without lengthy explanation.”<sup>32</sup> An alternative view became necessary with the expansion of biblical feminism.<sup>33</sup> While critics fairly observe that the second view detaches ὑποτάσσω from its consistent relationship with authority, Frank Thielman notes that the use of ὑποτάσσω in 5:21 suggests “a sense in which everyone is involved in serving others.”<sup>34</sup> This mutuality combined with the restraint of authority that is created by connecting “one another” to “submit” “make it likely that the odd expression ‘submit to one another’ means more than simply ‘obey whom you are supposed to.’”<sup>35</sup> Although Thielman's position differs from

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<sup>31</sup> I am using the term “mutual submission” similarly to George Knight in “Husbands and Wives as Analogues of Christ and the Church,” in Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 355, and to Thielman in *Ephesians*, 373-74. My use of “mutual submission” is distinct from Gilbert Bilezikian in *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says about a Woman's Place in Church and Family*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 154, when he states that “mutual submission rules out hierarchical differences.” My view also diverges from Craig Keener in *Paul, Women, and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 156-69, and with his conclusion that a wife's submission was a temporary cultural admonition.

<sup>32</sup> Doriani, “The Historical Novelty of Egalitarian Interpretations of Ephesians 5:21-22,” in Grudem, *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, 210.

<sup>33</sup> Best, *Ephesians*, 516; Doriani, “The Historical Novelty of Egalitarian Interpretations,” 210. While Doriani recognizes that both 5:21 and 5:22 co-existed historically, theologians focused on 5:21 as an introduction of submission within the subsequent household structures. Stephen Clark and Mark Whitters, “The Patristic Origin of ‘Mutual Subordination,’” *Nova et Vetera* 14, no. 3 (2016), names Ambrosiaster (833n15) and Theodoret of Cyrrhus (833n16) as the earliest references to uni-directional submission in 5:21. Of significance, Grudem and Piper, in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 172n6, respond to Knight with view 1's interpretation of ἀλλήλων and the concern that ὑποτάσσω is lexically incorrect in 5:21. See also James B. Hurley, in *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 139. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 373, mentions Charles Ellicott, J. Armitage Robinson, Peter O'Brien, Harold Hoehner, and Wayne Walden as theologians who concur with view 1.

<sup>34</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 373.

<sup>35</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 373-74. Early Christian writers such as Clement of Rome (1 Clement), Ignatius, Polycarp, Jerome (and, by association, Origen), and John Chrysostom instruct all believers to submit to one another while upholding traditional submission in the household structure. At times, Jerome and John Chrysostom use “submission” and “service” synonymously. See Jerome, *Commentariorum in Epistolam ad Ephesios*, cited in Ronald E. Heine, *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 231; John Chrysostom, “Homily 20 (Ephesians 5:22-24),” in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, First Series, vol. 13, *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians*,

Piper and Grudem, these authors do acknowledge that mutual submission is a “widely held” and historical interpretation.<sup>36</sup>

Mutual submission does not erase societal roles. Since 5:21 functions as a hinge to the household codes, mutual submission cannot syntactically eradicate household structures.<sup>37</sup> Adherents of the first view express concern that if mutual submission were present in 5:21, it would consequently apply to husbands/wives, parents/children, and slaves/masters, creating impossible social dynamics.<sup>38</sup> Some modern churches may be uncomfortable with this paradox, but “early Christianity contains an unresolved tension between authority and mutuality or, . . . between mutual subordination and the authority of some.”<sup>39</sup> Among leaders in Ephesus, there were, at minimum, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Eph 4:11). Who had greater authority and who needed to submit? If a church leader were a slave, he “would be entitled to receive due deference from his Christian master.”<sup>40</sup> Limiting ὑποτάσσεσθαι ἀλλήλοις to those under authority would have created a complication and focus that seems contrary to the ethos of imitating Christ’s servanthood.

### **Grounding Marriage in Relationship with Christ: Ephesians 5:22-24**

Humility and the willingness to put oneself under another are the life-works of all Christians and reflect the values of another world. Greco-Romans, however, would

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*Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Christian Literature, 1889), 143-52.

<sup>36</sup> Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 172n6.

<sup>37</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 651n99. Here, Wallace notes that the “doctrinal heart” of Ephesians (2:11-22) creates an “implicit question: . . . If there is now spiritual equality between Jew and Gentile in the body of Christ, are all social hierarchies eradicated? 5:22-6:9 answers that question with a resounding ‘No.’”

<sup>38</sup> Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 162n6.

<sup>39</sup> Best, *Ephesians*, 517.

<sup>40</sup> Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 167. Bruce seems to use “deference” interchangeably with “submission” (160).

have found such mutuality absurd. To submit required “relinquishing honor, which was the most valuable commodity in the ancient world, and accepting social humiliation and shame.”<sup>41</sup> Yet, voluntary subjection patterned after Christ’s example is a command in agreement with other teachings of Christ, all of which would have invited social stigma (cf. Matt 16:24-26; Mark 9:35-37). While husbands placing their wives ahead of themselves does not abolish the call for wives to submit to their husbands, Paul realigns the wife’s submission to a different kingdom. A woman’s submission begins as she is filled with the very presence of God (Eph 5:18). It is compared to and derived from her submission to the Lord,<sup>42</sup> enabling her to submit to her husband in everything (Eph 5:22, 24) that honors her preeminent commitment to Christ.<sup>43</sup> Though the husband’s role analogously correlates to Christ’s, it is not identical (Eph 5:23-24). The husband is neither referred to as the Lord of the wife nor is he a substitute in any way. Understanding this distinction, the wife responds by humbly submitting to her husband as a Spirit-filled act of worship to her Savior.<sup>44</sup>

In Ephesians 5:23, Paul begins the analogy of human marriage and the sacred marriage between Christ and the church. He refers to the husband as κεφαλή of the wife and ascribes the same word to Christ’s role with the church. Although scholars debate its meaning, here κεφαλή seems best translated as “head,” referring to authority and not source. The textual implication of authority and the metaphorical usage of the word

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<sup>41</sup> Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 350.

<sup>42</sup> Larkin, *Ephesians*, 131.

<sup>43</sup> The phrase “in everything” has been misused to harm women. Paul is not asking a wife to sin in anyway against her Lord. His use of the word “all” is general and expansive. See usage in 2 Cor 4:8, 7:5, according to Thielman, *Ephesians*, 380.

<sup>44</sup> Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 352-53.

supports this position.<sup>45</sup> In 5:33, Paul instructs the wife to “fear” (have reverence for) her husband. Such instruction is not reciprocal.<sup>46</sup>

Contemporaneously with Paul, the popular understanding of “head” was something that functionally controlled the body.<sup>47</sup> The body/head metaphor illustrated rank, authority, and value in the Greco-Roman world. Since the head sat at the top of the body, it was compared to an acropolis, which must be defended lest the city fall. The Roman people were the body of their emperor, their head, for whom they must be willing to die. The body’s survival depended on the preservation of its leader, who was morally obligated to protect himself. In response to loyalty, he might grant mercy but never love. Similarly, the husband was the wife’s head, and the man gained honor through domination, not love and sacrifice.<sup>48</sup> Household codes concentrated “on the right management of the household for the comfort and happiness of the husband/patriarch, with no thought given to a sacrificial lifestyle of the ‘head’ for the sake of other members of the household.”<sup>49</sup> The head of the house was obliged to rule his wife lest he disgrace his entire community.

In contrast, Paul connects κεφαλή with “Savior.” Hearing the comparison of the husband to Christ, an Ephesian Christian might have interpreted this as a man holding a lofty position.<sup>50</sup> However, Paul immediately instructs husbands to reject their culture and be heads who serve, die to self, and love the body. Because of Christ’s humility, the

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<sup>45</sup> Larkin, *Ephesians*, 131-32.

<sup>46</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 377.

<sup>47</sup> Gregory W. Dawes, *The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21-33*, *Biblical Interpretation* 30 (Boston: Brill, 1998), 131.

<sup>48</sup> Michelle Lee-Barnewall, *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective to the Evangelical Gender Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 150-58. In this section of her book, Lee-Barnewall discusses the usage and expectations of the head-body metaphor in the Greco-Roman world.

<sup>49</sup> Timothy G. Gombis, “A Radically New Humanity: The Function of the *Haustafel* in Ephesians,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 2 (June 2005): 325.

<sup>50</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 399.

head is directed to give up his rights of ease, honor, and preeminence to love that which was not as valued in his culture: the body. Paul commands the head to comport his character to Jesus Christ, the Savior;<sup>51</sup> and thus, the metaphor between the husband and Christ as head reaches its limit.<sup>52</sup> Paul's juxtaposition of "head" and "Savior" implies that "Christ's self-surrender unto death is part of his actions as head of the church."<sup>53</sup> Christ uses his authority as head to sacrifice himself so that the body will not die, thus creating unity between the head and the body.<sup>54</sup> Paul's correlation of head and Savior indicates "the self-sacrificial, nurturing, and supporting roles that Christ fills with respect to the church."<sup>55</sup> This type of counter-cultural, sacrificial headship is the role Paul gives to husbands and was the antithesis of protecting oneself, honoring oneself, or gaining more comfort for oneself.

### **The Redeeming Love of Christ: Ephesians 5:25-27**

After a call for wifely submission, Paul commands husbands to love their wives, strongly contradicting cultural standards. Within the Greco-Roman world, some authors wrote of loving their wives but doing so for self-serving purposes. In a historical first, husbands are not only invited but required to have an others-focused, self-sacrificing love (*ἀγαπάω*) for their wives, modeled after Christ's.<sup>56</sup> Grammatically, Paul indicates this love is a general precept through his choice of the present active imperative verb. His

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<sup>51</sup> Lee-Barnewall, *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian*, 156-59.

<sup>52</sup> Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 354, 358; Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4-6: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible, vol. 34A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 615-17; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 370; and Arnold, *Ephesians*, 382, agree. Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 385, interprets "the Savior" as the man as the protector.

<sup>53</sup> Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 354.

<sup>54</sup> Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 354.

<sup>55</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 379.

<sup>56</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 373-74.

use of the conjunction καθώς (“just as”) introduces a comparative clause that demonstrates the manner of this mandated love.<sup>57</sup> Just as Christ did not think of himself first but gave all of himself for the sake of his bride, husbands are to love their wives unconditionally, being “willing to sacrifice everything for the benefit and well-being of [their wives].”<sup>58</sup> Thus, Paul challenges the worldly definitions of headship, hierarchy, and love by pointing husbands who held authority to sacrifice self at the expense of personal honor.<sup>59</sup>

In verses 26-27, Paul leads the reader on an essential Christological digression, expressing the extent to which Christ, as the Head, loved his body, the church. Paul explains the purpose of Christ’s sacrifice mentioned in verse 25b—to make the church holy so that she could become his bride (cf. Eph 1:4). In an artful juxtaposition, the husbands, who were commanded to love their wives, are now addressed as members of Christ’s bride, needing their own purification.<sup>60</sup> Drawing from Old Testament sacrificial imagery, Paul uses the verb ἀγιάζω, meaning “setting apart to affect a state and condition of moral purity,”<sup>61</sup> followed by the verbal participle καθαρίζω, meaning to make one “free from the guilt of sins.”<sup>62</sup> Paul’s placement of the direct object emphasizes the significance of the soon-to-be-presented bride, who has been made holy and blameless. The phrase ἐν ρήματι modifies “to cleanse” and best represents “the gospel,” the word of truth spoken in the process of receiving salvation (cf. Eph 1:13).<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Larkin, *Ephesians*, 133-34.

<sup>58</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 383.

<sup>59</sup> Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 362.

<sup>60</sup> Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 362.

<sup>61</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 375.

<sup>62</sup> Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 363.

<sup>63</sup> Larkin, *Ephesians*, 134-35. Cf. Rom 10:17; Eph 6:8.

Paul continues to explain Christ's preparation of his bride. He references the metaphorical cleansing "with a water bath" in Ezekiel 16:6-14. In that passage, YHWH cleanses Israel in preparation for their marriage covenant. In Paul's time, Greco-Roman weddings included traditional bathing before the marriage. Therefore, the water bath was a contextualized image that both Jews and Gentiles would understand.<sup>64</sup> In this era, after the bride prepared herself for the wedding, her new husband would present her to his father. In contrast, Christ makes his own bride ready for the wedding—his preparations ensure she will be cleansed and worthy of such an eternal match.<sup>65</sup> Christ then expresses his authority as the head by presenting his own bride to himself.

**A New Identity through the Marriage  
Covenant: Ephesians 5:28-33  
and Genesis 2:18-24**

Verse 28 sits at the peak of the chiasm, highlighting the counter-cultural climax: "In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself." Paul repeats ἀγαπάω three times and includes the verb "ought," creating a moral obligation. The reflexive pronoun's use with the husband as the referent and its syntactic placement underlines the husband's call to love his wife.<sup>66</sup> Wives are called to submit to their husbands as to the Lord; husbands are comparably called to love their wives, as Christ has loved his own bride.

Paul's boldness comes from Christ's example of love that humbly serves.<sup>67</sup> The purpose clause in verse 30 indicates why Christ continues serving the church: each

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<sup>64</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 384, 386.

<sup>65</sup> Walter Hoehner, "Ephesians," in *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, Philemon*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2008), 117.

<sup>66</sup> Larkin, *Ephesians*, 129, 137-38.

<sup>67</sup> Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 367.

member of the church is part of his body.<sup>68</sup> Using Christ's example, Paul now asks husbands to take practical action. Whatever they would do to care for themselves, they should freely and generously do for their wives.<sup>69</sup> In verse 27, Christ washed the bride. In verse 29, he continues to care for his bride by feeding and nourishing her. These words, "cleaning, washing, feeding, caring/nourishing," are commonly associated with the work of women or enslaved people.<sup>70</sup> However, these are words Paul has associated with Christ's love. Now he tells the husband to serve his wife in these same ways by treating her with the same concern he would have toward the care of his own existence. Citing the membership that each person in the body shares with Christ, Paul reminds his readers that husbands and wives are likewise one flesh.

In Ephesians 5:31, Paul introduces a citation of Genesis 2:24 with an antecedent that refers to Genesis 2:23. On the day that God brought the first wife to the first husband, the man exclaimed, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh," recognizing the reason for a man to leave his parents.<sup>71</sup> Focusing on the material aspect of the man's flesh and bone, which God used to build the woman, this traditional interpretation of Genesis 2:23a fails to recognize the covenantal commitment uttered in Adam's exclamation. He spoke his vow to God and not to the woman.<sup>72</sup> By pairing the contrasting phrases of "bone of bone" and "flesh of flesh," new meaning is created. "Bone of bone" expresses power, and "flesh of flesh" communicates weakness. The first husband's words promised God that he would be committed to his wife through every

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<sup>68</sup> Larkin, *Ephesians*, 139.

<sup>69</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 374.

<sup>70</sup> Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 362.

<sup>71</sup> Larkin, *Ephesians*, 141.

<sup>72</sup> Gordon P. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 165.



“circumstance from the extreme of frailty to the extreme of power.”<sup>73</sup> Adam’s choice of words followed the elliptical nature of an ancient oath formula.<sup>74</sup> More expansively, Adam proclaims: “I hereby invite you, God, to hold me accountable to treat this woman as part of my own body.”<sup>75</sup>

The patrilocal culture of the Israelites did not require a man to physically leave his parents’ home to marry.<sup>76</sup> The terms “leave” and “unite” are figurative and emphasize the radical shift of loyalty from a husband’s mother and father to his wife.<sup>77</sup> “Leave” is a strong verb commonly used in the Old Testament to represent the Israelites’ desertion of YHWH (Judg 2:12; 1 Kgs 9:9; Jer 2:17).<sup>78</sup> Positively, it means “giving up one obligation and taking on another.”<sup>79</sup> The word “unite” was used to describe the faithfulness Israel should have to their covenant with YHWH (Deut 10:20; 11:22; 13:4). Using carefully chosen covenant language, marriage was defined as the transfer of preeminent loyalty and responsibility from parents to wife, permanently adhering to her in a way that alters the makeup of the original people.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Walter Brueggemann, “Of the Same Flesh and Bone, Gn 2:23a,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (October 1970): 533-35.

<sup>74</sup> See Brueggemann, “Of the Same Flesh and Bone, Gn 2:23a,” 536-38, and his discussion on family ties versus mutual covenant commitments in 2 Samuel 5:1-5 and 19:13-14. In both passages, David uses a derivative of the phrase “flesh and bone” to make or reaffirm a covenant. In the first case, he is in a place of strength. In the second, he is in weakness. Brueggemann argues that the words are not merely referencing biological relationships.

<sup>75</sup> Hugenberg, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 165.

<sup>76</sup> Carol Meyers, “The Family in Early Israel,” in *Families in Ancient Israel*, by Leo G. Perdue et al., *The Family, Religion, and Culture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 19. NB: This chapter does not address the wife also leaving her parents, uniting with her husband, and becoming one flesh, but it is an appropriate application of the text.

<sup>77</sup> Hugenberg, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 159.

<sup>78</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Nashville: Nelson Reference and Electronic, 1987), 70-71.

<sup>79</sup> John Goldingay, *Genesis*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Pentateuch (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 64.

<sup>80</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 717.

Leaving old allegiances and bonding to a wife through the covenant language of “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” resulted in a new familial bond. The ancient Hebrew world widely understood that covenants forged unity.<sup>81</sup> In this case, through a covenant promise to God, the man and woman became one flesh and created a new family. The husband and wife’s one-flesh-ness made them each other’s closest family member, even more immediate than either parent.<sup>82</sup>

In Ephesians 5:31-32, Paul takes the covenant one-flesh union of Adam and Eve and transforms it through the revelation of a “mystery”—“the once-hidden purpose of God which has now been revealed in Christ.”<sup>83</sup> Using the predicate adjective μέγας, he modifies the “mystery” to proclaim that among the mysteries which have been revealed, this one is the most amazing.<sup>84</sup> Genesis 2:24 holds real meaning about human marriage. The creation of Eve as the first bride foreshadowed the creation of the church as the eternal bride of Christ, whom Jesus has united to himself as one body.<sup>85</sup> Unlike Paul’s previous comparisons of the husband to Christ or the wife to the church, Ephesians 5:30-32 lacks comparative particles, indicating he is speaking factually.<sup>86</sup> Human marriage is the parable; the eternal romance is Christ, who will marry his bride in a permanent covenant. Adam and Eve were one flesh, so Christ and the church will be forever. The reality will be celebrated when “the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready” (Rev 19:7-8).

This reality of eternal union with Christ stresses the importance of marital unity. When he re-addresses the husbands, Paul’s emphatic intention is evident with his

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<sup>81</sup> Hugenberger, *Marriage as A Covenant*, 163.

<sup>82</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 71.

<sup>83</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 381.

<sup>84</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 389.

<sup>85</sup> Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 395.

<sup>86</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 396.

syntactical combination of the second-person personal pronoun and the imperative of ἀγαπάω: “You—every single one of you.”<sup>87</sup> If a man chooses to marry, he must love his wife. Paul then speaks to each wife but does so in the third person. As women would be present when the letter was read, Paul’s message to husbands appears to be more direct than the instruction to wives. Whether or not using the subjunctive clause before the word “fear” (v. 33) communicates a soft imperative,<sup>88</sup> Paul certainly teaches that wives should give their husbands a “profound measure of respect.”<sup>89</sup> When the husband and wife both honor their responsibilities, the result is unity.

### **Implications for Marriage Counseling**

Marriage counseling in Tanzania often focuses on helping husbands (decision-makers) and wives (obedient followers) embrace these roles within marriage. This approach misses the grander marriage narrative, as revealed in Ephesians 5:21-33: the upside-down kingdom dynamics of sacrificial love required of husbands that represents Christ’s covenant with his bride.<sup>90</sup> In both the Greco-Roman world of the original audience and the present-day culture of Tanzania, husbands are traditionally esteemed as those who must be served. But Christ, who gave up his very life for his bride, accepts dishonor to give honor. Unlike other male leaders of the first century, Jesus used his headship to love the body. Consequently, Paul argues that this is how all Christian husbands must live. Rather than abusing his authority in self-centered ways, a Christlike husband lovingly sacrifices, while a Christlike wife offers submission and respect; and together, they pursue a one-flesh relationship.

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<sup>87</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 390.

<sup>88</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 391.

<sup>89</sup> Larkin, *Ephesians*, 142. Cf. Eph 5:21—fear of Christ is contextually without terror.

<sup>90</sup> Many marital roles are culturally based, not biblically based. As I implemented this ministry project as a foreigner in Tanzania, it was best to teach a theology of marriage and allow nationals to interpret how those roles are practiced in local customs.

Marriage counseling is only necessary because married people need the gospel. The divine Groom chose his bride, but she trusted in herself and chased after other loves (Ezek 16:15-22). Because of his loyal love, the Bridegroom sacrificed himself to prepare his bride for a day of celebration and an eternal life of joy (Eph 5:25b-27; Rev 19:7-8). Even the marriage of the perfect Groom and his bride is presently marked with problems—how much more the marriages of men and women who dimly reflect him! However, Paul reminds his readers that the church is “the resplendent bride of Christ,” and God calls her “to live in a way that is consistent with the status.”<sup>91</sup> For married couples, this way of life must include “reflect[ing] and bear[ing] witness to the divine marriage in which they have their source and from which they draw their strength.”<sup>92</sup> Thus, marriage lives out the gospel in this way, displaying the Lover who gave everything for his beloved.

### **Reorientation to Christ Produces Unity: Philippians 2:1-11**

Paul sent a letter to the Philippian church from his rented prison home (Acts 28:16). Writing with thankfulness and joy, he exhorts his brothers and sisters to remain unified by “stand[ing] firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel” (Phil 1:27b). It would not be an easy task. However, looking to the example of Christ, he asks the Philippians to “place themselves at one another’s disposal, living so that their forbearance is a matter of public knowledge.”<sup>93</sup> Although they are redeemed, they need a reorientation to Christ to experience unity in their relationships.

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<sup>91</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 386-87.

<sup>92</sup> Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *God and Marriage* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 75-76.

<sup>93</sup> Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 382.

## **The Foundation of Unity—Humility: Philippians 2:1-4**

The Greek text begins with the conjunction “therefore,” referring to Philippians 1:27-30 and Paul’s initial mention of the need for unity. He knows they have been suffering, but he bases his forthcoming plea for humble unity on their relationship with God, their relationship with Paul, and their internal struggles. Missing from the narrative are outside persecutors. He communicates an emotional appeal through his syntax and word choice, striving to impart his knowledge of the essential nature of unity for a local body of believers.<sup>94</sup> Verses 1-2 are commonly translated with four “if . . . , then . . .” statements. This particular use of the first-class conditional communicates certainty and not doubt. The better translation is “since . . . ,”<sup>95</sup> with the apodosis taking the form of an imperative.<sup>96</sup>

The first conditional references the reader’s experience of παράκλησις in Christ. Paul often uses the root verb of this noun to convey “an appeal that leads to encouragement” (Phil 4:2; Col 2:2; 4:8). Therefore, in this verse, the word is best understood as “a strengthening encouragement.” Paul’s appeal seeks to remind them of God’s direct saving grace found in verse 1, which united them with Christ and created their eternal union with one another. Attuned to these truths, Paul exhorts the Philippians, “If this is true, as indeed it is, and if my words of encouragement have in any way helped you stay true to the faith in the past, then respond accordingly in the present.”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 382.

<sup>95</sup> James L. Boyer, “First Class Conditions: What Do They Mean?,” *Grace Theological Journal* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1981): 75-76, 83; Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 706, 762; Daniel Wallace, “The Myth about the Meaning of First Class Conditions in Greek,” Bible.org, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://bible.org/article/myth-about-meaning-first-class-conditions-greek>.

<sup>96</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 177.

<sup>97</sup> Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 43 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 65.

The second conditional phrase affirms past παραμύθιον of love. This noun is used only here in the New Testament and poses a translation challenge. The word conveys the meaning “to amiably speak to someone by coming close to his side.”<sup>98</sup> The word thus seems to be a near-synonym of the “encouragement” Paul just mentioned. It is unclear whose love is pictured by this “comfort,” but any love Paul had given them came from Christ.<sup>99</sup> With yearning, Paul appeals to the Philippians, “If my love has provided you with any consolation in your suffering, as indeed it has, then please now respond properly to my request.”<sup>100</sup>

In the third conditional construction, the context reminds the readers that they are standing together for the gospel in one Spirit, the Spirit who had put them “in Christ.” Therefore, it is consistent to see this as a reference to the Holy Spirit.<sup>101</sup> Paul is beseeching his friends, “If you belong to that community brought into existence by the Holy Spirit, and enjoy any fellowship with one another as a result, then live accordingly.”<sup>102</sup>

Paul’s emotional appeal is obvious. In this final conditional, he uses two words that refer to locations in the body where one experiences deep affection. The presence of Christ in the believer produces σπλάγγνον and οίκτιρμός, translated in a bygone era as “bowels and mercies.” Undoubtedly, the Philippians remember the gift of care God has given them at the core of their being. Paul’s heartfelt plea cries, “If then . . . you know

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<sup>98</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 65.

<sup>99</sup> Markus Bockmuehl, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (London: A&C Black, 1997), 106.

<sup>100</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 65.

<sup>101</sup> Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 181.

<sup>102</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 66.

anything of the mercy and compassion shown you by God in Christ, as you most certainly do, then please respond by saying ‘Yes’ to my request.”<sup>103</sup>

At last, Paul has reached his main verb, yet it does not capture his primary aim: that the Philippians implement all the subsequent exhortations with one mind.<sup>104</sup> His recipients had just heard that Paul “always prays for joy” when he prays for them (Phil 1:4). Even when self-focused people preach Christ, hoping to hurt him, he has joy (Phil 1:18). But here, Paul discloses his joy is missing something only they, his spiritual children, can give him—their like-mindedness.<sup>105</sup> Paul’s choice of φρονέω seeks to establish an inner attitude of loyalty to other believers, even in the presence of disagreements.<sup>106</sup>

Paul explains his understanding of like-mindedness in the three dependent clauses that follow. First, only when the Philippians prioritize this inner attitude of loyalty toward others will they be able to practically share in the same love.<sup>107</sup> Second, with a word Paul seems to have created for this context, σύμψυχος, he warmly conveys a desire for them to be “with one soul.” This unity creates common affection and “is essential for the spiritual growth of the church, the progress of the gospel, and the victory of believers over their adversaries.”<sup>108</sup> This unity of soul is directly connected to the third clause, having “one mind,” which is a verbal participle of φρονέω. Similar to Paul’s previous use of this word as a simple verb, here it communicates more than intellectual

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<sup>103</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 67.

<sup>104</sup> Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 86.

<sup>105</sup> Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 184.

<sup>106</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 68.

<sup>107</sup> Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 185.

<sup>108</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 68.

agreement and addresses “moral and spiritual orientation.” This orientation does not erase varying opinions but directs people to a united purpose.<sup>109</sup>

After illustrating the qualities of like-mindedness, Paul reveals the key to Christian community: “In humility value others above yourselves” (Phil 2:3b). Such humility requires abandoning selfish ambition and vain conceit.<sup>110</sup> Paul exhorts the Philippians to do nothing motivated by ἐριθεία, a word that denotes purposeful divisiveness mixed with envy (cf. Phil 1:17). Paul cuts “at the heart of human fallenness, where self-interest and self-aggrandizement at the expense of others primarily dictate values and behavior.”<sup>111</sup> Such self-motivated, self-fulfilling conduct is senseless for believers following a crucified King. Paul pairs selfish ambition with κενοδοξία, translated here as “vain conceit.” It is the old-English word “vainglory” that describes an elevated view of self—a person who projects a groundless self-image and empty pride where there should be Christian humility.<sup>112</sup>

Rather than generating worthless, self-centered actions, Paul says believers must possess and demonstrate humility. Consistent with the culture in a Roman city, the Philippians viewed humility as shameful and dishonorable, amounting to “servile weakness” to subordinates. The new morality of Christ changed the social order by making humility an integral aspect of every relationship, not marked by excessive deference to superiors but by an “‘ex-centric’ orientation, taking its focus outside oneself, and finding its power in the power of God.”<sup>113</sup> Humility acts. Paul calls the new believers in Philippi to lay aside any desire to get ahead of their brothers and sisters and instead let others go first from a new place of humility.

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<sup>109</sup> Bockmuehl, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 109.

<sup>110</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 69.

<sup>111</sup> Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 189.

<sup>112</sup> Bockmuehl, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 109-10.

<sup>113</sup> Bockmuehl, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 111.



Paul is not encouraging lip service but counter-cultural behavior by followers of a subversive new religion. He is asking them to place the needs of others above their own and to speak more highly of others than themselves from a sincere heart. This self-humiliation “to give preference to each other without distinction—not only to the good, the strong, or the beautiful, cut the jugular of a hierarchical, honor/shame culture.”<sup>114</sup> Such humble action does not belittle the self but regards the welfare of others over one’s personal matters.<sup>115</sup> If Paul were unclear to this point, he clarifies, “Do not fix your eyes on what benefits you, but all of you, refocus your attention on your brothers and sisters.”<sup>116</sup> Though there is debate about the significance of the *ἀλλά και* in this clause, there is no doubt that Paul is describing an others-centered humility.<sup>117</sup> The lexical and contextual clues reasonably point toward the binary choice of service to self or service to others.<sup>118</sup>

### **Christ, the Humble One: Philippians 2:5-11**

There has been considerable debate regarding the translation of verse 5 and its interpretation. In summary, the question is if the example of Christ is presented as doctrinal instruction (kerygmatic view) or as direction for Christian living (ethical view).<sup>119</sup> Since the Philippians were experiencing opposition, they needed steadfastness, which was only possible through spiritual unity. As unity necessitates humility, Paul reinforces its critical importance by illustrating Philippians 2:2-4 with Christ’s actions.

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<sup>114</sup> Bockmuehl, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 111-12.

<sup>115</sup> Bockmuehl, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 113-14.

<sup>116</sup> Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 191.

<sup>117</sup> Bockmuehl, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 113-14.

<sup>118</sup> Robert D. Jones and Kenneth Trax, “Whose Interests Should a Believer Pursue? A Reassessment of Philippians 2:4” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Fort Worth, TX, November 16, 2021), 4.

<sup>119</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 79.

By pointing to the ethical example of Christ, which believers are to follow wholeheartedly, Paul offers the most excellent illustration to support his previous admonitions.<sup>120</sup>

Grammatically, verse 5 reads, “Think this among yourselves, which also in Christ Jesus.” Most interpreters assign the imperative mood to “think,” which is the same word and meaning in verse 2, indicating more than cognition but an inward disposition. The following relative clause lacks a verb; thus, interpreters have traditionally inserted a form of “to be.” By following the principle that the main tense of a main clause best dictates the tense of its subordinate verbless clause, verse 5 translates, “Have this attitude amongst yourselves, which *is* also in Christ Jesus.”<sup>121</sup> In verses 6-11, Paul instructs the Philippians to compare their attitudes to Christ’s and adopt his mindset as their own.

Paul presents Christ’s self-humbling as the Philippians’ moral example (Phil 2:6-8). The phrase, Christ, “who being in very nature God,” speaks of his pre-incarnate existence. Paul categorically states “that outside his human nature Christ had no other manner of existing apart from existing in the form of God.”<sup>122</sup> The word *μορφή* denotes “the visual characteristics of a person or object.”<sup>123</sup> In this context, the word likely references “the visual characteristics of [Jesus’s] heavenly being . . . in his state or condition in relation to God *prior to* his state or condition as a servant.”<sup>124</sup> Syntactically, the words “form” and “equality” are parallel, linking meaning and intention.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Silva, *Philippians*, 93.

<sup>121</sup> Bockmuehl, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 121-24. NB: This translation takes the present tense of the kerygmatic view but employs it ethically. According to Bockmuehl, the attitude of Christ should not be read merely historically but as a “*present reality*.”

<sup>122</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 84.

<sup>123</sup> Bockmuehl, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 127.

<sup>124</sup> Bockmuehl, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 127, 129.

<sup>125</sup> Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 208.

The word ἀρπαγμός is only used here in the New Testament, thus presenting additional work for translators. When Plutarch used the word (ca. AD 100), he meant “robbery.” As it is against Christ’s nature to stage a robbery, scholars have searched for alternative idiomatic usage consistent with Greek noun formation. This research suggests that ἀρπαγμός either functions as an abstract noun, emphasizing the “concept of grasping or seizing,” or is a synonym of its cognate and means “booty” or “prey.”<sup>126</sup> Thanks to philological research in secular literature, the latter definition is more convincing, resulting in a more precise meaning that works well within the text: “to exploit fully something that is already in one’s possession.”<sup>127</sup>

Applying this meaning to verse 6 creates one of the strongest declarations of Christ’s deity. Equally possessing the nature of God, Christ did not consider taking advantage of his deity to avoid the incarnation.<sup>128</sup> In contrast with Paul’s concern for the Philippians’ selfish attitudes (Phil 2:3-4), “Jesus’ equality with God led him to view his status not as a matter of privilege but as a matter of unselfish giving.” In Christ’s humility, God reveals his character.<sup>129</sup>

Christ, being equal to God, did not selfishly hold onto the privileges of majesty. Instead, he revealed his humble attitude through his actions: becoming not only a human but also a slave. “He made himself nothing” refers to an often misconstrued theological term: the kenosis or “self-emptying of Christ.” Contrary to the belief that Christ emptied himself of some divine attributes, κενόω figuratively renders “something of no account.” “Making himself nothing” accurately captures how the pre-incarnate

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<sup>126</sup> Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 205-7.

<sup>127</sup> Silva, *Philippians*, 117.

<sup>128</sup> Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 208.

<sup>129</sup> Frank Thielman, *Philippians*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 116.

Christ would live among the people he had created.<sup>130</sup> Christ's self-emptying further reveals God's character. Rather than leveraging his deity for his advantage, Jesus's only mindset was others-centered. He willingly made himself nothing, first by being human and second by becoming a servant. The pre-incarnate Christ, who is equal to God, made himself nothing his entire earthly lifespan, including his incarnation, obedience, and crucifixion. By making himself nothing, Christ was "actually displaying the form of God, making the glory of God manifest to humans," without denying any element of deity.<sup>131</sup> Instead, the manifestation of glory was purposefully contained in the body of a man who would live as a servant to all.

Paul contrasts the attitude of Christ with the selfish ambition and vain conceit existing in the Philippian church (Phil 2:3). Using a strong adversative, he says Christ had no vainglory. His is true glory, but he willingly emptied himself of such privileges and reputation. In the first century, people were acquainted with slavery. Translating the word δούλος as "servant" would not hide the synonymous meaning of "slave" from the Greco-Roman ear. It was for the purpose of becoming a δούλος that Christ became human. He spoke of himself, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Thus, God reveals that he comfortably fits within the role of a slave. Such revelation communicates loudly to those made in his image: have the same mindset of Christ—the attitude that is generous to all and willingly lays aside rights for the interests of others.<sup>132</sup>

Christ's self-humiliation only reached its end when he had sufficiently provided for those he came to serve. To be killed by the state was shameful. To be killed on a cross was a curse (Deut 21:23). Crucifixion was the cruelest of deaths—a death

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<sup>130</sup> Thielman, *Philippians*, 117-18.

<sup>131</sup> Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians*, Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 96.

<sup>132</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 211, 214.

worthy of only the poor and the enslaved.<sup>133</sup> But Christ, who was everything, made himself nothing, his perfect person hanging from a tree so that he could save the ungodly (Rom 5:6). His humility displayed the greatest act of love. Paul expects those who have experienced all the blessings of Philippians 2:1, thanks to Christ's obedience, to humbly respond with obedience, being like-minded and united with their brothers and sisters.

This Christological narrative of humility and suffering ends in exaltation. The first half presents a humble and obedient servant equal to God (2:6-8). God vindicates this servant in the second half and "super-exalts" him.<sup>134</sup> God is not rewarding Christ for his obedience or compensating him for thirty-three lost years of privileges, and Paul is not pulling back eternal curtains and showing Christ in "the highest position." Paul's use of the word "highest" (ὕψιστος) is not a reference to "the highest place" but to "the highest possible degree."<sup>135</sup> God exalted Christ because he is the only one who could ever be worthy of such exaltation. No one else would ever consider so little of himself and so much of others.

Jewish names possess meaning. At Jesus's birth, Joseph gave him the name "the Lord saves" to identify his purpose (Matt 1:21). At his exaltation, God bestows on Jesus the divine title "Lord." Jewish readers of the Septuagint (LXX) would have understood "Lord," in this context, as the personal name of God—YHWH himself.<sup>136</sup> Therefore, the one who chose not to use his power to get ahead but sought after the welfare of others at his own expense will reign supreme, and all human and angelic creatures will pay homage to him and acknowledge that he is God (cf. Isa 45:23).<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Thielman, *Philippians*, 119.

<sup>134</sup> Bockmuehl, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 140-41.

<sup>135</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 221.

<sup>136</sup> Bockmuehl, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 142, 147.

<sup>137</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 225.

### **A Case Study: Philippians 4:1-3**

When Paul originally penned these living words, which the Spirit uses to “judge the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb 4:12), they would have had a comparable purpose for their original audience. Paul’s appeals surely met a need of the people: “Be likeminded. Do nothing out of selfish ambition. Value others above yourselves.” When Paul tenderly but directly addresses Euodia and Syntyche, two gospel workers, he applies the truth he had just recorded (Phil 4:2). He asks a mediator to help these women through their conflict (Phil 4:3) so that they may have the same mind and, through their unity, not hinder the spread of the gospel (Phil 1:27-30).<sup>138</sup> Paul has told his spiritual children to obey Christ by having one soul with other believers, imitating the attitude of Christ, and thus bringing Paul joy. In eternity, Paul longs to celebrate the Christ-filled life deeply formed in the Philippians and expressed in their unity (Phil 2:16).

### **Implications for Marriage Counseling**

Paul called the Philippian church to stand firm for Christ and share the gospel (Phil 1:27-30). An authentic gospel witness requires unity. That unity comes when members of the body of Christ recognize God’s saving grace in Christ. Once reminded of the cost of their salvation, they can lay aside their agendas and self-profit to lower themselves in service to their brothers and sisters. The lessons for the Philippian church correspondingly apply to a brother and sister in a Christian marriage. As God reveals the story of redemption through human marriage, a self-seeking, disunited couple will hinder the gospel message. However, as redeemed people are reoriented to Christ, they will experience growing unity in their marriage.

Paul fully invests himself in the Philippian church, and his joy is incomplete without their unity. When he seeks the reconciliation of two church members, he requests the help of a mediator. Marriage counseling, especially when practiced through the

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<sup>138</sup> Bockmuehl, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 239-41.

church among mutually committed members, echoes this aspect of Paul’s ministry in Philippi. Biblical marriage counselors serve as mediators to point husbands and wives back to Christ and toward unity.

