

Criteria for Marriage Approval Part 1

“But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.” (1 Corinthians 7:17 KJV)

Some they speak and ask, ‘Where in the Bible the church interfered with the marriage of her members?’ Apostle Paul wrote a whole chapter, **1 Corinthians 7:1-40**, that deals with the issue of marriage. Paul instructed the Corinthians that as God had allocated to every man and had called to walk in a certain way, he, Apostle Paul is ordaining the same of what God ordained in all the churches. Paul needed to put a clear outline for marriage because the churches that were under his care and leadership were facing certain troubles in pertains to the issues of marriage and he needed to put clear outlines of how the members would conduct themselves regarding the subject of marriage.

In the same way, the church today is facing the challenge of raising Godly children who should know God, know His Word, and walk in His ways. Therefore the church needs to put outlines and criteria for Godly marriage. As Paul used the Scriptures to outline to the members of the churches under His care God’s will about marriage, we too this time we do the same.

Jesus also outlined to His disciples what is marriage and He made them understand that they needed to be well prepared and well determined because after marriage there is no chance to divorce and remarriage, *“4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, 5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Matthew 19:4-6 KJV)* Jesus also used the Scriptures of the Old Testament to speak about marriage. Jesus also warned them that His followers should not behave and do marry as the people at the time of Noah did, *“26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. 27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.” (Luke 17:26-27 KJV)* The people at the time of Noah were directed by their flesh to live for food and pleasure. They were not directed to marry and have Godly families according to God’s will. Rather prompted by lust, they did marry with what they like with their eyes: *“1 And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, 2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.” (Genesis 6:1-2 KJV)*

There are other Scriptures about certain marriages that had been brought to the church leaders for opinion and approval as the followings:

I. The marriages of the daughters of Zelophehad, who were given an inheritance of land from their father who had no son: The elders of their tribe brought the issue of their marriage to Moses stating that if they will marry men from other tribes their inheritance of the land will go to the other tribes. So the tribe of Manasseh leaders appealed to Moses that they should not marry from another tribe. Let us read the story here: *“1 And the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the*

families of the sons of Joseph, came near, and spake before Moses, and before the princes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel: 2 And they said, The LORD commanded my lord to give the land for an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel: and my lord was commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother unto his daughters. 3 And if they be married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then shall their inheritance be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and shall be put to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall it be taken from the lot of our inheritance. 4 And when the jubile of the children of Israel shall be, then shall their inheritance be put unto the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall their inheritance be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers. 5 And Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the LORD, saying, The tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well. 6 This is the thing which the LORD doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry. 7 So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. 8 And every daughter, that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel, shall be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his fathers. 9 Neither shall the inheritance remove from one tribe to another tribe; but every one of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep himself to his own inheritance. 10 Even as the LORD commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad: 11 For Mahlah, Tirzah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married unto their fathers brothers' sons: 12 And they were married into the families of the sons of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father.” (Numbers 35:1-12 KJV)

The issue of their marriages reached to the highest leadership of the congregation, to Moses and the princes, the chief fathers of the tribes, and Moses needed to raise the matter to God to know God’s will in that critical matter that pertains to their inheritance.

We are fully aware that our inheritance is in Heaven. But marriage and its outcome can either bring us to Heaven or hell. Marrying the wrong partner, at the wrong timing, and without preparedness will bring us away from God and caused us to raise non-godly children and we will add more misery and ugliness to what is going on.

* Marriage is not sinning, but the outcome of marriage of ungodly children, separation, adultery, divorce, and remarriage are all sins and God is calling us accountable for that. Such kind of outcome will affect the ministry and the church as a whole. Ungodly children due to wrong matching and unpreparedness before marriage are a disgrace for God’s church and will have bad effects on the testimony and the power of witnessing. * Therefore it becomes mandatory, and as part of the discipleship process, that the church should put her hands to put clear Scriptural outlines of how marriages needed to be approved and agreed upon.

