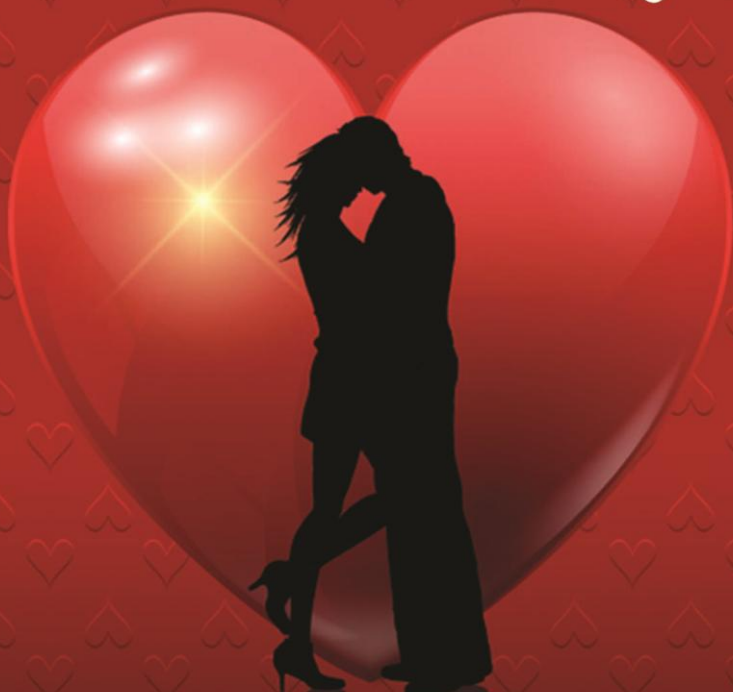


Before you say, *Yes, I do*

*A Practical Guide to
Premarital Counseling*



BISHOP ISHAYA ABDULMALIK

Copyright © June, 2026

Bishop Ishaya Abdulmalik

Phone: +255-752429810

Email: bishopabdulmalik@gmail.com

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Cover design & Typesetting by

DL Bookstore

Phone: +255 680 375 970

Email: authors@dlbookstore.com

Website: www.dlbookstore.com

Arusha, Tanzania

ISBN: 978 9912 44 286 3

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as may be expressly permitted by the applicable copyright statutes or writing by the author.

CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION	v
GETTING STARTED	ix
HOW TO USE THIS BOOK	xii
PART I: FOUNDATIONS OF A GODLY MARRIAGE	
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
What Is Marriage According to God?.....	1
CHAPTER TWO	5
Spiritual Compatibility	5
CHAPTER THREE	11
Understanding temperaments in marriage	11
CHAPTER FOUR	19
More than a feeling.....	19
CHAPTER FIVE.....	25
Love, Commitment, and Sacrifice	25

PART II: CONVERSATIONS YOU MUST HAVE

CHAPTER SIX	31
Faith and Values	31
CHAPTER SEVEN	37
Finances and stewardship	37
CHAPTER EIGHT	43
Communication and conflict resolution.....	43
CHAPTER NINE	49
Family background and in-laws.....	49
CHAPTER TEN	55
Intimacy and sexuality.....	55
CHAPTER ELEVEN	61
Roles and responsibilities	61

PART III: BUILDING TOGETHER

CHAPTER TWELVE.....	67
Vision, purpose, and calling	67
CHAPTER THIRTEEN	73
The importance of community	73
CHAPTER FOURTEEN.....	77
Planning a Christ-centered wedding and beyond.....	77
FINAL WORD	83

INTRODUCTION



Preparing for a covenant, not just a ceremony

Engagement is a beautiful and exciting season. You have found someone who makes your heart smile, who shares your dreams, and who might just be “the one.” The ring has been given, the date is set, and wedding plans are in motion. However, before you say, “Yes, I do,” there is one question every engaged couple must prayerfully consider:

Are you truly prepared, not just for a wedding, but also for a Christ-centered marriage?