### **Loving God and Neighbor**

God the Son took on flesh because of self-love in the world. His humble mindset indicated his love for people, and his obedience to the Father affirmed his love for God. He demonstrated and taught that when people intentionally love God, they simultaneously love their neighbor, thus becoming a neighbor—a person who lives wholeheartedly in the direction of God.

### **Love of God Creates Love of Neighbor: Mark 12:28-34**

During Passion Week, the Jewish leaders dedicated themselves to finding legal fault against Jesus. As one lobs another antagonistic question, a scribe recognizes Jesus’s morally good answer. Apparently, in good faith, this teacher of the law engages Jesus with a follow-up question: “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” (Mark 12:28). However, πάντων (“all”) is a masculine or neuter adjective and “commandments” is a feminine noun. A better translation is, “What commandment is the most important among all [human beings]?”<sup>139</sup> The scribe is asking Jesus, “Which commandment supersedes *everything* and is incumbent on all humanity—including Gentiles?” Since the Torah includes 613 different commandments, conversations about the more and less essential (“heavier” and “lighter”) laws were common.<sup>140</sup> However,

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<sup>139</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 370. In 370n45, Edwards cites Cullen I. K. Story, “Marcan Love Commandment ‘The Greatest of These Is Love’ (1 Corinthians 13:13),” *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (1999): 152.

<sup>140</sup> Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 370.

while seeking the most foundational command with universal application, this scribe includes a Gentile's responsibility before God.

Jesus responds with an astute connection. He cites the Shema, the words that observant Jews spoke twice daily (Deut 6:4-5). Then he connects this first command with the second, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18). The Jews affirmed both laws; however, Jesus inseparably linked the two concepts<sup>141</sup> (cf. Matt 22:35-40; Luke 10:25-28).<sup>142</sup> By citing the Shema, Jesus affirms a person's vertical responsibility to God, found in the first half of the Decalogue. His inclusion of Leviticus 19:18 honors a person's horizontal responsibility to other image-bearers, located in the second half of the Decalogue. Thus, all the remaining "lighter" commands are not abrogated but kept through the prioritization of what Christ entitles the first and second commandments.<sup>143</sup>

Jesus summarizes the entire law by calling people to love God wholeheartedly and, from this love, give love to their neighbors.<sup>144</sup> Jesus clarifies the love response: love for the Lord must be an ἀγαπάω love, the others-focused, self-sacrificing kind of love. Through repetition of the word "all," Jesus positions the whole person under the reign of God. The heart (emotions), the soul (spirit), the mind (intelligence), and the strength (will) are each introduced by the preposition ἐκ. Although this preposition is commonly understood as "by means of," it may also signify "from the source of." If the second meaning is applied, the translation shifts from "with all your heart" to "from all your

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<sup>141</sup> Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 372-73.

<sup>142</sup> In Luke 10:25-28, an expert in the law connects the two commandments in his answer to Jesus. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 372, states, "It does not appear that any rabbi before Jesus regarded love of God and neighbor as the center and sum of the law." It is reasonable to conclude that the lawyer in the Lukan passage had previously heard Jesus make this connection.

<sup>143</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 562.

<sup>144</sup> William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 433.



heart.”<sup>145</sup> This minor change would require the self-sacrificial love people are to have for God to come “from the source of their whole hearts” rather than “with the effort of their whole hearts.” This ἀγαπάω love that Christ commands to flow from the hearts of people contrasts strongly with the evil that bursts forth from the source of the heart in Mark 7:21 (ἐκ τῆς καρδίας). Therefore, Christ speaks of a need for heart regeneration so that the human heart might become a source of this “divinely inspired” love.<sup>146</sup>

For a second time, the scribe positively responds to Jesus’s answer. Obeying God’s command to love him and love others is greater than any type of ritualistic sacrifice (Mark 12:32-33). The Lord had made a covenant with the Israelites and promised a new covenant that he would write on the hearts of those who would know him (Jer 31:31-34). God’s covenant love and claim of authority are over the entirety of a person. Likewise, the future sacrifice of Christ would be for the whole of each person. Therefore, a love response to God should come from all of a person—to seek God for the sake of being near him. Jesus is claiming owner’s rights, not offering a tenant’s contract. Jesus expresses that the entire will of YHWH is met not by obeying the letter of the law but by giving a “whole-hearted response to God and to the neighbor.”<sup>147</sup> A person who wants to fulfill the law of God will discover that “love *for* God releases the love *of* God.”<sup>148</sup> Jesus uses the same word ἀγαπάω, others-centered love, for neighbor as he does for God, making the two commandments impossible to fulfill as separate units.

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<sup>145</sup> Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 371. Cf. Story, *Marcan Love Commandment*, 155.

<sup>146</sup> Story, “Marcan Love Commandment,” 155.

<sup>147</sup> Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 432.

<sup>148</sup> Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 372-73.

**Become a Loving Neighbor:  
Luke 10:25-37**

In Luke 10:25-37, Luke records a similar story about loving God and neighbor but with a different emphasis. Since debating the heavier and lighter demands of the law was common among Jewish leaders, it would not be unusual for Jesus, a Jewish rabbi, to have this discussion multiple times. This Lukan account presents an expert of the law who is hostile to Christ. Based on internal evidence, this narrative is likely a separate conversation from Mark 12:28-34.<sup>149</sup>

In Luke 10, the lawyer stands up and, recognizing his own expertise, antagonistically asks Jesus, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (10:25). Jesus, knowing the man’s training, rests the burden on the lawyer and asks him how he reads the law (10:26). The man combines the Shema (Deut 6:5) and Leviticus 19:18. His words communicate his belief that eternal life is not found in merely keeping legal requirements but in love and devotion. He understands that love for God is not an abstract concept but requires expressing love to others.<sup>150</sup> Jesus praises the man’s answer and, knowing the failings of the lawyer’s heart (Luke 9:47), tells him, “Do this and you will live” (Luke 10:28). The man knew the law, but he did not apply it to himself.<sup>151</sup> Knowing the man’s hypocrisy, Jesus’s message to the man is this: “If you want eternal life, love God, and take action by loving people.”

Seeking the minimum requirement necessary to secure a comfortable eternity, the lawyer attempts to defend himself by asking Jesus to define his neighbor. In this context, it appears the man wants to establish who is “not his neighbor” to identify whom he does not have to love. Undeterred by the lawyer’s pursuit of self-preservation, Jesus

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<sup>149</sup> Stein, *Mark*, 558-59.

<sup>150</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 3B (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 1025.

<sup>151</sup> R. Laird Harris, “Leviticus,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, *Genesis-Numbers*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 605-6.

tells the parable of the Good Samaritan. As he speaks, his words break cultural barriers and tell all who listen that “neighbor” is without boundaries (Luke 10:30-35).<sup>152</sup>

The lawyer knows that Leviticus 19:13-18a describes a practical exposition of neighborly love.<sup>153</sup> He had memorized “Love your neighbor as yourself,” which equalized the status of another person to “one’s very own self, thus being worthy of one’s love.”<sup>154</sup> However, as a theological expert, he knows the term “neighbor” is ambiguous. The “neighbor” in Leviticus 19:18 was an Israelite, while a few verses later, Moses included the foreigner living among the Jewish people as a possible neighbor (Lev 19:33-34). The man in Jesus’s story is not an Israelite and lives outside Jewish boundaries. According to the law, the lawyer may not need to love this Samaritan.<sup>155</sup> Jesus, however, grants the Israelite’s enemy the privileged status of neighbor!<sup>156</sup>

As Jesus finishes the parable, he inverts the man’s question. The lawyer had asked, “Who is my neighbor?” Now Jesus asks him, “Who became a neighbor?” (Luke 10:36). The man answers truthfully, “The one who had mercy on him” (Luke 10:37a). Through his affirmative reply, Jesus contextually defines love as showing mercy. He places the onus of responsibility on the person who can help rather than on the identity of the one needing help. Then Jesus reveals the central point of his teaching by telling the man, “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37b). A person who believes the Word of God puts

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<sup>152</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 426.

<sup>153</sup> Robert Alter, ed., *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*, vol. 1, *The Five Books of Moses* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019), 431-32.

<sup>154</sup> John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Nelson Reference and Electronic, 1992), 318.

<sup>155</sup> Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 429.

<sup>156</sup> Stein, *Mark*, 562.

it into action. In this case, the obedient response is loving God and becoming a loving neighbor to those whom one has the ability and opportunity to help.<sup>157</sup>

**My Wife, My Closest Neighbor:  
Leviticus 19:18 in Ephesians  
5:28-33**

As previously stated, Paul integrally connects the wife to the husband in Ephesians 5:28-32, but there he also implies that the wife is the husband's closest neighbor. "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18) resounds in the text as Paul redefines the husband's nearest neighbor as his one-flesh wife (Eph 5:28, 33).<sup>158</sup> In verse 28, Paul transposes the word "body" for "self" to match the upcoming citation of Genesis 2:24 and its reference to the one-flesh-ness of the two bodies.<sup>159</sup> Because Paul is writing household codes, he substitutes the word "wife" for "neighbor." In this verse, the call for husbands to love their wives as their own bodies reflect Leviticus 19:18, with the word "bodies" substituted for "themselves."<sup>160</sup> In verse 33, which mirrors the flow of Leviticus 19:18, the term "wife" is used rather than "neighbor." The LXX translation of the Song of Songs nine times calls the bride the female derivative of neighbor (πλησίον).<sup>161</sup> While Paul does not unequivocally quote Leviticus 19:18 in Ephesians 5:28-33, he does employ the only other use of "as yourself" in the entire biblical text outside of references to the second commandment.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1032, 1035.

<sup>158</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 391. Cf. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 384, who writes, "The wife is the husband's primary and exemplary neighbor." Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 719, agrees.

<sup>159</sup> Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 391.

<sup>160</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 391; J. Paul Sampley, "And the Two Shall Become One Flesh": A Study of Traditions in Ephesians 5:21-33 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 32-33, 57-58.

<sup>161</sup> Sampley, "And the Two Shall Become One Flesh", 30-31. See Song of Songs 1:9, 15; 2:2, 10, 13; 4:1, 7; 5:2; 6:4 and Sampley's additional evidence found in Tannaitic literature.

<sup>162</sup> Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 704-5.

In Ephesians 5:31, Paul directly connects two unique metaphors—the church as the bride and the body of Christ. Paul applies the same images in human marriage. The wife is concurrently the bride and the husband’s body. Therefore, if a man hates his wife, he hates his own flesh. This connection “underlies the maxim that one should love one’s neighbor—and preeminently one’s wife—as *oneself*. Christ’s love for his ‘neighbor,’ and preeminently for the church, is the paradigm for a husband’s love of his wife.”<sup>163</sup> Paul is applying the general commandment of “Love your neighbor as yourself” to the husband-wife relationship. As Christ connects the love of God to the love of neighbor (Mark 12:28-34), in Ephesians 5:28-31, he joins the love of God with the love of one’s wife. Thus, “the echo of the second of the two great commandments is scarcely to be missed.”<sup>164</sup> A husband who truly loves God must also love his wife, his closest neighbor.

### **Implications for Marriage Counseling**

The expert in the law desired eternal life with minimal cost, yet Jesus requires “whole-personed” obedience, and that obedience is summed up in the self-sacrificial love of God and neighbor.<sup>165</sup> Similarly, married people may limit their investment in their husbands or wives, but God desires them to direct the same all-inclusive love to their closest neighbor. How people treat their spouses represents their intentions toward them and their loyalty to God.<sup>166</sup> At times, married people need interactions with someone willing to point out where they are not doing what they know they need to, as Jesus shows this lawyer. As a husband and wife “do” their love for God, they simultaneously give love toward their closest neighbor, their spouse.

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<sup>163</sup> Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 392.

<sup>164</sup> Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 391.

<sup>165</sup> Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1028.

<sup>166</sup> Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 27.

## **Conclusion**

Biblical marriage counseling recognizes that through the marriage covenant Christ reveals the story of humanity's redemption. God made people for relationship with him; to secure this, the Son sacrificed himself. God shares this story through the picture of human marriage, which represents the eternal divine romance (Gen 2:23-24; Eph 5:21-33). Redeemed married people struggle with self-focused love and need regular reorientation to Christ to experience vertical and horizontal unity. Through the reminder of God's saving grace and the self-sacrificial humility of Christ, they are reminded to adopt his inner attitude of humility (Phil 2:1-11). When a couple becomes intent on loving God, they simultaneously love their closest neighbor, their spouse. It is impossible for a husband and wife to love God if they do not love their spouse, their "bone-of-bone," "flesh-of-flesh," "own body" covenant partner (Lev 19:18; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-37; Eph 5:28). Through biblical marriage counseling, couples are pointed to Christ to reorient each spouse to love God and their closest neighbor.

## CHAPTER 3

### CULTURAL ISSUES IMPEDING BIBLICAL MARRIAGE COUNSELING

Tanzanians greatly esteem marriage. John Mbiti, the father of modern African theology, recognizes how the drama of human history repeats itself in the marriage union. He stresses that “for African peoples, marriage is the focus of existence . . . , a rhythm of which everyone must participate.”<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, marriages struggle, and divorce rates are increasing. Seeking to explain the situation, some people blame colonization and globalization for introducing family values contrary to African culture.<sup>2</sup> Others suppose the fault is women’s empowerment. If only the divine order of male headship were correctly followed, men would be faithful to their wives.<sup>3</sup> Another common argument credits marital dissatisfaction to satanic onslaught. Perhaps addressing the evil work of the devil, such as anger, adultery, inequality, violence, and separation, will lead to stable families. However, in all these approaches, the stakeholders discuss problems rather than foundational causes of marital strife. Josephine Munyao brings innovation to the issue, asserting that a lack of theological contextualization of the Bible with modern African

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<sup>1</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1990), 130.

<sup>2</sup> See Douglas W. Waruta, “Marriage and Family in Contemporary African Society: Challenges and Pastoral Counseling,” in *Pastoral Care in African Christianity: Challenging Essays in Pastoral Theology*, ed. Hannah W. Kinoti and Douglas W. Waruta, 2nd ed., African Christianity Series (Nairobi: Acton, 2005), 108; Andrew A. Kyomo and Sahaya G. Selvam, eds., introduction to *Marriage and Family in African Christianity*, African Christianity Series (Nairobi: Acton, 2004), 1; Laurenti Magesa, “Reconstructing the African Family,” in Selvam and Kyomo, *Marriage and Family in African Christianity*, 14; Theological Advisory Group Research Team on Marriage and Family, ed., *A Biblical Approach to Marriage and Family in Africa*, TAG Theological Reflections 5 (Machakos, Kenya: Scott Theological College, 1994), 111.

<sup>3</sup> See pastors’ interview results in Josephine Munyao, “Marital Disharmony among Akamba Christians: A Consequence of Women’s Empowerment or Improper Contextualized Theology?” (PhD diss., Africa International University, 2017), 85-120.

society is the root of the marriage crisis.<sup>4</sup> Contextualization offers a creative solution, but it also falls short of identifying the root issues of the current marital crisis.

From the time of colonialism and the early Christian missionaries until modern times, African marriage realities indicate that Christianity “converted the African people to a new religion without converting their culture.”<sup>5</sup> Missionaries failed to connect the kingdom values of Christian marriage to the heart of African life, as they focused on civilizing “the heathen” and ending polygamy. The meaning of marriage remained a procreative relationship affirming men’s supremacy and women’s identity as mothers. The trouble within Christian Tanzanian marriages emerges from this poor foundation. People get married without understanding why God created marriage. The culture values men over women, pressing both genders into ungodly roles, and then offers excuses to justify subsequent sinful behavior. Marriage counseling needs to address these issues. Therefore, effectively teaching biblical marriage counseling to Tanzanian Christians requires understanding and addressing cultural beliefs regarding the purpose of marriage, the value and roles of men and women, and cultural justifications about human behavior that is contrary to biblical truth.

### **Cultural Views about the Purpose of Marriage**

Africans believe that marriage is an essential social responsibility.<sup>6</sup> Since society views marriage as the pathway to adulthood, many young adults desire to marry because of the honor and position granted to married people.<sup>7</sup> The social status of

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<sup>4</sup> Munyao, “Marital Disharmony among Akamba Christians,” 87-88, 163.

<sup>5</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 176.

<sup>6</sup> Bénézet Bujo, *Plea for Change of Models for Marriage* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2009), 18.

<sup>7</sup> Claire Coultas, “Sexual Health Promotion in Tanzania: Narratives on Young People’s Intimate Relationships,” in *Research on Gender and Sexualities in Africa*, ed. Jane Bennett and Sylvia Tamale (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2017), 172; Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Rachel Angogo Kanyoro, *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 141; J. N.



adulthood eludes those without a spouse and a child. Women long to be mothers, and men desire the unlimited sexual access afforded to married men.<sup>8</sup> However, each of these motivations falls short of the biblical teaching about the purpose of marriage: the man and woman covenanted together as one flesh, foreshadowing the permanent covenant between Christ and his church. Effectively teaching biblical marriage counseling, therefore, necessitates contrasting cultural beliefs with biblical truth regarding the purpose of marriage.

### **Creation of Christian Marriage**

Tanzanian marriage law recognizes customary and statutory marriages. Most Christians live in “unsealed” marriages that follow a generalized process of cohabitation, investigating the extended families’ social standing, approval of parents, negotiation and payment of *mahari* (bridewealth), and the birth of the first child. The government or church will eventually “seal” a minority of marriages with a formal ceremony and certificate. At various stages along this timeline, the couple considers themselves married, and the community affirms their relationship. These common law marriages are culturally understood to fulfill the meaning of becoming one flesh in Genesis 2:24.<sup>9</sup>

However, what makes a marriage Christian? When introducing Christian marriage, missionaries emphasized the legal and prestigious elements of a church wedding. The white wedding gown and accompanying regalia became the cultural

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Kanyua Mugambi, *The African Heritage and Contemporary Christianity* (Nairobi: Longman Kenya, 1989), 199.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Louisa Plummer and Daniel Wight, *Young People’s Lives and Sexual Relationships in Rural Africa: Findings from a Large Qualitative Study in Tanzania* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 279.

<sup>9</sup> Bertha Koda, “The Logistics of Doing Gender-Based Research in Tanzania,” in *Proceedings on a National Workshop on Women and Law in Eastern Africa*, ed. Magdalena K. Rwebangira, Tanzania Women Lawyers’ Association (Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press, 1993), 9-10; Wayne L. Nieminen, “The Meaning, Experience and Ecology of African Christian Marriages and Familial Relationships: A Phenomenological Study at Makumira University College, Tanzania” (PhD diss., Iowa State University, 2004), 129-30. NB: During the RTBS Marriage class, students regularly shared that they had believed that being “one-flesh” only refers to sexual intimacy.

symbols that define this Christian institution. When a non-cohabitating couple says their vows in a church, the culture deems their marriage “Christian.” Pastors often overlook preparing the couple to understand and implement the meaning of Christian marriage, substituting this vital teaching with brief pre-marital instruction about marriage roles. When the wedding day arrives, few expected guests will attend the religious ceremony compared to the number who will join the subsequent reception. Society values communal celebration; thus, maintaining social respect compels families to display personal wealth and status at the reception.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, couples remain in “unsealed” relationships, waiting for the elusive day when they can afford the demands of a church wedding.<sup>11</sup>

The Tanzanian church honors Christian statutory marriage but often fails to teach what marriage represents. Pastoral messages about marriage commonly focus on marital roles and the manifold ways couples can fall short of expectations, overlooking instruction about how to love one another. Church leaders rightly emphasize the biblical standard of a lifelong commitment, often citing “God hates divorce” (Mal 2:16). Thus, when individual couples experience marriage crises, churches may discipline or excommunicate members.<sup>12</sup> However, church leaders often misapply the permanence of the marriage covenant. When a woman promises “for better or worse” to her husband, the church and community typically understand that her commitment has no limits. Irrespective of her husband’s abuse, adultery, or neglect, the wife’s duty is to stay and

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<sup>10</sup> Auli Vähäkangas, “The Crisis of Christian Marriage,” in Kyomo and Selvan, *Marriage and Family in African Christianity*, 30.

<sup>11</sup> Benezeri Kitembo, Laurenti Magesa, and Aylward Shorter, *African Christian Marriage* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1977), 92-93; Margaret Peil and Olatunji Oyeneeye, *Consensus, Conflict, and Change: A Sociological Introduction to African Societies* (Nairobi: East African Educational, 1998), 100; Maia Green, *Priests, Witches and Power: Popular Christianity after Mission in Southern Tanzania*, Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology 110 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 78-79. Cf. Nieminen, “Meaning, Experience and Ecology,” 58-59.

<sup>12</sup> Nieminen, “Meaning, Experience and Ecology,” 62; Vähäkangas, “The Crisis of Christian Marriage,” 31.

endure. Because marriage does not include divorce, it often does not have a process for godly reconciliation.<sup>13</sup>

### **Paying *Mahari***

When Tanzanians marry, the man's family traditionally gives *mahari*, a form of bridewealth, to the woman's family. This payment formalizes the two families into a covenantal bond, ideally securing a unified commitment to support the longevity of the marriage. The *mahari* payment provides the bride's family with commensurate compensation for past economic investments in their daughter and the added financial loss of her future contribution to her biological family. Thus, her parents formally transfer her labor value to her future husband and his family. The concept of bridewealth is an ancient custom, and many Christian families value the practice, recognizing it as comparable to Old Testament dowry. Similar to the patriarchs' authority over their wives, *mahari* grants the husband exclusive sexual access to his wife as well as legal rights over any future children.<sup>14</sup>

The introduction of a cash society has altered the practice of *mahari*, endangering the lives of some women. In previous generations, *mahari* primarily consisted of livestock. Unlike shillings, these living animals represented inherent value and were not easily lost or spent. Mbiti argued that paying *mahari* with money would be analogous to buying a woman and beneath her dignity.<sup>15</sup> However, with the advent of cash and commercialism, *mahari* has become a business for many families. Parents seek

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<sup>13</sup> Kalist Tesha, "Genuine Reconciliation: A Practical Response to Domestic Violence among the Chagga in Tanzania" (DMin diss., The Catholic Theological Union at Chicago, 2013), 40-41. NB: While writing this chapter, two RTBS alumni pastors consulted me about marriage problems in their churches. In both cases, the wife had repeated, "If I stay, he will kill me." Neither pastor was initially concerned about the wife's statement; instead, he had encouraged her to remain in her marital home.

<sup>14</sup> Fareda Banda, *Women, Law and Human Rights: An African Perspective* (Portland: Hart, 2005), 109; Oduyoye and Kanyoro, *The Will to Arise*, 119-20; Waruta, "Marriage and Family in Contemporary African Society," 107.

<sup>15</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 140.

large sums of money for their financial gain.<sup>16</sup> Not only can the parents' demands delay a wedding, but they also weaken the support structure *mahari* was meant to create. In the past, if a marriage had a serious problem, the wife could visit her natal home, and her family would intervene. If the parents decided it was unsafe for their daughter to live with her husband, they returned the *mahari*. However, when a husband has paid a substantial cash *mahari* that the wife's parents have subsequently spent, they may force their daughter to go home to her husband.<sup>17</sup> With the growing popularity of expensive cash *mahari*, some husbands consider their wives their purchased possessions. In this modern iteration of *mahari*, women can be obliged to contractually "tolerate whatever transpires during a marriage," including violence and unprotected sex with an HIV-positive partner.<sup>18</sup>

### **Procreation and Identity**

Before the spread of Christianity in East Africa, most Tanzanians practiced some convention of African Traditional Religions (ATR). Many early missionaries lacked cultural insight and accepted external conversion to Christianity as sufficient discipleship. However, the new believers' worldview did not shift from old to new. ATR never opposed Christianity. In fact, the two religions appeared complementary: Christianity provides eternal life after death, while ATR addresses the problems of this

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<sup>16</sup> Theological Advisory Group, *A Biblical Approach to Marriage and Family in Africa*, 87. At the time of this book's publication, the Theological Advisory Group was a department in the Institute of Church Renewal at Scott Theological College in Machakos, Kenya. This group was formed in 1986 by the Africa Inland Church National Bible Schools Committee "to research various problems and issue which face the churches in order to find a solution which is both biblical and relevant to the African context" (x).

<sup>17</sup> Melissa Danielle Browning, "Patriarchy, Christianity, and the African HIV/AIDS Epidemic: Rethinking Christian Marriage in Light of the Experiences of HIV Positive Women in Tanzania" (PhD diss., Loyola University Chicago, 2011), 59; Cynthia Grant Bowman and Akua Kuenyehia, *Women and Law in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Accra: Sedco, 2003), 9-10.

<sup>18</sup> Flora Peter Myamba, "Domestic Violence Rights Movement in Tanzania: An Exploration" (PhD diss., Western Michigan University, 2009), 175.

life.<sup>19</sup> Among the most significant concerns in the present world are fertility and the continuation of the family line. The African worldview believes in the essentiality of marriage for the sake of procreation. The unity of marriage and procreation offers the hope of immortality as a family's name passes to the next generation, fulfilling a responsibility to the entire community.<sup>20</sup> Children act as messengers of their ancestors, serving as the link between the present and the past.<sup>21</sup> The more children a man fathers, the more opportunity for ancestral seeds to give birth to new life.<sup>22</sup>

Since Christian teaching neither addressed this preexisting worldview nor presented a biblical understanding of procreation within marriage, Christian culture continues to correlate childbirth and a person's value. Just as society expected procreation to seal the pre-Christian marriage contract, evidence of fertility still affirms the masculinity and femininity of both partners and the validity of their union.<sup>23</sup> When asked about the meaning of marriage, one pastor in Wayne Nieminen's research concisely captured this viewpoint: "I find myself so significant because I have fulfilled the question of marriage. I have the children."<sup>24</sup> Through successfully reproducing his seed, this father has attained full adulthood in the community. However, couples who reach their first wedding anniversary without a pregnancy commonly attract suspicion from their extended family and community: "Is the marriage in trouble?" "Is the wife infertile?" Some people suggest the husband take a new wife who can bear his offspring,

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<sup>19</sup> Terje Oestigaard, *Religion at Work in Globalised Traditions: Rainmaking, Witchcraft and Christianity in Tanzania* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2014), 41, 229.

<sup>20</sup> Oduyoye and Kanyoro, *The Will to Arise*, 120.

<sup>21</sup> Bujo, *Plea for Change of Models for Marriage*, 18.

<sup>22</sup> Elijah M. Baloyi, "Critical Reflections on Polygamy in the African Christian Context," *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Missiology* 41, no. 2 (2013): 164.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Guy, "The Cultural Approach to a Christian Theology of Marriage," in Kyomo and Selvam, *Marriage and Family in African Christianity*, 82. Cf. Theological Advisory Group, *A Biblical Approach to Marriage and Family in Africa*, 11; Oduyoye and Kanyoro, *The Will to Arise*, 141.

<sup>24</sup> Nieminen, "Meaning, Experience and Ecology," 176.

and some men accede.<sup>25</sup> Just as the community grants a positive identity to fathers, it also celebrates when women gain the title “Mama.”<sup>26</sup> However, a married woman without a child has no status.<sup>27</sup> Other women question them, and some declare mockingly, *Amekula kujaza choo tu* (“She only eats to fill up the toilet”).<sup>28</sup> Failing to complete her elemental societal duty, the woman’s failure to procreate diminishes her value.

### **Consequences of Transactional Sex**

The prevailing practice of pre-marital sex, primarily for male sexual pleasure and female provision, separates sexual intimacy from marriage. Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, a considerable volume of literature recognizes the cultural presumption of transactional sex,<sup>29</sup> which places a woman’s value in her sexuality, adapting *mahari* to temporary relationships. When young women receive small gifts of petty cash, personal hygiene products, or food in exchange for sex, both men and women operate within the prevailing patron/client system. The female reduces her economic disparity while appropriately reinforcing her dependence on men. Simultaneously, she protects her self-respect, as no honorable woman would give her body for free. In a corresponding manner, the male’s promiscuity strengthens his community status through his growing

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<sup>25</sup> Nieminen, “Meaning, Experience and Ecology,” 83.

<sup>26</sup> Oduoye and Kanyoro, *The Will to Arise*, 158.

<sup>27</sup> Margrethe Silberschmidt, “*Women Forget That Men Are the Masters*”: *Gender Antagonism and Socio-Economic Change in Kisii District, Kenya* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1999), 138.

<sup>28</sup> Mangi J. Ezekiel et al., “Attitudes Towards and Perceptions of Reproductive Health Needs of Persons Living with HIV/AIDS in Rural Kilimanjaro, Tanzania,” *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 14, no. 10 (November 2012): 1158.

<sup>29</sup> Kirsten Stoebenau et al. define transactional sex as the “non-marital, non-commercial sexual relationships, motivated by the implicit assumption that sex will be exchanged for material support or other benefits.” Kirsten Stoebenau et al., “Revisiting the Understanding of ‘Transactional Sex’ in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Review and Synthesis of the Literature,” *Social Science and Medicine* 168 (November 2016): 187. NB: Prostitution is a different category from this definition of transactional sex; cf. Ludovick Jacob Myumbo, “Young Women’s Narratives of Lived Experience in Face of Multiple Constraints and Barriers in Tanzania,” *Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Management Studies* 8, no. 1 (2021): 11.

network of dependents. These financial connections drive him to seek employment, which circuitously enables him to initiate another sexual transaction.<sup>30</sup>

Pre-marital sexual relationships commonly lack emotional attachment, foreshadowing a future problem for married couples.<sup>31</sup> The culture affords young people few socially appropriate opportunities to develop relationships; therefore, most young people hide their relationships from adults. Meet-ups are often brief and concentrated on quick and unsafe sex.<sup>32</sup> Because of the secretive and rushed nature, sexual relationships tend to be matter-of-fact and short-lived, with a high probability of concurrent back-up partners. Even for young couples who are emotionally connected and planning for marriage, research shows a lack of desire to get to know one another or to spend time together outside of sexual encounters. Monogamy cannot be assumed, even in committed relationships. Many engaged people maintain secondary relationships in case their first

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<sup>30</sup> R. K. Maganja et al., "Skinning the Goat and Pulling the Load: Transactional Sex among Youth in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania," *AIDS Care* 19, no. 8 (September 2007): 975; Margrethe Silberschmidt and Vibeke Rasch, "Adolescent Girls, Illegal Abortions and 'Sugar-Daddies' in Dar es Salaam: Vulnerable Victims and Active Social Agents," *Social Science and Medicine* 52, no. 12 (June 2001): 1821; Joyce Wamoyi et al., "'Women's Bodies Are Shops': Beliefs about Transactional Sex and Implications for Understanding Gender Power and HIV Prevention in Tanzania," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 40, no. 1 (February 2011): 9; Jennifer Cole, "Love, Money, and Economics of Intimacy in Tamatave, Madagascar," in *Love in Africa*, ed. Jennifer Cole and Lynn M. Thomas, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 110-19, contains a lengthy discussion of the issue; Joyce Wamoyi et al., "Is Transactional Sex Exploitative? A Social Norms Perspective, with Implications for Interventions with Adolescent Girls and Young Women in Tanzania," *PLOS ONE* 14, no. 4 (April 2019): 1-16. The entire article addresses the nature of transactional sex.

<sup>31</sup> Plummer and Wight, *Young People's Lives and Sexual Relationships*, 19; Betty Komba-Malekela and Rita Liljeström, "Looking for Men," in *Chelewa, Chelewa: The Dilemma of Teenage Girls*, ed. Zubeida Tumbo-Masabo and Rita Liljeström (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1994), 139; Laura Stark, "Cultural Politics of Love and Provision among Poor Youth in Urban Tanzania," *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 82, no. 3 (July 2017): 579; Joyce Wamoyi et al., "Transactional Sex amongst Young People in Rural Northern Tanzania: An Ethnography of Young Women's Motivations and Negotiation," *Reproductive Health* 7, no. 1 (April 2010): 6.

<sup>32</sup> Heidi Lary et al., "Exploring the Association between HIV and Violence: Young People's Experiences with Infidelity, Violence and Forced Sex in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania," *International Family Planning Perspectives* 30, no. 4 (December 2004): 203; Coultas, "Sexual Health Promotion in Tanzania," 175.

plan for marriage fails. Once married, the previous alternatives are easily re-established if the conjugal relationship fails to bring sufficient pleasure.<sup>33</sup>

### **Sending Polygamy Underground**

In a concerted effort to Christianize the African concept of marriage and sexuality, early missionaries committed themselves to ending polygamy. New disciples displayed their commitment to Christ by what they gave up—their old customs and all but their most senior wives. Since Western culture was unacquainted with the cultural reasons for African polygamy, missionaries misinterpreted the meaning and assumed that Africans had relaxed marriage and sexual bonds.<sup>34</sup> In actuality, the culture believed an unmarried woman was a tragedy; thus, polygamy provided women with protection and social status. At other stages of life, the practice excused ill or breastfeeding wives from meeting their husband's sexual needs. Families encouraged men to take additional wives so women could convalesce or avoid breaking childbirth taboos that they believed would damage themselves and their babies.<sup>35</sup>

As monogamy became normative in Christian Africa, so did “hidden” polygamy. Because missionaries failed to address the cultural reasons for multiple wives, including the accepted belief that a man needs a generous amount of sex, there was no heart-based change.<sup>36</sup> Arguing or associating polygamy with adultery and sin rang hollow, since polygamy provided security for women. In the Reach Tanzania Bible

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<sup>33</sup> Plummer and Wight, *Young People's Lives and Sexual Relationships*, 19, 179-80; Wamoyi et al., “Transactional Sex amongst Young People,” 6; Lary et al., “Exploring the Association between HIV and Violence,” 203.

<sup>34</sup> Magesa, “Reconstructing the African Family,” 14; Browning, “Patriarchy, Christianity, and the African HIV/AIDS Epidemic,” 8-9.

<sup>35</sup> Baloyi, “Critical Reflections on Polygamy in the African Christian Context,” 170-72; Browning, “Patriarchy, Christianity, and the African HIV/AIDS Epidemic,” 67.

<sup>36</sup> Ronilick E. K. Mchami, “Divorce and the New Testament in Tanzania,” in Kyomo and Selvam, *Marriage and Family in African Christianity*, 211-12; Liv Haram, “‘Prostitutes’ or Modern Women? Negotiating Respectability and Northern Tanzania,” in *Re-Thinking Sexualities in Africa*, ed. Signe Arnfred, 2nd ed. (Stockholm: Alpha Print, 2006), 223; Magesa, “Reconstructing the African Family,” 14.



School (RTBS) classroom, a few pastors have quietly asked, “What’s wrong with polygamy? It’s biblical.” They point out the biblical patriarchs and kings who had multiple wives and wonder if Western missionaries have imposed their culture on Africa. From the inception of Christianity in Africa, missionaries did not prioritize teaching a robust theology of biblical marriage. Superficial teaching could not uproot polygamy. As a result, a Christian man, who claims to be the husband of one wife, has retained the cultural right to enjoy other women discreetly.<sup>37</sup> Some husbands remain faithful, but others take advantage of their social permission, whether they have a permanent mistress (known as *nyumba ndogo*) or enjoy intermittent extramarital affairs.<sup>38</sup>

### **Cultural Views about the Value and Roles of Men and Women**

The considerable weight of gender norms and values in Tanzanian culture forms the mass of expectations married couples place on one another. As husbands and wives fall short of society’s standards, the lack of trust and tension between the sexes multiplies.<sup>39</sup> Men judge themselves as self-sacrificial and view women as opportunistic, while women regard themselves as victims and men as exploitative.<sup>40</sup> Couples formally avoid one another, occupying separate cultural spheres to safeguard the husband’s authority and the wife’s obedience. Traditionally, husband and wife spend no leisure time together, commonly eat separately, share little information, and rarely touch one another

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<sup>37</sup> Waruta, “Marriage and Family in Contemporary African Society,” 108. NB: The author critiques the serial polygamy of Western Christian cultures. According to Bowman and Kuenyehia, the historical iteration of polygamy provided for the first wife and children, whereas under the new system of polygamy, the first family suffers financially. Bowman and Kuenyehia, *Women and Law in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 465-66.

<sup>38</sup> When sex outside of marriage results in procreation, some possible responses are as follows: the man assumes financial responsibility for a “second family” at the expense of his first one, the child is sent to extended relatives, or the woman gets an illegal abortion. See Philip Setel, *A Plague of Paradoxes: AIDS, Culture, and Demography in Northern Tanzania*, *Worlds of Desire: The Chicago Series on Sexuality, Gender, and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 127; Silberschmidt and Rasch, “Adolescent Girls, Illegal Abortions and ‘Sugar-Daddies,’” 1821.

<sup>39</sup> Silberschmidt, “*Women Forget That Men Are the Masters*”, 12.

<sup>40</sup> Stark, “Cultural Politics of Love and Provision,” 577-78, 586.

except for sexual intercourse.<sup>41</sup> The church affirms this separation, emphasizing the complementarity of men's and women's roles and overlooking cooperation between the sexes.<sup>42</sup> The husband is the sexually powerful head who provides as he sees fit, his wife acceding to his decisions. For marriage counseling to be effective, therefore, the counselor must understand and address these cultural beliefs about the value and roles of men and women that are contrary to biblical truth.

### **Male Role: Head**

Patriarchal structures in Tanzania elevate the value of men. As the head of the house, the man reigns as the decision-maker and person of importance. From this position, many husbands find it acceptable and even admirable to rule over their wives, believing that they prove their manhood through their ability to control them. This cultural application of man's "headship" presumes women are naturally inferior to men.<sup>43</sup> Silencing his wife's opinion, a husband may declare, "You can't talk, because I am the father of the family and head of the family."<sup>44</sup> Since the man is the head who makes unquestioned decisions, many wives must receive permission to purchase essential household supplies and are prevented from knowing about their husbands' activities.<sup>45</sup>

Within this context, Tanzanian Christians commonly conclude that biblical teaching affirms the superiority of a man. Some pastors assert that the husband's superior position demands absolute authority; therefore, they instruct men to enforce their wives'

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<sup>41</sup> Plummer and Wight, *Young People's Lives and Sexual Relationships in Rural Africa*, 73, 289. See also Komba-Malekela and Liljeström, "Looking for Men," 147-48.

<sup>42</sup> Munyaio, "Marital Disharmony among Akamba Christians," 114.

<sup>43</sup> Nieminen, "Meaning, Experience and Ecology," 193; Tesha, "Genuine Reconciliation," 98.

<sup>44</sup> Shelley Lees, Mark Marchant, and Nicola Desmond, "Addressing Intimate Partner Violence Using Gender Responsive Approaches at a Community Level in Rural Tanzania: The UZIKWASA Programme," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 36, nos. 13-14 (2019): 13.