Marriage is one of the offices that have restrictions and that need to be observed so that borders will not be crossed because the consequences of wrong marriages are havoc and cannot be easily corrected. Marriage is something that once it happens, cannot be reversed. Put in your mind also that divorce and remarriage are sins, against God’s Word and God’s will, so wrong marriages cannot be corrected by divorce and remarriage.

II. The marriage of Boaz from Ruth: Is another marriage that was brought to the attention of the elders of the city at the city gate and we can read the details of that here:

“1 Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down. 2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. 3 And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: 4 And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it. 5 Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. 6 And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it. 7 Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel. 8 Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe. 9 And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. 10 Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. 11 And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem: 12 And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman. 13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son.” (Ruth 4:1-13 KJV)

Boaz needed to approach the kinsman who was before him about the land of Naomi and the widow Ruth. He called the kinsman and he called ten elders to witness what was going on, to give their approval and blessings to the marriage. The kinsman declined to buy the land when he came to know that he needed to marry Ruth the widow. Upon that situation Boaz announced that he purchased the land from Naomi, and purchased Ruth, the widow of Mahlon, to be his wife so that the name of the dead will not be cut off from among his brethren, *“9 And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. 10 Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day.” (Ruth 4:9-10 KJV)* The people and elders heard and witnessed what was taken place, and blessed the marriage of Boaz to Ruth. Boaz was a well prepared, responsible, and mature person, and his marriage was to fulfill his commitment before God and before men and to build up a family and to raise a child who will continue the line of David's family, till the coming of the Messiah.

III. The marriages of the six hundreds men of Benjamin who left after the inhalation campaign against the men of Benjamin; their marriage was arranged by the leaders of the Israelites: This is an event that the church went ahead to arrange marriages for 600 men who were left after the inhalation of the tribe of Benjamin. Their marriage was arranged after the decision of the leaders of the Israelites that no tribe is to be missing among the Israelites. We can read in **Judges 21** how those marriages arranged:

“1 Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpeh, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife. 2 And the people came to the house of God, and abode there till even before God, and lifted up their voices, and wept sore; 3 And said, O LORD God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to day one tribe lacking in Israel? 4 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early, and built there an altar, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. 5 And the children of Israel said, Who is there among all the tribes of Israel that came not up with the congregation unto the LORD? For they had made a great oath concerning him that came not up to the LORD to Mizpeh, saying, He shall surely be put to death. 6 And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day. 7 How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by the LORD that we will not give them of our daughters to wives? 8 And they said, What one is there of the tribes of Israel that came not up to Mizpeh to the LORD? And, behold, there came none to the camp from Jabeshgilead to the assembly. 9 For the people were numbered, and, behold, there were none of the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead there. 10 And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children. 11 And this is the thing that ye shall do, Ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lain by man. 12 And they found among the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead four hundred young virgins, that had known no man by lying with any male: and they brought them unto the camp to Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan. 13 And the whole congregation sent some to speak to the children of Benjamin that were in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them. 14 And Benjamin came again at that time; and they gave them wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabeshgilead: and yet so they sufficed them not. 15 And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel. 16 Then the elders of the congregation said, How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing the women are destroyed out of Benjamin? 17 And they said, There must be an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not destroyed out of Israel. 18 Howbeit we may not give them wives of our daughters: for the children of Israel have sworn, saying, Cursed be he that giveth a wife to Benjamin. 19 Then they said, Behold, there is a feast of the LORD in Shiloh yearly in a place which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah. 20 Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards; 21 And see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin. 22 And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them, Be favourable unto them for our sakes: because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war: for ye did not give unto them at this time, that ye should be guilty. 23 And the children of Benjamin did so, and took them wives, according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in

them.” (Judges 21:1-23 KJV) Here the crucial rule for the church had been revealed, and the church in that event was the hand of God to show mercy to those men of Benjamin who were afflicted by the judgment of God.