In today’s world, weddings are celebrated with great fanfare. Hours are poured into choosing flowers, venues, colors, playlists, and outfits. Yet, so many couples stand at the altar with little understanding of the sacred covenant they are entering into. The result? Marriages that start beautifully but crumble under the weight of unmet expectations, miscommunication, and spiritual disconnection. That is not God’s design.

God, not as a social contract, but as a holy covenant, created marriage. It is meant to be a living reflection of Christ’s relationship with His Church, full of love, grace, sacrifice,

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

and purpose. It is a partnership designed to bring Him glory, advance His Kingdom, and build a legacy of faith that impacts generations.

This book is written to help you pause, reflect, and prepare. It is not here to scare you with statistics or pressure you with perfection. Instead, BEFORE YOU SAY, “YES, I DO” offers a roadmap to help you:

- Understand what marriage truly is from a biblical perspective.
- Explore the foundations of emotional, spiritual, and relational readiness.
- Communicate with wisdom, resolve conflict with grace, and build trust.
- Embrace God’s design for love, leadership, submission, and service.
- Create a shared vision and purpose for your life together.
- Connect with a supportive community that uplifts and holds you accountable.
- Plan a wedding that honors God—and a marriage that thrives beyond it.

Whether you are newly engaged, or nearing your wedding day, this book is for you. Each chapter contains biblical truths, real-life insights from the wealth of years of counselling with intended and marriage couples, discussion

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

prompts, reflection questions, and prayers to help guide you both individually and as a couple.

However, this is not just a workbook, it is a heart check. An opportunity to ask deep questions. To confront fears. To celebrate the beauty of love and commitment. Ultimately, to say, “Yes” not only to your partner, but also to God’s vision for your life.

Because before you say, “yes, I do” to each other, you need to say “yes, Lord” to His will, His timing, and His ways for your life.

So take a deep breath. Open your heart. Invite God into this season of preparation. In addition, get ready to build something beautiful, lasting, and anchored in Christ.

Let us begin...

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

GETTING STARTED

Foundations for the Journey



Why premarital counseling?

Marriage is a sacred covenant, not just a romantic partnership. It is one of the most important decisions you will ever make, second only to your decision to follow Christ. Yet, many couples spend more time planning their wedding than preparing for their marriage.

Premarital counseling is about intentional preparation. It helps couples:

- Clarify expectations that may be unspoken or unrealistic.
- Uncover potential areas of conflict and learn how to address them with wisdom and grace.
- Build communication and problem-solving skills grounded in biblical truth.
- Explore spiritual, emotional, and relational compatibility.

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

— Create a strong foundation that honors God and supports long-term growth

“By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.” Proverbs 24:3-4

Premarital counseling provides that wisdom and understanding, helping you build your home with purpose, not just passion.

Whether you have dated for years or months, whether you feel very ready or a little nervous, premarital counseling helps ensure that your “yes” is rooted in clarity, not just chemistry.

God’s design for marriage

Marriage did not start with culture; it started with God.

“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” Genesis 2:18

Marriage was God’s idea, created not to fulfill selfish desires, but to reflect His love, unity, and fulfill his purpose.

Here is what Scripture teaches about God’s design for marriage:

1. Marriage is a Covenant, Not a Contract

A contract says, “I’ll stay as long as you make me happy.”

A covenant says, “I’m committed to love you as Christ loves, even when it is hard.” “... yet is she thy companion, and the

wife of thy covenant. Malachi 2:14 “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;” Ephesians 5:25

2. Marriage Mirrors Christ and the Church

Ephesians 5 describes marriage as a living symbol of Christ’s love for His bride, the Church. That love is sacrificial, steadfast, and sanctifying.

3. Marriage Is a Ministry

Your relationship is not just about you, it is a witness to others. Your love, forgiveness, patience, and unity can point others to Jesus.

4. Marriage Is a Partnership with Purpose

God brings two people together not just to share life, but also to serve Him in fulfil his divine purpose together. Your gifts, personalities, and callings come together to accomplish something greater than either of you could do alone.