<sup>45</sup> Lees, Marchant, and Desmond, "Addressing Intimate Partner Violence," 13; Nieminen, "Meaning, Experience and Ecology," 84, 171-72; Silberschmidt, "Women Forget That Men Are the Masters", 115.

obedience.<sup>46</sup> Women understand that good Christian wives give their husbands “say of what happens in the marriage.”<sup>47</sup> In Nieminen’s research, a female participant explains the lack of consultation between a husband and wife: “Because our tribes, our society says that the husband should decide and now the Bible says the husband is the head of the home, then African society thinks: ‘Yes, even the Bible says that, in a Christian marriage.’”<sup>48</sup> Some African theologians have tried to soften the decision-making power of the husband, imploring him to consider his wife’s advice and even to submit to her when she gives wise counsel. However, after encouraging men to view their wives as partners, the same authors state that decision-making is a man’s divinely appointed responsibility.<sup>49</sup> The concept of a husband and wife partnering to form a collaborative decision remains hindered by prevalent pastoral teaching.

If a husband believes his wife is controlling him, his intense shame may drive him to restore the natural marital order by exerting traditionally understood dominance.<sup>50</sup> When a wife fails to meet her responsibilities or appears to question her husband’s authority, her husband may respond with a controlling or aggressive posture or physical violence.<sup>51</sup> For men who equate paying *mahari* with “ownership,” a wife’s perceived lack of deference is a greater offense because objects should not speak back to their masters.<sup>52</sup> Research shows that men believe women are instinctively argumentative and fail to

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<sup>46</sup> Munyao, “Marital Disharmony among Akamba Christians,” 89; Fatuma A. Mgomba, “Rape Is Rape: The Need to Criminalise Marital Rape in Tanzania,” *East African Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 2, no. 1 (October 2020): 121.

<sup>47</sup> Nieminen, “Meaning, Experience and Ecology,” 171.

<sup>48</sup> Nieminen, “Meaning, Experience and Ecology,” 194.

<sup>49</sup> Theological Advisory Group, *A Biblical Approach to Marriage and Family in Africa*, 120, 122-23.

<sup>50</sup> Tesha, “Genuine Reconciliation,” 98.

<sup>51</sup> Bowman and Kuenyehia, *Women and Law in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 467.

<sup>52</sup> Tumaini M. Nyamhanga and Gasto Frumence, “Gender Context of Sexual Violence and HIV Sexual Risk Behaviors among Married Women in Iringa Region, Tanzania,” *Global Health Action* 7, no. 1 (December 2014): 7; Banda, *Women, Law and Human Rights*, 79.

follow men's orders; therefore, men must "correct" them. Correction is often equivalent to beating.<sup>53</sup> "Wife beating," as it is colloquially known, is justified by both women and men. A national study shows that up to 58 percent of women and 40 percent of men believe domestic violence is justified if a wife burns the food, argues with her husband, goes out without informing him, neglects the children, or refuses sex.<sup>54</sup>

Many people believe that wives, like children, need discipline to learn. The Theological Advisory Group of the African Inland Church denounces this misguided interpretation of marriage and affirms that "wives are not children but part of the one flesh which God has created in Christian marriage."<sup>55</sup> While acknowledging that wife beating may be traditional, they strongly denounce it as unchristian. These theologians recognize that battered Christian women might be safer on the streets than in their homes. However, while advocating for women, they advise pastors to counsel abused wives to avoid making their husbands jealous, simultaneously admitting this may be impossible. A wife "must learn God's grace to love and forgive her husband who abuses her. Women must first deal with their own attitudes and conduct," which echoes their research finding that "wives invite a beating because of their own poor behaviour or speech."<sup>56</sup> Even when defending women, the preeminent position of husbands prevents them from being held fully accountable for their actions.

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<sup>53</sup> Silberschmidt, "Women Forget That Men Are the Masters", 115-16; Tesha, "Genuine Reconciliation," 39.

<sup>54</sup> Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children (MoHCDGEC), *Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey and Malaria Indicator Survey 2015-16* (Dar es Salaam: MoHCDGEC, 2016), 330.

<sup>55</sup> Theological Advisory Group, *A Biblical Approach to Marriage and Family in Africa*, 207.

<sup>56</sup> Theological Advisory Group, *A Biblical Approach to Marriage and Family in Africa*, 119, 205, 207.

## Female Role: Submissive

The culture has trained “good” women to be quiet, tolerant, and submissive in all their relationships with men.<sup>57</sup> A common saying, “Women are like children and should be guided by men,” even influences schoolboys. Some male students inform female classmates that Genesis 3:16 enthrones their masculine right to rule.<sup>58</sup> Some Christian men carry this superior attitude into marriage, affirmed by their understanding of Scripture. A male pastor from Munyao’s research confirms this view: “I guess God must have had a reason creating a man and creating a helper for him. Because God did not say they help each other. He created the woman for the man to be his helper in various things.”<sup>59</sup> In many homes, the wife as “helper” means the wife is a domestic servant. The husband as ruler may even treat his submissive wife as if she were mindless, lacking equal dignity before God.<sup>60</sup>

Pastors and churches expect women to sacrifice for their husbands as part of their Christian duty.<sup>61</sup> Some use the Bible’s teaching on headship to control women, ignoring the husband’s call to imitate Christ, who loves his bride and showed this love through sacrifice.<sup>62</sup> Church teaching rarely instructs men to love their wives. Instead, because Ephesians 5:23 compares the husband to Christ, the husband is interpreted as perfect and the wife as broken. Just as salvation comes through Christ, a woman’s

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<sup>57</sup> Lary et al., “Exploring the Association between HIV and Violence,” 205; Nyamhanga and Frumence, “Gender Context of Sexual Violence,” 3, 7; Nieminen, “Meaning, Experience and Ecology,” 184.

<sup>58</sup> Emmanuel Charles Kimaro, founder of Stawi Christian Ministry, in a consultation with me about how to counsel teenagers regarding Genesis 3:16, April 6, 2019. See also Margrethe Silberschmidt, “Masculinities, Sexuality and Socio-Economic Change in Rural and Urban East Africa,” in Arnfred, *Rethinking Sexualities in Africa*, 237.

<sup>59</sup> Munyao, “Marital Disharmony among Akamba Christians,” 91.

<sup>60</sup> Theological Advisory Group, *A Biblical Approach to Marriage and Family in Africa*, 120. NB: This is a research observation and not the opinion of the authors.

<sup>61</sup> Melissa Browning, *Risky Marriage: HIV and Intimate Relationships in Tanzania*, Studies in Body and Religion (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 65.

<sup>62</sup> Nieminen, “Meaning, Experience and Ecology,” 194.

existence rests on her husband.<sup>63</sup> In RTBS classes, some male students have argued that loving their wives like their own bodies means controlling their wives' bodies, just as they do their own. Church leaders use Scripture to affirm a man's right to govern what his wife eats, what she wears, where she goes, whom she speaks to, and when she sleeps with him.

Though the man is the head, women are responsible for making their marriage work. When colonizers reinforced male and female complementarity, they further partitioned and cemented gender roles to "inside" and "outside" the home. Consequently, women complete all domestic labor, and men spend their time away from their families.<sup>64</sup> Marriage falls under "inside" work; thus, women are culturally responsible for its success.<sup>65</sup> A wife, therefore, must adapt to her husband and endure his lifestyle, even if his decisions include other women.<sup>66</sup> Older wives advise younger ones to accept the unavoidable—"men are sexually unstoppable."<sup>67</sup> Husbands add to this narrative, blaming their wives for not affirming their polygamous "nature."<sup>68</sup> Wives who fail to submit adequately may discover their husbands have committed revenge adultery.<sup>69</sup> A wife's Christian submission extends to forgiving and forgetting her husband's philandering or abuse, regardless of his repentance. If a husband's wrongdoing has become public, a

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<sup>63</sup> Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike, "Domestic Violence against Women: A Cry for Life and Wholeness," in Waruta and Kinoti, *Pastoral Care in African Christianity*, 124. NB: While non-Christian husbands are culturally the heads of their homes, qualitative research for the following chapter (i.e., chap. 4 of this project) suggests that church leaders and Christian men weaponize biblical "headship" against women, creating a greater burden for women in "Christian" marriages compared to secular unions.

<sup>64</sup> Browning, *Risky Marriage*, 71, 142; Martin Lindhardt, "Men of God: Neo-Pentecostalism and Masculinities in Urban Tanzania," *Religion* 45, no. 2 (April 2015): 255.

<sup>65</sup> Nieminen, "Meaning, Experience and Ecology," 89.

<sup>66</sup> Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, 205; Plummer and Wight, *Young People's Lives and Sexual Relationships*, 301.

<sup>67</sup> Nyamhanga and Frumence, "Gender Context of Sexual Violence," 3.

<sup>68</sup> Bowman and Kuenyehia, *Women and Law in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 465.

<sup>69</sup> Nieminen, "Meaning, Experience and Ecology," 65.

pastor may intervene. The church leader commonly listens to a shortened narrative and then instructs the man to apologize. If he complies, the wife should immediately forgive her husband. Often, the pastor orders the couple to shake hands or sing a praise song, only adding counseling sessions if the wife is slow to forgive.<sup>70</sup>

### **Male Role: Provider**

A man's primary responsibility is to provide materially for his family. Without biblically examining the meaning of "head," the culture has traditionally interpreted it as the sole breadwinner.<sup>71</sup> Husbands must earn enough money to supply the family's food, personal needs, and school fees for the children.<sup>72</sup> In practice, however, many men admit that their wives are the primary breadwinners. With low wages and inconsistent job opportunities, a man may have little to show for his effort. Wives must participate in income-generating projects or work outside the home in order for the family to survive.<sup>73</sup> A wife's industriousness, however, often leads to a man's ambivalence. Although the family needed her provision, when the God-given head fails to meet his cultural responsibility as breadwinner, he can experience an affront to his honor.<sup>74</sup>

Many husbands directly connect their economic power to their sexuality. Engaging in transactional pre-marital sex logically results in a comparable transactional view of marital sex. When a husband experiences economic powerlessness in his home, he may assuage his pain by spending the little he has on alcohol and other women.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Tesha, "Genuine Reconciliation," 94-99. In this section, Tesha cites the methods Catholic *Chagga* community members employ to reconcile marriages after domestic violence.

<sup>71</sup> Magesa, "Reconstructing the African Family," 21.

<sup>72</sup> Theological Advisory Group, *A Biblical Approach to Marriage and Family in Africa*, 120.

<sup>73</sup> Silberschmidt, "*Women Forget That Men Are the Masters*," 12, 111-12, 171.

<sup>74</sup> Wamoyi et al., "Transactional Sex amongst Young People," 8; Silberschmidt, "Masculinities, Sexuality and Socio-Economic Change," 237-39.

<sup>75</sup> Silberschmidt, "Masculinities, Sexuality and Socio-Economic Change," 237-39.

However, the more economically powerful the husband is, the more confidently he can expect his wife to grant him “sexual service.” A man’s material provision should guarantee his wife’s sexual compliance. If a wife refuses sexual access to a generous provider, he may force her to comply. Wider gaps between male providership and female dependence directly correlate with a greater likelihood of non-consensual sex.<sup>76</sup>

### **Female Role: Dependent**

Although husbands may not adequately fulfill their role as providers, women’s economic identities remain dependent on men. Some financially reliant wives must beg their husbands for the resources to feed their children or pay their school fees. In response to their requests, men complain that women “never stop asking for money.”<sup>77</sup> If husbands cut their wives’ access to money, some women resort to extramarital transactional sex to make ends meet, further deepening their financial dependence on men.<sup>78</sup> Some unmarried women contribute to the cyclical problem between husbands and wives as they conform to the cultural pressure to depend on men. A journalist from neighboring Malawi reports a fight between a wife and her husband’s “bar girl.” When the wife confronts her husband’s lover, the sex worker shouts at the wife, “Your husband is not for you alone. He was born not for you special.”<sup>79</sup> The “bar girl’s” response expresses a troubling yet common opinion: women who expect their husbands to be monogamous are selfish. Dependent women need men’s money, and another woman’s husband is not off limits if he can provide.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Nyamhanga and Frumence, “Gender Context of Sexual Violence,” 5, 7.

<sup>77</sup> Silberschmidt, “*Women Forget That Men Are the Masters*”, 116.

<sup>78</sup> Sally M. Mtenga et al., “Linking Gender, Extramarital Affairs, and HIV: A Mixed Methods Study on Contextual Determinants of Extramarital Affairs in Rural Tanzania,” *AIDS Research and Therapy* 15, no. 1 (June 2018): 12; Plummer and Wight, *Young People’s Lives and Sexual Relationships*, 292.

<sup>79</sup> Ann Swidler and Susan Cotts Watkins, “Ties of Dependence: AIDS and Transactional Sex in Rural Malawi,” *Studies in Family Planning* 38, no. 3 (2007): 154-55.

<sup>80</sup> Swidler and Watkins, “Ties of Dependence,” 154-55.



Even financially indigent men provide wives with their greatest asset—social status.<sup>81</sup> Husbands provide wives with *heshima* (a word akin to “self-worth” with shades of honor, respect, and dignity). Claire Coultas interviewed a young woman named Susanna who aptly shared the value of marriage for a dependent female: “For us girls, we are very lucky because you go from being a person with no respect to being the wife of someone and given respect . . . ; therefore, it’s important to respect the husband because he brings you respect from neighbors and other men.”<sup>82</sup> Obedient wives who publicly display their husbands’ authority receive more societal respect and are esteemed “good women.” Consequently, when a husband’s home affairs appear well-managed, his *heshima* increases and is inherently imputed to his wife.<sup>83</sup> For some women, however, this social standing brings a severe cost. Among ever-married women in Tanzania, half have endured some type of violence from their partners.<sup>84</sup> The desire to protect *heshima* ensures that socially dependent women protect their family secrets.<sup>85</sup>

### **Male Role: Sexually Insatiable**

Tanzanian society commonly believes sex is an essential biological need for men that must be fulfilled at will. The literature reveals a common belief: once young men become sexually active, abstaining is impossible and would lead to psychological issues.<sup>86</sup> Since men are considered naturally promiscuous, they innately need an abundance of sex with an assortment of women. Therefore, wives cannot expect their

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<sup>81</sup> Silberschmidt, “*Women Forget That Men Are the Masters*”, 117.

<sup>82</sup> Coultas, “Sexual Health Promotion in Tanzania,” 172.

<sup>83</sup> Auli Vähäkangas, “Contextual Pastoral Counseling among Terminally Ill AIDS Patients in Tanzania,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 22, no. 1 (2012): 6.9-6.10; Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, 205.

<sup>84</sup> MoHCDGEC, *Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey*, 376.

<sup>85</sup> Tesha, “Genuine Reconciliation,” 91.

<sup>86</sup> Wamoyi et al., “‘Women’s Bodies Are Shops,’” 9; Plummer and Wight, *Young People’s Lives and Sexual Relationships*, 130-33, 254, 280-81; Gunnell Balaile et al., “Sexuality and Health: A Study of Tanzanian Men’s Experiences of Living with HIV/AIDS,” *African Journal of Reproductive Health/La Revue Africaine de La Santé Reproductive* 12, no. 1 (2008): 42.

husbands to remain faithful.<sup>87</sup> After several years of marriage, “most” men had at least one extramarital affair, often initiated when traveling or when their wives were in the last trimester of pregnancy or breastfeeding.<sup>88</sup> While it is impossible to conclude the rate of infidelity among Christian men, Martin Lindhardt’s anecdotal findings point to the prevalence of Pentecostal men who attempted chastity but found it too counter-cultural.<sup>89</sup>

A husband’s headship and providership converge with his sexuality, giving him sole sexual decision-making power. The man decides how often and under what circumstances the couple will have intercourse.<sup>90</sup> Wives may need to provide sex multiple times at night, when children are nearby during the day, and right after giving birth. Rather than strengthening marriage through an emotional, spiritual, and physical connection, many wives describe sex as an unpleasurable and even painful act that leaves them frustrated and feeling exploited.<sup>91</sup> Understanding her role as the submissive partner, a good wife will not refuse her husband’s desire.<sup>92</sup> However, a wife’s responsibility to be submissive is not her only concern. If she rejects her husband’s frequent sexual requirements, even a monogamous man could feel sufficiently justified to go elsewhere.<sup>93</sup> Therefore, a wife accepts what she must do.

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<sup>87</sup> Silberschmidt, “*Women Forget That Men Are the Masters*”, 163.

<sup>88</sup> Plummer and Wight, *Young People’s Lives and Sexual Relationships*, 290-91; Nieminen, “Meaning, Experience and Ecology,” 203.

<sup>89</sup> Lindhardt, “Men of God,” 256. NB: Lindhardt identifies the need for further research.

<sup>90</sup> Sia E. Msuya et al., “HIV among Pregnant Women in Moshi Tanzania: The Role of Sexual Behavior, Male Partner Characteristics and Sexually Transmitted Infections,” *AIDS Research and Therapy* 3 (January 2006): 30. See Liv Haram, “‘Eyes Have No Curtains’: The Moral Economy of Secrecy in Managing Love Affairs among Adolescents in Northern Tanzania in the Time of AIDS,” *Africa Today* 51, no. 4 (2005): 59; Nyamhanga and Frumence, “Gender Context of Sexual Violence,” 6; Mgomba, “Rape Is Rape,” 113.

<sup>91</sup> Sammy Gitaari, *Resolving Conflicts in Marriage* (Nairobi: Evangel House, 2006), 9; Browning, “Patriarchy, Christianity, and the African HIV/AIDS Epidemic,” 232; Silberschmidt, “*Women Forget That Men Are the Masters*”, 156, 160.

<sup>92</sup> Nieminen, “Meaning, Experience and Ecology,” 201.

<sup>93</sup> Mtenga et al., “Linking Gender, Extramarital Affairs, and HIV,” 13.

## **Female Role: Sexual Possession Defined by Procreation**

In his book *I Married You*, Walter Trobisch observes an unbiblical concept of marriage in West Africa. This popular view compares a woman to a garden. She is valuable as long as she bears fruit, but if she fails to produce, the owner of the field may reasonably abandon her for a better garden. This erroneous concept of women is as prevalent today in Tanzania as it was in Trobisch's time.<sup>94</sup> For example, the Sukuma tribe in Northwestern Tanzania equates an unmarried woman with a wild sorghum field (*shamba*). When a man marries her, he cultivates his *shamba* and, through his effort, transforms her into a useful field. The woman is passive, while the man actively clears, prepares, sows, and harvests.<sup>95</sup> As with any field, barrenness destroys property value. Consequently, the husband "deprives his own garden of nothing" if his *shamba* fails to produce, forcing him to sow in another. Thus, for a man, extramarital sex is often not considered adultery unless the woman is another man's wife/field.<sup>96</sup>

A *shamba* that fails to produce fruit is useless and stigmatized.<sup>97</sup> A woman's ability to give birth to children sits at the center of her identity. Just as the man sows his seed in his *shamba*, the culture and Swahili language determine that the man gives "pregnancy," and the woman "receives" it. Even when a doctor diagnoses a husband with

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<sup>94</sup> Walter Trobisch, *I Married You* (Bolivar, MO: Quiet Waters, 1971). Trobisch astutely recognized the traditional view of woman as a garden and how it contradicted a woman's God-given value. His observations relied on David Robert Mace and Vera Mace, *Marriage: East and West* (New York: Doubleday, 1960).

<sup>95</sup> Per Brandström, "Seeds and Soil: The Quest for Life and the Domestication of Fertility in Sukuma-Nyamwezi Thought and Reality," in *The Creative Communion: African Folk Models in Fertility and the Regeneration of Life*, ed. Anita Jacobson-Widding and Walter van Beek, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis 15 (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1990), 171.

<sup>96</sup> Kitembo, Magesa, and Shorter, *African Christian Marriage*, 21; Silberschmidt, "Women Forget That Men Are the Masters", 163. NB: While Silberschmidt researched the Kisii in Western Kenya, this viewpoint is common throughout East Africa. During the RTBS Marriage class, challenging the concept of a "woman as a *shamba*" was a featured part of the curriculum.

<sup>97</sup> Lilian T. Mselle et al., "'I Am Nothing': Experiences of Loss among Women Suffering from Severe Birth Injuries in Tanzania," *BMC Women's Health* 11, no. 1 (January 2011): 9.

infertility, society blames the woman for the seed failing to grow in the *shamba*.<sup>98</sup> Likewise, when the *shamba* ages and is no longer fertile, she is discarded. Since culture merges women's sexuality with their ability to bear children, menopause traditionally ends their sexual relationships.<sup>99</sup> People commonly believe that sex after menopause is inappropriate and dangerous, as seminal fluid may damage the older female body. This belief encourages some wives to advise their husbands to seek out other women for their ongoing sexual needs.<sup>100</sup>

Many women believe they are the sexual possessions of their husbands.<sup>101</sup> Since childhood, women have taught girls that they are inferior to men and meant to be under "complete subjugation" to their fathers and, subsequently, their husbands. Older women train brides to be ready at all times to provide sex to their husbands.<sup>102</sup> Pre-marital counseling and sermons directed at women instruct them to meet their husbands' sexual needs.<sup>103</sup> Thus, a wife knows she must respond to her husband's sexual demands, even when he belittles, physically abuses, or violates her during the sex act.<sup>104</sup> The majority of Tanzanians are professing Christians, so the church and state interpret Christian marriages as one-flesh unions, and "one body could not rape itself."<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Baloyi, "Critical Reflections on Polygamy in the African Christian Context," 176; Oduyoye and Kanyoro, *The Will to Arise*, 151.

<sup>99</sup> Plummer and Wight, *Young People's Lives and Sexual Relationships in Rural Africa*, 73, 289; Komba-Malekela and Liljeström, "Looking for Men," 146; Baloyi, "Critical Reflections on Polygamy in the African Christian Context," 170; Liv Haram, "'Women out of Sight': Modern Women in Gendered Worlds: The Case of the Meru of Northern Tanzania" (PhD diss., University of Bergen, 1999), 75.

<sup>100</sup> Vähäkangas, "The Crisis of Christian Marriage," 35, 36; Faith A. Lugazia, "Church Discipline and the Christian Family: A Lutheran Perspective," in Kyomo and Selvam, *Marriage and Family in African Christianity*, 169-70. NB: Older women have personally informed me of these issues.

<sup>101</sup> Nyamhanga and Frumence, "Gender Context of Sexual Violence," 6.

<sup>102</sup> Mgomba, "Rape Is Rape," 114, 122.

<sup>103</sup> Munyao, "Marital Disharmony among Akamba Christians," 99-100.

<sup>104</sup> Mgomba, "Rape Is Rape," 113, 121.

<sup>105</sup> United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Human Rights Committee Considers Report of Tanzania," July 14, 2009, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2009/10/human-rights-committee-considers-report-tanzania>.

Therefore, married women lack agency over their bodies, leaving them at significant risk of contracting HIV. The sexual norms that grant husbands the right to participate in unprotected extramarital sex also deny wives the right to refuse non-consensual unprotected sex with their straying husbands.<sup>106</sup>

### **Cultural Views about Justification of Human Behavior**

The Tanzanian construal of the human heart provides an essential perspective on the prevailing cultural views about marriage and gender value and roles. East Africans live within a milieu of ATR, folk Islam, Old Testament law, exported American prosperity gospel, a history of colonization, and enduring poverty and corruption. These influences create a complicated worldview in which external forces are perceived to reduce the agency of individuals.<sup>107</sup> Analysis of Jeremy Pierre’s dynamic heart model proves the need to include cultural beliefs about the inner person within marriage counseling training. I have adapted Pierre’s diagram<sup>108</sup> to represent the East African worldview, which understands the functions of the heart to exist outside the person.

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<sup>106</sup> Browning, “Patriarchy, Christianity, and the African HIV/AIDS Epidemic,” 28, 102; Nyamhanga and Frumence, “Gender Context of Sexual Violence,” 1. NB: According to Hiam Chemaitelly et al., monogamous marriages (which include all legal Christian marriages) have a higher rate of HIV transmission than polygamous marriages. Hiam Chemaitelly et al., “Sources of HIV Incidence among Stable Couples in Sub-Saharan Africa,” *Journal of the International AIDS Society* 17 (January 2014): 1.

<sup>107</sup> See also Nicola Desmond, “‘Ni Kubahatisha Tu!’ ‘It’s Just A Game of Chance!’: Adaptation and Resignation to Perceived Risks in Rural Tanzania” (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, 2009).

<sup>108</sup> Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), chap. 1, “Simple and Complex,” diagram “The Dynamic Heart Functions,” Kindle.

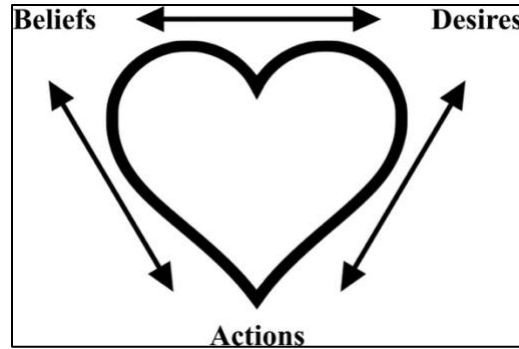


Figure 1. Externalized heart functions

Beliefs, desires, and actions are implicitly viewed as an outcome of predetermined character. Desires that influence affections are often viewed externally, as if they were acting upon a person. These same functions of the heart are likewise affected by demonic powers and society’s values. Presuming that cognition, affection, and volition are passively predetermined or uncontrollable, individuals are prone to abdicate responsibility. The degree to which people believe they are active or passive over their own hearts correlates with their ability to change. Biblical marriage counseling must guide couples to internalize and own these externalized functions of their hearts. Therefore, teaching marriage counseling requires understanding and addressing these common cultural justifications about human behavior that are contrary to biblical truth.

**“*Tabia* Made Me Do It”**

The Swahili concept of *tabia* (behavior, character, and nature) shapes a fundamental aspect of personhood that guides an individual’s life choices. Infants are born with this fixed, inherent substance, transmitted through the biological and spiritual attributes of parents and ancestors. As children mature, they reveal their *tabia*, whether good or bad. A child with good *tabia* responds to correction and becomes a contributing member of society. However, children with bad *tabia* are unruly and trouble their

community. For example, in Genesis 4, Cain's evil *tabia* caused his actions, while Abel's good *tabia* led him to honor God.<sup>109</sup>

The culture genderizes good and bad *tabia*. Since girls exhibit more shame than boys, society credits females with superior *tabia*. Once a person's character has revealed itself, future actions will correspond with past ones. Consequently, as girls mature, their *tabia* should remain consistently good, while adolescent boys are more prone to be headstrong, daring, and shameless. When young men break societal values, such as exhibiting respect and restraint, the community can blame bad behavior, such as drinking or pre-marital sex, on bad *tabia*. As people grow into full adulthood, their *tabia* latently destines their lives.<sup>110</sup>

### **“Tamaa Made Me Do It”**

Tanzanian Christian culture affirms monogamy, but *tamaa* (desire) pushes people to pursue other sexual partners. In some cases, *tamaa* is considered positive; however, when connected to sexuality, it is always negative and seeks to possess what does not rightly belong to a person. The compounding influence of *tamaa* on an already bad *tabia* inevitably produces trouble.<sup>111</sup> Succumbing to *tamaa* contradicts cultural sensitivities that value modesty, reservation, and perseverance. It lures women to engage in illicit sex to acquire material things quickly, and it entices men to seek sexual pleasure. A young man in Philip Setel's research describes his battle with *tamaa*: “You fear it, then you get used to it, and then you start to want it. There are films that show embraces,

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<sup>109</sup> Setel, *A Plague of Paradoxes*, 94-95n2; Laura Stark, “Early Marriage and Cultural Constructions of Adulthood in Two Slums in Dar es Salaam,” *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 20, no. 8 (August 2018): 897.

<sup>110</sup> Setel, *A Plague of Paradoxes*, 94-97; Stark, “Early Marriage and Cultural Constructions of Adulthood,” 897.

<sup>111</sup> Setel, *A Plague of Paradoxes*, 93-100; Liv Haram, “AIDS and Risk: The Handling of Uncertainty in Northern Tanzania,” *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 7, no. 1 (2005): 9n1. NB: Haram's observations were of the Chagga tribe. However, this tribe has many residents in Dar es Salaam, and the meanings of these two words (*tamaa* and *tabia*) are common in Dar es Salaam.

kisses, and even sex right out there in the open. These videos give you the desire to have sex.”<sup>112</sup> The disassociation of *tamaa* from the self victimizes people with its overpowering presence.

After marrying, a couple should no longer experience *tamaa*. Women want faithful husbands, and men want frugal wives; therefore, both should avoid *tamaa* lest it damages the marriage.<sup>113</sup> Since *tamaa* is a combination of negative sexual desire and taking that which does not belong to a person, it is unfathomable in the marriage bed since the sexual union is legitimate.<sup>114</sup> Therefore, the one-flesh marriage relationship should be passionless and mechanical, producing children and keeping Satan at bay. As one husband in Setel’s research characterizes it, “When you have sex with your wife, ideally, it is for love and for children. It is respectful. With a girlfriend there is a sort of love, but it’s more about mutual understanding . . . a lot of *tamaa* . . . and release. With a wife, *tamaa* doesn’t enter the picture.”<sup>115</sup> Passionate marital sex that includes mutual pleasure, creativity, and play are “unthinkable acts” between a husband and wife.<sup>116</sup> Few pastors teach about married sex, but Munyao notes that for those who do, they emphasize its role in preventing immorality, failing to teach that sex is a gift from God that nourishes a marriage.<sup>117</sup> Sadly, the association of sexual pleasure with illicit sex prevents couples from enjoying holy sexuality and strengthens the allure of extramarital partners.

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<sup>112</sup> Stark, “Cultural Politics of Love and Provision,” 583; Setel, *A Plague of Paradoxes*, 93.

<sup>113</sup> Stark, “Cultural Politics of Love and Provision,” 582-83.

<sup>114</sup> Setel, *A Plague of Paradoxes*, 100. NB: *Tamaa* may possibly be acceptable if a married couple is reunited after a long separation.

<sup>115</sup> Setel, *A Plague of Paradoxes*, 131.

<sup>116</sup> Setel, *A Plague of Paradoxes*, 131.

<sup>117</sup> Munyao, “Marital Disharmony among Akamba Christians,” 94.



## “The Spirits Made Me Do It”

Many Christians view all marital problems as spiritual attacks that they must battle through spiritual deliverance.<sup>118</sup> A traditional African worldview believes that everything manifested in the material world has first cause in the spiritual world. The blend of ATR with Christianity, especially with Pentecostal/charismatic traditions, cements the correlation between the spiritual and material. Spiritual warfare, characterized by a dualistic theology, continually pits the blood of Jesus against demonic powers. Therefore, a wife may attribute her husband’s sinful behavior to a demon of adultery, anger, or drunkenness that overpowers him and renders him helpless. Munyao’s research sought to discover what pastors and their wives consider the “root causes of marital crises.” Following the “disruption of God’s order of husbands’ leadership and wives’ submission,” they listed the most common cause of marital strife as satanic attack. One pastor explained, “Satan does not want the church to be strong, [so] he targets the home to destroy the church.”<sup>119</sup> While this statement can be supported biblically, the context credits Satan as the cause of marriage problems. Therefore, when evil powers target a marriage, the husband and wife are viewed as the enemy’s victims, lacking agency over their behavior.

Christians may believe in God, but where he fails to intervene, witchcraft and other ATR practices may explain, justify, or relieve current problems.<sup>120</sup> In a multi-national survey by Pew Research, Tanzanians’ belief in witchcraft (92 percent) ranked higher than all other surveyed countries.<sup>121</sup> The extensive practice situates spouses

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<sup>118</sup> Päivi Hasu, “The Witch, the Zombie and the Power of Jesus,” *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 74.

<sup>119</sup> Munyao, “Marital Disharmony among Akamba Christians,” 86-87. NB: The pastors in this research are from the non-Pentecostal Africa Inland Church in Kenya. This research finding indicates the common theme of blaming Satan.

<sup>120</sup> Oestigaard, *Religion at Work in Globalised Traditions*, 165, 227.

<sup>121</sup> Pew Research Center, *The World’s Muslims: Unity and Diversity*, Pew Forum, August 9, 2012, 71, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2012/08/the-worlds-muslims->

against one another. Men fear their wives will use witchcraft to poison them with love medicine, rendering them gentle, sexually faithful, or willing to help with chores.<sup>122</sup> An erring husband or wife may attribute sinful behavior to an unknown bewitchment.<sup>123</sup> Alternatively, a gendered spirit known as a “spirit spouse” can marry a man or woman and, out of jealousy, seek to destroy the person’s human marriage. The power of dark spiritual forces practically restrains both God and personal responsibility.<sup>124</sup>

### “Society Made Me Do It”

Tanzanian self-identity comes from the larger community. John Mbiti coined the famous saying characterizing sub-Saharan African cultures: “I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.”<sup>125</sup> Thus, when individuals make decisions, the community’s accepted norms are ever-present.<sup>126</sup> As a result, people “are often much more sensitive to failing to meet those expectations and often feel ‘shame’ when they do not.”<sup>127</sup> In many ways, the emphasis on shame is consonant with ancient biblical

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full-report.pdf. Belief in supernatural phenomena is described in Chapter 4, “Other Beliefs and Practices.” NB: Tanzania is a majority Christian nation; the survey administration was non-sectarian.

<sup>122</sup> Steven Dale Horsager Rasmussen, “Illness and Death Experiences in Northwestern Tanzania: An Investigation of Discourses, Practices, Beliefs, and Social Outcomes, Especially Related to Witchcraft, Used in a Critical Contextualization and Education Process with Pentecostal Ministers” (PhD diss., Trinity International University, 2009), 146, 291; Lindhardt, “Men of God,” 259; Plummer and Wight, *Young People’s Lives and Sexual Relationships*, 290; Silberschmidt, “*Women Forget That Men Are the Masters*”, 116.

<sup>123</sup> Browning, “Patriarchy, Christianity, and the African HIV/AIDS Epidemic,” 176.

<sup>124</sup> See Karen Gammel, “Gendered Narratives of Illness and Healing: Experiences of Spirit Possession in a Charismatic Church Community in Tanzania,” in *Faith in African Lived Christianity: Bridging Anthropological and Theological Perspectives*, ed. Karen Lauterbach and Mika Vähäkangas, *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies* 35 (Boston: Brill, 2020), 314-34; Cf. Linda van de Kamp, “Converting the Spirit Spouse: The Violent Transformation of the Pentecostal Female Body in Maputo, Mozambique,” *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 76, no. 4 (December 2011): 510-33, for a thorough observation of the experience.

<sup>125</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 108-9.

<sup>126</sup> Ralph Ipyana Schubert and Louise Kretschmar, “Towards Genuine Partnerships: A Dialogue between Western and Tanzanian Christian Leaders,” *Scriptura* 101 (2009): 333.

<sup>127</sup> Christopher Flanders, “Bringing Shame upon an Honored Missiological Paradigm: A Study of Conviction and Elenctics,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 37, nos. 3-4 (Fall/Winter 2020): 126.

societies.<sup>128</sup> A challenge in such communities is adopting individual agency if community mores point away from God's standards.

As previously defined, *heshima* is an essential social commodity and reflects society's value of a person. For both genders, a person's compliance with the community's principles determines *heshima*. To maintain respect from his community, a man sits as the unquestioned head of his home, financially provides for many, and portrays sexual virility. Thus, if a Christian man encounters a woman who piques his *tamaa*, adultery may not ruin his social standing. The Christian moral code defers to masculine cultural standards.<sup>129</sup> The husband may also retain *heshima* by blaming his wife for his dalliance.<sup>130</sup> Just as the value of men and women and their social roles differ, the wife's source of *heshima* contrasts with her husband's. She maintains her dignity by following society's view of married women—a sexually reserved and discrete mother who is obedient to her husband.<sup>131</sup>

Even though the culture accepts that men are promiscuous, Tanzanian culture values marriage and elevates monogamy. When virginity followed by sexual fidelity becomes idealistic, the community must provide a way to save face when a person deviates from the standards. Like most collectivistic societies, the wrong is getting “caught” breaking the rules, not the act itself. As a result, the individual typically experiences internal and communal shame but less commonly personal guilt over sin.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Andrew Mbuvi, “African Theology from the Perspective of Honor and Shame,” in *The Urban Face of Mission: Ministering the Gospel in a Diverse and Changing World*, ed. Harvey M. Conn, Manuel Ortiz, and Susan S. Baker (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 91.

<sup>129</sup> Silberschmidt, “*Women Forget That Men Are the Masters*”, 120.

<sup>130</sup> Constance Shishanya, “The Impact of HIV/AIDS on Women in Kenya,” in *Quests for Abundant Life in Africa*, ed. Mary N. Getui, Matthew M. Theuri, and Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, African Christianity Series (Nairobi: Acton, 2002), 58.

<sup>131</sup> Vähäkangas, “Contextual Pastoral Counseling,” 6.9-6.10.

<sup>132</sup> Waruta, “Marriage and Family in Contemporary African Society,” 107.

The wrong is not having “illicit” sex but engaging in extramarital sex and failing to be discrete.<sup>133</sup> Mbiti explains,

To sleep with someone else’s wife is not considered “evil” if these two are not found out by the society that forbids it; . . . It is not the act in itself which would be “wrong” as such, but the relationships involved in the act: if relationships are not hurt or damaged, and if there is no discovery of breach of custom or regulation, then the act is not “evil” or “wicked” or “bad.”<sup>134</sup>

It is not the behavior that brings judgment but the shame of damaged relationships and societal position if a person’s actions are discovered.<sup>135</sup>

### **Conclusion**

When introducing Christian marriage, missionaries’ lack of cultural insight encouraged a syncretic understanding of marriage that added biblical elements to cultural norms. Marriage for procreation remained the path to adulthood and identity. Kingdom values of unity and loving service did not transform the institution. Tanzanian biblical counselors, equipped for marriage cases, have a new opportunity to apply a robust theological understanding of marriage within their culture. Those equipped to do marriage counseling must be aware of any disconnect between biblical truth and the value and roles of men and women in the culture. To help people take personal responsibility, the marriage counselor must understand how externalizing agency limits the change process. When biblical counselors consider how truth intersects culture, they can address marriage challenges with the hope that Tanzanian marriages will reflect Christ and the church.

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<sup>133</sup> Haram, ““Eyes Have No Curtains,”” 66.

<sup>134</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 213.

<sup>135</sup> Signe Arnfred, ““African Sexuality’/Sexuality in Africa: Tails and Silences,”” in Arnfred, *Re-Thinking Sexualities in Africa*, 74.

## CHAPTER 4

### DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BIBLICAL MARRIAGE COUNSELING EQUIPPING PROJECT

This chapter records the preparatory process, implementation, and distribution of the marriage counseling training project at Reach Tanzania Bible School (RTBS) in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. As this project aimed to equip church leaders for biblical marriage counseling, I needed to accomplish five goals: determining the current counseling competency of participants, creating an intensive counseling course, implementing the training to increase competency, evaluating the effectiveness of the course, and making the curriculum available for future use at RTBS or other training venues. I initiated participant preparation on September 18, 2022, taught the marriage counseling course May 6-20, 2023, and completed all instrument collection two months later.