IV. The wedding at Cana that was attended by Jesus and His disciples: This is another marriage that was brought to the church, as we read here:

“1 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: 2 And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. 3 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. 4 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. 5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. 6 And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. 7 Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. 8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. 9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, 10 And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. 11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.” (John 2:1-11 KJV)

In that wedding, the first miracle was made by Jesus and through that, He manifested His glory. Jesus was called to that marriage with His disciples. Those who invited Him were not aware that the Son of God is attending the wedding. When Jesus attended there, other events took place that put things in order:

- His mother was told not to put herself in things that she should not.
- The servants were asked to do all that He asked of them to do.
- The bridegroom was reprimanded for not giving a good drink at the beginning.
- The bridegroom was taught that he needed to be a good steward and not to invite many people and be in want.

They were not aware that God was among them and He had sent His son to them. But now we are fully aware that Jesus is with us, God’s Word we have in the Bible, and that we cannot keep his commands and teachings if we go for marriages that do not glorify God.

Jesus fixed things not done well in the marriage at Cana. But Jesus is not here with us so that we can do wrong and abuse His grace, and that He will fix what we do wrong, but Jesus is with us to help us as we are willing to obey Him and do His will in pertains to marriage.

V. The marriage of Adam with Eve: That was the first marriage that took place in the world where God’s son, Adam, married the woman that God prepared for him. God had prepared Adam and had prepared everything for Adam before that marriage took place. **We need to remember as a church that God is there in every marriage and He had given us His Word and in details in the Bible and we cannot play the fool and then we will come to ask Him to correct the wrongdoing of our hands.**

My Dear and Beloved: Come now to God and reflect on the message that we received today and start to apply in your life, in pertain to preparation for Godly marriage. Is time for you now to renew your mind and to accept that the church God had placed on earth to help you how to walk correctly according to the Word of God that we have in the Bible. God was the one who arranged for Adam his marriage, and he is in every marriage to guide, to lead, to correct, and to provide, therefore allow God to come into your life and reign over you and to lead you in the good plan that he has for you. Let us pray ...

My Prayer: Father God, I come before you in the name of Jesus, who died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead to give me eternal life. Lord thank you for your Word that teaches me about the important role that the church have in my life and in pertains to marriage and in preparation for Godly marriage. Lord thank you for the good plan that you have for me, and thank you for the teaching, the corrections and the admonishments that I received from this message.

Confess and renounce all your sins. Confess and renounce your pride, and your non willingness to be guided and led by God’s Word and His church. Confess and renounce you are not willing to open up to the church and ask counsel and advices. Confess and renounce doing your own will and plan and not the will nor the plan of God. Confess and renounce your lack of physical and spiritual preparations and your lack of resources but inspite of that you went for marriage. Confess and renounce your bad stewardship and your lack of saving. Confess your lack of reading God’s Word and your lack of prayers. Confess and renounce your yoke with non believers, having many friends and in bondage with the Media. Confess and renounce your bad example and your non willingness to serve God and suffer for Him. Lord forgive me, I repent of the following sins _____.

Lord I commit myself to apply what I learned today from your Word in this message. Lord I surrender my life and my will to you to lead me in the way you want me to move. Lord I am willing to open up my plans to the church to receive correction, counsel and advices. Lord I am willing to go through the process of preparation for Godly marriage to prepare myself for the kind of life, marriage and family life that you had prepared for me. Lord I am willing to serve you and to live my life according to your plan and will for me.

Lord thank you for my Brothers and Sisters who repented of their sins, surrendered their will and humbled themselves and committed to live according to your will and follow your plan for them and the teaching that we received in this message. Lord bless them and reward them and let their lives be good testimonies to others to follow you.

Lord, bless us as your church, and help us to continue to teach and implement the preparation for Godly marriage and to prepare your people to have Godly marriages and Godly families. Lord lead us to go on and evangelize, and make new disciples and train new workers to plant new Bible studies and congregations for the church. Lord we pray for more people to get water baptized and receive the Holy Spirit baptism. Lord fulfill the vision of the church, ‘Multiplication in peace with implementing the whole will of God.’ Lord bless us, enlarge our territory, let your hand be with us and free us from harm so that we will not feel pain. May the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all in Jesus name, Amen.

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