Marriage is beautiful, but it is also spiritual warfare. The enemy opposes anything that reflects God’s heart. That is why preparing for marriage with God’s design in mind is essential, not optional.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK



This book will guide you through critical conversations and spiritual preparation during your engagement season. Whether you are reading it together as a couple, with a mentor, premarital class, or in a church group, here is how to get the most out of it:

1. Read One Chapter at a Time

Do not rush. Each chapter builds on the next. Take your time and let the content spark meaningful conversations.

2. Reflect Individually and Together

At the end of each chapter, you will find Reflection Questions and a Prayer Together. Answer the questions separately at first, then come together to discuss your thoughts honestly and humbly.

3. Be Open and Vulnerable

This process is not about giving the “right” answers; it is about getting to the truth. The more honest you are, the stronger your foundation will be.

4. Involve a Trusted Mentor or Pastor

Invite a mature, godly couple or a church leader to walk through this with you. Their wisdom and objectivity can be incredibly helpful.

5. Pray Together Regularly

Your spiritual connection matters. Praying together builds intimacy, deepens trust, and keeps your focus on Christ.

6. Use This Book alongside Other Resources

This book can be used with formal premarital counseling, church-based programs, a stand-alone guide, or as a textbook in a premarital class. Do not hesitate to supplement it with Scripture, sermons, and other faith-based materials.

Marriage preparation is not about being perfect, it is about being intentional.

This book is a tool, but God is the Builder. As you read, reflect, and pray together, invite Him to shape every part of your relationship.

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:” Philippians 1:6

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

PART I: FOUNDATIONS OF A GODLY MARRIAGE

CHAPTER ONE



What Is Marriage According to God?

*"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and
hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."*

Genesis 2:24 (ESV)

Marriage Is God's Idea

Before the rings, the vows, and the beautiful ceremonies, marriage was God's idea. It was not invented by culture or society; God, the Creator Himself in the Garden of Eden established it. When God made Adam, He said it was not good for man to be alone, so He made Eve as a suitable helper, and in doing so, instituted the very first marriage.

From the beginning, marriage was meant to be a sacred covenant, a reflection of God's love and unity. It is designed to be a lifelong bond between a man and a woman, joined together not just emotionally and physically, but spiritually.

This divine foundation is what sets Christian marriage apart; it is not just about two people loving each other, but about

two people joining together to love God better and together fulfil God's purpose.

A Covenant, Not a Contract

In today's world, many see marriage as a contract; something that can be broken if one party does not fulfill their part. However, in God's Word, marriage is described as a covenant. A covenant is a sacred promise, witnessed and sealed by God Himself. It is not based on convenience or conditions, but on commitment.

Malachi 2:14 describes marriage as a covenant before God. This means it is meant to be honored, cherished, and protected. It's not a temporary agreement but a lasting vow to love, serve, and remain faithful, just as Christ remains faithful to His Church. "... yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant." Malachi 2:14

The Purpose of Marriage

God designed marriage with purpose. Here are a few of the key reasons why He created it:

- **To Reflect His Love:** Marriage is a living picture of Christ's relationship with the Church (Ephesians 5:25-33). Husbands are commanded to love their wives sacrificially, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her, and the wives to submit to their husbands as the church submits to Christ in all things.
- **To Provide Companionship:** Genesis 2 shows that it was not good for Adam to be alone. Marriage provides a unique kind of friendship and

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

companionship where two become one as they forge forward to fulfill God's divine purpose as well as share life's joys and challenges together.

- **To Multiply and Build Families:** God instructed Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28). Marriage provides the foundation for raising children in a godly environment.
- **To Grow in Holiness:** Marriage is not just about happiness it is about holiness. It is in the closeness of marriage that God often shapes us, challenges us, and grows us to become more like Christ.

Marriage Is a Calling

Not everyone is called to marriage. If you are, it is a calling that requires preparation, prayer, and purpose. It is not something to enter into lightly or out of pressure, sentiment or competition. Saying “yes” to marriage is saying “yes” to a life of partnership, sacrifice, and growth under God's direction. Before you say “I do,” you must ask: Do I understand what marriage really is? Am I prepared to live out this covenant in a way that honors God?