#### **Preparation of Participants**

Recruiting and preparing participants for equipping in biblical marriage counseling required several months (September 2022-April 2023). When I first considered creating this project, there was still hope that RTBS would reopen, but by late 2021, it was clear that RTBS would no longer operate as a brick-and-mortar structure. Since courses had been taught as one-week intensives, participants would expect a similar schedule. However, to successfully train marriage counselors, participants needed essential prerequisites—an understanding of the process of biblical heart change, a working knowledge of counseling methodology, and a familiarity with biblical teaching about marriage and holy expressions of sexuality. A delimitation of this project stated

that participants had completed two prerequisite courses at RTBS: (1) Biblical Counseling and Practical Theology and (2) Marriage and Family. Looking at the list of possible participants, I noted that only eighteen met all requirements, and all had studied before 2020. Therefore, I would need to provide refresher courses in Biblical Counseling and Marriage and Family so that participants could gain marriage counseling competency during the actual course.

On September 19, I sent an invitation via the Reach Tanzania students and alumni group chat, informing them I would be finishing my doctorate in biblical counseling the following year and would be offering a course in marriage counseling as part of my program completion. I invited the group members to participate and informed them that to qualify for the training, they would need to retake the regular biblical counseling class online. I would later provide the marriage and family class notes for review. Twenty-five people expressed interest. After gathering participant availability, I began teaching a two-hour Zoom class with Monday and Tuesday options for eight weeks. Since all marriage counseling participants were required to take this review course, it seemed advantageous to invite spouses of RTBS students while still honoring my delimitation. Therefore, I encouraged potential students to participate with their spouses.

In November, I taught the last three weeks of the biblical counseling course from Dar es Salaam. The Monday section was in-person, and the Tuesday class remained on Zoom to accommodate those living outside the city. At the end of eight weeks, twenty-eight people had signed on to Zoom at various times or attended in-person sessions, but only two individuals had been present for the entire sixteen hours. Network connectivity, power outages, and attempting to learn from home while children needed care challenged even the most committed. Although I recorded the classes and posted them in our group chat, it was impossible to monitor students' learning. However, on this trip to Tanzania, two different wives of RTBS graduates requested that I provide an

online course with pre-recorded videos and interactive materials. In response, I announced to our group that I would find an alternative format and try to deliver the biblical counseling course in an improved manner.

On January 25, I posted an advertisement with a registration link for the upcoming marriage counseling training.<sup>1</sup> Potential participants were informed that they must complete two online prerecorded courses to qualify. Fifteen people initially registered. I proceeded to rent a home large enough for teaching and boarding those from out of the city during the May training. A ministry supporter created an online class delivery system with a YouTube channel for the prerecorded courses.<sup>2</sup> I then divided the biblical counseling class into ten lessons and recorded and edited videos for each lesson. My husband created subtitles, as the learners were all non-native English speakers. I created online quizzes or projects to accompany each lesson to measure participants' progress. By February 24, all ten lessons were available, and students were accessing the course.<sup>3</sup>

When considering how to help students review the marriage class material, I discovered a new problem. Eight active participants were spouses who had never taken the course. Only reading class notes would be insufficient. Therefore, I made an abridged set of seven lessons from the Marriage and Family course and asked my husband, Mark, to record and subtitle the videos.<sup>4</sup> I then uploaded the quizzes and course materials and dispersed them to participants on March 29. On April 8, the first two people submitted their prerequisite requirements and qualified for the marriage counseling course. As our

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 9.

<sup>2</sup> The YouTube channel is available at this link:  
<https://www.youtube.com/@counselinginafrica>

<sup>3</sup> The "Introduction to Biblical Counseling Coursework" document is available at this link:  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1t3I1891k041rFFYTIK0Q9X8ECn94nFMo3dbADRh3L1A/edit>

<sup>4</sup> The "Marriage Theology Review" document is available at this link:  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/17LCGKjnNDRZ7VIUVzvJMo2bjVmga0PC\\_gIoGDA1Qyqk/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/17LCGKjnNDRZ7VIUVzvJMo2bjVmga0PC_gIoGDA1Qyqk/edit)

group chat celebrated the accomplishments of these two women, who were wives of RTBS graduates, I knew the effort to create this online course was producing fruit. For the next three weeks, I tracked students' online progress, communicated regularly with those taking the prerequisites, and announced each new person who qualified. Throughout the process, forty-one people completed some aspects of training, and twenty-two people completed both prerequisite courses and participated in the marriage counseling training course.

### **Assessing Biblical Marriage Counseling Competency**

The Ethics Committee approved my research profile on October 13, allowing me to begin the implementation of research instruments during the November visit to Dar es Salaam. At that point, the final participants had not been determined; however, all research was performed on the population who had participated in RTBS training.

The Marriage Beliefs Survey (MBS) was designed to assess the pre-course understanding of some marriage issues, measure differences influenced by gender bias, and determine how respondents viewed *jini mahaba* (a gendered spirit spouse that possesses and has sexual intercourse with opposite gendered humans). Three questions about *jini mahaba* were included to explore the magnitude of this belief and its use as an explanation for marital problems. The six-point Likert scale forced a positive or negative response to isolate biblical, cultural, and gender-specific responses. Respondents used an identifying term to preserve their anonymity yet allow the pairing of the pre- and post-teaching results. A Tanzanian friend translated the instrument into Swahili, and I back-translated it. On November 13, a Tanzanian data analyst pilot-tested the survey and noted that the personal identification marker was confusing. Apparently, I had sent the translator an outdated copy of the survey.

After the MBS was correctly updated and translated, I administered it after adopting two changes from my initial research methodology plan. First, I intended to



employ a research assistant to give the survey in person, thus avoiding technology issues; however, nearly half of my participants lived far from Dar es Salaam. Second, I became convinced that the MBS needed comparative data. Many individuals in my research population had already been exposed to biblical counseling and biblical marriage teaching. The Ethics Committee approved my request to administer section 2 of the MBS as a separate instrument, asking respondents to respond according to their culture's perspective. I then uploaded the "Marriage Beliefs Survey—My Opinion" and the "Marriage Beliefs Survey—My Culture's Opinion" to the group chat using Google Forms. My first request to complete the surveys produced four responses. I contacted each person in our group chat and eventually received twenty-eight personal and twenty-five cultural opinion responses.<sup>5</sup>

The thirteen-question Marriage Beliefs Interview (MBI) was administered fifteen times to twenty-one respondents. I interviewed nine respondents in person and twelve via phone. Interviews were approximately one hour long, recorded with permission, then transcribed, followed by the interviewees' approval of the transcriptions. The first two questions of the interview were written to assess participants' pre- and post-confidence levels and understanding of biblical marriage counseling. However, when asked the questions, the first five respondents expressed hesitancy. One respondent new to RTBS training challenged why I would ask her to define biblical marriage counseling without first teaching her. In response to the participants' discomfort, I removed the question from the interview, increasing my reliance on the Counseling Case Study (CCS) to measure change.

Using MAXQDA, I coded and then winnowed the data to discover what respondents considered the most common problems in Christian marriages in Tanzania.

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<sup>5</sup> The participants who took the MBS in March were not identical to the participants who attended the course. Since the primary purpose of the MBS was to measure change through dependent samples, I re-administered the instrument as the first activity of the course. I was later able to pair this set of responses with the post-MBS. Discussion of the results follows in chapter 5.

According to the data coding, there is a strong correlation between (1) the problems of transparency, money, and family interference and (2) the problems of transparency and sexual issues.

Table 1. The biggest problems in Christian marriages in Tanzania

| <b>What Is the Biggest Problem in Christian Marriages in Tanzania?</b> | <b>Number of Respondents Who Indicated the Problem</b> |
|--|--|
| Adultery   | 17   |
| Lack of Preparation <sup>6</sup>                                       | 17   |
| Money  | 16   |
| Male Dominance   | 14   |
| Sexual Issues  | 13   |
| Family Interference  | 10   |
| Transparency between the Couple  | 9  |

The following quotations indicate the primary problems facing Christian marriages in Tanzania.

Table 2: Illustrations of each identified problem<sup>7</sup>

| <b>Subject</b> | <b>Responses</b>  |
|----------------|---|
| Adultery       | “If you talk with an African, they tend to say that adultery is like a ‘go ahead’ thing. Even Christians say, ‘There’s no man with one woman.’” (Respondent #4, Female) |
|                | “Polygamy is genetic.” (Respondent #11, Male)   |
|                | “When servants of God go out for ministries, they forget their marriage.” (Respondent #21, Female)  |

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<sup>6</sup> While “Lack of Preparation” was identified as the second largest marriage problem, pre-marital preparation is beyond the scope of this course. Appendix 11 list respondents’ concerns that a future RTBS project may address.

<sup>7</sup> NB: Respondents quotations are not representative of their personal views but how they see these problems manifesting in their culture.

| Subject              | Responses   |
|----------------------|---|
| Money                | <p>“People don’t mention their properties or money to their spouse. And at the end, the spouse finds out that this person has this and this, and that creates disunity and distrust.” (Respondent #13, Male)</p>  |
|                      | <p>Culturally, a wife’s income is “her money.” But as many wives now make sizeable incomes, following this tradition minimizes male responsibility. Churches commonly teach men and women to keep their money separate. (Paraphrase from male Respondents #1, #2, #8, #9, #11, and #19, and female Respondents #3, #7, #10, and #20)</p>  |
| Male Dominance       | <p>“I’m the head of this house! I’m the head of this house!” Men make their wives like slaves, and they are the masters. Wives have no say in anything. They are just there. They are told, “You are just the helper.” Christian marriages can be harder than non-Christian marriages because the Bible and the church agree with culture that the man is the “head of the house.” (Respondent #10, Female)</p>   |
|                      | <p>“Men don’t want to be questioned. They are gods.” (Respondent #6, Female)</p>  |
| Sexual Issues        | <p>“There are two groups in the church: one that knows everything about sex and pretends they don’t, and another that doesn’t know anything. When spouses who know a lot of things enter marriage with an amateur and are sexually dissatisfied, they say, ‘No, I have to look for another one.’ They are not willing to help or to teach their partner because if they are more transparent that they know about sex, their partner will know they have experience. So, they keep their dissatisfaction a secret.” (Respondent #5, Male)</p> |
|                      | <p>“Many women cannot tell their husbands that there is something in the bed they don’t like. They just keep quiet, and they start to hate it. The whole thing. They keep quiet to the point that they don’t even enjoy the sexual life. They are not transparent and even pretending excitement.” (Respondent #10, Female)</p>   |
| Family Interference  | <p>“What I see in our churches is husbands and wives don’t leave and cleave. Many issues are connected to their families. They fight a lot because the husband believes his family is supposed to have a say in their marriage, and the wife believes her family must have a voice in their marriage, in their decision-making about how many children to have, where they should live, and what they should do with their money.” (Respondent #15, Male)</p>   |
|                      | <p>“In-laws think they have the right to receive money and blame their relative’s spouse if they don’t receive enough money on their timetable.” (Paraphrase from Respondents #1, Male; #7, Female; #8, Male)</p>   |
| Lack of Transparency | <p>“Couples are more transparent with their father or mother or brother or sister than with their spouse.” (Respondent #5, Male)</p>  |

| Subject | Responses   |
|---------|---|
|         | <p>“People pray and fast about something they don’t like about their partner and look for prayer partners. But communicating with each other about what is really going on would be the last thing they will do.” (Respondent #4, Female)</p> |

The pre-MBS indicated that *jini mahaba* was a concern among some respondents; thus, I paid particular attention to this issue in the MBI. However, incorporating mixed methods proved to be beneficial. Respondents who positively indicated a belief in *jini mahaba* (questions 11-13) simultaneously expressed that becoming a true follower of Christ was the solution. The qualitative data seemed to explain the quantitative findings from questions 18-20 on the MBS. While the participants in this project will undoubtedly find themselves counseling couples who identify *jini mahaba* as the cause of their marriage issues, this particular group of RTBS participants appear equipped to handle the challenge. Therefore, I excluded discussion about *jini mahaba* from the curriculum.

My original research profile required participants to complete a counseling case report from an actual marriage counseling session. After the class, participants would then submit a report from a different counseling session. I would compare the two submissions to assess changes in counseling methodology. Shortly before teaching the marriage counseling course, I recognized that requesting each participant to counsel the same case study before and after class would provide more uniform results. The Ethics Committee approved the change. Two weeks before class was scheduled to begin, I arrived in Tanzania to personally administer the translated CCS. However, shortly after arriving in Dar es Salaam, my husband and I contracted COVID. In place of personal meetings, I distributed the CCS through our group chat, asking individuals to send their responses to me through voice recording or text message. Remembering the MBI respondents’ nervousness when asked to self-evaluate counseling skills, I tried to clarify

the purpose of the CCS—to measure the quality of my teaching and its effect on counseling approaches. Thankfully, of the twenty-two participants, eighteen completed the pre-CCS.

### **Creating the Marriage Counseling Curriculum**

The second goal was to write a thirty-hour marriage counseling course to equip participants to counsel married couples biblically. Before creating the curriculum, I had to consider how to teach the class logistically. When creating the project goals, I assumed this course would follow the same schedule as previous RTBS units. However, since RTBS was physically closed, I needed to adapt this training opportunity to the schedules of busy people not regularly attending school. Because I was not giving a final exam, I shortened instructional time to twenty-four hours and reduced the class from five days to four. To increase participation, I decided to teach two different cohorts. One group would divide their instructional time between three Saturdays, and the other would come Monday through Thursday.<sup>8</sup>

Since the curriculum aimed to equip participants to practice biblical marriage counseling, learning was built upon the prerequisites of biblical counseling principles and a biblical understanding of marriage. The MBI data provided guideposts for the teaching. Every respondent identified husbands and wives not forming a superior alliance with one another as one of the “biggest problems” in marriage and thus required attention. Many Bible passages from chapter 2 were integrated into the curriculum, allowing participants to study them and then discuss their application in their cultural context. The teaching sought to explore the intersection of forgiveness and reconciliation in light of a break in the marriage covenant. Where research from chapter 3 was confirmed by the MBI, such as separating sexual pleasure from marriage, externalizing desire, and believing that men

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<sup>8</sup> See appendix 10 for the teaching schedule.

are morally weaker than women, I integrated these cultural challenges into the curriculum as opportunities for participatory action research and group discussions.

The MBI results revealed that adultery was the biggest issue in Christian marriages. To provide real help, we needed to discuss how adultery was traditionally handled in the church so that participants could critically consider whether the traditional approach was biblical. Respondents stated that pastors insist marriages must remain intact after adultery. Respondent #2 explained, “The church built the solid foundation to say, ‘Christian marriage can never be broken. Nothing can break it: even fornication, adultery, nothing.’” Then the respondent keenly noted that people commit adultery with impunity due to protecting marriage at all costs. The churches stand on Malachi 2:16: “God hates divorce.” Some respondents inadvertently conveyed agreement with the absolute permanence of marriage when they expressed concern that divorce among church members was increasing “only because of adultery.”<sup>9</sup>

The interviews documented the typical approach to adultery recovery. Pastors judge the man and tell him to “stop doing the adultery.” He may receive some type of punishment.<sup>10</sup> Once a church leader has declared that the husband has done wrong, multiple respondents indicated that the wife is expected to forgive her husband and take him back immediately. The pastor may say, “*Msameheane, yaishe, ndoa iendelee*” (“Forgive each other. Go on living. Let the marriage continue”). In a common reconciliation technique, the leader asks the couple, “Can you hug each other? Can you smile? Can you eat together?”<sup>11</sup> The pressure is heavy on the wife to quickly restore her marriage. Since the Bible says to forgive and there is no divorce for Christians, “wives don’t have any decision. They have to say yes. If it’s true repentance, true remorse, they

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<sup>9</sup> MBI Respondents #1, #9, #11, #12, #17, #19, #20.

<sup>10</sup> MBI Respondents #13, #14, #15, #21.

<sup>11</sup> MBI Respondents #3, #4, #5, #8, #12.

don't care. They'll bring a lot of Scriptures to scare the wife. They'll talk about the noble woman and remind her of the foolish woman and the harm she can do to her family."<sup>12</sup> If the wife does not welcome back her "lost sheep," she will be blamed for disobeying her pastor and for causing the adultery through something she failed to provide for her husband.<sup>13</sup>

When asked about adultery recovery if a wife is the perpetrator, 100 percent of respondents agreed that sin is sin—it should not matter whether the sinner is male or female. However, the group agreed that applying equality in this area would challenge the Christian culture. Pastors do not require husbands to grant forgiveness if their wives commit adultery. Instead, the most common response to a wife's sexual immorality is a quick divorce. One respondent summarized the situation, "Forgiveness is for men and not for women."<sup>14</sup>

While the delimitation of time would neither allow the course to exhaustively cover all marriage counseling issues nor provide unlimited time for counseling practice, ensuring time for practical learning opportunities was essential. Steven Rasmussen notes, "One of the most difficult aspects of teaching at a theological seminary in Africa is nurturing students' ability to bridge theoretical truths with their real problems and ministries. Case studies have a way of bringing the theoretical in line with the practical."<sup>15</sup> I leaned heavily on Rasmussen's advice, weaving case studies throughout the coursework. Participants were asked to engage with them in large and small groups,

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<sup>12</sup> MBI Respondents #8, #12.

<sup>13</sup> MBI Respondent #7.

<sup>14</sup> MBI Respondents #8, #12, #18, #21.

<sup>15</sup> Steven Dale Horsager Rasmussen, "Illness and Death Experiences in Northwestern Tanzania: An Investigation of Discourses, Practices, Beliefs, and Social Outcomes, Especially Related to Witchcraft, Used in a Critical Contextualization and Education Process with Pentecostal Ministers" (PhD diss., Trinity International University, 2009), 70n3. NB: Rasmussen implemented his doctoral work in a Tanzanian Bible school.

creating an interactive adult education process that integrated critical contextualization of Scripture within culture.

### **Curriculum Evaluation**

A panel of four people evaluated the curriculum using a rubric, measuring its biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability. Panelists consisted of an American pastor (ThM), an American seminary professor with broad ministry experience in East Africa (PhD in New Testament), a seminary program director of an MA in Biblical Counseling (ThM from a Southern Baptist school), and a Tanzanian theologian who holds a significant leadership position with a Pan-African Christian ministry.

Table 3. Expert panel curriculum review results<sup>16</sup>

| <b>Rubric Criteria Followed by Comments</b>  | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Each lesson applies sound hermeneutics in its biblical interpretation.   | 0        | 0        | 0        | 4        |
| You're doing great hermeneutics and bringing in so much biblical data and background. It's great work!<br>Very sound hermeneutically. Flesh and bone and covenant and Eph 5 were especially well done. |          |          |          |          |
| Each lesson is faithful to the theology of the Bible.  | 0        | 0        | 1        | 3        |
| You capture the overall theology of marriage and carefully contextualize every passage into that broader theology.<br>Good canonical use of Scripture.   |          |          |          |          |
| The content sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.  | 0        | 0        | 2        | 2        |
| Very thorough.<br>Solid. Sufficient time is always a challenge on complex issues.  |          |          |          |          |
| Each section of the curriculum follows good pedagogy.  | 0        | 0        | 0        | 4        |
| Excellent exercises for class and discussion questions for teaching. Great use of case studies.  |          |          |          |          |
| The topics have practical implications in marriage counseling.   | 0        | 0        | 0        | 4        |

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<sup>16</sup> The rubric scoring options were 1 = insufficient, 2 = requires attention, 3 = sufficient, and 4 = exemplary.



| <b>Rubric Criteria Followed by Comments</b>   | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| It covers and addresses practical issues one may face during counseling.<br>So practical. Great case studies.   |          |          |          |          |
| The curriculum clearly details how to practice biblical marriage counseling.  | 0        | 0        | 1        | 3        |
| Very good methodology. The section on abuse was helpful even for me as I read it!<br>Yes, the basics are well covered. Loved simple small group activity on Proverbs and I-P-I.   |          |          |          |          |
| The curriculum is relevant to issues affecting marriages in Tanzania.   | 0        | 0        | 0        | 4        |
| It addresses true Tanzanian cultural norms. <sup>17</sup><br>I'm blown away by how insightful this curriculum is; you've surfaced Tanzanian struggles I was completely unaware of.<br>Based on research and surveys.<br>Great job is done in this curriculum in applying biblical counseling to specific cultural issues in marriage. |          |          |          |          |
| The curriculum includes input from Tanzanian church leaders.  | 0        | 0        | 1        | 3        |
| The quotes from your interviews are encouraging and devastating. Great work incorporating and interacting with those.   |          |          |          |          |

While marking the curriculum at 90 percent or above, the evaluators offered suggestions for improvement. Two members of the panel recommended that in “Day 4 Lesson 1—Divorce,” I should discuss the context of Deuteronomy 24:1 in Matthew 5:31-32 and more clearly indicate God’s condemnation of husbands rather than wives. Moses allowed divorce because men were unwilling to endure something they thought “disqualified” their wives from being good spouses. The certificate protected women, allowing them to remarry legally. This addition proved beneficial to class discussion. Participants had understood a wife’s indecency in Deuteronomy 24:1 as a sexual sin, but with study, they realized that if that were the case, the woman would have been stoned. God’s protection of wives who had hard-hearted husbands surprised the class and challenged the cultural norm of protecting marriages at all costs.

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<sup>17</sup> This comment was given by the Tanzanian cultural expert.

## **Curriculum Implementation**

To achieve the third goal, I taught the curriculum.<sup>18</sup> On Saturday, May 6, ten participants, including four married couples, joined me for a twelve-hour marathon. We began with breakfast and ended by enjoying dinner together, prepared by the former RTBS school cook and her assistant. It was a joyful reunion of old friends. This group met three Saturdays in a row, following the same rhythm. On May 8, twelve participants began the Monday-Thursday cohort, with three married couples in attendance. Three participants traveled from Kenya and Rwanda, and two other couples traveled by bus with their toddlers for one to two days. Nine participants, two children, and my husband and I boarded in the rental home. We took our meals together and fellowshiped for several hours each evening outside the training times. At the end of the training, participants completed the post-MBS and received certificates for completing a short course in marriage counseling.<sup>19</sup> I then collected the second CCS through July 25.

## **Curriculum Distribution**

The final goal of this project was to update and distribute the curriculum for use among the RTBS network and beyond. I integrated new information learned from the participants through classroom contributions and course evaluations<sup>20</sup> into revised teacher and student editions of the curriculum shared within the RTBS church leaders' network. Throughout the course, I took notes while teaching, highlighting student feedback, key points of discussions, grammatical errors, poorly worded sentences, or any place of confusion in the students' notes. After teaching, I updated the curriculum accordingly.

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<sup>18</sup> See appendix 10 for teaching schedule.

<sup>19</sup> See appendix 13.

<sup>20</sup> See appendix 8.

Participants also completed course evaluations that requested suggestions for improvement. The following table contains the results of this instrument.<sup>21</sup>

Table 4. Student course evaluation results

| <b>Criteria</b>  | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| The course is presented at a level appropriate for most participants.  | 0        | 0        | 0        | 22       |
| This course addresses important theological issues affecting marriages.  | 0        | 0        | 1        | 21       |
| The course teaches how to practice marriage counseling.  | 0        | 0        | 1        | 21       |
| The course includes opportunities to practice counseling.  | 0        | 0        | 4        | 18       |
| The course addresses issues that married couples deal with in daily life.  | 0        | 0        | 0        | 22       |
| Because I took this course, I have more confidence to counsel married couples biblically.  | 0        | 0        | 4        | 17       |
| This course addresses important issues in my culture.  | 0        | 0        | 5        | 17       |
| After taking this course, I am more equipped to help marriages in my cultural setting.   | 0        | 1        | 2        | 19       |
| Comments for Improvement: Provide participants with additional reading; allow more time to discuss divorce; offer more examples about difficult issues; address village life and tribal issues; teach biblical/healthy parenting. Four participants requested longer practice time for case studies. |          |          |          |          |

My original research methodology required that I re-submit the edited curriculum to the expert panel for approval. However, alterations were minimal and primarily consisted of improving conciseness, lengthening discussions, and making minor changes to the educational sequence. With permission from my supervisor, I did not request further feedback from the panel. However, a cultural expert did grant verbal approval to the changes, as did the RTBS director, who uploaded the curriculum to the student access site on July 25.

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<sup>21</sup> The rubric scoring options were 1 = insufficient, 2 = requires attention, 3 = sufficient, and 4 = excellent.

## **Conclusion**

After many months, I can joyfully state that this project met or exceeded the goals. The online biblical counseling and marriage classes benefited project participants and now provide learning opportunities in other environments. Using the MBS, I assessed participants' biblical and cultural views that could affect marriage counseling; using the CCS, I assessed how they would counsel a couple in trouble. The MBI was especially helpful in creating a contextualized, biblically centered curriculum with appropriate methodology for adult learners in Tanzania. My initial hope had been to train ten marriage counselors. At the end of this project, twenty-two people from five African countries completed the course. From this group, seven married couples are now equipped to practice biblical marriage counseling together. A t-test for dependent samples performed on the pre- and post-MBS revealed that the teaching created a positive statistically significant difference, and the pre- and post-CCS demonstrated a change in respondents' competence to counsel married couples. The course was uploaded to the RTBS network, and participants have already reported teaching others some of the curriculum. The following chapter will provide an in-depth evaluation of this project.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

After completing a counseling class at Reach Tanzania Bible School (RTBS) in 2016, Pastor Ronald implored me to help him counsel a man in his church who had just committed adultery. A few months later, he asked me to help another couple in a similar situation. But there was a problem—I had already taught Ronald everything I knew about counseling. I admitted to him that I did not have more to offer, but I promised him I would learn. Pastor Ronald was not the only one who had expressed his concern about the health of marriages in his church. I heard the call—I needed to learn how to equip students to counsel hurting couples biblically. These conversations catalyzed my study of biblical counseling, transforming my counseling methodology by grounding it in Christ, ultimately leading to this project.

#### **Evaluation of the Project’s Purpose**

This project aimed to equip church leaders for biblical marriage counseling through Reach Tanzania Bible School in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. While forming this project’s title, I was cautioned by a professor to avoid the word “equipping” unless I could demonstrate how I had prepared my participants for a specific task. I needed to show not just that they learned new material but also that they could apply it. Therefore, the crux of this project evaluation is the question “Were church leaders equipped to practice biblical marriage counseling?” Participants were requested to complete course evaluations and post-Counseling Case Studies (CCS) to answer this question. Responses strongly indicated that participants believed they were both more equipped to practice biblical marriage counseling and more confident to do so. As I evaluated the CCS, I

could affirm participants' self-perceptions of preparedness. The two tools concurrently pointed to a similar conclusion: RTBS students had been equipped to biblically counsel marriages.

From a population of forty-one people who completed some aspects of the prerequisite training, twenty-two individuals met all of the requirements necessary to receive a RTBS Biblical Marriage Counseling Short Course Certificate. Each of these men and women was challenged to examine issues associated with marriage in light of Scripture rather than culture. Through case studies and practice counseling opportunities, participants developed their marriage counseling skills and confidence in using the Root-to-Fruit methodology. Equipping these twenty-two was successful; however, the church's needs far exceed the capacity for such few ministers. I must continue encouraging these brothers and sisters to disciple and equip others until a network of Christ-centered biblical marriage counselors exists.

### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

Five sequential goals guided the success of this project. The goals were (1) to assess biblical marriage counseling competencies, (2) to write a marriage counseling course, (3) to implement the training and increase participants' marriage counseling competency, (4) to administer and analyze the post-course assessments, and (5) to revise the curriculum and distribute it among the RTBS network.

#### **Goal 1: Assess Biblical Marriage Counseling Competencies of Qualified Participants**

At the beginning of this project, I set out to train ten individuals to practice biblical marriage counseling. When I taught the course, RTBS had been closed for three years. Asking people to give me three to four days for in-person training and complete two prerequisite courses was a substantial request. Incredibly, twenty-two people completed everything. As participants qualified for the course, I worked within the RTBS

population to assess marriage counseling competencies, giving special attention to cultural issues that could affect a person's counsel. The Marriage Beliefs Interview (MBI) was administered to twenty-one respondents in the sample population, then it was analyzed and used to inform the curriculum. Before beginning the marriage class, participants completed the CCS. Twenty-eight respondents completed the pre-Marriage Beliefs Survey (MBS) online, and twenty-five answered the MBS—My Culture's Opinion two months prior to the course. Then, I analyzed and evaluated the data. However, noticing the potential disparity between those registered for the course and my existing random sample, I readministered the pre-MBS and the MBS—My Culture's Opinion to twenty-two participants at the beginning of the first class so that I could ensure dependent samples for a paired t-test.

## **Goal 2: Curriculum Creation**

Steven Rasmussen noted in his doctoral work that African leaders have expressed the frustrating experience of being used for research rather than benefiting from it. I wanted to create a learning environment that served my African friends and not my agenda. Therefore, I relied on my participants' context insights as communicated in the MBI. I employed an element of participatory action research where the group cooperatively identified a problem, conducted research together, analyzed the results, and created actions to address the issue.<sup>1</sup> Respondents indicated the greatest marriage problems in their Christian communities through the interviews. I threaded their interview data throughout the curriculum, asking participants to interact with the data results and discuss what can be done to influence the health of marriages positively. Because the MBI disclosed the repression of sexual enjoyment in marriage, which

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Dale Horsager Rasmussen, "Illness and Death Experiences in Northwestern Tanzania: An Investigation of Discourses, Practices, Beliefs, and Social Outcomes, Especially Related to Witchcraft, Used in a Critical Contextualization and Education Process with Pentecostal Ministers" (PhD diss., Trinity International University, 2009), 68.

supported Philip Setel’s research as recorded in chapter 3 and my informal information gathered over the years, I created an opportunity for the group to discuss the sensitive issue of sexual pleasure and how couples can enjoy it in a holy way.<sup>2</sup>

Critically analyzing my participants’ context allowed me to see where Scripture had not been applied to root issues. Tanzanians highly value marriage, and marital roles are bedrock—husbands are heads, and wives are submissive helpmates. Yet, my respondents noted that adultery, male dominance, and elevating loyalty to one’s natal family above one’s spouse bring havoc to marriages. Tanzanian Christians quote Genesis 2:24 to explain God’s creation of marriage. But what would happen if the covenant promise to God in Genesis 2:23 were understood as the reason a husband must “leave/shift his loyalty” from his family to his new closest relative? Consequently, if a man’s wife has become his closest relative, how does Jesus’s teaching about loving one’s neighbor as oneself transform how a man loves his wife, his closest neighbor? Helping an African marriage counselor digest implications from these core biblical truths became a goal of the curriculum. The previously learned Root-to-Fruit methodology was applied using case studies, giving participants opportunities to practice marriage counseling.

### **Goal 3: Implementation of the Curriculum to Increase Competency**

As MBI respondents expressed their dismay at the divorce increase in their communities, I became more committed to equipping as many counselors as possible. Therefore, I created a timeline that supported the existence of two cohorts rather than one. Participation was almost equally divided between the traditional RTBS weekday option and the alternate Saturday schedule.

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<sup>2</sup> See appendix 12 for participants responses to this conversation.



While it is true that scriptural truths apply to all generations and cultures, cultural outsiders must walk with caution and humility when addressing marriage in a different context. I am not unaware of my audacity as a female Western missionary to offer marriage counseling training in Tanzania. Therefore, participants' anonymous comments were valuable:

1. "This curriculum tackled 'taboo' areas of marriage in Africa."
2. "The instructor has done deep research on marriage in Africa."
3. "The whole class was tailored to fit the Tanzanian context."
4. "Many cultural issues have been addressed which has helped me."
5. "Our culture is facing a lot of the things we have learned. This is true in our country. Excellent material."

One of the participants, who has an MA in Theology from a prestigious African seminary, asked in the middle of a lesson, "How did you know these things? I am learning about my own culture!" I received participants' positive feedback regarding the intersection of biblical truth, praxis, and cultural awareness with gratitude and awe, acknowledging the kindness of the Holy Spirit to teach and lead.

Participants summarized the benefit of the training by mentioning its effect on their marriages, their ability to apply God's Word in marriage counseling, and their ability to differentiate between biblical truths and culture. Referring to a growing ability to counsel their own marriages, both husbands and wives wrote on their course evaluations about their commitment to grow in their loyalty and commitment to their spouse, practicing transparency, and choosing to love their spouse as their closest neighbor. Several participants reflected on their growing abilities to connect scriptures to counseling situations. One person shared, "There was a certain way I viewed scriptures concerning marriage, but now my eyes are bigger and looking properly at how scriptures address marriage issues." Participants claimed that the training had also motivated them to help marriages in their specific cultural context. One person wrote, "I am looking at

marriage through the lens of scripture rather than culture, and I want to show married people how God wants marriage to be different from the traditions and customs of our tribes.”

Since the purpose of this project was not marriage enrichment but equipping people to counsel marriages biblically, it is worthwhile to note whether participants think they have been equipped. Questions 6 and 8 on the Participant Course Evaluation<sup>3</sup> were written to assess this concern. Between the two questions, one person reported a “2—requires attention,” and the remaining twenty-one participants ranked the course’s preparation as sufficient or excellent. To further assess participants’ ability to practice counseling, the evaluation form asked, “What action do you plan to take as a result of this course?” The two most common action points participants planned due to this training were teaching others and practicing biblical marriage counseling. Some intended to teach seminars in their churches or provide premarital counseling trainings within the nine represented denominations and three parachurch ministries. A majority of participants indicated that they planned to counsel other couples using the Christ-centered approach they had learned, even if they were counseling a non-believer. Those who attended the course with their spouse often commented that they would counsel with their spouse as co-counsel. One respondent succinctly explained the course’s purpose: “I now understand that the goal of a marriage counselor is much bigger than preventing divorce; it is to maximize God’s glory through Christ-focused marriages.” Participants’ positive evaluations of the course and their call to action offer robust markers that the course equipped them to do the work of biblical marriage counseling.

I readministered the MBS immediately after participants completed the course. The three iterations of the survey produced twenty pre- and post-paired dependent samples and eighteen samples of the MBS—My Culture’s Opinion, which could be

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix 8.

matched to the pre- and post-MBS personal identifying markers. To prepare the surveys for analysis, I removed questions 6, 7, 16, and 17, as they served as validity checks for the MBS section 3 and were not targeted by the teaching. I reverse-scored the negatively keyed items (4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 18, 19, and 20) to measure positive change consistently. I had hypothesized that the marriage counseling course would shift participants' opinions toward a more biblical view quantified by movement toward the positive end of the Likert scale. Therefore, I performed a one-tailed t-test on the above-mentioned survey items of the pre- and post-MBS data sets with the alpha level set at .05 percent.

The pre- and post-MBS paired t-test results showed p-values of statistical significance for eight of the sixteen items, and the mean across all questions showed a p-value of <0.001. These results indicated that the teaching intervention had shifted participants' views. While statistically significant p-values are meaningful, it is important to note the positive shift toward the ascendent end of the Likert scale for each question. On the pre-MBS, only two respondents recorded a median of 4 across the sixteen questions. The other eighteen individuals had medians of 5 or 6. As most participants had already graduated from RTBS, and as all had completed prerequisites that could affect their responses, small growth increments are notable since respondents were already approaching the end of the interval scale. Table 5 below shows the results.

Table 5. Pre- and post-survey item analysis<sup>4</sup>

| <b>Question</b>                  | <b>Pre-MBS Mean</b> | <b>Post-MBS Mean</b> | <b>Mean Change (90% confidence interval)</b> | <b>p-value (1-sided)</b> |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Overall Average across Questions | 5.18                | 5.65                 | +0.48<br>(0.33, 0.62)                        | <0.001                   |

<sup>4</sup> See appendices 2 and 3 for full lists of the survey items.

| <b>Question</b> | <b>Pre-MBS Mean</b> | <b>Post-MBS Mean</b> | <b>Mean Change (90% confidence interval)</b> | <b>p-value (1-sided)</b> |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|--|--------------------------|
| 1               | 5.20                | 5.75                 | +0.55<br>(0.06, 1.04)                        | 0.0350                   |
| 2               | 5.75                | 5.90                 | +0.15<br>(-0.04, 0.34)                       | 0.0930                   |
| 3               | 5.75                | 5.90                 | +0.15<br>(-0.04, 0.34)                       | 0.0930                   |
| 4               | 4.95                | 5.65                 | +0.70<br>(0.18, 1.22)                        | 0.0150                   |
| 5               | 4.85                | 5.55                 | +0.70<br>(0.14, 1.26)                        | 0.0220                   |
| 8               | 5.50                | 5.65                 | +0.15<br>(-0.29, 0.59)                       | 0.2810                   |
| 9               | 5.40                | 5.65                 | +0.25<br>(-0.18, 0.69)                       | 0.1650                   |
| 10              | 4.95                | 5.70                 | +0.75<br>(0.11, 1.39)                        | 0.0280                   |
| 11              | 5.70                | 6.00                 | +0.30<br>(-0.14, 0.74)                       | 0.1250                   |
| 12              | 5.10                | 5.75                 | +0.65<br>(0.01, 1.29)                        | 0.0480                   |
| 13              | 4.85                | 5.75                 | +0.90<br>(0.16, 1.64)                        | 0.0250                   |
| 14              | 5.60                | 5.95                 | +0.35<br>(-0.14, 0.84)                       | 0.1160                   |
| 15              | 5.80                | 5.95                 | +0.15<br>(-0.21, 0.51)                       | 0.2410                   |
| 18              | 3.95                | 5.20                 | +1.25<br>(0.64, 1.86)                        | 0.0001                   |
| 19              | 5.05                | 5.10                 | +0.05<br>(-0.29, 0.39)                       | 0.4020                   |
| 20              | 4.45                | 5.00                 | +0.55<br>(0.09, 1.01)                        | 0.0260                   |

Marriage counseling training in Tanzania must include an effort to help Christians believe that their hearts function dynamically; therefore, they are responsible before God for their cognition, affections, and volition rather than being the victims of circumstance or outside forces. This concept of personal agency was woven throughout the curriculum, and some survey items were written to assess its value among respondents. Questions 4 and 5, which asked respondents to rate how much blame they would assign to a spouse for the other spouse's unhappiness, showed statistically significant p-values. Likewise, the pre- and post-t-test results on questions 18 and 20, which made statements about spiritual forces controlling married people's choices, also indicated p-values that rejected the null hypothesis that the marriage counseling course would have no impact on participants' viewpoints. Although I did not teach about *jini mahaba* (a gendered love spirit), I was pleased to note that questions 18 and 20 showed that respondents shifted away from blaming marriage problems on other entities and moved toward accepting personal responsibility.