This chapter is just the beginning, but understanding marriage through God's eyes is foundational. It will shape how you approach every conversation, every decision, and every step forward with your fiancé.

Reflection Questions:

- 1. How would you define marriage in your own words?*

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

2. *What does the idea of “covenant” mean to you in the context of marriage?*
3. *In what ways do you see your relationship as a reflection of God’s love?*
4. *Are there any cultural ideas about marriage you need to unlearn or challenge?*

Prayer Together:

Lord, thank You for designing marriage with such beauty and purpose. Help us to see it as you do, not just as a partnership, but also as a holy covenant. Prepare our hearts to love sacrificially, commit faithfully, and grow spiritually. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

CHAPTER TWO



Spiritual Compatibility

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.” 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (ESV)

Understanding Spiritual Compatibility

Spiritual compatibility goes beyond sharing the same church or religious label, it is about aligning your hearts, values, and goals under God’s guidance.

When two individuals grow in their faith together, they build a foundation that can weather life’s storms.

For an engaged couple, this means being intentional about nurturing a relationship that is centered on prayer, Scripture, and mutual spiritual growth.

Why It Matters

- **Unified Purpose:** When you both understand and share God's vision, your relationship takes on a purposeful direction. Your shared faith becomes the anchor that keeps you rooted amid life's uncertainties.
- **Growing Together:** Spiritual compatibility means you are committed to growing together in Christ. It encourages you to hold each other accountable, challenge one another to greater spiritual heights, and celebrate the small victories on your journey.

Shared Faith Practices

A key component of spiritual compatibility is the adoption of shared practices that strengthen your relationship with God and with one another.

Praying Together

Prayer is a powerful tool that invites God into every aspect of your relationship. Establishing a habit of praying together can create intimacy and open the door for God's guidance.

- **Daily Devotions:** Consider setting aside time each day for joint prayer and Bible study.
- **Prayer Journals:** Share your prayer journals with each other to reflect on God's work in your lives.

Studying Scripture Together

Regular Bible study is essential in fostering spiritual growth. By exploring God's Word together, you can build a common understanding of His will for your marriage.

- **Bible Studies for Couples:** Join a couples' Bible study group or create your own study plan at home.
- **Discuss and Reflect:** Take time to discuss what the Scriptures mean to each of you and how they apply to your lives.

Discerning God's Will as a Couple

In a world full of noise and competing priorities, discerning God's will is essential. Here are a few ways to ensure your decisions reflect His guidance:

Seek Wise Counsel

- **Mentorship:** Engage with a trusted pastor or a couple who exemplify a Christ-centered marriage. Their wisdom can help you navigate challenges and confirm your decisions.
- **Community Support:** Being part of a faith community where you can share your journey will provide additional layers of accountability and insight.

Make Decisions Together

- **Mutual Submission:** Ephesians 5:21 instructs us to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Though the husband is called and saddled with the responsibility of being the captain of the boat in

marriage, mutual submission is especially important when making decisions that affect both of you.

- **Discernment through Prayer:** Regularly ask God to direct your steps. Whether planning a wedding, choosing a home, or setting life goals, rely on prayer to guide your path.

Facing Spiritual Challenges

No journey is without its challenges, and the spiritual aspect of your relationship may face obstacles. Recognizing these challenges early can prepare you to meet them with grace.

Differences in Spiritual Maturity

It is common for one partner to be further along in their faith journey than the other is. Embrace this difference as an opportunity for growth:

- **Patience and Encouragement:** Support each other in learning and growing at your own pace.
- **Continuous Learning:** Consider attending workshops, retreats, or couples' counseling sessions focused on spiritual development.

External Influences

Life's pressures, such as work stress, cultural expectations, and social media, can sometimes distract you from your spiritual walk.

- **Setting Boundaries:** Identify and limit influences that hinder your spiritual growth.

- **Staying Focused:** Create rituals that remind you to center your relationship on God, whether that is a weekly church service, a community event, or a couple's retreat.