The majority of participants in this course had previously completed multiple RTBS courses. There was no data about respondents' beliefs before matriculation; therefore, prior to the course, participants completed section 2 of the MBS according to how they thought their Christian culture would respond. The MBS—My Culture's Opinion served as a control group and was compared to the post-MBS data set. This approach had a noticeable limitation: the data represented what participants *thought* Christians in their culture believe and does not represent the *actual* non-RTBS Tanzanian Christian population. Regardless of this weakness, paired t-tests comparing each survey item for the two data sets offered insight into RTBS student growth. As I anticipated the marriage counseling course to have a positive result, I ran a one-tailed t-test on the eighteen post-MBS surveys that had paired MBS—My Culture's Opinion responses. I removed questions 6, 7, 16, and 17 for the same reasons previously explained. The t-test results showed that the null hypothesis could be rejected, suggesting that RTBS students'

claim to have differing opinions from their Christian culture was valid. Table 6 below shows the results.

Table 6. Cultural Christianity compared to RTBS post-MBS<sup>5</sup>

| <b>Question</b>                  | <b>Cultural Mean</b> | <b>Post-MBS Mean</b> | <b>Mean Change (90% confidence interval)</b> | <b>p-value (1-sided)</b> |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Overall Average across Questions | 3.40                 | 5.66                 | +2.26<br>(1.83, 2.68)                        | <0.001                   |
| 1                                | 3.56                 | 5.83                 | +2.28<br>(1.65, 2.90)                        | <0.001                   |
| 2                                | 3.61                 | 5.89                 | +2.28<br>(1.61, 2.95)                        | <0.001                   |
| 3                                | 3.56                 | 5.89                 | +2.33<br>(1.62, 3.05)                        | <0.001                   |
| 4                                | 2.78                 | 5.61                 | +2.83<br>(2.11, 3.55)                        | <0.001                   |
| 5                                | 3.61                 | 5.50                 | +1.89<br>(1.28, 2.50)                        | <0.001                   |
| 8                                | 4.06                 | 5.61                 | +1.56<br>(0.80, 2.32)                        | 0.001                    |
| 9                                | 3.61                 | 5.61                 | +2.00<br>(1.24, 2.76)                        | <0.001                   |
| 10                               | 2.00                 | 5.67                 | +3.67<br>(3.14, 4.19)                        | <0.001                   |
| 11                               | 2.11                 | 6.00                 | +3.89<br>(3.33, 4.45)                        | <0.001                   |
| 12                               | 5.61                 | 5.78                 | +0.17<br>(-0.12, 0.46)                       | 0.166                    |
| 13                               | 4.33                 | 5.78                 | +1.44<br>(0.77, 2.12)                        | 0.001                    |
| 14                               | 2.44                 | 5.94                 | +3.50<br>(2.79, 4.21)                        | <0.001                   |

<sup>5</sup> See appendices 3 and 4 for full lists of the survey items.

| Question | Cultural Mean | Post-MBS Mean | Mean Change (90% confidence interval) | p-value (1-sided) |
|----------|---------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 15       | 4.94          | 5.94          | +1.00<br>(0.39, 1.61)                 | 0.006             |
| 18       | 2.56          | 5.28          | +2.72<br>(1.83, 3.61)                 | 0.001             |
| 19       | 2.83          | 5.22          | +2.39<br>(1.49, 3.29)                 | <0.001            |
| 20       | 2.83          | 5.00          | +2.17<br>(1.19, 3.14)                 | 0.001             |

The research in chapter 3 and the MBI results indicated adultery as a prominent issue. According to respondents' perceptions of their culture in question 11, a wife's infertility is a common reason for a husband's unfaithfulness. Yet, the pre-MBS mean of 5.7 and the post-MBS mean of 6 further separate RTBS students from the Christian culture around them. The respondents' shifts in opinion from the pre- and post-MBS and their views about their culture suggests that RTBS students have been moving away from some cultural beliefs and toward a more biblically sound worldview throughout their educational process, including during their recent study in marriage counseling.

#### **Goal 4: Complete and Analyze the Post-Course Assessments**

Eighteen participants completed the pre-CCS after completing prerequisites in biblical counseling and marriage. Within two months of taking the marriage counseling class, seventeen participants completed the post-CCS. When pre- and post-submissions were paired, there were fifteen sets.

I transcribed oral responses and uploaded paired documents to the MAXQDA software program to analyze this qualitative data. Using an inductive method, I assigned codes where participants employed various elements of the five-step Root-to-Fruit

counseling methodology or indicated an understanding of the biblical counseling definition used in our RTBS classes.<sup>6</sup> After coding the thirty documents, I looked for themes and found that every participant had used elements of the five-step process while counseling Peter and Joy. I concluded that the most systematic approach to understanding the data was to isolate codes that represented the five-step counseling methodology and evaluate respondents' competency for each step based on response quality.<sup>7</sup> To identify possible growth more easily, I created a rubric and assigned a descriptive numerical value of 1-3 to each code to represent the categories of (1) minimal competency, (2) adequate competency, or (3) strong competency. Table 7 below shows the assessment key.

Table 7. CCS individual assessment key

| <b>Competency per Step</b> |   | <b>Total Competency: All Five Steps</b> |  |
|----------------------------|---|---|--|
| 0                          | Step Not Covered                        | 0                                       | Steps Not Covered                        |
| 1                          | Step Covered with Minimal Competency    | 1-5                                     | Steps Covered with Minimal Competency    |
| 2                          | Step Covered with Acceptable Competency | 6-10                                    | Steps Covered with Acceptable Competency |
| 3                          | Step Covered with Strong Competency     | 11-15                                   | Steps Covered with Strong Competency     |

While qualitative variables cannot be statistically analyzed, these categories allowed me to assess respondents' expressed competency for each step and assign a total methodological competency by adding descriptive numbers. I followed this process for the pre- and post-CCS for each respondent. Table 8 below shows the results.

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<sup>6</sup> Biblical counseling is a Christ-centered process in which a Spirit-empowered believer comes alongside someone facing challenges and lovingly applies biblical truth for inner transformation that leads to spiritual maturity that pleases God.

<sup>7</sup> For the Root-to-Fruit five-step counseling model, see appendix 6 (pp. 148-50).



Table 8. Individual counseling methodology competency

| <b>Respondent</b> | <b>Pre-CCS</b> | <b>Post-CCS</b> | <b>Respondent</b> | <b>Pre-CCS</b> | <b>Post-CCS</b> |
|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1                 | Acceptable     | Strong          | 9                 | Minimal        | Strong          |
| 2                 | Acceptable     | Strong          | 10                | Acceptable     | Strong          |
| 3                 | Minimal        | Strong          | 11                | Acceptable     | Strong          |
| 4                 | Minimal        | Strong          | 12                | Minimal        | Strong          |
| 5                 | Minimal        | Strong          | 13                | Acceptable     | Strong          |
| 6                 | Minimal        | Strong          | 14                | Minimal        | Strong          |
| 7                 | Acceptable     | Strong          | 15                | Acceptable     | Strong          |
| 8                 | Acceptable     | Strong          |                   |                |                 |

I then combined the individual descriptive numbers to reflect the competency of the convenience sample. The maximum competency a respondent could attain for each step was 3. As the sample contained fifteen respondents, the assessment key below (table 9) was created to coordinate with the individual assessment key.

Table 9. CCS group assessment key

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| 1-15  | Steps Covered with Minimal Competency    |
| 16-30 | Steps Covered with Acceptable Competency |
| 31-45 | Steps Covered with Strong Competency     |

Data from the fifteen respondents were combined to display the pre- and post-competency levels per counseling step according to the group assessment rubric. Table 10 below shows the results.

Table 10. CCS group competency per counseling step

|                            | <b>Step 1</b> | <b>Step 2</b> | <b>Step 3</b> | <b>Step 4</b> | <b>Step 5</b> |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Counseling Step</b>     | Open Door     | Broken Cup    | Bread of Life | Farming       | Setting Sun   |
| <b>Pre-CCS Competency</b>  | 20            | 17            | 18            | 13            | 16            |
| <b>Post-CCS Competency</b> | 34            | 40            | 41            | 41            | 35            |

Table 8 shows that seven respondents exhibited minimal competency before the marriage counseling course, and eight respondents performed with acceptable competency. After completing the course, all fifteen respondents demonstrated strong competency in the post-CCS. All participants entered the course with biblical counseling training, which presents a challenge for understanding how the marriage counseling class specifically affected participants' methodology. Table 10 provides important insights. While overall competency for Step 1 was lower than others, respondents' answers were truncated and, in my assessment, did not reflect their relational skills. The growth in Step 2 was most significant in two areas. First, respondents asked better questions to help elicit knowledge of the situation and a counselee's motivations. Second, in the post-CCS, most respondents described the heat, bad fruits, bad roots, good fruits, and good roots they would look for in the counselee. Step 5 also showed growth as the post-CCS showed a consistent effort to plan and pray, continuing the counseling process beyond the end of a session.

The data from Step 3 and Step 4 powerfully communicates that participants were equipped to practice biblical marriage counseling. On the pre-CCS, seven respondents mentioned elements of biblical truth without specificity. The most common was the need for the counselee to "trust God." However, how to trust God and what Scripture to teach that explains how God is trustworthy were rarely used. In some cases, counselors overpromised what God would accomplish for the counselee or presented a

non-biblical view of love, such as the presence of chemistry. Such statements were missing from the post-CCS, and respondents consistently chose appropriate passages of Scripture to teach and, in many cases, introduced elements of the biblical texts covered in class. The most significant change, however, was in Step 4. The pre-CCS recorded few Growth Projects. In many cases, the extent of “Farming” work was “trusting God” or non-specific prayer. Respondents’ efforts on Step 4 in the post-CCS demonstrated increased confidence to pursue a counselee’s growth beyond the counseling session.

The purpose of this project was to equip RTBS students for biblical marriage counseling. Were they equipped? According to the qualitative data in the CCS, the answer is yes. While participants entered the classroom with counseling abilities, they exited equipped to counsel troubled marriages. One participant<sup>8</sup> said in his post-CCS, “I learned to be very different in the way I approach this couple. I must give very serious attention and focus on their lives as Christians . . . . I would want to first help these people get to understand all of Jesus Christ and see what he has done for them . . . . This class helped me teach the Bread of Life.” This pastor holds a highly respected position in his denomination and has been teaching God’s Word for nearly twenty years. To hear a minister with his experience confidently state his ability to counsel and feed Christ’s sheep improved due to this course brings me great encouragement.

### **Goal 5: Curriculum Revision and Distribution**

Although RTBS is no longer enrolling students, its network of church leaders continues to serve, provide trainings, and collaborate for new ministry endeavors. After updating the curriculum from participants’ feedback, the RTBS director approved the marriage counseling course and uploaded it to the network’s access point as its twenty-first course. Project participants have already used the materials to teach marriage issues

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<sup>8</sup> NB: This respondent was not included in the CCS results as he did not submit a pre-CCS.

in their denomination. For example, the day after the training ended, a participant who serves as a denominational leader taught some of the material to denominational leaders and began preparations to teach elements of the course to approximately two hundred people.

### **Strengths of the Project**

The project had several strengths that assisted its success. Requiring participants to enter the course with an understanding of Christ-centered biblical counseling allowed us to immediately begin applying the process model to marriage issues. Delivery of the prerequisites as online courses provided scheduling flexibility, creating the opportunity for the wives of five RTBS alumni to engage fully. The total number of married couples present was seven, so fourteen people could practice counseling with their spouses as co-counsel. Ministers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Malawi, and Tanzania represented urban and rural areas and various ministry settings.

The teaching was biblical, contextualized for the culture, and allowed time for participants to study the passages in small groups. RTBS students have always loved talking about God's Word together, which accords with their communal culture. They receive great benefits when, as a group, they consider what God has to say. Exploring Genesis 2:23 and the ancient covenant was a holy moment. A pastor confessed, "I always thought my wife is not a relative. My kids are my relatives." He then looked at the group, pointed to his wife, and said, "My wife is my closest relative." It was a joy to hear men and women talk about their spouse as their closest relative and neighbor during our many hours together.

The discussion questions were meaningful and led to thoughtful conversations. The combination of good class size and alumni studying together prepared us to discuss weighty topics. For example, the group discussed why it is difficult for a husband and

wife to leave their family and unite and become one flesh with each other. Participants shared the expectations of parents who “own” their adult children and analyzed different approaches to affect change. When we discussed how the culture views women, a female participant insightfully summarized the church’s challenge by asking, “Are we raising girls to be moms or people of God, to be holy?” During the conversation about adultery in the church, a participant spoke for the group, saying, “We talk about things we are not doing. We can’t be hypocrites. We need to live it out. We can no longer know what God wants but not do it.” The mood in the room was serious. When engaging in the participatory action research portion of the curriculum, the group wrestled with the word *tamaa*.<sup>9</sup> Research for chapter 3 revealed that *tamaa* in marriage is impossible since the sexual union is legal and there is nothing to take from one another.<sup>10</sup> Sharing with the group that the MBS showed their solid agreement that sexual enjoyment was very important for both men and women, I asked about the problem of sexual dissatisfaction in marriage: “Have you ever heard that marital sex should be passionless and mechanical, producing children and keeping Satan at bay?” The room was full of people nodding their heads. One member somberly acknowledged, “Many times. It is a lie prevalent in the culture.” As the conversation drew to a close, the group was struck by the fact that there is no word for sexual desire outside of *tamaa* in Swahili. These types of conversations were mature and profitable for personal and ministerial growth.

The integration of case studies into several lessons was highly beneficial. Whether it was a brief study to help students recall the steps of the counseling methodology or the longer John and Patience case study that detailed multiple issues in

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<sup>9</sup> Loosely defined, *tamaa* is a combination of negative sexual desire and taking that which does not belong to a person.

<sup>10</sup> Philip Setel, *A Plague of Paradoxes: AIDS, Culture, and Demography in Northern Tanzania*, *Worlds of Desire: The Chicago Series on Sexuality, Gender, and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 100. NB: *Tamaa* may possibly be acceptable if a married couple is reunited after a long separation.

their young marriage, participants enjoyed acting the roles. Applying theoretical truths to real-world problems through case studies greatly benefitted the adult African learning environment.<sup>11</sup> I credit dividing into groups of four (two people were the couple in the case study, and two were the co-counsel) and practicing the entire methodology over multiple sessions as the primary reason the pre- and post-CCS showed so much positive change.

This marriage counseling equipping project was built on personal relationships. Even though RTBS closed three years ago, I exceeded my target of ten students because of long-term friendships. I am in awe when I consider that forty-one people participated to some degree in this project and twenty-two completed it. After I boarded the plane to depart Dar es Salaam, I received the following message from a participant:

Thank you, Alyssa, for your continuous support to our ministries here in Tanzania. You could have chosen any other place to do this class. To me, and I believe most of us here, we see you and regard you as our mentor, mother, *dada* [sister], and much more. And Mark is not forgotten for allowing his dear wife to be away for such a period of time.

This project was successful because my dear brothers and sisters love me.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

While the project had strengths, it also had weaknesses. The most prevalent among them was time management. I did not have sufficient time to cover all of the material and did not always use the allotted time well. One of my evaluators, who serves in a similar African environment, warned me that the schedule would be tight. Because I knew we would not start on time, I should have built a review and question time into the 9:00 am slot. While dividing the class was strategic, the two cohorts did not always desire

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<sup>11</sup> Rasmussen, "Illness and Death Experiences in Northwestern Tanzania," 70n3. In this footnote, Rasmussen refers to the important work by Paul J. Fritz: "Contextualizing the Message through the Use of Case Studies," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 12, no. 3 (July-September 1995): 147-52.

the same depth of engagement on a particular topic. For example, one group was satisfied with the allotted time to discuss forgiveness and repentance, while the other required nearly two hours. Having two groups, however, did allow me to learn from my errors. I decided to save time in the Monday-Thursday group by not sending the class into small groups to read and discuss the Bible verses relating to divorce. Instead, I referred to the verses, wrongly assuming participants were conversant with them, then moved to the next part of the lesson. After thirty minutes of mutual frustration, I conceded that participants needed to look at the verses in small groups. I stopped the lesson and gave participants approximately forty minutes to study the Scriptures according to my original plan. Admitting that my effort to save time had backfired, the Saturday class began the divorce lesson with small group Bible studies. Although both cohorts completed the course material, there were only three hours to practice the John and Patience case study. Additionally, readministering the cultural and personal opinion versions of the MBS and teaching the eight-week Zoom class, only to offer the course in another delivery mode, are other examples of not using time as well as possible.

The course focused on methodology and practical aspects of counseling and did not cover exhaustive marriage and family counseling issues. Some participants requested information about topics I did not address, such as polygamy, intermarriage between tribes, the implications of *mahari* (bride price), parenting, and how to help people married to unbelievers. In the section about how to counsel someone who is committing adultery and has a child outside of the marriage, some people asked for more discussion about how to treat the child well yet protect the marriage from repeated adultery.

When I initially considered teaching this course, I wanted it to be highly reproducible. The need to train marriage counselors is great, and the vast majority of equippers should be Tanzanian. Although the course is now available for the RTBS network, reorganizing the material into two classes—(1) marriage and theological issues

and (2) the practice of marriage counseling—may improve reproducibility. Removing the participatory action research sections and replacing them with lessons about the topics gleaned from participants' feedback could improve teachability.

### **What I Would Do Differently**

If I could go back in time, I would make some changes to this project. I created confusion with the survey administration. A better plan would be to post all survey requests in the group chat and then send the survey directly to potential respondents two days later. By delaying personal requests, some people could not remember if they had filled out the form. Since the MBS was anonymous, uncertainty about one's response created difficulty for survey completion. I would also administer only one survey at a time. I would begin with the pre-MBS, as response rates would likely be higher with the first survey. I would then wait at least a month before administering the MBS—My Culture's Opinion, more strongly emphasizing that this survey request is about the culture's views and not personal ones. The online pre-MBS and MBS—My Culture's Opinion data suggested that some respondents mixed the two perspectives.

The pre- and post-teaching surveys were designed to mark changes possibly affected by the instruction. However, as we neared the course implementation, I knew some participants who intended to participate had not completed the online pre-MBS. Therefore, I chose to readminister the surveys in person. I distributed the pre-MBS and verbally gave instructions, collected the forms, then gave them the MBS—My Culture's Opinion, accompanied by verbal directions. Still, several individuals asked to clarify which was personal and which was cultural. A better approach would have been to compile a list of the personal identifying markers from the submitted surveys and ask class participants to check the list to see if they had completed the forms. If their marker was missing, they could have filled in the missing survey(s); thus, everyone would not be forced to complete the surveys again. If I was concerned that an online survey response



had mixed cultural and personal opinions, I could have printed the responses and allowed the individual to retrieve the survey and check it for accuracy privately.

Four participants commented on the evaluation forms that longer case study counseling times would have been beneficial. The original marriage and family class was thirty hours long, but the online review class was approximately three hours. If I had lengthened the prerequisite marriage class to ten sessions, I could have moved the lessons on love and submission and the introductory lesson about divorce out of the main curriculum. When we met in person, we could have discussed the issues more concisely, thus allowing for more time for case study practice.

Student feedback assisted improvement. First, I am grateful for the two participants who suggested I create an interactive pre-recorded online introduction to the counseling course. This format was far superior to the Zoom class, and its accessibility has proven valuable for other ministry settings. Second, several respondents' post-CCS showed confusion about the methodology's prayer element in Step 5. I devoted the least amount of time to this step of the counseling process and see that it can be clarified.

### **Theological Reflections**

When choosing my project for this program, I was concurrently writing a practical research paper entitled "Applying Biblical Covenant to Christian Marriages in East Africa" for the marriage and family counseling seminar taught by Robert Jones. At the time, I had a Tanzanian friend who had recently shared how her husband's extended family treated her as a personal servant. They considered her his helper as well as theirs. When she became ill and could not perform her responsibilities, the family believed she had abdicated her role. They verbally shamed her and left her to care for herself. I tried to understand the dynamics of this family and how Scripture could guide this situation.

I began considering how Genesis 2:24 instructed Israelite men to leave their fathers and mothers. When Moses wrote Genesis, his audience was twelve tribes who

organized themselves according to their banners in the wilderness (Num 2). For forty years, moving away from their families of origin was impossible. There must have been many marriages during this time, as only those twenty years and younger were allowed to enter the promised land, less Joshua and Caleb (Num 32:11-12). Indeed, Genesis 2:24 must have meant something other than moving from one's father and mother's home to a new community. As I explored the meaning of "leave" and "cleave," I began to see hope for tight-knit Tanzanian families: using covenant language, the Lord was teaching a change of loyalty from the parents to the wife. Yet, those who had changed their loyalties were still required to honor their parents (Exod 20:12). Leaving parents and honoring parents could co-exist.

My study led me to appreciate the beauty of Genesis 2:23-24 more fully. This ancient covenant obligated the husband, both in times of strength and weakness, to God himself. The promise made Adam's wife his closest relative. The commitment in Genesis 2:23b subsequently gave future generations of Israelite men the reason to leave their families, cling to their wives, and become one flesh with them. As I thought about marriage in ancient Israel and God's radical call for a husband to leave his parents in a patriarchal and patrilocal culture, I recognized the Lord's creation of something new when he fashions a marriage. In my reflection, I wondered how my Tanzanian friend and her husband would receive this message.

I considered the many Israelites who were married until Paul and Peter wrote their true and important instructions about a wife's submission to her husband. Before followers of Christ heard Ephesians, Colossians, Titus, and 1 Peter, what would they have considered the cornerstone for marriage? I contemplated the greatest commandment that our Lord gave and the second that is like it—summarized by "If you love God, you will simultaneously love your neighbor, whom God has made" (Matt 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-37)—and that our Lord went even further by saying, "A new command I give you. Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one

another” (John 13:34-35). As I considered the question “What approach to marriage counseling would lead people to be more like Jesus, measured by an increased love for God and each other?” the answer seemed clear. We start with loving God. From there, the Lord calls us to love our neighbor—and who is our closest neighbor? Jesus asked a corresponding question to a man who was shocked to learn that this teacher was asking him to love a Samaritan. Comparably, some Christian Tanzanian men would be astonished by the teaching that their love for their wives reflects their love for God.

There are other teachings about marriage in the New Testament, and looking at the metanarrative of marriage does not denigrate these other passages. Instead, the larger message becomes their context. As a cross-cultural worker, I have become convinced that my role is to focus on interpreting and contextualizing biblical truths and allowing my listeners to find their application.

### **Personal Reflections**

Throughout my preparation for this project, it became increasingly clear that creating biblically based, theologically robust, and culturally appropriate materials for marriage and marriage counseling would benefit African audiences. At the same time, I have questioned my place to write them. I recently met a graduate of the seminary where I currently serve in Nairobi. This man pastors a primarily white congregation in the suburbs of Indianapolis. As we discussed my upcoming move to work in person, he asked me what subject I enjoy teaching. With hesitation, I apologetically explained that I specialize in marriage and personal counseling issues in Africa. My self-awareness as an outsider was strong. Then, this African brother kindly asked me, “Would you say that after ten years of pastoring in the US, I am not qualified to help Americans with their marriages?” Of course, I would not. This pastor encouraged me to embrace the research and ministry opportunities I have been afforded in East Africa as equipping from the same Lord who likewise empowers him to work cross-culturally.

Working on this project has given me more confidence to write on marriage related issues. I have plenty of material to work with, starting with the entire marriage and family class and integrating it with this course's biblical and theological teaching. As ministry at the official Reach Tanzania Bible School has ended, my husband and I have recognized the need to continue regional work in the area. We are pursuing a name change for the school and options for moving some of the coursework online, exploring the hybrid method used to deliver the prerequisites for this course and its actual implementation.

I never intended to implement my project from a distance when I applied for this program. While I have continued working in East Africa, various circumstances planted our family in Indiana since the start of the 2020 pandemic. While I have made trips to Tanzania and spent countless hours interacting with friends from a distance, I have daily faced the reality of chronic illness that limits my functionality. Throughout every step of this project, my husband treated me as his closest neighbor, expressing his love for God as he lived out his love for me—and together, we have given our affection to our dear African brothers and sisters.

### **Conclusion**

The initial idea for this project began when a young pastor thought I could advise him as he counseled a couple in his church. His need exposed my lack of training and motivated me to become better equipped so I could equip others. As a ReachGlobal missionary, I am commissioned to develop, empower, and release ministry leaders. Although the first iteration of RTBS has closed, the relationship with the participants in this marriage counseling course sparked something new. There was a shift in the relationship. We moved from student and teacher to ministry partners. We share future ideas to serve the Lord together. And until I see them again, I have confidence that these

twenty-two men and women from RTBS have been equipped for biblical marriage counseling—all praise to God.

## APPENDIX 1

### MARRIAGE BELIEFS INTERVIEW

The following mixed-methods instrument was administered as a semi-formal interview and recorded with the permission of each participant. Some interviews were conducted in-person and others by phone, depending upon my ability to travel. The purpose of this assessment was to determine each participant's confidence in biblical marriage counseling and perception of cultural issues that impact marriage counseling.

## Marriage Beliefs Interview

### Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to strengthen the Tanzanian church by equipping leaders to better help couples have Christ-centered marriages. In response to requests by some Reach Tanzania Bible School affiliated alumni, the school will be offering a course in marriage counseling training. This research is being conducted by Alyssa Dunker for purposes of developing marriage counseling training curriculum as part of her Doctorate in Educational Ministries in Biblical Counseling at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In this research, you will be asked oral questions regarding marital issues in the local church and culture that will be recorded. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses.

*Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By completing this interview and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

I agree to participate.

I do not agree to participate.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. On a scale of 0-10, with 0 representing no competence and 10 representing excellent competence, how would you rate your competence to counsel married couples biblically? Please **circle** the number that represents your current competence.

Low

High

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

2. Describe biblical marriage counseling.
3. What are the three biggest problems in Christian marriage?
4. What are biblical solutions to the three marriage problems you listed in question 3?
5. What should Christian couples learn in pre-marital counseling?
6. Describe biblical marriage advice you have received from your church.
7. If a man commits adultery, what is the biblical process for him to be restored to his wife?
8. If a woman commits adultery, what is the biblical process for her to be restored to her husband?

*Directions: Circle either yes or no for questions 9 and 10.*

9. Do you believe in spirit wives?      Yes              No  
10. Do you believe in spirit husbands?      Yes              No

*Directions: If the respondent answered yes to at least one of the above questions, answer questions 11-13 from their perspective. If they answered no to both questions above, answer questions 11-13 according to the perspective of people in their community.*

11. How does a person acquire a spirit spouse (spirit husband or spirit wife)?  
12. In what ways does a spirit spouse hurt a human marriage?  
13. How can a person become free from a spirit spouse?



## APPENDIX 2

### PRE-INSTRUCTION MARRIAGE BELIEFS SURVEY—MY OPINION

The following mixed-methods instrument contained a brief demographic section followed by twenty-two quantitative survey items. It was translated into Swahili. Respondents chose an identifying marker to preserve anonymity and allow for paired analysis. The purpose of the survey was to measure each participant's worldview regarding issues that impact biblical marriage counseling. Of particular interest were beliefs concerning the value and dignity of women, issues regarding adultery, the emphasis of the spirit world in marriage problems, and the extent to which a person accepts responsibility for marriage issues. NB: The translated Swahili version follows the English version.

## Marriage Beliefs Survey—My Opinion

### Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to strengthen the Tanzanian church by equipping leaders to better help couples have Christ-centered marriages. In response to requests by some Reach Tanzania Bible School affiliated alumni, the school will be offering a course in marriage counseling training. This research is being conducted by Alyssa Dunker for purposes of developing marriage counseling training curriculum as part of her Doctorate in Educational Ministries in Biblical Counseling at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

In this research, you are asked to respond in writing to written questions regarding marital issues in the local church and culture. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this interview assessment, and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

I agree to participate

I do not agree to participate

Do not write your name on this paper. This is an anonymous survey.

In the box below, please write the name of your closest childhood friend.

At the end of the marriage counseling class, you will write the same name of your friend on another similar survey. Giving me this identifying word will allow me to match your two surveys so that I can better evaluate my teaching.

Please complete each item on this survey.

---

### Section 1

---

Circle one answer for each item below.

- |                      |      |        |
|----------------------|------|--------|
| 1. I am:             | Male | Female |
| 2. I am married.     | Yes  | No     |
| 3. I am Pentecostal. | Yes  | No     |

4. Which best describes your relationship to Reach Tanzania Bible School?
- |   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| a. I have completed fewer than 5 classes. | Yes | No |
| b. I have completed 5-9 classes.          | Yes | No |
| c. I have completed more than 10 classes. | Yes | No |

5. I grew up in a:            Village            Town            City

Write your leadership roles and responsibilities in your church or ministry on the lines below.

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Section 2

Directions: In this section, please circle the answer that best matches **your opinion** using this scale:

- 1= strongly disagree
- 2= disagree
- 3= somewhat disagree
- 4= somewhat agree
- 5= agree
- 6= strongly agree

|   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1. Married couples should spend time conversing with each other every day.                  | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |
| 2. After a relationship with God, a husband's most important relationship is with his wife. | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |
| 3. After a relationship with God, a wife's most important relationship is with her husband. | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |
| 4. When a husband is unhappy with his wife, she is to blame.                                | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |
| 5. When a wife is unhappy with her husband, he is to blame.                                 | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |
| 6. Husbands are trustworthy.  | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |
| 7. Wives are trustworthy.   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |
| 8. Husbands are tools of Satan.   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |

|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|-------------------|
| 9. Wives are tools of Satan.   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |
| 10. A man's family has authority over his wife.  | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |
| 11. If a wife cannot give birth, it is allowable for the husband to try to conceive a child with another woman.                  | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |
| 12. It is important for a man to enjoy sex.  | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |
| 13. It is important for a woman to enjoy sex.  | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |
| 14. When a husband's sexual desires are unfulfilled by his wife, it is allowable for the husband to have sex with another woman. | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |
| 15. When a wife's sexual desires are unfulfilled by her husband, it is allowable for the wife to have sex with another man.      | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |
| 16. Born-again married men are sexually faithful to their own wife for their entire marriage.                                    | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |
| 17. Born-again married women are sexually faithful to their own husbands for their entire marriage.                              | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |
| 18. Demonic forces cause married people to sin sexually.   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |
| 19. A born-again person can have a spirit spouse.  | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |
| 20. Married people in the church have marriage problems because of spirit spouses.   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6                 |

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Section 3

---

Directions: In this section, please circle one numerical percentage that best represents **your opinion** for each question.

|   |        |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |
|---|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| 1. What percent of born-again husbands have had sex with someone who is not their wife at least one time after getting married? | 0<br>% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |
| 2. What percent of born-again wives have had sex with someone who is not their husband at least one time after getting married? | 0<br>% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |

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You have reached the end of the survey.

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*Thank you for completing this survey. This information will help me better prepare the marriage counseling material. I look forward to our time in class together.*

*In Christ,*

*Alyssa*

## UTAFITI JUU YA MITIZAMO YA NDOA

Usiandike jina lako halisi kwenye karatasi hii. Huu ni utafiti usiohusisha majina halisi ya watu.

Katika kisanduku kilicho hapa chini, tafadhali andika jina la rafiki yako wa utotoni.

Mwishoni mwa darasa hili la ushauri wa ndoa, utaandika jina la yule rafiki yako wa utotoni ulilolitumia hapo awali katika utafiti mwingine kama huu. Kwa kunipa jina hili kutaniwezesha kulinganisha tafiti zako mbili ili niweze kutathmini vyema ufundishaji wangu.

Tafadhali kamilisha kila kipengee kwenye utafiti huu.

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Sehemu ya 1

---

Zungushia jibu sahihi kwenye kila kipengele kilichoainishwa hapa chini.

- |   |          |          |        |
|---|----------|----------|--------|
| 1. Mimi ni:   | MWANAUME | MWANAMKE |        |
| 2. Nimeoa au kuolewa.   | NDIO     | HAPANA   |        |
| 3. Mimi ni Mpentekoste.   | NDIO     | HAPANA   |        |
| 4. Kipi kinaelezea uhusiano wako na Chuo cha Biblia cha Reach Tanzania? |          |          |        |
| a. Nimemaliza chini ya madarasa 5.                                      | NDIO     | HAPANA   |        |
| b. Nimemaliza madarasa 5-9.   | NDIO     | HAPANA   |        |
| c. Nimemaliza zaidi ya madarasa 10.                                     | NDIO     | HAPANA   |        |
| 5. Nimekulia:   | KIJIJINI | MJINI    | JIJINI |

Andika majukumu na wajibu wako kiuongozi katika kipindi cha miaka miwili iliyopita kanisani kwenye huduma yako katika nafasi iliyo hapa chini.

Sehemu ya 2

Maelekezo: Katika sehemu hii, tafadhali zungushia jibu linaloendana na mtazamo wa utamaduni wako, ukitumia kipimo hiki:

- 1= sikubaliani kabisa
- 2= sikubaliani
- 3= sikubaliani kwa kiasi
- 4= nakubaliana kwa kiasi
- 5= nakubaliana
- 6= nakubaliana kabisa

|   | Sikubaliani kabisa | Sikubaliani | sikubaliani kwa kiasi | Nakubaliana kwa kiasi | Nakubaliana | Nakubaliana Kabisa |
|---|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 1. Wanandoa wanapaswa kuwa na muda wa peke yao kwa mazungumzo kila siku.                            | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 2. Ukiachilia mbali mahusiano na Mungu, mahusiano muhimu zaidi kibinadamu kwa mume ni kwa mke wake. | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 3. Ukiachilia mbali mahusiano na Mungu, mahusiano muhimu zaidi kibinadamu kwa mume ni kwa mme wake. | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 4. Kama mume hajafurahishwa na mke wake, mke wake anapaswa kulaumiwa.                               | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 5. Kama mke hajafurahishwa na mume wake, mume huyo anapaswa kulaumiwa.                              | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 6. Waume wanaaminika.   | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 7. Wanawake wanaaminika.  | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 8. Wanaume ni mawakala wa Shetani.  | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 9. Wanawake ni mawakala wa Shetani.   | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 10. Familia ya mwanamume ina mamlaka juu ya mke wa mume huyo.                                       | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |

|  | Sikubaliani kabisa | Sikubaliani | sikubaliani kwa kiasi | Nakubaliana kwa kiasi | Nakubaliana | Nakubaliana Kabisa |
|--|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 11. Kama mke hawezi kuzaa, inaruhusiwa mume kujaribu kupata mtoto kupitia mwanamke mwingine.   | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 12. Ni muhimu kwa wanaume kufurahia tendo la ndoa.   | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 13. Ni muhimu kwa wanawake kufurahia tendo la ndoa.  | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 14. Pindi hamu ya mume juu ya tendo la ndoa isipo timizwa na mke wake, inaruhusiwa kwa mume huyo kufanya mapenzi na mwanamke mwingine. | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 15. Pindi hamu ya mke juu ya tendo la ndoa isipotimizwa na mumewe, inaruhusiwa mwanamke huyo kufanya mapenzi na mwanamume mwingine.    | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 16. Wanaume walokole waliooa ni waaminifu kimapenzi kwa wake zao 131aisha yao yote ya ndoa.  | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 17. Wanawake walokole walioolewa ni waaminifu kimapenzi kwa waume zao 131aisha yao yote ya ndoa.                                       | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 18. Nguvu za kipepo husababisha watu waliooana kufanya dhambi ya zinaa.  | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 19. Watu waliyeokoka wanaweza kuwa na jini mahaba.   | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 20. Baadhi ya watu waliooa na kuolewa makanisani wana matatizo ya ndoa kwa sababu ya jini mahaba.                                      | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |



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### Sehemu ya 3

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Maelekezo: Katika sehemu hii, tafadhali zungusha asilimia ya inayowakilisha vyema maoni yako kwa kila swali.

|   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| 1. Je, ni asilimia ngapi ya waume waliokoka hufanya mapenzi na mtu ambaye si mke wao angalau mara moja baada ya kufunga ndoa? | 0 % | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |
| 2. Je, ni asilimia ngapi ya wanawake waliokoka hufanya mapenzi na mtu ambaye si mume wao angalau mara moja baada ya kuolewa?  | 0 % | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |

---

Umefika mwisho wa utafiti.

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*Asante kwa kukamilisha utafiti huu. Ulichokijaza hapa kitanisaidia kuandaa vizuri nyenzo za ushauri wa ndoa. Ninasubiri kwa shauku kubwa kukutana nawe darasani.*

*Katika Kristo,*

*Alyssa*

### APPENDIX 3

#### POST-INSTRUCTION MARRIAGE BELIEFS SURVEY—MY OPINION

The following instrument is an abbreviated version of the previously administered Marriage Beliefs Survey containing only section 2. It was translated into Swahili. Participants were instructed to use the same identifying marker from the previous MBS, and they completed this second MBS immediately after finishing the course. The purpose of the survey was to measure each participant's worldview regarding issues that impact biblical marriage counseling and compare those results to the pre-course survey. NB: The translated Swahili version follows the English version.

## Marriage Beliefs Survey—My Opinion

Do not write your name on this paper. This is an anonymous survey.

In the box below, please write the name of your closest childhood friend. This will enable me to compare your opinions before and after the class.

Directions: Please complete each item on this survey. Circle the answer that best matches

**your opinion**, using this scale:

- 1= strongly disagree
- 2= disagree
- 3= somewhat disagree
- 4= somewhat agree
- 5= agree
- 6= strongly agree

|   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| 1. Married couples should spend time conversing with each other every day.                        | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 2. After a relationship with God, a husband's most important human relationship is with his wife. | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 3. After a relationship with God, a wife's most important human relationship is with her husband. | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 4. When a husband is unhappy with his wife, she is to blame.                                      | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 5. When a wife is unhappy with her husband, he is to blame.                                       | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 6. Husbands are trustworthy.  | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 7. Wives are trustworthy.   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 8. Husbands are tools of Satan.   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 9. Wives are tools of Satan.  | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 10. A man's family has authority over his wife.   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |

|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| 11. If a wife cannot give birth, it is allowable for the husband to try to conceive a child with another woman.                  | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 12. It is important for a man to enjoy sex.  | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 13. It is important for a woman to enjoy sex.  | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 14. When a husband's sexual desires are unfulfilled by his wife, it is allowable for the husband to have sex with another woman. | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 15. When a wife's sexual desires are unfulfilled by her husband, it is allowable for the wife to have sex with another man.      | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 16. Born again married men are sexually faithful to their own wife for their entire marriage.                                    | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 17. Born again married women are sexually faithful to their own husbands for their entire marriage.                              | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 18. Demonic forces cause married people to sin sexually.   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 19. A born-again person can have a spirit spouse (spirit husband or spirit wife).  | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 20. Some born again married people have marriage problems because of spirit spouses.   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |

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Section 3

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Directions: In this section, please circle one numerical percentage that best represents **your opinion** for each question.

|   |        |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |
|---|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| 1. What percent of born-again husbands have had sex with someone who is not their wife at least one time after getting married? | 0<br>% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |
| 2. What percent of born-again wives have had sex with someone who is not their husband at least one time after getting married? | 0<br>% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |

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You have reached the end of the survey.