Reflection Questions

- 1. In what ways do you currently nurture your spiritual life individually, and how can you grow these habits together as a couple?*
- 2. How can you ensure that your decisions and goals align with God's will for your marriage?*
- 3. What challenges might arise from differences in your spiritual maturity, and how can you address them with love and patience?*
- 4. How do you envision your shared spiritual practices to strengthen your bond?*

Prayer Together

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of faith and for drawing us together in your love. As we prepare for marriage, help us build a relationship rooted in your truth and grace. Guide our prayers, our conversations, and our decisions; so that every step we take align with your will. Teach us to lean on each other and on you, trusting that with you as our guide, we can overcome any challenge. In Jesus' name, Amen.

This chapter invites you to build a partnership that is not only romantic but also spiritually robust. By fostering

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

spiritual compatibility, you set the stage for a marriage that honors God and withstands the tests of time.

CHAPTER THREE



Understanding temperaments in marriage

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up.” Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 (NIV)

Why Temperament Matters

When preparing for marriage, one of the most enlightening things you can learn about each other is your individual temperament. Your temperament is the God-given pattern of your personality that influences how you think, respond emotionally, communicate, and relate to the world around you. Understanding temperaments is not about putting each other in a box, but about increasing awareness and empathy for how God has wired your future spouse, and how your differences can become strengths when stewarded with wisdom and love.

In marriage, conflicts often arise not from a lack of love but from a lack of understanding. When you realize that your fiancé is not being “difficult” but is simply different, it

changes your approach. Compatibility is not about being the same; it is about learning how to fit together in a way that brings out the best in each other.

Let us explore the four classic temperaments, and see how they can shape compatibility in your marriage.

The Four Classic Temperaments

Though no one fits perfectly into a single category, most people have one or two dominant temperaments. Here is a simple overview:

Sanguine – The Fun-Loving Extrovert

- **Strengths:** Outgoing, talkative, optimistic, warm, energetic.
- **Challenges:** Tends to be disorganized, impulsive, and easily distracted.
- **Marriage note:** Sanguine bring joy and spontaneity. They thrive on connection and need affirmation and variety.

Choleric – The Driven Leader

- **Strengths:** Confident, goal-oriented, assertive, visionary, decisive.
- **Challenges:** Can be controlling, impatient, and insensitive to emotion.

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

- **Marriage note:** Choleric are natural leaders. They bring direction but must learn to listen and collaborate.

Melancholic – The Thoughtful Perfectionist

- **Strengths:** Analytical, deep thinking, loyal, sensitive, detail-oriented.
- **Challenges:** Can be moody, overly critical, and perfectionistic.
- **Marriage note:** Melancholic value depth and quality. They bring emotional insight but need encouragement to avoid overthinking.

Phlegmatic – The Calm Peacemaker

- **Strengths:** Easygoing, dependable, kind, good listener, steady.
- **Challenges:** May be passive, indecisive, and avoid conflict.
- **Marriage note:** Phlegmatic offer peace and patience. They avoid drama but need motivation and encouragement.

Temperament pairings in marriage

Now let us take a closer look at how these temperaments work in combination within a marriage:

1. Sanguine + Phlegmatic

- **Why it works:** This is a joyful, relaxed pairing. The Sanguine brings energy and fun, while the Phlegmatic brings calm and stability. The Sanguine keeps things lively; the Phlegmatic ensures things do not get out of control.
- **Potential challenges:** Both may avoid structure and responsibilities if not intentional.

“Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). This couple may need to grow in shared discipline and intentionality.

2. Choleric + Phlegmatic

- **Why it works:** The Choleric’s drive complements the Phlegmatic’s steadiness. The Choleric leads with confidence; the Phlegmatic supports with quiet strength. The balance between action and peace can be powerful.
- **Potential challenges:** If the Choleric is too dominant, the Phlegmatic may retreat or shut down emotionally.

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2). Choleric must lead with humility and include their partner in decisions.

3. Melancholic + Sanguine

- **Why it works:** This couple brings the best of both worlds: deep, meaningful insight from the

Melancholic and light-hearted, relational joy from the Sanguine. They can learn a lot from each other's strengths.