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*Thank you for completing this survey. This information will help me better prepare the marriage counseling material. I look forward to our time in class together.*

*In Christ,*

*Alyssa*

## UTAFITI JUU YA MITIZAMO YA NDOA

Usiandike jina lako halisi kwenye karatasi hii. Huu ni utafiti usiohusisha majina halisi ya watu.

Katika kisanduku kilicho hapa chini, tafadhali andika jina la rafiki yako wa utotoni.

Mwishoni mwa darasa hili la ushauri wa ndoa, utaandika jina la yule rafiki yako wa utotoni ulilolitungia hapo awali katika utafiti mwingine kama huu. Kwa kunipa jina hili kutaniwezesha kulinganisha tafiti zako mbili ili niweze kutathmini vyema ufundishaji wangu.

Tafadhali kamilisha kila kipengee kwenye utafiti huu.

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### Sehemu ya 1

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Maelekezo: Katika sehemu hii, tafadhali zungushia jibu linaloendana na mtazamo wako, ukitumia kipimo hiki:

- 1= sikubaliani kabisa
- 2= sikubaliani
- 3= sikubaliani kwa kiasi
- 4= nakubaliana kwa kiasi
- 5= nakubaliana
- 6= nakubaliana kabisa

|   | Sikubaliani kabisa | Sikubaliani | sikubaliani kwa kiasi | Nakubaliana kwa kiasi | Nakubaliana | Nakubaliana Kabisa |
|---|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 1. Wanandoa wanapaswa kuwa na muda wa peke yao kwa mazungumzo kila siku.                            | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 2. Ukiachilia mbali mahusiano na Mungu, mahusiano muhimu zaidi kibinadamu kwa mume ni kwa mke wake. | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 3. Ukiachilia mbali mahusiano na Mungu, mahusiano muhimu zaidi kibinadamu kwa muke ni kwa mme wake. | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |

|  | Sikubaliani kabisa | Sikubaliani | sikubaliani kwa kiasi | Nakubaliana kwa kiasi | Nakubaliana | Nakubaliana Kabisa |
|--|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 4. Kama mume hajafurahishwa na mke wake, mke wake anapaswa kulaumiwa.  | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 5. Kama mke hajafurahishwa na mume wake, mume huyo anapaswa kulaumiwa.   | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 6. Waume wanaaminika.  | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 7. Wanawake wanaaminika.   | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 8. Wanaume ni mawakala wa Shetani.   | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 9. Wanawake ni mawakala wa Shetani.  | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 10. Familia ya mwanamume ina mamlaka juu ya mke wa mume huyo.  | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 11. Kama mke hawezi kuzaa, inaruhusiwa mume kujaribu kupata mtoto kupitia mwanamke mwingine.   | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 12. Ni muhimu kwa wanaume kufurahia tendo la ndoa.   | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 13. Ni muhimu kwa wanawake kufurahia tendo la ndoa.  | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 14. Pindi hamu ya mume juu ya tendo la ndoa isipo timizwa na mke wake, inaruhusiwa kwa mume huyo kufanya mapenzi na mwanamke mwingine. | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 15. Pindi hamu ya mke juu ya tendo la ndoa isipotimizwa na mumewe, inaruhusiwa mwanamke huyo kufanya mapenzi na mwanamume mwingine.    | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 16. Wanaume walokole walioo ni waaminifu kimapenzi kwa wake zao 138aisha yao yote ya ndoa.   | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 17. Wanawake walokole walioolewa ni waaminifu kimapenzi kwa waume zao 138aisha yao yote ya ndoa.                                       | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 18. Nguvu za kipepo husababisha watu waliooana kufanya dhambi ya zinaa.  | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 19. Watu waliyeokoka wanaweza kuwa na jini mahaba.   | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 20. Baadhi ya watu walioo na kuolewa makanisani wana matatizo ya ndoa kwa sababu ya jini mahaba.                                       | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |

---

Sehemu ya 2

---

Maelekezo: Katika sehemu hii, tafadhali zungusha asilimia ya inayowakilisha vyema maoni yako kwa kila swali.

|  |        |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |
|--|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| 1. Je, ni asilimia ngapi ya waume waliookoka hufanya mapenzi na mtu ambaye si mke wao angalau mara moja baada ya kufunga ndoa? | 0<br>% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |
| 2. Je, ni asilimia ngapi ya wanawake waliokoka hufanya mapenzi na mtu ambaye si mume wao angalau mara moja baada ya kuolewa?   | 0<br>% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |

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Umefika mwisho wa utafiti.

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*Asante kwa kukamilisha utafiti huu. Ulichokijaza hapa kitanisaidia kuandaa vizuri nyenzo za ushauri wa ndoa. Ninasubiri kwa shauku kubwa kukutana nawe darasani.*

*Katika Kristo,*

*Alyssa*



## APPENDIX 4

### MARRIAGE BELIEFS SURVEY—MY CULTURE'S OPINION

The following instrument asked identical questions as section 2 of the Marriage Beliefs Survey but requested that respondents answer according to the opinion of their culture. The purpose of the survey was to compare participant's views regarding issues that impact biblical marriage counseling with their perceived culture's view. Of particular interest were beliefs concerning the value and dignity of women, issues regarding adultery, the emphasis of the spirit world in marriage problems, and the extent to which a person accepts responsibility for marriage issues.

## Marriage Beliefs Survey—My Culture’s Opinion

Do not write your name on this paper. This is an anonymous survey.

In the box below, please write the name of your closest childhood friend. This will enable me to compare the opinions of your culture with your personal opinions.

Directions: Please complete each item on this survey. Circle the answer that best matches **your culture’s opinion (NOT your opinion)**, using this scale:

- 1= strongly disagree
- 2= disagree
- 3= somewhat disagree
- 4= somewhat agree
- 5= agree
- 6= strongly agree

|   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| 1. Married couples should spend time conversing with each other every day.                                      | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 2. After a relationship with God, a husband’s most important human relationship is with his wife.               | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 3. After a relationship with God, a wife’s most important human relationship is with her husband.               | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 4. When a husband is unhappy with his wife, she is to blame.  | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 5. When a wife is unhappy with her husband, he is to blame.   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 6. Husbands are trustworthy.  | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 7. Wives are trustworthy.   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 8. Husbands are tools of Satan.   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 9. Wives are tools of Satan.  | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 10. A man’s family has authority over his wife.   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 11. If a wife cannot give birth, it is allowable for the husband to try to conceive a child with another woman. | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 12. It is important for a man to enjoy sex.   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |

|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| 13. It is important for a woman to enjoy sex.  | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 14. When a husband's sexual desires are unfulfilled by his wife, it is allowable for the husband to have sex with another woman. | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 15. When a wife's sexual desires are unfulfilled by her husband, it is allowable for the wife to have sex with another man.      | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 16. Born again married men are sexually faithful to their own wife for their entire marriage.                                    | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 17. Born again married women are sexually faithful to their own husbands for their entire marriage.                              | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 18. Demonic forces cause married people to sin sexually.   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 19. A born-again person can have a spirit spouse (spirit husband or spirit wife).  | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| 20. Some born again married people have marriage problems because of spirit spouses.   | 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |

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You have reached the end of the survey.

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## Utafiti Juu ya Mitazamo ya Ndoa ya Utamaduni ya Wakristo wa Tanzania

Usiandike jina lako halisi kwenye karatasi hii. Huu ni utafiti usiohusisha majina halisi ya watu.

Katika kisanduku kilicho hapa chini, tafadhali andika jina la rafiki yako wa utotoni.

Maelekezo: Katika sehemu hii, tafadhali zungushia jibu linaloendana na mtazamo wa utamaduni wa Kikristo wa Kitanzania na **si mtazamo wako**, kwa kutumia kipimo hiki:

- 1= sikubaliani kabisa
- 2= sikubaliani
- 3= sikubaliani kwa kiasi
- 4= nakubaliana kwa kiasi
- 5= nakubaliana
- 6= nakubaliana kabisa

|   | Sikubaliani kabisa | Sikubaliani | sikubaliani kwa kiasi | Nakubaliana kwa kiasi | Nakubaliana | Nakubaliana Kabisa |
|---|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 1. Wanandoa wanapaswa kuwa na muda wa peke yao kwa mazungumzo kila siku.                            | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 2. Ukiachilia mbali mahusiano na Mungu, mahusiano muhimu zaidi kibinadamu kwa mume ni kwa mke wake. | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 3. Ukiachilia mbali mahusiano na Mungu, mahusiano muhimu zaidi kibinadamu kwa mume ni kwa mme wake. | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 4. Kama mme hajafurahishwa na mke wake, mke wake anapaswa kulaumiwa.                                | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 5. Kama mke hajafurahishwa na mume wake, mume huyo anapaswa kulaumiwa.                              | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 6. Waume wanaaminika.   | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 7. Wanawake wanaaminika.  | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |

|  | Sikubaliani kabisa | Sikubaliani | sikubaliani kwa kiasi | Nakubaliana kwa kiasi | Nakubaliana | Nakubaliana Kabisa |
|--|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 8. Wanaume ni mawakala wa Shetani.   | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 9. Wanawake ni mawakala wa Shetani.  | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 10. Familia ya mwanamume ina mamlaka juu ya mke wa mume huyo.  | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 11. Kama mke hawezi kuzaa, inaruhusiwa mume kujaribu kupata mtoto kupitia mwanamke mwingine.   | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 12. Ni muhimu kwa wanaume kufurahia tendo la ndoa.   | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 13. Ni muhimu kwa wanawake kufurahia tendo la ndoa.  | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 14. Pindi hamu ya mume juu ya tendo la ndoa isipo timizwa na mke wake, inaruhusiwa kwa mume huyo kufanya mapenzi na mwanamke mwingine. | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 15. Pindi hamu ya mke juu ya tendo la ndoa isipotimizwa na mumewe, inaruhusiwa mwanamke huyo kufanya mapenzi na mwanamume mwingine.    | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 16. Wanaume walokole waliooa ni waaminifu kimapenzi kwa wake zao maisha yao yote ya ndoa.  | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 17. Wanawake walokole walioolewa ni waaminifu kimapenzi kwa waume zao maisha yao yote ya ndoa.   | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 18. Nguvu za kipepo husababisha watu waliooana kufanya dhambi ya zinaa.  | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 19. Watu waliyeokoka wanaweza kuwa na jini mahaba.   | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |
| 20. Baadhi ya watu waliooa na kuolewa makanisani wana matatizo ya ndoa kwa sababu ya jini mahaba.                                      | 1                  | 2           | 3                     | 4                     | 5           | 6                  |

Umefika mwisho wa utafiti.

APPENDIX 5  
COUNSELING CASE STUDY

The following Counseling Case Study was administered once before instruction and once after instruction. Its purpose was to assess if the marriage counseling course changed participants' approaches to marriage counseling and, if so, to identify the specific changes. Participants were asked to read the case study in Swahili and record their responses on a phone messaging app or in writing. The same process was used for pre- and post-instruction assessments. NB: The Swahili translation follows the English version.

## Counseling Case Study—English

Instructions: Read the case study below. Using the information in the case study, describe how you would counsel this couple.

Peter was born in the village and dropped out of school after Standard 7. He moved to Dar es Salaam and began selling *mitumba*. He worked extremely hard and saved enough money to open a small store next to your church. Some youth from your church told him that if he came to Friday night prayers, God would prosper his business. Peter liked this idea and became a regular attender.

Joy's parents were founding members of your church. She grew up in your community, except for the six years she was at boarding school. She and Peter met at church while Joy was waiting for her Form 6 results. Peter's intentions were clear from the beginning: he wanted to marry her. Joy, however, was eager to attend university to become an accountant. Although Joy didn't think they were a good match, Peter was persistent and attractive. Two weeks before Joy began university, she discovered she was pregnant.

Joy's parents were shocked but arranged for their daughter to marry Peter quickly. The couple got off to a difficult start. One month after the wedding, Joy had a miscarriage. She felt great sadness because she had lost her opportunity to continue her education and had married Peter, and now they didn't even have a baby.

The couple continued to attend church. With the help of Joy's accounting skills, the store grew, and they opened three other businesses. During this time, Joy got pregnant three more times, but she lost the baby each time. Joy's grief was great. She looked successful on the outside, but on the inside, she was deeply depressed and hopeless. She was convinced that God must hate her for getting pregnant before marriage.

Peter was deeply dissatisfied that he had no children and felt trapped in the marriage. When Joy and Peter visited his family in the village, Peter's brothers and parents verbally attacked Joy for not giving their son a child. Peter and his family had a secret meeting, and two months later, a house girl from Peter's tribe moved into Peter and Joy's home.

You are a pastor at Peter and Joy's church. Joy informs you that Peter's family sent a new house girl, and she suspects Peter is sleeping with her. How would you counsel this couple?

## Counseling Case Study—Swahili

Maelekezo: Soma somo la mfano hapa chini. Kwa kutumia taarifa zilizopo katika somo la mfano, eleza namna ambavyo utawapa ushauri wanandoa hawa.

Peter alizaliwa kijijini na aliacha shule baada ya darasa la 7. Alihamia Dar-Es-Salaam na kuanza kufanya biashara ya kuuza mitumba. Alifanya kazi kwa bidii sana na kutunza pesa ya kutosha kufungua kibanda cha biashara karibu na kanisa lako. Baadhi ya vijana kanisani kwenu walimwambia ikiwa atahudhuria mikesho ya kila siku ya Ijumaa basi Mungu atamfanikisha katika biashara yake. Peter alivutiwa sana na hili wazo na akaanza kuwa mhudhuriaji wa kawaida mara kwa mara.

Wazazi wa Joy ni waanzilishi wa kanisa lako. Joy alikulia katika jamii yako isipokuwa kwa miaka sita aliyokuwa akisoma katika shule ya bwani. Joy na Peter walikutana kanisani kipindi ambacho Joy alikuwa akisubiri matokeo yake ya kidato cha sita. Malengo ya Peter yalikuwa wazi toka mwanzo, alitaka kumuoa Joy japokuwa alikuwa na shauku ya kwenda chuoni kusoma na kuwa mhasibu.

Pamoja na kuwa Joy alifikiri kuwa yeye na Peter hawakuendana, Peter alikuwa mwenye ushawishi na kuvutia. Wiki mbili kabla ya Joy kuanza chuo aligundua kuwa ni mjamzito.

Wazazi wa Joy walishtushwa lakini walipanga mipango ya mtoto wao kuolewa na Peter haraka. Wanandoa hawa waliendea mwanzo mgumu. Mwezi mmoja baada ya ndoa, mimba ya Joy iliharibika. Alijisikia huzuni sana kwasababu alipoteza nafasi yake ya kuendelea na elimu yake na kuolewa na Peter na sasa hawakuwa hata na mtoto.

Wanandoa hawa waliendelea kwenda kanisani. Kwa msaada wa ujuzi wa uhasibu wa Joy, kibanda chao kilikuwa na walifungua biashara nyingine tatu. Katika kipindi hiki Joy alipata mimba mara tatu na zote ziliharibika kila mara. Maumivu ya Joy yalikuwa ni makubwa mno. Alionekana mwenye kufanikiwa kwa nje lakini kwa ndani alikuwa ni mwenye sonona na asiye na matumaini. Alishawishika kuamini kwamba Mungu alimchukia kwa kupata mimba kabla ya ndoa.

Peter hakuridhika kwamba hakuwa na watoto na alihisi kuwa katika mtego wa ndoa. Wakati Peter na Joy walipowatembelea wazazi wao kijijini, kaka za Peter na wazazi wa Peter walimshambulia kwa maneno Joy kwa kushindwa kumzalia kijana wao mtoto. Peter na familia yake walikuwa na kikao cha siri, na miezi miwili baadae msichana wa kazi kutoka katika kabila la Peter alikuja kuishi na Peter na Joy katika nyumba yao.

Wewe ni mchungaji katika kanisa ambalo Peter na Joy wanasali. Joy anakutaarifu kwamba familia ya Peter wamemleta dada wa kazi mpya na anahisi Peter analala naye. Je, utawashaurije wanandoa hawa?



APPENDIX 6  
CURRICULUM

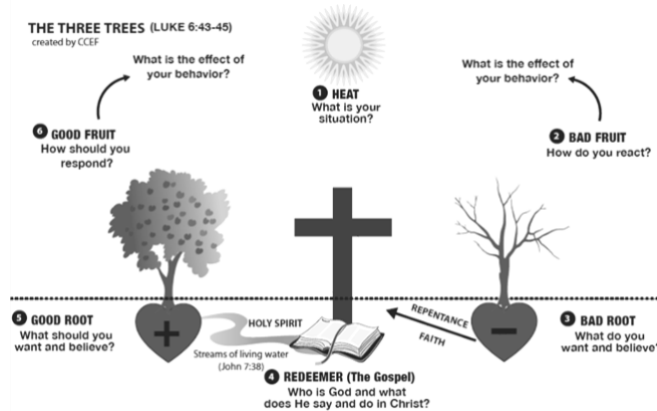
The following curriculum was created and taught to RTBS participants to equip them to practice biblical marriage counseling.

## Marriage Counseling Curriculum

### Day 1—Lesson 1: Review of “Root-to-Fruit” Counseling Methodology

Vision: God created marriage, and God loves reconciliation.

*Students have previously studied the “Three Trees” diagram, the three parasitic trees diagram, the explanation of the “Three Trees” categories, the Root-to-Fruit counseling definition, and the five different steps of the Root-to-Fruit counseling methodology. (Definition and methodology both developed by the author.) These notes (excerpted from a previously completed counseling class) are included as a tool to use in this course. NB: Sentences in italics are directions to teachers.*



#### Explanation of the Three Trees Categories<sup>1</sup>

1. **HEAT—What is your situation?** What is stressing you? What did you do that you shouldn't have done? What do you fear? What are your blessings? What are your responsibilities? What is tempting you?
2. **BAD FRUIT—How do you react?** What did you feel, think, say, or do that is not God's way?
3. **BAD ROOT—What do you desire and believe?** To determine the roots, look at the fruits. What do you think about most often? What is ruling your heart? What do you want or think you need? What do you fear? Whose approval do you want? What do you see as your rights?
4. **EFFECTS—What is the effect of your behavior?** How have your desires and behaviors affected you and others?
5. **THE CROSS (Truth and the Holy Spirit)—What does God have to say to me in my situation?** The Holy Spirit uses redemptive truths to address bad roots, leading you to repentance and transformation. What lies do you need to turn from and what redemptive truths do you need to believe?
6. **GOOD ROOT—The Holy Spirit replaces a bad root with a good one.** How do I grow in my love for God and others?
7. **GOOD FRUIT—Responses from love.** Fruits of the Spirit, trust in God, godly behavior coming from a good root, but not legalistic rules.

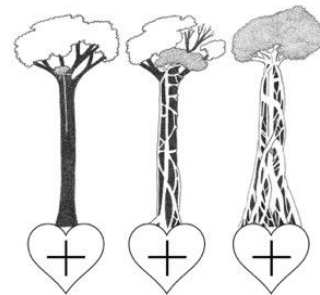
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<sup>1</sup> See Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2006), chap. 6.

8. **EFFECTS—What is the effect of your behavior?** What are you reaping from godly fruit? What are the consequences for other people?

### Which Tree Are You?

The image to the right shows a tree with parasitic growth. If the parasitic roots and branches are ignored, they take over the original tree. This progression represents how a justified believer struggles with sin. However, the central root system of the tree is still good. The believer, though bearing bad fruit, still belongs to Jesus. This is represented by the heart with the positive sign.



Becoming more like Christ (the sanctification process) requires digging out the roots that bear the bad fruits.

**DEFINITION: Root-to-Fruit counseling** is a Christ-centered process in which a Spirit-empowered believer comes alongside someone facing challenges and lovingly applies biblical truth for inner transformation that leads to spiritual maturity that pleases God.

### Root-to-Fruit Counseling/Discipleship Steps and Images

- Step 1: Create Hope—An Open Door
- Step 2: Learn and Understand—A Broken Cup
- Step 3: Teach Truth—Bread of Life
- Step 4: Get to Work— Farming
- Step 5: Plan and Pray—Setting Sun

#### Step 1: Create Hope—An Open Door

The first step in a counseling relationship is to “Create Hope.” The image we use to remember this step is “An Open Door.” You patiently listen and offer a Christ-like presence, helping the person to open the door to their heart.

#### We Give Biblical Hope, Not False Promises

1. Biblical hope is based on God’s character.
2. Biblical hope is based on what God promises us.
3. Biblical hope includes an eternal perspective.

#### Step 2: Learn and Understand—A Broken Cup

To help people re-orient their hearts to Christ, you need to “Learn and Understand.” To remember this step, think of a Broken Cup. When we meet with a person, we wait until they open the door. Then we walk in and sit with them. They offer us something to drink, and we notice the cup they are drinking from is broken. Why do they keep this broken cup? How did it break? There must be a story. We ask our friend questions to learn about the situation.

You must **learn** about the situation. For example: What is the “bad fruit?” What was the situation that produced them? Then you must **understand what you have learned**. What

story does it tell? For example: What motivates the person to make these “bad fruit” choices? What is the person valuing in the “heat” situation? What might be a “bad root?”

### Step 3: Teach Truth—Bread of Life

The image we use to remember this stage is the Bread of Life. Our friend has opened the door and invited us in. We continue to “Create Hope.” When we see the broken cup, we ask questions and begin to “Learn and Understand.” When our friend becomes hungry, we share God's Word, the Bread of Life.

What do we teach? This will be different for each person, but we always apply God’s Word to people’s hearts—to the roots and not the fruits. How do you determine what to teach?

1. Consider the lies a person is believing about God, themselves, others, or their situation.
2. Consider what biblical truths, if believed them, could make a difference in this person’s life.

### Step 4: Get to Work—Farming

In Step 4, “Get to Work,” we ask people to practice God’s truths in their everyday lives. This work encourages spiritual maturity. Your friend has opened the door, you drank some tea and discussed the broken cup. You shared the bread of life together. Now it is time to go home. You are leaving your friend with work to do.

Our image for “Get to Work” is farming. Our friend prepares the soil, plants the seeds, waters the plants, digs weeds, and waits for a harvest. Each person must work in their own field. You help them get to work by assigning Growth Projects. A good Growth Project will: 1) Be specific to the truths a person needs. 2) Include an opportunity to process information and interact with God. 3) Have variety.

### Step 5: Plan and Pray—Setting Sun

In Step 5, “Plan and Pray,” we use the image of the setting sun. When you arrived, your friend invited you in through an open door. You discussed the broken cup. You shared the bread of life. You left your friend to work on their farm. Now you are on your journey home. The setting sun represents the passing of time and how you still have an opportunity to serve your friend.

You need to:

1. Pray for them.
2. Follow through on any commitments you made.
3. Keep your own heart right.
4. Consult your counseling plan.

### Counseling Practice Review

*In the following case study, the facilitator plays the role of Ruth. The students have 20 minutes to group counsel Ruth, following the 5 steps of the counseling process. The purpose of this activity is to review the counseling process and discuss how the same*

*steps will be used in marriage counseling. Refer to the Three Trees diagram and remind students of the difference between the heart and behavior (roots and fruits).*

**Group Counseling Activity:** It is Sunday afternoon. You are walking out of church when Ruth, a newly married woman approaches you. She tells you, “My friend told me you can help me. I have a problem. My husband always complains to his family that I am a bad cook. And tomorrow, his brother and mother are coming to visit. I don’t know what to do.”

**Key Idea:** The problem is not the problem; the problem is the heart.

*Discussion:* In individual counseling, we address problems, but problems connect back to the heart. Our goal is not to fix problems but to help people re-orient their hearts to Christ. As this happens, many problems are reduced. We follow the same principle for marriage counseling. We work with the problem but remember that the heart is our target. This is a previously learned concept. Give students opportunity to discuss the activity and ask questions.

### **Day 1—Lesson 2: Bone of My Bone**

**What Do You Want to Teach a Couple Before They Get Married?** (From Marriage Beliefs Interviews)

“Marriage is not a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship. After quarreling, you cannot think that everybody’s going home.”

“We can’t jump in and jump out of marriage like we are swimming in the ocean. We can’t follow the saying: ‘I’ve just found him when I’m grown up.’ You may have been with your family your whole life, but this new person you have is one body with you. Whatever you’re doing, you’re doing to yourself, not just to anybody, but to yourself.”

*Discussion:* Read the above quotes. Ask: What are some consequences of thinking marriage is similar to a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship?

The common teaching of Genesis 2:23a, “This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh,” focuses on God using the material of the man to build the woman. In the Reach Tanzania marriage class, you learned that through the way God created Eve, he is teaching the oneness and closeness that should exist between the husband and wife. Some people argue that because the woman was made from the man, this makes her lower than him. After all, she is the helper. (Refer to your marriage theology notes if you have questions about “helper.”) Thankfully, God answers this question in Genesis 1:27. Both male and female were created in God’s image.

*Discussion:* In what way can people make an oath in Swahili? For example: “Haki ya Mungu.” (“Swear to God.”) “Haki ya mama.” (“Swear on my mother.”) “Mungu nife.” (“May God let me die.”)

### An Ancient Covenant

In addition to the woman and man being made from the same substance, Adam's words reveal the covenantal commitment of marriage. When Adam first saw his wife, he exclaims: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. . ." Who was he speaking to? *Read Gen 2:23b: "she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."*

He was not speaking to the woman. He was talking to God. Adam's words were spoken as an oath. In ancient Israel, "bone of bone" and "flesh of flesh" represented "power" (bone) and "weakness" (flesh). When someone connects the words "bone and flesh," he expresses two extreme circumstances. In one, the person is in a place of power; in the other, he is in a place of weakness. When the two opposite words are put together, the meaning is "in every type of circumstance."

When Adam said the woman is "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh," he promised God that he would be committed to his wife through every circumstance, from weakness to strength. By making this promise to God, he asked God to hold him accountable to treat his wife as part of his own body.<sup>2</sup> Marriage is a binding covenant between one man and one woman that makes the man and the woman each other's closest relative. Because his wife is "now bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh," his wife is now a closer relative to him than his mother or father or brothers or sisters.

*Discussion: Look at fn 2 for those who want to study the concept further. Take questions.*

### **Day 1—Lesson 3: Leave, Unite, Become One Flesh**

"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen 2:24).

From Marriage Beliefs Interviews:

Many of you said that the church teaches that a "*mwanamume atamwacha baba yake na mama yake naye ataambatana na mkewe, nao watakuwa mwili mmoja.*" ("A man will leave his father and his mother, and they will be joined to one another, and they shall become one flesh.") But you also told me this:

"I'm seeing the three principles of the Bible are either not known, or Christians do not understand them. Christians follow cultural ways of marriage instead of the biblical way of marriage. You always find that 1) people are not leaving their parents; 2) they are not cleaving, growing together, knowing each other; and 3) they are not uniting."

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Brueggemann, "Of the Same Flesh and Bone, Gn 2:23a," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (October 1970): 533-38; Gordon P. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 165. If you want to learn more about this "bone of bone" and "flesh of flesh" idea, see Genesis 29:14 and Judges 9:2. These usages show how the word is used to indicate a close relative. But in 2 Samuel 5:1-5 and 19:13-14, David uses a version of "flesh and bone" to make or reaffirm a covenant, a promise of loyalty to one another—once from a position of strength and once from a position of weakness.

Discussion: Why is it difficult for a husband and wife to leave, be united, and become one flesh?

### **Leave**

*Go to Gen 2:24 and discuss who wrote the text (Moses), to whom was it written (the Israelites), and their situation (likely in the wilderness). Connect Adam and Eve to Moses.*

Africans have strong connections to their families. So did the ancient Israelites. While Moses and the Israelites wandered for 40 years in the wilderness, they lived in tents organized by their clans and tribes (Num 2). They were family traveling and living with their extended family. During these 40 years, many young couples would have gotten married. This is when Moses wrote the instructions from Genesis 2:24: “A man shall leave his family, unite with his wife, and become one flesh.” How could they shift from their families when they were living in tents together? They could not. Leaving their families must have meant something different than shifting from families. This is good news for newly married African couples living near their original families. They can still follow Genesis 2:24, even if they don’t shift.

A husband leaving and uniting with his wife is about a shift of loyalty rather than a shift of location.<sup>3</sup> The man was instructed to “leave” because marriage created a “bone of bone and flesh of flesh” covenantal bond between him and his wife. In the Old Testament, the word “leave” is commonly connected to the covenant between God and Israel. Many times, God accuses the Israelites of changing their loyalty. They would forsake (leave) Yahweh and choose to follow other gods (Judg 2:12; 1 Kgs 9:9; Jer 2:17). When the Israelites left Yahweh, they were “leaving” their loyalty and allegiance.

Husbands and wives are told to leave their families, but this does not mean they should not care for them. When Israelites married, they “left” their families. Yet, they were also commanded to “honor their father and mother” (Ex 20:12). Adult children remain obligated to their parents and extended families. But when a couple marries, their loyalty must change. They “leave” their parents. The commitment between the husband and wife, as the most important human relationship, must be greater than any dedication to parents, extended family, church, friends, or children.<sup>4</sup> A lesser commitment is unbiblical.

Discussion: What have you learned about why a person should ‘leave?’ How can this understanding help marriages?

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<sup>3</sup> Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 159.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Keller and Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (New York: Penguin Group US, 2011), 119, Kindle.

## Unite

When a man and woman marry, they unite their bodies, and souls/spirits (mind, will, heart, emotions, etc.) The completeness of each person is united with the completeness of the other person. Together, they have created something entirely new—a marriage.

*Discussion: How does making ugali<sup>5</sup> describe how a husband and wife unite?*

In the Old Testament, the word “unite” describes the faithfulness Israel should have to their covenant with the LORD (Deut 10:20, 11:22, 13:4). This word used to describe how the Israelites should be faithful to God’s covenant is the same word used in Genesis 2:24.

*Discussion: Why is this important? Using the same word in Genesis 2:24 that is used to tell Israel to remain faithful points to the LORD creating marriage as a covenantal relationship.*

Using carefully chosen covenant language, God teaches that marriage requires a transfer of the highest loyalty and responsibility from the parents to the spouse, permanently sticking together in a way that changes them forever.<sup>6</sup> Genesis 2 does not describe marriage as “being in love.” Instead, it describes loyalty and commitment.

How do couples keep their commitment? How do they keep loving each other for a lifetime? (from Marriage Beliefs Interviews) *Discuss.*

*“Kuambatana: (“To cleave.”) It is a process. Not event. Couples need to do this every day.”*

*Case Study:* David and Fridah have been married for 6 months. Since their honeymoon, they have constantly been arguing about small and big things. Neither of them wants to lose, so neither will back down. Last night, they were arguing about their budget. They ended up shouting at each other and both threatened divorce. David said, “My mother was right. I should have never married you.” Fridah left the house and slept at her sister’s.

*Discussion:* In light of Gen 2:23-24, what might be happening in this marriage? What lies have David and Fridah believed? What could make a difference in their marriage? *Consider a possible failure to leave and unite, that they are competitors and not partners, and a conversation about how the truth of Genesis 2:24, if they really believed it, could bring transformation to their marriage.*

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<sup>5</sup> *Ugali*, a food staple, is a stiff corn porridge made from finely ground corn boiled in water.

<sup>6</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 717.



## **Become One Flesh**

“And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (Gen 2:25). This reference is commonly understood to refer to sexual intercourse. But “one flesh” is more than sex. Because the man and woman have a “bone of bone” covenant, they are “one flesh.” They are “the closest family either will ever have.”<sup>7</sup>

An Example of “One Flesh” (from Marriage Beliefs Interviews)

*“The biblical approach is unity. In marriage, especially in Christian marriage, in everything, remove me and put we. This is not my money. This is our money. These are not my belongings. These are ours. Whether or not the worker is the wife or the husband, when you come together, put your things together. In a biblical way, remove the selfishness, remove the envy. Let these two people become one, in every way, as the Bible says.”*

In-laws may admit that their son or brother is now “one flesh” with his wife. But they may not respect the man’s loyalty has shifted. They might say, “My son’s wife is his helper (Gen 2:18). They are one flesh because they gave me grandchildren.” But the Bible does not say that the wife is her husband’s “one flesh” because she is his helper or because they have produced children through sexual intercourse.

Discussion: Why is a wife “one flesh” with her husband? *Because the man and woman made a covenant (2:23a) before God. They left their fathers and mothers and created a new family. This shift in loyalty makes them “one flesh” and each other’s closest relative. The text does not refer to 2:18 (helper) but 2:23.*

### **Day 1—Lesson 4: Loving God and Neighbor**

In small groups, read Luke 10:25-29. Discuss the following questions:

- What is the man’s question to Jesus?
- What is the correct answer to Jesus’s question?
- What does this kind of love look like?
- How are these two commands linked?
- How does Jesus respond to the man, and what does this mean?
- Why does the man ask, “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29)

### **Day 1—Lesson 5: My Wife, My Closest Neighbor**

Read Ephesians 5:28 and 33. *Teacher leads the discussion as they walk through the text.*

- What do you notice?
- What does it remind you of? *If needed, the call for husbands to love their wives as their own bodies reflects Leviticus 19:18, with the word “bodies” substituted for “themselves.” In verse 33, which mirrors the flow of Leviticus 19:18, the term “wife” is used rather than “neighbor.” The Greek translation of the Song of*

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<sup>7</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Nashville: Nelson Reference and Electronic, 1987), 71.

- Songs that the Jewish leaders were reading at the time of Jesus referred to the bride as the female word for neighbor.*<sup>8</sup>
- In Ephesians 5:29-30, what are the two images Paul connects? *The church as the bride and the body of Christ. Paul uses the same images in human marriage: the wife is the bride of the husband and his body. Thus, a man who hates his wife, hates his own flesh.*
  - How is Paul applying the general commandment of “Love your neighbor as yourself” to the husband-wife relationship?
  - What is the proof of a man’s love for God? *As Christ connects the love of God to the love of neighbor, in Ephesians 5:28-31, he links a man’s love for God to how he loves his wife, his closest neighbor.*

Discussion: How does the way people treat their spouses represent their loyalty to God? Return to the David and Friday case study. Assuming they are believers in Jesus, how could the truth of “loving your neighbor” help their marriage?

**Day 1—Lesson 6: Submission and Love**

*Participants’ interviews revealed that male dominance damages marriages. The Swahili Bible tells women to “obey” not “submit,” and participants explained this creates more problems for women. The goal of this lesson is to consider that the emphasis in Eph 5:22-33 is on a husband loving his wife more than the wife’s submission. Read the quote then walk through the lesson.*

“People quote the Bible out of context. They say the Bible says, ‘You need to obey your husband.’ Sometimes they read it in Swahili, and the Swahili Bible speaks a different language. It’s speaking the same language as you would speak to a kid. But if you go to the English Bible or other versions, you find ‘submit.’” (From Marriage Beliefs Interviews)

Shortly after revealing how the Ephesian church are members of one another (Eph 4:15-16), Paul speaks of submission.

A few observations about submission:

- “Submit” and “Obey” are two different words with two different meanings: The word in Greek *hypotasso* is translated as “to submit” in English. The word in Greek *hypokouo* is translated as “to obey” in English.
- In Ephesians 5:21, Paul tells the people to submit (*hypotasso*) to one another.
- In Ephesians 5:22, there is a missing verb. Translators must look at the context to determine what Paul is saying. Look at what Paul writes in Eph 5:21. This is the same verb that should be used in Eph 5:22. The word is *hypotasso*. It should not be translated as “obey” or “*kutii*,” because it means “to submit.” *Have students look at Eph 5:21-22 in Swahili translations.*

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<sup>8</sup> J. Paul Sampley, “*And the Two Shall Become One Flesh*”: A Study of Traditions in Ephesians 5:21-33 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 32-33, 57-58 (cf. Song 1:9, 15;2:2, 10, 13; 4:1, 7; 5:2; 6:4).

- In Eph 5:24, Paul does not use the word “to obey/*kutii*.” He uses “to submit.” Look at the Swahili translation.
- In Eph 5:22 and 5:24, the word “to submit” is assumed, but is not a command. The original language in Greek expresses a statement of fact. However, in Col 3:18, wives are commanded to “submit.”
- A wife’s submission begins as she is filled with the very presence of God (Eph 5:18), and it comes from her submission to the Lord.
- A wife’s submission to her husband is voluntary. It is not a husband’s job to enforce or demand it.
- The text says a wife submits to her husband in everything. Submission does not mean that a wife should submit to her husband and commit sin or allow herself to be abused (to be sinned against).
- Though the husband’s role is compared to Christ (Eph 5:23-24), it is not identical. The husband is neither referred to as the Lord of the wife nor a substitute in any way.

Male Dominance (from Marriage Beliefs Interviews)

14 out of 21 respondents identified “male dominance” as the biggest problem in Christian marriages. Here is how you described the problem:

- “When a couple has a communication problem because they have different priorities, the husband can take a shortcut. He becomes a dictator.”
- “Men don’t want to be questioned. They are gods.”
- “A husband is a superpower in the family. So, when he says something, you have to appreciate, whether you like it or not. You have to follow those things that the husband wants from you.”
- “I’m the head of this house! I’m the head of this house!” Men make their wives like slaves, and they are the masters. Wives have no say in anything. They are just there. They are being told, ‘You are just the helper.’ Christian marriages can be harder than non-Christian marriages because even the Bible and the church say the man is the ‘head of the house.’”
- Our culture expects a good woman to say yes to everything without having an opportunity to discuss with her husband.”
- “Marriage is for women. The husband is the guest.”

Read Eph 5:23.

- Who is the savior of the wife?
- What does it mean that Christ is the savior of his body? *How did he attain that role?*

Read Eph 5:25.

- How are husbands instructed to treat their wives and why?

### What does the word “head” represent?

Here are some ways people talked about “head” during Paul’s time:

- The “head” was something that controlled the body. It had increased value because, without the head, the body would die.<sup>9</sup>
- The “head” was compared to the highest place in a city. When enemies attacked, that area (the acropolis) was defended and protected.
- The “head” of the empire of Rome was the emperor. The people were called the body. They had to be willing to die for their head, the Emperor. To protect the empire, the “head” was morally obligated to protect himself and not the body (the people). The emperor might show mercy to the body, but he would not love the body.
- The “head” was the husband. The Roman man traditionally gained honor through domination, not love and sacrifice. The “head” had to rule his wife to avoid shame.<sup>10</sup>

Discussion: How did Paul instruct the Ephesian husbands to act counter-culturally? *Paul instructs husbands to be sacrificial heads. Christian husbands must never act like the Emperor of Rome. They must act like Jesus Christ, who did not seek to protect himself, honor himself, or gain more comfort for himself.*

In your community, what rights do husbands believe they have within their marriages? What do you think this text says about those rights?

### A few observations about love:

- Paul **commands** husbands to love their wives, strongly contradicting cultural standards. For the first time in history, husbands are ordered to have an others-focused, self-sacrificing love for their wives.<sup>11</sup>
- Eph 5:22-33 is written with a special literary structure called a chiasm. This structure places **the main point** in the middle of the passage, where Paul commands **husbands to love their wives as their own bodies**. not at the beginning, where Paul talks about a wife’s submission.
- In Eph 5:25, 28, and 33, Paul issues a moral obligation for a husband to love his wife. If a man chooses to marry, he must love his wife.

Discussion: What are the implications of what we have just learned in marriage counseling?

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<sup>9</sup> Gregory W. Dawes, *The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21-33*, Biblical Interpretation 30 (Boston: Brill, 1998), 131.

<sup>10</sup> Michelle Lee-Barnewall, *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective to the Evangelical Gender Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 150-58.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 373-74.

### **Day 1—Lesson 7: Does the Rest of the Bible Apply to Married People?**

In marriage counseling, passages about how Christians should act toward each other also apply to a husband and wife. *Culturally, verses that apply to marriage have a headline in most Bibles about “Husbands and Wives.” I want to encourage students to consider the way we are to treat one another as believers (or even our enemies) also applies to how we treat our spouses.*

Philippians 2:1-8 is one example.

In small groups, do the following:

- Read Phil 2:1. What is Paul saying?
- Read Phil 2:2-5. Because we are in Christ, what should we do?
- Read Phil 2:6-8. How did Christ use his authority? How did he view himself and people?
- Discuss how these truths apply to marriage.

Large Group Discussion: Christ is a servant. He teaches us to serve and specifically commands men to love their wives through service. What kind of shame would Christian Tanzanian men face if they loved their wives in a sacrificial way that serves? How can men and women both be disciplined to serve like Jesus?

### **Day 1—Lesson 8: The Process of Marriage Counseling**

*Read this material together. Discuss throughout, take questions, and check for understanding.*

Marriage counseling is challenging. You are working with two people who have problems with each other. Sometimes, the husband or wife doesn't want to meet for counseling. In the meeting, one spouse might refuse to speak, or another might suddenly express strong anger. You will want another counselor to help you, especially someone of the opposite sex. This way, the husband and wife have someone of the same gender in the room. If you are married, consider ways to encourage your spouse to join you in this ministry. Practicing marriage counseling together can be an activity that strengthens your own relationship.

Although marriage counseling is more complicated than individual counseling, the two types have many things in common.

#### Apply What You Already Know about Individual Counseling

- Your goal is the same: Spiritual maturity that pleases God.
- How will you work toward that goal? Through a Christ-centered process in which you, a Spirit-empowered believer, come alongside a couple facing challenges and lovingly apply biblical truths for inner transformation.
- You will still use the Three Trees Diagram. The heat situation shows you the bad fruit (the behaviors/attitudes). The bad fruits have consequences, especially relational consequences. You want to find the bad roots that are creating the bad fruits. What motivates this person to do this bad behavior with these bad consequences?

- You will use the “Root-to-Fruit” 5-Step Counseling Model (Open Door, Broken Cup, Bread of Life, Shamba, Setting Sun): The steps are the same for marriage counseling. You don’t need to learn a new model.
- The qualities of the counselor remain the same: *We have discussed these at length in the introduction to biblical counseling class and reviewed them before this course.*
  - Spiritual maturity
  - A Christ-centered worldview
  - Sexual integrity
  - A person who does NOT gossip

Discussion: *Can a single person do marriage counseling? Jesus and Paul were both single. It may be helpful for the single person to have a married co-counsel to assist.*

### Counseling Accountability

There is an imbalance of power in a counseling relationship. The counselor provides help and often holds a position of spiritual authority. Therefore, the counselor has more power than the counselee. When people have marriage problems, they are disappointed and hurt. When you listen well and show concern, there is an increased risk for the person to become inappropriately attached to you. There is also a risk for you to become inappropriately attached to the counselee. Therefore, you must protect vulnerable people and yourself by requiring accountability of YOURSELF.

### What Does Accountability Look Like:

- You do not meet with a spouse of the opposite sex alone.
- You include co-counsel.
- If, at any point, you or the counselee develops an ungodly connection, you immediately terminate counseling and refer the person to someone else.

Discussion: What other ideas do you have to keep marriage counseling above reproach?

### How Is Marriage Counseling Different from Individual Counseling?

- There are TWO people. Each person has their own understanding of the heat, their own types of fruits, and their own root systems. The marriage problem comes from each individual. Therefore, each person has their own Three Trees diagram.
- These two people are ONE. Whatever each spouse is doing has consequences in the other spouse’s life. Pay attention to how they interact with one another and learn what they are creating in their marriage.
- You are there to help both re-orient their hearts to Christ. You also need to consider how they are building their marriage and how you can re-orient their marriage to Christ.

### How to do Marriage Counseling

1. Often one person will reach out for help, so your first meeting might be with only one spouse.

- If the person is not your gender, have a co-counsel present.
  - Listen to the initial complaint but do not take sides. If the spouse you met with leaves that meeting happy that they convinced you how bad their spouse is, you have not set up a good environment for marriage counseling.
  - If the person who reaches out to you says they are in physical danger, take it seriously. Take action to protect this person. Do not proceed with marriage counseling.
2. Schedule a time to meet with the couple.
    - Make sure both people have agreed to come to the meeting.
    - If both spouses do not reach out to you, meeting with the other person might be helpful before the first meeting.
  3. During your meetings, follow the Root-to-Fruit 5-Step Counseling Model.
    - Step 1: You want to create biblical hope. We don't promise unbiblical hope, such as, "God will change your wife (or your husband)." If both people personally choose to seek after Christ and allow him to change their roots, then God may bring healing to the individual and the marriage. But each person needs to be personally growing for this to happen.
    - Step 2: This is where it gets complicated. You must learn how each person sees the problem and how they are addressing it as a couple. You need to understand the fruits and roots of each person AND the couple. One reason marriage counseling takes longer than individual counseling is that you need more time to understand the situation.
    - Step 3: When you teach truth, you are focused on truth for the couple, not the individual. If you need to address lies and truth for an individual, do this in separate individual counseling sessions.
    - Step 4: Both spouses need to get to work. You may need to give growth projects to help an individual, but always consider how the project will help the couple.
    - Step 5: You will plan and pray for the couple and for them as individuals. You should also have co-counsel who plans and prays alongside you.
    - Just like individual counseling, this 5-step process continues until the goals of your counseling plan have been met.
    - If counseling is not going well and a person is not dealing with obvious sin, remember the principles of Matthew 18:15-17. (Other people, may need to be involved in the process.)

How Quickly Can We Solve the Problem? (from Marriage Beliefs Interviews)

"I accompanied a pastor to help a couple with 'the issue of mistrust.' The pastor made a lot of effort and spent seven hours talking with the couple. Then he said, 'Let's pray. The problem has gone.' So, he prayed and said, 'The problem is finished. Go hug each other.' The couple hugged each other. That same night, the wife called me and said, 'The problem is still there.'"

Discussion: What could have gone better in this counseling situation?

### Common Challenges in the Marriage Counseling Process:

- Because marriage counseling is a process with two people, it often takes longer than individual counseling. Don't rush.
- Do not allow the couple or one member of the couple to take over the meeting. Although watching their negative interactions can help you understand the situation, make sure you are leading the discussions. If you ask one spouse a question and the other interrupts or is rude to their partner, you must address this. You want to teach them to practically act like Jesus in a relationship. You need to demonstrate this in the meetings. *Practice in group.*
- When beneficial, have the couple address each other and not you. Encourage them to speak to each other. Teach them to use the good listening skills we discussed in our introduction to biblical counseling class. *Practice in group.*
- During counseling, you may discover that one spouse has an "individual counseling issue." This issue affects the marriage, but one person is primarily responsible for growth or change. Some examples: one person has a habit of getting drunk, has suicidal thoughts, is going out of the marriage, or is emotionally, physically, or sexually abusing the partner or another person. These issues cannot be solved in marriage counseling.
- If a spouse is emotionally, physically, or sexually abusing the partner or their child, stop marriage counseling. You must meet with the person who is committing the abuse individually. Until their heart and their behavior change, marriage counseling is not safe. We will discuss abuse in further detail in a later session.
- If you discover trust has been broken, start individual counseling to address the trust issue. A couple without trust will not speak transparently in front of one another.
- Even when marriage counseling is going well, meeting separately with individuals and providing one-to-one counseling may be wise. Make sure all private meetings are of the same gender.
- If you meet with one spouse separately, be aware that the spouse who is not present might feel anxious about what is said. Remain on the side of spiritual growth and not on the side of a particular spouse.

### Small Group Activity:

If YOU follow the principles found in these Proverbs, how would you be a better marriage counselor?

- Proverbs 18:2
- Proverbs 18:13
- Proverbs 18:17



## **Day 2—Lesson 1: Results of Interviews**

| Interview Results: What Is the Biggest Problem in Christian Marriages in Tanzania? | Number of Participants Who Indicated the Problem (out of 21) |
|--|--|
| Adultery   | 17   |
| Lack of Preparation before Marriage  | 17   |
| Money Issues   | 16   |
| Male Dominance   | 14   |
| Sexual Issues  | 13   |
| Problems with In-Laws  | 10   |
| Transparency (Trust) between the Couple  | 9  |

*The survey participants and those who completed the interviews are not identical but come from the same population. For this activity, we are going to discuss the interview results, for the sake of including the participants in the process. Inform participants that many people communicated concerns about lack of marriage preparation. Distribute the list of concerns to the participants and inform that throughout this course, we will add to this list. At a future date, we will work together on some premarital counseling materials.*

## **Day 2—Lesson 2: In-Laws, Money, and Transparency**

Your interviews showed a strong connection between 1) problems with in-laws, 2) a husband or wife being more transparent with their extended family (or friends) than with their spouse, and 3) how both of these issues are often connected to money.

### **Some Comments about Transparency** (from Marriage Beliefs Interviews)

- “Couples are more transparent with their father or mother or brother or sister than their spouse.”
- “People pray and fast about something they don't like about their partner. And they look for prayer partners. But talking to each other, communicating with each other about what is really going on, would be their last thing that they will do.”
- “A lack of transparency ruins trust.”

**Discussion:** From your interviews, it is also clear that many couples lack trust. But they also lack transparency. *The participants marked dealing with scenarios about hiding money and social engagements as a big issue. I want to allow them to discuss these things together.*

- How are trust and transparency connected?
- What biblical reasons can you give for a couple to be transparent with each other about money?
- What biblical reasons can you give for a couple to be transparent with each other about who they spend their time with?

A Possible Solution? (from Marriage Beliefs Interviews)

“We are the ones who made it very clear to my family that this is my wife. I respect my wife. If they see respect, they do the same thing. If I don't respect my wife, they mistreat her. Respect for the wife starts with the husband speaking up. How do I treat my wife? How does she treat me? If my wife's brother calls and asks for money, and my wife says, 'I have to tell my husband first.' Then they know. If my mom calls and says, 'I need 100,000/=. Just take your phone now. Send it.' But I say, 'Wait a minute, let me consult my wife.' She will understand. She will get that this is what we stand for.”

Discussion: What are the consequences of such a decision?

Considering what we have learned from Gen 2:23-24, as well as the command to love your closest neighbor, your spouse, what do you think is happening in the following case study? *Separate into groups of four and discuss.*

Case Study: Martin and Naomi

A mama calls her married son, Martin, and asks for 100,000/=. Martin tells her that he must first consult with his wife, Naomi. The mother responds, “The last time I asked, you helped me. Why not now? Eh, that woman is controlling you. Who gave her the right to tell you what to do with your money? Let her manage her own money.” Martin tells his mama, “I will still talk to my wife.”

After Martin spoke with Naomi, they agree that he should send his mama 40,000/=. Martin sends the money but does not call or text his mama to explain anything. Then Martin's older sister calls him and tells him (on speakerphone), “I told you that you shouldn't marry Naomi. That woman is hurting our family. Before you married her, you loved us! Now you have changed. You are selfish. It's that woman's fault. She must be witching you.” Naomi overhears this conversation. She is hurt, and before the phone call is over, she begins texting her mom, complaining about her evil in-laws.

Large Group Counseling Activity: *After the small group discussions, have two people volunteer to be Martin and Naomi. The class will “group” counsel the couple, working together as “co-counsel.” Remember to 1) address each part of the Root-to-Fruit counseling model, 2) discuss it in light of the definition of counseling, and 3) the Tree Trees. The goal is that students will begin to see how the counseling process works with a married couple.*

*Make sure participants consider underlying issues. Has the couple left their families? Did the loyalty change? Have they united? What does it mean for them to be “one flesh?” What does it mean for them to love each other? What are the lies they are believing? What are the truths they need to learn? What about the extended family?*

**Day 2—Lesson 3: Communication and Conflict in Marriage**

*In small groups, complete the following guided Bible studies. For many students, this is a review. The goal is not an in-depth study of the nature of sin or conflict but a reminder*

*that our conflicts come from inside us, and we are responsible for them, not spiritual forces.*

### Where Does Conflict Come From?

Read James 3:13-18.

- What do you learn about godly wisdom and ungodly wisdom?
- Paul calls ungodly wisdom demonic. Read the verses and discuss if the demons are causing evil behavior or if the person is choosing their behavior?

Read James 4:1-3.

- Where do our fights and quarrels come from?
- How does the earthly (ungodly) wisdom you read about in James 3 directly connect to fights and quarrels in these verses?

Read James 4:7-10.

- What is the connection between submitting to God and resisting the devil? In your answer, consider the promise at the beginning of verse 8 and how it relates to verse 7.
- How can this type of “spiritual warfare” help couples in conflict?

Discuss: What are some sinful ways people respond in a marital conflict. Which of these are socially acceptable?

### What Does Jesus Want Us to Do in Conflict?

Read Romans 12:17-18.

- What do these verses teach about conflict and peace? Consider the context (Rom 12:1-2).

Read Matt 5:23-24.

- What do these verses teach about conflict and peace?

Read Matt 7:3-5.

- What do these verses teach about conflict and peace?

*Large Group Discussion: Make a list of all the things we have learned about conflict and peace. How do we apply these truths to marriages? Then ask if not offered: Why should married couples expect communication problems and conflict in their marriages? Who is called to be a peacemaker in marriage? Why?*

### **Day 2—Lesson 4: Conflict Resolution Tool: I-P-I (Issues-Positions-Interests)<sup>12</sup>**

Issues-Positions-Interests is a helpful tool to use when couples disagree over something very specific. This tool helps a couple understand each other and create a mutually agreeable solution. **DO NOT** use this tool when the disagreement is about something sinful, such as, “Should a spouse stop committing adultery?”

Read Phil 2:3-4. We are using the context of these verses to learn this new conflict resolution tool.

1. When couples have conflict, they have an “ISSUE.” The issue is the problem. Both the husband and wife can identify the ISSUE.

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<sup>12</sup> Ken Sande and Tom Raabe, *Peacemaking for Families: A Biblical Guide to Managing Conflict in Your Home* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 2002), 100-106.

### Example ISSUES:

- We disagree about how much money to give our in-laws.
  - We disagree about how often we should be physically intimate.
  - We disagree about how to discipline the children.
2. The couple disagrees about their POSITIONS. The position is the outcome each person desires to get. (Notice the connection to James 4:1-3). Couples get stuck in conflict when their positions are different.

### Example POSITIONS about the in-law money issue:

- The wife wants to give her mama 200,000/= every month.
  - The husband doesn't want to give his mother-in-law money.
3. Most couples don't know that beneath their partner's positions are deeper INTERESTS. An interest is what motivates a person to take a specific position.

### Example INTERESTS about the proposed payment of 200,000/=:

- The wife wants to give her mama 200,000/= a month because when she was at university, her mother gave her that much money every month. The wife feels that if she provides less, she is not doing for her mama what her mama did for her and is being selfish and non-Christian.
- The husband doesn't want to give his mother-in-law any money because he thinks his wife's brother should contribute more. If they give 200,000/=, then the brother will have an excuse to not help his own mama.

Once a couple clearly understands the issues, they are in a better position to negotiate positions. But they still don't know what motivates the other person. Phil 2:4 says we should have great concern for other people's interests/concerns.

## How Do You Use This Conflict Resolution Tool?

### Step 1: Issues

1. Work with the couple to write an "issues" list. The list should not be all of their problems. Instead, it should focus on specific issues that can be negotiated. It's possible one of the spouses doesn't feel comfortable at the beginning of this process. They may want to add an issue in the future.  
Example issue: "We don't agree on how to financially help the wife's mama."
2. Now look at each issue and change the sentence to a question that can be answered. For example: "What kind of financial help does the wife's mama need?"
3. Now, this question becomes the "Issue." The couple should be encouraged to see one another as partners who need to solve this issue, not as competitors who need to win a competition. The problem is outside of them, and they must work on solving it together.

### Step 2: Positions

1. What is each person's position on this issue/question?
2. Ask questions of each person until everyone clearly understands the positions. You are not trying to get people to agree with the other person's position. You are only trying to get the person to understand the position.
3. Work on this together. The couple should be in the room together so that they can understand their partner's position.

### Step 3: Interests

1. Choose the “easiest” issue.
2. Using open-ended questions, ask each person to share why their position is important to them. What are their concerns? What are their fears? What are their underlying motives?
3. You are looking for legitimate, non-sinful interests. These are not always easy to determine, but this activity is not meant to be a manipulation tool for one spouse to get what they want from the other.
4. When the interests become clear, ask each spouse to “reflect” back to their partner the interests they are hearing. They should say something like, “What I hear you saying is that this position is really important to you because you care about \_\_\_\_\_. And you care about that because \_\_\_\_\_. Have I understood you correctly?”
5. The counselor should not be doing the reflective listening. This is the role of each spouse.

### Step 4: Consider New Positions

1. Once the couple understands each other’s interests, they should work together to create a list of positions that could be possible solutions to the issue.
2. When suggesting a new position, each partner should consider the other person’s interests. This is Phil 2:4 in action.
3. Both spouses continue to come up with new positions. These are just ideas. Writing them down does not mean they must be implemented.
4. Be creative.

### Step 5: Choosing a Position

1. Help the couple evaluate each possible position.
2. Help them negotiate and mutually agree on a new position that addresses everyone’s interests.

Practice: Two people will volunteer to be in conflict. They disagree about the amount of money to give to in-laws. As a class, we must work together to counsel this “couple.” Our job is to complete all five steps of the Issues-Positions-Interests conflict management tool until the couple has a mutually agreed upon new position.

## **Day 2—Lesson 5: How Are Men and Women Different?**

*As a large group, read these quotes and follow the discussion questions.*

From your interviews, it is clear that both men and women are committing adultery. But you agree that men are more likely to commit adultery and do so more often. You shared lots of words, like going outside of their marriage, *mchepuko*, away game, *nyumba ndogo*.

How Does the Culture View Men (from Marriage Beliefs Interviews)

- *“All men are doing the same thing. They are all born from one mother.”*
- *“Polygamy is genetic.”*
- *“There is no man with only one woman.”*

- *“Men are controlled by their eyes. When they see a beautiful woman, they might make a quick mistake. They lust and act, but it does not come from their heart. Because they did not take time to think about it, it is easier to forgive them. They can cheat and still love their wives.”*
- *“If you want your husband to stay, make sure you know some things to make him crazy in bed. If you do this for your husband, he will never leave you.”*

Discussion: Evaluate each of the above quotes from a biblical point of view.

How Does the Culture View Women (from Marriage Interviews)

Several people shared that God made women’s character different from men.

- *“God creates women and men differently. Women have a polite heart. When their husbands go outside of the marriage, the women think about the children. They think about their marriages. Most women will forgive and even forget when a husband asks for forgiveness. They are ready to continue their marriage. They are ready to receive their lost sheep. God must have created a different heart in women compared to men.”*
- *“But if a woman cheats on her husband and wants to return to him, the man will have so much shame that he might die, kill her, take her back but make sure she never forgets what she did, or might divorce her. There are some stories about women who cheated, and their marriages were saved. But usually, if a woman cheats, there is no hope of restoration.”*
- *“Women are not controlled by their eyes. They take time to think before they go outside of their marriage, so if a woman cheats, it is more serious. Everyone knows that her heart made that choice. It is not easy to forgive them because if a wife cheats, she does not love her husband.”*
- *“When a man goes out of the marriage, people say, “These things happen.” But when a woman cheats, people say she is like a devil.”*

Discussion:

- Evaluate each of the above quotes from a biblical point of view.
- How the *tabia* of a girl different from a boy? Biblically support your ideas.
- Is a woman’s nature different from a man’s (as God created them both), or is culture or the life situation influencing women to respond differently than from men? How do you see it?
- When we consider that a husband and wife are one another’s closest neighbors, how do we address these issues?

**Day 2—Lesson 6: Sexual Issues and Transparency**

*This section is an adapted action research process. The participants have identified a problem (sexual transparency among married couples). I will share the results of our interviews and some findings from outside research to better understand the problem. I will ask questions that will help us analyze the results. Then we will work toward a remedy. In the future, this curriculum will be edited to include the participants’ suggestions. I will begin this section by explaining to the participants the above information, how we will go through this process, and how we will use the results, in this*

upcoming curriculum, possibly on the [www.counsellinginafrica](http://www.counsellinginafrica.com) website, and in the marriage book that we are writing.

Discussion:

- How do you describe *tamaa*?
- Should a married couple have *tamaa*?

How does this quote reflect what you see and hear in your culture?

“When you have sex with your wife, ideally, it is for love and for children... With a girlfriend, there is a sort of love, but it's more about mutual understanding . . . a lot of *tamaa* . . . and release. With a wife, *tamaa* doesn't enter the picture.”<sup>13</sup>

Let's consider this:

Passionate marital sex that includes mutual pleasure, creativity, and play are “unthinkable acts” between a husband and wife.<sup>14</sup> Few African pastors teach about married sex, but Kenyan theologian Josephine Munyao notes that pastors who teach about married sex emphasize its role in preventing immorality. It keeps the devil away. The pastors do not teach that sex is a gift from God that nourishes a marriage.<sup>15</sup>

- Do you find this to be true or not in your cultural situation?
- How do you think associating sexual pleasure with sex outside of marriage affects sex inside of marriage?

Sexual Problems in Marriage (from Marriage Beliefs Interviews)

- “There are two groups in the church: one that knows everything about sex and is pretending they don't, and another who doesn't know anything. When a spouse who knows a lot of things enters a marriage with an amateur and is sexually dissatisfied, they say, ‘No, I have to look for another one.’ They are unwilling to help or teach their partner because they fear that if they are more transparent on how you're supposed to perform sex, the partner will know they have experience. So, they keep their dissatisfaction a secret.”
- “Many women cannot tell their husbands that there is something in the bed they don't like. They just keep quiet, and they start to hate the whole thing. They keep quiet to the point that they don't even enjoy their sexual life. They are not transparent and even pretend excitement.”
- “If a man is dissatisfied with the sexual relationship, he won't let his wife know. And will go outside to another woman or at least talk about it with other people. And the wife, if she is also unhappy, probably won't tell her husband.”
- “Women are going out of marriages because they are sexually dissatisfied. They are not prepared well, which is a problem on the man's side. The man,

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<sup>13</sup> Philip Setel, *A Plague of Paradoxes: AIDS, Culture, and Demography in Northern Tanzania*, *Worlds of Desire: The Chicago Series on Sexuality, Gender, and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 131.

<sup>14</sup> Setel, *A Plague of Paradoxes*, 131.

<sup>15</sup> Josephine Munyao, “Marital Disharmony among Akamba Christians: A Consequence of Women's Empowerment or Improper Contextualized Theology?” (PhD diss., Africa International University, 2017), 94.

who is finished first, leaves his friend. And many times, we get complaining from the wife. Because when he is finished, he leaves her. Most of the time, men, they just come when they are in need without considering the woman.”

- One woman explains, “I visited a newly married woman and found her being forced to do extra housework. I asked her why she has so much cleaning. She replied, ‘It is because I failed at sexual intercourse.’ She explained to me that her husband had been rough and sex had been painful. Her husband just had intercourse with her with no preparation. In fear and pain, she refused him. So, her husband decided he needed to punish her so that she would learn. There are several women like this.”

- From looking at these quotes, how do you see the problems?
- What are the consequences?
- What biblical truths could help a husband and wife be more transparent with each other sexually?

A Possible Solution (from Marriage Beliefs Interviews)

“Husbands and wives can have different perspectives about sex. Men and women think differently about this thing. In marriage, this becomes a problem because neither the man nor the woman thinks the way God thinks about sex. They don’t discuss sex, creating their own “law or stand” about their sexual life. But each marriage should have its own kind of law. It doesn’t matter what other people say they are doing in their bedrooms. This is personal between each husband and wife. This is godly because God united us and declared we are one, and we have to plan our oneness. “How could it be? What do we need? What do we want?” Some men fight with their wives. They are angry and say, “You don’t give me your body as much as I want.” This is selfish. But the Word of God says sex in the married relationship is good. So, husbands and wives should make the effort to plan theirs. They must be in agreement.”

Discussion: How can couples plan their intimacy?

Small Group Discussion: You are doing marriage counseling with a couple and discover each person is disappointed with their sexual relationship, but neither has told the spouse. What are some growth projects you could give this couple to help them be more transparent in their sexual relationship?

**Day 3—Lesson 1: Confession and Confrontation**

Think of the last time you wronged your spouse and confessed. What did it sound like? What did you say? What did you do? *Ask participants to privately write this down.*

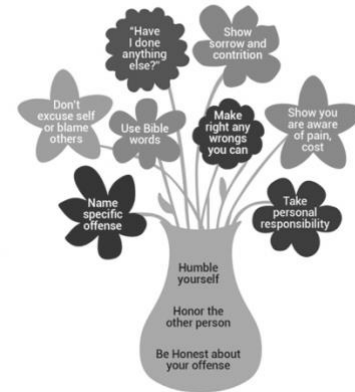


When you know you have done wrong in your marriage, the Christian should confess and ask for forgiveness. When you confess, your marriage relationship will likely improve if you follow these principles:<sup>16</sup>

1. Be humble.
2. Honor the person you have sinned against.
3. Be honest about what you did.

What confession should look like:

1. Name the specific way you sinned.
2. Don't excuse yourself or blame the other person.  
Such as,  
"I didn't really mean to do what I did." Or "I only got angry because you make me so angry."
3. Take personal responsibility.
4. Make right any wrongs you can. For example, if you lied about your spouse, go to the people you lied to and tell the truth.
5. Use biblical words. For example, a husband who got drunk and slept with the young woman at the bar did not make a mistake. He committed adultery.
6. Show that you are aware of the pain you have caused the other person. Allow your spouse to tell you about it.
7. When you ask the person to forgive you, don't demand forgiveness. This is not humility and doesn't show true repentance.
8. Ask the person you have wronged if there is anything else to discuss. This is an act of humility and honors the other person. However, this step should only be done by a person who is sincerely humble.



Remember your last confession or apology you gave your spouse. Take a few minutes and re-write it, applying some of these principles.

Discussion: As a counselor, what benefit is there to help a person "improve" their confession?

### How to Help a Person Confront Their Spouse

If a person believes they need to confront their spouse about a problem, help them consider these things first:

1. How is their heart? Why are they wanting to talk about this now? What is the motivation?
2. What is their goal? Are they seeing their spouse as a partner or as a competitor?
3. Have they confessed their sin to God?
4. Are they willing to confess their own sin to their spouse, even if their spouse has also wronged them and hasn't apologized?
5. Are they praying for their spouse?

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<sup>16</sup> This vase illustration and instructions on confession are taken from John Shindeldecker, *The Peace Pursuit Handbook: Biblical, Practical, and Accessible Tools for Resolving Interpersonal Conflict* (n.p.: John Shindeldecker, 2018), 122, [www.peacepursuit.org](http://www.peacepursuit.org).

### **Day 3—Lesson 2: Biblical Forgiveness**

Discussion: What does forgiveness look like culturally? What does forgiveness look like biblically?

The Bible Talks about Two Kinds of Forgiveness: Vertical and Horizontal. Vertical is between you and God. Horizontal is between you and another person.

We Must Forgive Vertically. This type of forgiveness means forgiving the person in your heart before God. When you forgive, you release bitterness and hatred.

Read Mat 18:15-20.

- What is the context of verses 18-20? *This is not an exposition on these verses but will cover these basics. The context is vs. 15. The person you have conflict with may not listen. Then what are you supposed to do? There is a direct connection to vv. 21-22. Peter comes to Jesus and asks about forgiveness in the context of the previous teaching.*
- How is Mat 18:21-22 connected to the previous context? *Read through the end of the chapter.*
- How had the fellow servant wronged the servant who had been forgiven? *It's important to notice that there was a real debt.*
- When do we know we have forgiven the person in our heart? *When we take our hands off a person's neck (v. 28). We stop demanding that they pay us back (v. 30). Because of your vertical relationship with Jesus, and that he forgave you, we don't seek to retaliate or harm others.*
- How do we understand Mat 18:34-35? *Jesus is still talking directly to Peter. He instructs Peter that as a person who has been forgiven, he is required to forgive (v. 22). A person who has received great forgiveness will be willing to give it.*

#### Application:

- If a husband commits adultery, does a Christian wife have to forgive him? *Some respondents said that because Jesus taught to forgive, a wife must forgive her husband, and this forgiveness is equivalent to reconciliation.*
- What should her forgiveness look like? *Several may say restoration of the marriage.*
- If a wife commits adultery, does a Christian husband have to forgive her?
- What should that forgiveness look like? *Discuss why it is viewed differently.*

In summary, what does Mat 18:21-35 teach us about forgiveness? *The person wronged is not harming the other person, not seeking revenge. Instead, he forgives from "the heart." It does not say that the man owed money should have just let it go and reconciled. But the man should have allowed God to deal with the other person and not seek the other's destruction. Before God, the wronged person forgives the person who sinned. But this does not heal the relationship. It is not the same as reconciliation. Instead, the person who has been wronged releases the power to control the situation to God.*

A Hard Teaching: Jesus requires forgiveness, even if the person is unrepentant. It is God's expectation that those who are forgiven will forgive others.

- Mark 11:25 (When praying, make sure you forgive others.)
- Mat 6:9-15 (The Lord's Prayer)

Forgiveness Illustration: Ask the students, "Who wants 10,000/=?" Choose a student, but then don't give them the money. Instead, say, "I just gave him 10,000/=." What is wrong here?

*Forgiveness is not about the words coming out of our mouths but about the actions of our hearts.*

Discussion: Sometimes in marriages, there is a "forced" forgiveness, which might lead to bitterness. How have you seen this?

### **Let's look at biblical repentance.**

Before we discuss horizontal forgiveness (one person to another), let's discuss biblical repentance.

Write what these verses teach about biblical repentance. *Participants work in small groups.*

- Acts 26:20
- 2 Cor 7:8-11 (The context is the Corinthian church's repentance from their previous approval of sexual sin in 1 Cor 5.)

Discussion: What does biblical repentance look like? *Tears and apologies aren't enough for reconciliation.*

### Horizontal Forgiveness (Applied Forgiveness between People) Requires Repentance. Repentance is Necessary for Reconciliation.

"If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the seas,' and it will obey you." (Luke 17:6)

What does this verse refer to? *Forgiveness. The verse is often misused for word of faith teaching.*

Read the context: Luke 17:3-10.

- It is God's expectation that those who have received his forgiveness will give it to others. Verses 7-10 teach that forgiveness is our obligation as servants. It is expected of those who have been forgiven.
- But look closely at verses 3 and 4. In this text, what is forgiveness based on? *Repentance.*
- What does biblical repentance look like? *Refer back to Acts 26:20 and 2 Cor 7:8-11. Fruit should come from repentance.*
- If a person continues to do the same sin again and again, even on the same day, is the person repenting? *This would be inconsistent with a definition of biblical*

*forgiveness. Discussing this is important, as some husbands serially commit adultery but “repent.”*

We must forgive vertically—before God. It is a sin for us to hold unforgiveness in our hearts. **But to give horizontal forgiveness** (applying forgiveness to the relationship so that it might be restored), **the person who has sinned needs to biblically repent.** True reconciliation is not possible without forgiveness and repentance.

“It takes one person to forgive.

It takes two to be reunited.

Forgiving happens inside the wounded person.

Reunion happens in a relationship between people.

We can forgive a person who never says he is sorry.

We cannot be truly reunited unless he is honestly sorry.

We can forgive even if we do not trust the person who wronged us once not to wrong us again.

Reunion can happen only if we can trust the person who wronged us once not to wrong us again.”<sup>17</sup>

Discussion: What are the implications of horizontal and vertical forgiveness in marriage counseling? *For possible discussion: All people are called to love their neighbors. That love includes the closest neighbor, one’s spouse. As counselors, we should not allow a spouse to sin against their closest neighbor. If that happens, go back to Mat 18:15-17.*

#### Additional Thoughts on Forgiveness

Did the spouse actually sin against the partner? This is important. As a marriage counselor, make sure that the issue is a sin. Sometimes people are just offended and not sinned against.

Some examples:

- A wife is unhappy because her husband bought her a green dress. She doesn’t like green.
- A husband is angry because his wife burned the *ugali*.

When we are offended over something that was not a sin, we are the ones in the wrong.

**Forgiveness Growth Project:** *Guide participants to spend five minutes on each section of this chart. Then follow the directions at the end of the last chart.*

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<sup>17</sup> Lewis B. Smedes, *The Art of Forgiving: When You Need to Forgive and Don’t Know How* (Nashville: Moorings, 1996), 27.

| How Have Others Sinned Against You? |                               |                                 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Who has wronged you?                | How did they sin against you? | How have you responded to them? |
|                                     |                               |                                 |
|                                     |                               |                                 |
|                                     |                               |                                 |
|                                     |                               |                                 |

| How Have You Sinned Against Others? |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Who have you wronged?               | How did you sin against the person? | How have you responded to those you sinned against? |
|                                     |                                     |   |
|                                     |                                     |   |
|                                     |                                     |   |
|                                     |                                     |   |

| How Have You Sinned Against God? |                              |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| How have you sinned against God? | How has he responded to you? | What do you learn from this? |
|                                  |                              |                              |
|                                  |                              |                              |
|                                  |                              |                              |
|                                  |                              |                              |

After completing the charts:

- Put a tick next any person or situation where you need to forgive.
- Put a tick next to any person you have wronged, and you need to seek their forgiveness, including God.
- What are your next steps to move toward forgiveness?
- Which was the easiest and hardest section to complete?

**Day 3—Lesson 3: How to Help People Recover after Adultery**

*The first Tanzanian pastor who asked for marriage counseling training requested help with an adultery case. This lesson is participatory research, sharing respondents’ comments from the MBI, verifying if it they were correctly understood, giving participants time to discuss the issues, and searching for culturally and biblically effective approaches to deal with this issue.*

|   |
|---|
| <p><b><u>The Common Way to Address Adultery</u></b> (from Marriage Beliefs Interviews)</p> <p>There is no one way churches address a person who has committed adultery when the adultery has become known to the community. However, these are some common things you said:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The man will lose his church position, be required to sit in a special seat at the back of the church reserved for adulterers, or possibly be chased out of the</li> </ul> |
|---|

church. The church's role is to communicate judgment of the man's sin for a while.

- How does a church leader help the wife if her husband commits adultery? The greatest goal is to keep the marriage together, because "God hates divorce." The pastor tries to solve the problem by getting the husband to admit what he did and tell the wife that because Christ has forgiven her, she must forgive her husband. At the end of the day, he is only a man. The woman understands that she must obey her pastor and her husband.
- When a woman commits adultery, the pastor is not quick to tell the husband to forgive.

Discussion: Does God hate divorce if the wife breaks the marriage covenant?

*Explain that the following represents the respondents' thoughts about addressing adultery.*

Your Approach to Addressing Adultery (from Marriage Beliefs Interviews)

- The majority of you said forgiveness and reconciliation are a process. You reject a more traditional approach that requires a woman to forgive immediately. A woman's feelings need to be acknowledged. She is valuable and part of the marriage. She has a wound that needs to be healed.
- Some of you recognized that the man may now have a disease or have other children which complicates the situation.
- You noted that if the wife doesn't forgive her husband, some people will blame her for her husband's adultery. It will be easier for her socially if she can continue in her marriage.
- You shared a common view that because God commands believers to forgive one another, wives must eventually forgive their husbands. If a husband wants to return to his wife, a Christian woman should be willing to receive him and continue with the marriage. As his helper, she can even encourage him to live a good life.

Discussion: Does a husband who has committed adultery and has biblically repented have the right to return to his marriage? Does his wife need to forgive him? *Encourage the discussion to consider rights, vertical vs. horizontal forgiveness, what biblical repentance and reconciliation are, what does it mean that the covenant is broken, and what does Jesus say about adultery and divorce.*

Forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation. Reconciliation requires biblical repentance. But it also requires a rebuilding of trust. Here are some suggestions to help a marriage that has been harmed through unfaithfulness:<sup>18</sup>

- Encourage both people, whether the one who committed adultery or the one who has been betrayed, to remain faithful to Jesus. God desires them to trust him and

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<sup>18</sup> The rest of this lesson is guided by Robert D. Jones, *Restoring Your Broken Marriage: Healing after Adultery* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2009), Kindle.

- turn to him in this trial. If both spouses turn to Christ, there is a much greater likelihood that the marriage can be healed.
- Encourage both spouses to be careful about who advises them. There will be people in their families, communities, and online who will not point the spouses' hearts to Christ.
  - Counseling should be individual until the one who committed adultery has repented and ended the illicit relationship. You cannot do marriage counseling when one spouse has an extra lover.
  - If the person who did not commit adultery decides to pursue reconciliation with the repentant spouse, walk with the couple. Reconciliation requires trust. Trust requires transparency. These things take time.

When helping the one who has committed adultery:

- They must immediately end the illicit relationship. This means cutting off all contact, including texting and social media. If children are involved, you will need to find alternative ways to cut off the relationship and protect the children.
- They need to admit what they have done and not at the surface level. They must take full responsibility. It will not be possible to truly repair the marriage without honesty.
- They should confess to those they have hurt.
- They need to begin individual counseling to understand the root issues and begin a process of discipleship and change.
- If the person repents and the spouse decides to continue the marriage, remember that the betrayed spouse has a wound that needs healing. The spouse who committed adultery should not be surprised or angry when their partner struggles to trust them. If the spouse who committed adultery “demands” trust, you can be confident that the person’s heart is not humble, and there may not be true repentance.

When helping the one who has been betrayed by adultery:

- Special care must be taken to help the person see how valuable they are to Jesus.
- Walk with the person in individual counseling, helping them communicate their pain.
- Help the person see their problems in the light of a good God who still has good plans for their life.
- Consider how this person may need practical care. They may need a medical exam or financial assistance if the spouse has not returned and was the primary breadwinner.
- Assist the person to vertically (before God) forgive their spouse, allowing God to deal with their partner.
- If the spouse who committed adultery shows biblical repentance, help the betrayed partner to horizontally forgive the spouse. This forgiveness does not “demand” reconciliation of the marriage. The covenant has still been broken. A spouse can forgive and desire good for their partner but not trust the person. They might not want to continue the marriage. We will discuss this in the “Divorce” section.

- The person will need encouragement to learn to not dwell on the past and to trust God to heal the wound.
- Discussion: What is helpful from this section that works in your culture? What would you add? What do you think would not work in your context?

### **Day 3—Lesson 4: Case Study: John and Patience, Part 1**

*Break the participants into groups of four.*

Instructions: Read the case study in your small groups and discuss it in light of the Three Trees diagram. Talk about how you could approach counseling this couple. What questions do you need to ask? Then role play the counseling with two people from each group playing the roles of Patience and John and the other two working as counselors. Try to move through the five steps. Then you will switch roles but continue the counseling. Do not start over as if you have never counseled Patience and John. This could even be your second counseling session if that is your approach. Refer to the notes on pp. 1-3.

John and Patience have been married for one and a half years. They met at their local church three years ago. One day, John told his pastor that he loved a girl named Sharon and wanted to marry her after she returned from university. The pastor agreed to pray about this. Then after a week, the pastor told John that God had said, “Patience is your wife.” This was hard for John to hear because he loved Sharon. They had secretly been boyfriend and girlfriend for three years.

Not much time passed before the pastor married John and Patience. Before their wedding day, they had never talked alone together. On their wedding night, Patience tried to follow the advice she had received at her kitchen party. But her husband was not interested in her. He quickly had sex with her but then spent the rest of the night on his phone. This became their habit.

Patience decided her husband must not love her. She told this to some friends. Soon, one of John’s friends informed him that his wife said he hated her. This made John angry.

Patience works as an accountant for an NGO and earns 4,000,000/= a month. John teaches at a government secondary school. His salary is 500,000/= a month. Patience believes the money she earns is “her money,” so she will not tell her husband how much she makes. John knows his wife has a better job than he does, so he resents her and feels ashamed. Recently, Patience came home with a car. John assumes his wife bought the car, but he is not sure. He is tired of her complaining that he doesn’t buy her nice things while he still takes a *daladala* (a type of public transport) to work.

John has become suspicious of Patience. Every Thursday night, she comes home late. When John asks her where she’s been, she says, “My boss makes us work late.” One of John’s friends at church said that he saw Patience having dinner with a man. John is convinced she is sleeping with the man. When John confronted her, she denied doing anything wrong and said it was a business meeting. He responded by saying that he is the head of the house, and she must return home immediately after work each day. The next



time Patience was late, John went to a bar, got drunk, and had sex with a woman he just met there. (He doesn't remember her name and doesn't have her number.) Patience and John's relationship has continued to fall apart. They either argue or avoid each other. Meanwhile, Sharon finished university and returned to the city.

Patience has been suspicious their entire marriage that John has another woman. Recently, when John left his phone unlocked, Patience looked through it and found texts from Sharon. The texts show that John is planning on meeting her next weekend.

You are a ministry leader at Patience and John's church. Patience tells you that her husband is going out of their marriage, and she needs help. What do you do?

#### **Day 4—Lesson 1: What Does the Bible Say about Divorce?**

Discussion: According to your feedback, the number of divorces in Tanzania seems to be increasing. Many of these divorces are happening because of sexual unfaithfulness. Who is more in the wrong: The person who divorces because their spouse broke their marriage covenant, or the person who broke the marriage covenant through adultery? *The intention for this lesson is not to encourage divorce or suggest that it is good. But research indicates that because divorce is taboo among Christians, some husbands use the taboo as a protection to serially commit adultery, knowing that there are no consequences. As a result, women suffer.*

What did Moses say about divorce? *The teacher will lead the discussion of Deut 24:1.*

- Deut 24:1: A husband could divorce if he found something about his wife "indecent." The consequence for adultery was death by stoning. Therefore, this passage is not referencing adultery. In situations where men had no godly right to sever their marriages, Moses allowed a certificate of divorce to protect woman. Sending a woman away without a certificate of divorce meant she could not remarry. Similar to African culture, an unmarried Jewish woman lacked societal and financial protection. Divorce was instituted as a way to protect women, rather than as a way to let men be free from their wives whenever they wished.

*Send participants to small groups and ask them to read the following verses and summarize what Jesus taught about divorce.*

- Mat 5:31-32. *Jesus is speaking against men for treating their wives poorly.*
- Luke 16:18. *No exception clause: "except for adultery."*
- Mark 10:1-12.
- Mat 19:3-12. *A certificate of divorce was not God's plan, but he allowed it because of hard hearts. Jesus says that divorcing someone, because something was "indecent" about them, does not break the marriage covenant. Breaking of the marriage covenant required a spouse to commit adultery.*

Discussion: *In large group, ask participants to summarize what they learned and ask questions.*

## Does God Hate Divorce?

*Teacher leads this section. Introduce these things: In the MBI, participants said that “God hates divorce” is the church’s most common teaching about marriage and divorce. We have heard, “God hates divorce,” so divorce must be sinful. No matter the problem, the victim (usually a woman) must endure any sins from the spouse. Some women have reported to their pastors, “My husband is going to kill me.” But since “God hates divorce,” pastors couldn’t help the women.*

### The Problem (from Marriage Beliefs Interviews)

“The church built a solid foundation by teaching, ‘Christian marriage can never be broken.’ The goal was for marriages to stay together. This is good. But then the church teaches that nothing can break a marriage. Not adultery, not abuse, not abandonment. This is a problem. The husband or wife can go to another man or woman because the Christian says, ‘Nothing can break this marriage.’ A couple may separate for a few months. The wife may go back to her family. But eventually, she must forgive her husband. Because of these kinds of marriages, women must learn to live with pain all their life. The husband goes outside. He returns. Another time, he goes outside. And there is no divorce. Because the church refuses to apply biblical teaching about divorce, men are given permission to continue going outside of their marriages.”

What about Malachi 2:16? Many Bible translations translate the Hebrew in Mal 2:16 as “God hates divorce.” For example:

- NLT: “‘For I hate divorce!’ says the LORD, the God of Israel. ‘To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty.’”
- NKJV: “For the Lord God of Israel says that he hates divorce, for it covers one’s garment with violence.”
- SUV: “‘Maana mimi nakuchukia kuachana,’ asema BWANA, Mungu wa Israeli.”
- Neno: “‘Ninachukia kuachana,’ asema Bwana, Mungu wa Israeli.”

But Malachi 2:16 is one of the more difficult verses to translate in the Bible. A direct translation of the Hebrew is, “Because **he** hates sending away, says the Lord...” The verse in Hebrew does not say, “**I** hate divorce. It says “**he**” hates. Who is the “**he**” who hates? Many Bible translations translate “**he**” as the husband who sends his wife away. This is a hateful thing for the husband to do. For example:

- NIV: “‘The man who hates and divorces his wife,’ says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘does violence to the one he should protect,’ says the LORD Almighty. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful.”
- ESV: “‘For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her,’ says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘covers his garment with violence,’ says the Lord of hosts. ‘So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.’”
- Habari Njema (This translation takes a different approach and says God hates both divorce and when husbands harm their wives.): “Mwenyezi-Mungu, Mungu wa Israeli asema: ‘Ninachukia talaka. Ninachukia mmoja wenu anapomtendea mkewe ukatili huo. Hakikisheni kwamba hakuna hata mmoja wenu anayekosa uaminifu kwa mkewe.’”

Read the larger context of Malachi in 2:13-16. What do you see?

It is possible that Malachi 2:16 is better translated as, “The Lord God says, ‘The husband who divorces his wife, instead of protecting her, hates and hurts her.’” When a man divorces his wife, he harms her. In this verse, it seems that God’s judgment is against the man who divorces his wife and not against the practice of divorce. Divorce grieves God. But he desires men to be faithful, protecting husbands. When they are not, this also grieves God.

*This teaching is offered to church leaders. It may not be wise to teach broadly that the Scripture may not be translated correctly. Therefore, another approach is to ask what else God hates.*

#### What else does the Bible say God hates?

Look at Proverbs 6:16-19:

“There are six things the Lord hates—no, seven things he detests:

- haughty eyes, (How often does one spouse think they are better than the other?)
- a lying tongue, (Lying to one’s spouse and family to cover adultery, or lying to one’s pastor by saying that there is no abuse)
- hands that kill the innocent, (If a woman says, “My husband will kill me,” listen to her!)
- a heart that plots evil, (We are called to love our spouse, not do evil to our spouse.)
- feet that race to do wrong, (Not only can an offending spouse have no desire for holiness, but also be eager to sin.)
- a false witness who pours out lies, (Blaming a spouse instead of admitting personal sin.)
- a person who sows discord in a family.” (Marriage is supposed to reveal the beauty of Christ, but some spouses act in ways that create problems instead of unity).

#### An Example of Things God Hates (from Marriage Beliefs Interviews)

- “Churches typically say, ‘God hates divorce.’ And some pastors tell couples getting married that there is no way they can be divorced. They will be married until death, no matter what. This teaching gives some men power. They think, ‘I can do anything, and you're not going to go anywhere.’ When some women go to their pastors and report what is happening in their homes, the pastors say, ‘Please bear with it. Be patient. Don't go anywhere. That is your husband. God gave you that husband. That man will change because of your prayers.’ The pastor will pray for the woman, and he will encourage her to pray but tell her to never leave her house. It doesn’t matter if the man is drinking and comes with a machete, and she’s so injured she is taken to the hospital. Still, the pastor says, ‘God hates divorce.’”

- ‘Some women die in their houses because the pastors tell them to stay. They tell themselves, ‘Let me obey God. If I die, I die because I was in my marriage, and I was obeying my God.’”

Discussion: Looking at Proverbs 6:16-19, how do you think God sees this above situation?

Conclusion: When we focus on “God hates divorce,” we are not protecting the victim in a violent or adulterous marriage. Instead, we are protecting the one who does violence or commits adultery. God loves justice. But when we ignore the sins of the offending spouse and hold tight to “God hates divorce,” we might cause injustice.

Discussion: What do you think about what you just heard? *The discussion question may seem weak, but this is a sensitive issue. Participants need a chance to process.*

### **When is Divorce Permitted?**

*Instruct participants to read this section in small groups, discuss where they agree and disagree, and record their questions. This lesson is for information and not to force a particular position.*

Discussion: Is divorce ever biblically permitted? If so, what are some valid reasons for divorce?

The following are *possible* reasons for divorce. Divorce *does not need to occur* in the following situations. These passages have different interpretations. Some Christians allow for divorce in more situations than these, and others do not believe these are reasons for divorce.

1. Adultery. In Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, the phrase “except for marital unfaithfulness” refers to general sexual immorality in the original Greek language. Sexual immorality could be interpreted as fornication, adultery, prostitution, pornography, or another sexual sin. Although a believer should enter divorce cautiously and only as a last resort, the act of sexual immorality may be cause for divorce. Marital unfaithfulness breaks the covenant vow, so although divorce is not required, it seems to be allowed.

Hopefully, the spouse who commits adultery will repent and grow in Christlikeness and holiness, seeking their spouse’s forgiveness. The other spouse may be able to forgive and move forward as the two work to rebuild and strengthen their marriage. A repentant spouse should be willing to express love by getting tested for sexually transmitted diseases. If a spouse is repentant and genuinely changes, divorce might be avoided as the couple works to reconcile and restore the marriage.

2. Spiritual Differences with Abandonment. In 1 Cor 7:12-17, Paul explains what happens if a believer is married to an unbeliever. If the unbelieving spouse is willing to continue being married, the believer must stay married. “If the

unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or sister is not bound in such circumstances (v15).” Many interpret this to mean that if a non-Christian spouse physically abandons a marriage, the believing spouse is free to divorce and remarry.

Reconciliation should be the goal, so if an unbelieving spouse leaves but doesn’t remarry, there is still the possibility of restoring the marriage. Therefore, the remaining spouse should be cautious about remarrying. Some would argue that remarriage would not be allowed unless the spouse who abandoned the marriage also commits adultery.

3. Abandonment through Abuse. The word translated “leaves” in 1 Cor 7:15 means “to separate.” For separation to be real, physically shifting out of the home is not necessary. One view is that an abuser breaks the one-flesh union of the marriage covenant by terrorizing their spouse. They “left” the spouse, although still remain in the same house.

Everyone is called to care for one’s family. Still, a husband, as head, is especially responsible. One who does not care for his family “has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (1 Tim 5:8).” The abuser, even if claiming to be a Christian, is acting as an unbeliever. Through such actions, an unrepentant, abusive spouse separates from the marriage covenant, and the victimized spouse may be free to seek divorce. The abusive spouse is the one who broke the marriage covenant. The divorce does not break it but is an acknowledgment that the abuser has already broken the covenant.

#### Other Common Reasons a Person Might Want a Divorce:

When Jesus said, “What God has joined together... (Matt 19:6),” it does not mean God hasn’t joined together *some* marriages. When people marry, they are married. God never allows for divorce if someone doubts God has confirmed the marriage.

After getting married, some people may think, “Why did I marry this person...my real soulmate is still out there!” Others haven’t married yet but are looking for “the One,” who is the perfect person or soul mate. They might say, “If I find this person, I am in God’s will.” However, this is an idea from romance movies, not the Bible. The Bible says nothing about soulmates. Once you enter a marriage covenant, you are married, and that person is “the One.” You may stop loving that person; you may even grow to hate that person. However, saying that the person is the “wrong One” for you is not a valid reason to end the relationship. Instead, you should try to restore the relationship. Once you are married, your spouse is the right person.

If Divorce Is Allowed, Is it Necessary? No. The Bible doesn’t encourage or command divorce. The decision to divorce should not be taken lightly, and divorce is never inevitable. Each situation is different, and the issues are complex. Generally, rebuilding a marriage is better than divorce. Christians should live lives of forgiveness (Luke 11:4; Eph 4:32), working on rebuilding their marriage whenever possible.

What Does the Bible Say about Remarriage after Divorce? The Bible is clear that remarriage is allowed after a person's spouse has died (Rom 7:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:39). What about remarriage after divorce when the ex-spouse is still alive? Read Luke 16:18, Mark 10:11-12, and 1 Cor. 7:10-11. It seems that remarriage is not generally allowed after divorce.

However, read Matt. 5:32 and 19:9. There seems to be the possibility of remarriage after a divorce due to adultery. These verses need to be read together with the other passages. Divorce should not be encouraged, but there appears to be a condition in these two verses that allows remarriage for the person who did not commit adultery. Similarly, 1 Cor 7:15 seems to imply remarriage for the abandoned spouse. "The person is no longer bound." From the previous section, it would also seem that abandonment of the marriage covenant by abuse could be classified in this category.

Therefore, biblically it seems that remarriage after divorce is allowable for the widow and the spouse who is the victim of adultery, abandonment, or abuse. The Bible does not permit remarriage for the spouse who caused the divorce. However, if someone divorces then marries someone else, restoration with the previous spouse (even when the person is repentant) is not possible. The new marriage is a real marriage.

The Bible does not speak about a person who divorces before being saved. Therefore, if a person is divorced as an unbeliever, this should not prevent them from remarrying after becoming a believer.

*In the large group, discuss participants questions and concerns. Then ask:*

Discussion: If Jesus allowed divorce for adultery, would it be sinful for the victim of adultery to get a divorce? How should we speak about divorced people who were the victims of adultery, abandonment, or abuse?

#### **Day 4—Lesson 2: Case Study: John and Patience, Part 2**

Return to Case Study: John and Patience. Work in the same small groups, with two people playing the roles of the couple and two as the counselors. Continue to practice the counseling steps. Then switch roles, allowing the "counselors" to play the role of the "couple."

Case Study Update: You learn that this week Patience told her pastor that John was going out of their marriage. The pastor spoke to John, and John admitted to this sin. The pastor then informed Patience that she needs to forgive John. Instead, Patience says she wants a divorce. What do you do?

#### **Day 4—Lesson 3: Abuse**

Not all abuse looks the same. The most common types of abuse in marriage are physical, emotional, or sexual violence.

If a spouse or children are being abused, you must help them have a safe place to stay. Sometimes people feel trapped, thinking there is no option for a "good Christian" to do

anything about the abuse. As church leaders and friends, we must work to ensure people's safety.

Marital Rape. One particularly damaging form of abuse is marital rape. Rape is when someone forces sex on another person or forces that person to commit sexual acts. Some people believe that rape cannot exist in marriage, because "two bodies became one, and one body cannot rape itself."

Discussion: If a wife does not want to have sex, but her husband physically forces her, has the man sinned? What kind of affects can forced sex have on a husband and wife?

Some people might refer to 1 Cor. 7:1-7 to support the view that it isn't wrong for a husband to force his wife to have sex. After all, "the wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband." The text does say that a husband and wife's bodies belong to each other. But how should we treat our bodies? With care. We don't abuse. There is nothing loving about demanding sex from your spouse. Paul's words should not be used as a weapon to force a spouse have sex. It completely misses what Paul is trying to say. Verse 5 says, "do not deprive." It does not say, "do not refuse." Nothing in the Bible says a person must always have sex whenever the spouse wants.

Marital rape goes against the biblical call for men to love their wives. Marital rape is violent, controlling, selfish, and abusive. It should never be a part of a Christian marriage. It completely contradicts a husband's command to love his wife as he would love his own body (Eph 5:28).

Discussion: "The way the husband treats his wife is not just about his intentions toward her, but his loyalty to the God who designed him."<sup>19</sup>

- What is the connection between Genesis 2:23-24 and loving God and loving neighbor with this quote?
- When a husband harms his wife, what does this tell us about him?
- As a counselor, how should you address an abusive spouse?

What to do if you are counseling someone who says they are being abused?

- Believe them and get them to safety. You can ask questions later.
- Create a safety plan and offer real help to provide safety. This plan will need to involve a larger community. Caring for someone who has been abused takes much effort.
- Begin individual counseling with the person who has been abused. They have been deeply wounded and will need much love from others and Jesus, the Suffering Savior. *By His Wounds: Trauma Healing for Africa* by Steve and Celestia Tracy is an excellent resource. There is also a workbook and translations in Kiswahili. See <https://www.mendingthesoul.org/global-work>.

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<sup>19</sup> Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), chap. 1, "The Dynamic Heart and Human Problems," para. 4, Kindle.

- As you care for the abused adult, consider how to care for any affected children.
- Once those who were abused are safe, offer counseling for the abuser. It is best that the counselor is not the same person counseling the person who was abused.
- Do not begin marriage counseling until a former abuser has exhibited lengthy biblical repentance and personal growth shown by loving God and neighbor. See the next section for signs of repentance.
- The church should not force someone to remain with an unrepentant adulterer or abuser. These people have abandoned their spouses and failed to keep the marriage covenant. Let us be kind and protective to those in the church who are abused in their marriages. God is the protector of the oppressed and those victimized by violence (See 2 Sam 22:1-31).

How to help someone who has been abused make a safety plan:

Sometimes we think there is not much we can do to help someone who is being abused. But often, we can do more than we think. You can use the following “Adult Personalized Safety Plan”<sup>20</sup> and adjust it to your cultural situation.

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<sup>20</sup> Steven R. Tracy and Celestia G. Tracy, *By His Wounds Workbook: Trauma Healing for Africa* (Wilsonville, OR: Mending the Soul Ministries, 2019), 212-13. Used with permission.



# Adult Personalized Safety Plan

Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety (Proverbs 11:14, NIV)

**Being aware + informing others + Finding support = Increased safety**

**Increasing safety in the relationship:**

1. I will have important phone numbers accessible to my children and myself

Relative \_\_\_\_\_ Friend \_\_\_\_\_

2. I can tell my relative \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ about the violence and ask them to talk to my spouse about the violence as a way of protecting me.

3. I can tell my parents \_\_\_\_\_ and his or her parents \_\_\_\_\_ about the violence and ask them to intervene and help us. If they don't know what to do they can help me find somebody else who knows how to help. This is the only way violence will end!

4. I can tell (neighbor) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ about the violence and ask them to call the police (or others who can help) if they hear suspicious noise coming from my home.

5. I will leave a change of clothes, copies of documents/keys if we have a car and extra money with \_\_\_\_\_ If I leave, I will bring:

*(Cross out items that do not apply)*

- |                              |                        |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| • My identity cards          | • Land sale agreement  |
| • School and medical records | • Clothing and bedding |
| • ATMs, jewelry, bank books, | • Marriage certificate |
| • Medications and money      |                        |

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6. If I leave my home I can go: (Please list as many places possible)

A. \_\_\_\_\_ B. \_\_\_\_\_  
C. \_\_\_\_\_ D. \_\_\_\_\_

7. To ensure safety and independence, I can: keep change for phone calls with me at all times, open my own saving account, rehearse my escape plan with my children and support person, and review my safety plan regularly.

8. Increasing safety when the relationship is over:

a. I can obtain a restraining order from the County Courthouse, keep it on me or near me at all times and leave a copy with \_\_\_\_\_

b. I can change the locks, install a security system, a smoke detector, and an outside lighting system.

c. I can shift from \_\_\_\_\_ (my place) to \_\_\_\_\_ (another place) where my tormentor may not know.

d. I can inform pastor \_\_\_\_\_ to help provide security and support.

e. I can report to \_\_\_\_\_ (advocacy NGOs) and lawyer \_\_\_\_\_

f. I can also avoid public places that I used while residing with my batterer. I can tell \_\_\_\_\_ at work about my situation so that she/he may screen my calls.

g. I will tell people who take care of my children the names of those who have permission to pick them up. They are \_\_\_\_\_

h. I will inform (Neighbor) \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ that my partner no longer resides with me and to call the police if he/she is seen near my home or children.

9. If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can call \_\_\_\_\_ and attend a support group for help.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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### How Can Abusers Change?<sup>21</sup>

It is not enough to just forgive someone who has been violent and then forget about it. Unless there is a godly life change, violence will happen again, and will often increase in severity. Instead, look for these heart changes to see if a violent person is changing.

- They fully admit what they have done.
- They stop making excuses and blaming others.
- They are working on correcting their mistakes and wrongs to other people.
- They accept responsibility for their abuse and admit that abuse is a choice they made.
- They can identify patterns of their own controlling behavior.
- They can identify the attitudes (bad roots) that motivate their abuse.
- They don't declare themselves cured but accept that it is usually a very long process (even decades-long) to overcome abusive patterns.
- They don't demand credit for improvements they've made.
- They don't believe if they have shown good behavior for a while, this means they have earned the right to be abusive occasionally.
- They are developing good fruit behaviors: being respectful, kind, supportive.
- They respond differently to their partner's anger and grievances.
- When they are in conflict, they behave differently than before.
- They accept the consequences of their actions, including not feeling sorry for themselves about the consequences and not blaming their partner or children for them.

Discussion: What questions do you have about abuse?

### **Day 4—Lesson 4: Case Study: Lydia**

*Work through this case study as a large group. "Lydia" is not present. Do not pretend to counsel her but rather discuss how to approach the situation. Make sure to consider how an adaptation of the Adult Safety Plan might help.*

Lydia is a Christian and has been married for 20 years. Her husband is not a believer and drinks a lot. Sometimes he comes home so drunk that he is vomiting and urinating on himself. Whenever he is drunk, he beats her and forces Lydia to have sex. One night, he beat her so badly that her neighbor had to take her to the hospital.

You are Lydia's pastor, and you hear she has been taken to the hospital. When you visit her, the nurse tells you what happened. What do you do?

### **Day 4—Lesson 5: Q&A and Evaluation**

*This last session will include open time for Q&A and a course evaluation. Students will also complete the post-course MBS.*

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<sup>21</sup> This list is adapted from National Domestic Violence Hotline, "Is Change Possible In An Abuser?," The Hotline, accessed July 17, 2023, <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/is-change-possible-in-an-abuser/>.

## APPENDIX 7

### CURRICULUM EVALUATION TOOL

As outlined in the “Goals” section of chapter 1, an expert panel used the following rubric to evaluate the marriage counseling curriculum.

Name of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

| Curriculum Evaluation Tool   |   |   |   |   |          |
|--|---|---|---|---|----------|
| 1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary         |   |   |   |   |          |
| Criteria   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Comments |
| <b>Biblical Faithfulness</b>   |   |   |   |   |          |
| Each lesson applies sound hermeneutics in its biblical interpretation.       |   |   |   |   |          |
| Each lesson is faithful to the theology of the Bible.                        |   |   |   |   |          |
| <b>Content &amp; Pedagogy</b>  |   |   |   |   |          |
| The content sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.        |   |   |   |   |          |
| Each section of the curriculum follows good pedagogy.                        |   |   |   |   |          |
| <b>Practical Application</b>   |   |   |   |   |          |
| The topics have practical implications in marriage counseling.               |   |   |   |   |          |
| The curriculum clearly details how to practice biblical marriage counseling. |   |   |   |   |          |
| <b>Cultural Relevancy</b>  |   |   |   |   |          |
| The curriculum is relevant to issues affecting marriages in Tanzania.        |   |   |   |   |          |
| The curriculum includes input from Tanzanian church leaders.                 |   |   |   |   |          |

Other Comments:

## APPENDIX 8

### PARTICIPANT COURSE EVALUATION

The following post-instruction evaluation tool was completed by participants at the end of the course. The purpose of the assessment was to improve the curriculum, as outlined in the “Goals” section of chapter 1.

| Biblical Marriage Counseling Course Evaluation   |   |   |   |   |                                 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---------------------------------|
| <i>Directions: Tick the box for each question to indicate your answer. Include comments to improve the curriculum.</i> |   |   |   |   |                                 |
| 1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = excellent  |   |   |   |   |                                 |
| Criteria   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Comments to IMPROVE Curriculum: |
| <b>Understandability</b>   |   |   |   |   |                                 |
| The course is presented at a level appropriate for most participants.  |   |   |   |   |                                 |
| <b>Content</b>   |   |   |   |   |                                 |
| This course addresses important theological issues affecting marriages.  |   |   |   |   |                                 |
| The course teaches how to practice marriage counseling.  |   |   |   |   |                                 |
| <b>Practical Application</b>   |   |   |   |   |                                 |
| The course includes opportunities to practice counseling.  |   |   |   |   |                                 |
| The course addresses issues that married couples deal with in daily life.  |   |   |   |   |                                 |
| Because I took this course, I have more confidence to counsel married couples biblically.                              |   |   |   |   |                                 |
| <b>Cultural Relevance</b>  |   |   |   |   |                                 |
| This course addresses important issues in my culture.  |   |   |   |   |                                 |
| After taking this course, I am more equipped to help marriages in my cultural setting.                                 |   |   |   |   |                                 |

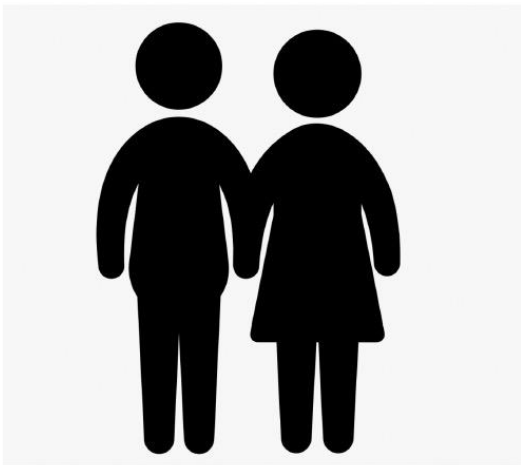
How has this training helped you?

What action do you plan to take as a result of this instruction?

APPENDIX 9  
ADVERTISEMENT FOR MARRIAGE  
COUNSELING TRAINING



# Marriage Counseling Training with Reach Tanzania



**Who:** Individuals Connected to Reach Tanzania

**When:** 24-27 April or 15, 22, & 29 April

**Where:** Mbezi Beach and Kunduchi areas.  
Ask about limited boarding options.

**Cost:** Free but lots of time and effort

**Contact:** Alyssa Dunker, WhatsApp:  
+13173150013

**REGISTER HERE!!**

The following advertisement was distributed to possible participants; it explained scheduling choices, prerequisites, and boarding options.

---

## Earn A Counseling Certificate

Become part of a growing community of pastoral counselors equipped to disciple and strengthen marriages. Participants who complete the April training AND all prerequisites will receive a Certificate in Counseling and a counseling skills book.

---

## Complete Your Pre-requisites

The Marriage Counseling training assumes you are familiar with the 5-step Counseling Methodology and have recently reviewed a theology of marriage class. These topics will NOT be taught in Marriage Counseling. To receive your certificate, you must:

- 1) Complete the introductory counseling class. You may have completed this last Oct/Nov or you can take it online in Feb/March. Information coming soon.
- 2) Complete the online Marriage Theology class in March/April, even if you previously took Marriage and Family at Reach Tanzania.

---

## Choose An April Training:

- 1) 4 days of training, Monday-Friday, 24-27 April, 9am-4:15pm OR
- 2) 3 days of training: Saturdays, 15, 22, & 29 April, 9am-7pm OR
- 3) Online only available for those outside of Dar es Salaam

APPENDIX 10  
TEACHING SCHEDULE

The following teaching schedule was used for Monday-Thursday and Saturday cohorts. Each lesson in the schedule is demarcated by the day and lesson number that corresponds with the curriculum and includes the recommended instructional time.

**MONDAY-THURSDAY COHORT**

| <b>Time</b> | <b>MONDAY</b>  | <b>Length</b> |
|-------------|----------------|---------------|
| 9:00        | Day 1—Lesson 1 | 45 min        |
| 9:45        | Day 1—Lesson 2 | 45 min        |
| 10:30       | Break          | 15 min        |
| 10:45       | Day 1—Lesson 3 | 45 min        |
| 11:30       | Day 1—Lesson 4 | 30 min        |
| 12:00       | Day 1—Lesson 5 | 45 min        |
| 12:45       | Lunch          | 30 min        |
| 1:15        | Day 1—Lesson 6 | 60min         |
| 2:15        | Day 1—Lesson 7 | 30 min        |
| 2:45        | Break          | 15 min        |
| 3:00        | Day 1—Lesson 8 | 60 min        |

| <b>Time</b> | <b>TUESDAY</b> | <b>Length</b> |
|-------------|----------------|---------------|
| 9:00        | Day 2—Lesson 1 | 30 min        |
| 9:30        | Day 2—Lesson 2 | 90 min        |
| 11:00       | Break          | 15 min        |
| 11:15       | Day 2—Lesson 3 | 45 min        |
| 12:00       | Day 2—Lesson 4 | 90 min        |
| 13:30       | Lunch          | 30 min        |
| 14:00       | Day 2—Lesson 5 | 45 min        |
| 14:45       | Break          | 15 min        |
| 15:00       | Day 2—Lesson 6 | 60 min        |

| <b>Time</b> | <b>WEDNESDAY</b> | <b>Length</b> |
|-------------|------------------|---------------|
| 9:00        | Day 3—Lesson 1   | 30 min        |
| 9:30        | Day 3—Lesson 2   | 90 min        |
| 11:00       | Break            | 15 min        |
| 11:15       | Day 3—Lesson 3   | 60 min        |
| 12:15       | Lunch            | 30 min        |
| 12:45       | Day 3—Lesson 4   | 120 min       |
| 14:45       | Break            | 15 min        |
| 15:00       | Day 3—Lesson 4   | 60 min        |

| <b>Time</b> | <b>THURSDAY</b> | <b>Length</b> |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 9:00        | Day 4—Lesson 1  | 90 min        |
| 10:30       | Break           | 15 min        |
| 10:45       | Day 4—Lesson 2  | 120 min       |
| 12:45       | Lunch           | 30 min        |
| 13:15       | Day 4—Lesson 3  | 60min         |
| 14:45       | Break           | 15 min        |
| 15:00       | Day 4—Lesson 4  | 60 min        |
| 15:30       | Day 4—Lesson 5  | 30 min        |

**SATURDAY COHORT**

| <b>Time</b> | <b>1ST SATURDAY</b> | <b>Length</b> |
|-------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 9:00        | Day 1—Lesson 1      | 45 min        |
| 9:45        | Day 1—Lesson 2      | 45 min        |
| 10:30       | Break               | 15 min        |
| 10:45       | Day 1—Lesson 3      | 45 min        |
| 11:30       | Day 1—Lesson 4      | 30 min        |
| 12:00       | Day 1—Lesson 5      | 45 min        |
| 12:45       | Lunch               | 45 min        |
| 13:30       | Day 1—Lesson 6      | 60min         |
| 14:30       | Day 1—Lesson 7      | 30 min        |
| 15:00       | Break               | 15 min        |
| 15:15       | Day 1—Lesson 8      | 60 min        |
| 16:15       | Day 2—Lesson 1      | 30 min        |
| 16:45       | Break               | 15 min        |
| 17:00       | Day 2—Lesson 2      | 90 min        |

| <b>Time</b> | <b>2ND SATURDAY</b> | <b>Length</b> |
|-------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 9:00        | Day 2—Lesson 3      | 45 min        |
| 9:45        | Day 2—Lesson 4      | 90 min        |
| 11:15       | Break               | 15 min        |
| 11:30       | Day 2—Lesson 5      | 45 min        |
| 12:15       | Day 2—Lesson 6      | 60 min        |
| 13:15       | Lunch               | 45 min        |
| 14:00       | Day 3—Lesson 1      | 30 min        |
| 14:30       | Day 3—Lesson 2      | 90 min        |
| 16:00       | Break               | 15 min        |
| 16:15       | Day 3—Lesson 3      | 60 min        |
| 17:15       | Break               | 15 min        |
| 17:30       | Day 3—Lesson 4      | 60 min        |

| <b>Time</b> | <b>3RD SATURDAY</b> | <b>Length</b> |
|-------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 9:00        | Day 3—Lesson 4      | 120 min       |
| 11:00       | Break               | 15 min        |
| 11:15       | Day 4—Lesson 1      | 90 min        |
| 12:45       | Lunch               | 45 min        |
| 13:30       | Day 4—Lesson 2      | 120 min       |
| 15:30       | Break               | 15 min        |
| 15:45       | Day 4—Lesson 3      | 60min         |
| 16:45       | Break               | 15 min        |
| 17:00       | Day 4—Lesson 4      | 60 min        |
| 18:00       | Day 4—Lesson 5      | 30 min        |

## APPENDIX 11

### PRE-MARITAL INSTRUCTION AREAS OF CONCERN

The MBI results identified “Lack of Preparation” as the second largest marriage problem. The following document represents how respondents understand the problem, their ideas for solutions, and a list of possible topics. Respondents communicated a desire to create a resource addressing these issues at a future date.

## Pre-Marital Instruction Areas of Concern

*Problem:* Couples are getting married without adequate preparation. Before their wedding, people are told they should not have sex outside of marriage, that they should leave their father and mother and become one flesh with their spouse, and that a husband must love his wife and a wife must obey her husband. The teaching is shallow, often cultural rather than biblical, and couples are unprepared to apply truths in their marriages. Couples do not know each other well.

*Solution:* Youth should be given instruction about marriage. When a couple gets engaged, they should receive pre-marital counseling for one to six months before their wedding date. In-laws should be included in the counseling. After marriage, churches should offer marriage enrichment seminars.

What should couples be taught or discuss in pre-marital counseling?

- Their commitment is between each other and God.
- The real meaning of *kuambatana*
- The position of children in marriage
- Discussion of both individual's pasts: relationships, any children, family of origin
- Money management/financial transparency.
- Sexual practice and transparency. What is the purpose of sex? What does sex accomplish, and what are its limitations? For example, sex cannot destroy lust.
- The harm of pornography
- Family planning
- Keeping the marriage bed pure
- How to forgive and ask for forgiveness
- Communication and conflict resolution
- Parenting issues
- How to connect love and submission with the way Jesus cares for the church
- Both marriage partners should seek to serve and not be served
- Understanding that you and your partner are both sinners. How can you love and show compassion to a sinner?
- Marriage is hard. It is a false teaching that a blessed life has no trials.
- How to love each other and practice the fruits of the Spirit within the marriage relationship
- Creating a vision for the marriage: What is its purpose? Transformation and spiritual maturity.
- Recognize that marriage is also spiritual. When there is a problem, husbands and wives must do more than fast and pray to address the issues.

## APPENDIX 12

### NOTES FROM PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH ABOUT SEXUAL ISSUES AND TRANSPARENCY

On Day 2—Lesson 6: Sexual Issues and Transparency, participants discussed how Christian couples can better plan physical intimacy. Participants requested the following notes be preserved as they consider how to implement some of the ideas within their families and ministry contexts.

## How Can Couples Plan Their Intimacy?

Regarding Married People:

- Can we experience healthy sex? “Physician, heal thyself.”
- Put others above self.
- Have accountability to grow in humility.
- Not misuse scripture that one should enjoy over another.
- The foundation is wrong. Among wives, sex is viewed as a duty. But it is not a duty. It is godly.
- Parents should be very careful having sex around children.
- We should have seminars for married people. We can share experiences and suggest how to help couples grow. We must teach what is biblical.
- There is a need for a Christian book to address sexual issues among married couples. It would include:
  - Use of correct words.
  - Discussion of styles, including oral sex.
  - Teaching newlyweds about lubrication.
  - A biblical teaching about sexuality.

Regarding Youth and Children:

- Discover what is taught by aunties and address these things.
- Consider *jando* and *unanygo* and how to make them Christian.
- Teach children correct words for body parts.
- Teaching youth to wait but also educate them, so that when they are married, they enter marriage with a healthy knowledge about sex.
- The dangers of porn and how to protect children.
- How to protect children from sexual abuse.

APPENDIX 13

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

The following certificate was given to participants who completed the required prerequisite work and attended the marriage counseling training.



# Reach Tanzania Bible School

**John Doe**

has successfully completed the Marriage Counselling, Introduction to Biblical Counselling, and  
Theology of Marriage courses,  
and is therefore awarded this

## **Marriage Counselling Short Course Certificate of Completion**

Dated this 11th day of May 2023

reach  
tanzania

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Alyssa Dunker, Teacher

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Mark Dunker, Director

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## ABSTRACT

### EQUIPPING CHURCH LEADERS FOR BIBLICAL MARRIAGE COUNSELING THROUGH REACH TANZANIA BIBLE SCHOOL IN DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA

Alyssa Noel Dunker, DEdMin  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Robert D. Jones

This project aimed to equip church leaders for biblical marriage counseling through Reach Tanzania Bible School (RTBS) in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Chapter 1 describes the historical and ministry context of RTBS, focusing on marriage and counseling issues, and includes the goals for this project. Chapter 2 provides an exegesis of five passages of the Bible (Eph 5:21-33; Gen 2:18-25; Phil 2:1-11; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-37) to demonstrate that biblical marriage counseling points to Christ to reorient a spouse to love God and the closest “one another.” Chapter 3 explores cultural issues in disagreement with biblical values particular to Tanzania that marriage counselors must understand and address. Chapter 4 presents the project itself, describing the specific curriculum’s process, content, and methodology. Chapter 5 evaluates the effectiveness of the project by its measurable goals.

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