- **Potential challenges:** Their differences may create frustration; Sanguines may feel restricted, and Melancholics may feel overlooked.

“Love is patient, love is kind... it is not self-seeking” (1 Corinthians 13:4–5). This couple thrives when they choose grace over judgment.

4. Melancholic + Phlegmatic

- **Why it works:** Both tend to be calm, loyal, and steady. The Melancholic brings depth; the Phlegmatic brings peace. This couple may be deeply committed and emotionally stable.
- **Potential challenges:** Together, they may struggle with passivity or avoidance of conflict or decision-making.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord” (Colossians 3:23). They may need to encourage one another toward initiative and shared purpose.

5. Choleric + Melancholic

- **Why it works:** The Choleric provides vision and momentum; the Melancholic ensures quality and careful planning. This can be a high-achieving, thoughtful pairing.

- **Potential challenges:** The Choleric's intensity and the Melancholic's perfectionism can create control issues or emotional shutdowns.

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves" (Philippians 2:3). Mutual respect and gentleness are key.

Compatibility vs. Commitment

While understanding temperament is helpful, it is essential to remember this truth: **compatibility does not guarantee success, and differences do not guarantee failure.** What matters more than your combination is your character, your commitment to grow, and your willingness to love sacrificially.

God can bless any pairing couple, when both individuals surrendered to Him, and are committed to loving each other as Christ loves the Church. Your temperament may explain your behavior, but it does not excuse immaturity or sin. Maturity, not similarity, is the key to lasting love.

Reflection Questions

Take time to reflect and discuss the following with your fiancé:

1. *What is your primary temperament? What about your partner's?*
2. *How do your strengths complement one another?*
3. *What potential challenges could arise from your differences?*

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

4. *How can you intentionally grow to better love and support one another?*
5. *In what ways can your temperament pairing reflect the image of God in your marriage?*

Pray this together

Lord, thank you for making us unique and wonderful. Help us to understand each other more deeply through the lens of your truth. Teach us to embrace our differences with grace, and to build a marriage that reflects your love, patience, and unity. May our strengths serve one another, and may our weaknesses lead us to depend on you more. In Jesus' name, Amen.

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

CHAPTER FOUR



More than a feeling

*“Can two walk together unless they are agreed?” Amos 3:3
(NKJV)*

Exploring compatibility beyond temperament

When two people come together in marriage, they bring not only their personalities and love for each other, but also their histories, worldviews, expectations, and habits, many of which are shaped by their environment, upbringing, culture, personal experiences, and education. These factors, though often overlooked, play a crucial role in marital compatibility.

Let’s explore each area and how it can impact your future marriage.

1. Environmental Background: The Lens You See Life Through

Our environment shapes how we see the world and relate to it. A person who grew up in a busy, fast-paced city might

view time, security, and independence differently than someone raised in a small rural town.

Examples of Environmental Differences:

- *Pace of life (fast vs. slow)*
- *Access to opportunities*
- *Views on privacy, community, and safety*
- *Responses to stress or change*

“The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.” Proverbs 22:3 (NIV)

Understanding your environmental differences helps you wisely prepare for marital adjustments.

Reflection Exercise:

- *Discuss the kind of neighborhood you grew up.*
- *How does that influence your idea of an ideal home or lifestyle?*

2. Upbringing & Family Values: Your First Lessons in Love

Your family of origin taught you consciously or unconsciously, what love, conflict, forgiveness, and gender roles look like.

Consider:

- *Was love expressed with words, actions, or not at all?*

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

— *How were chores, finances, and responsibilities handled?*

— *How did your parents resolve disagreements?*

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6 (NKJV)

Your upbringing trained you. The question is; was it a training you want to continue or correct?

Couples Exercise:

1. Each partner writes down three things they admired about their parents' marriage and three things they want to do differently.
2. Share and discuss them honestly.

3. Cultural Background: Honoring Heritage, Blending Values

Culture informs everything from communication styles to gender expectations and spiritual practices. When it is not understood or respected, cultural differences can become a source of division.

Intercultural Marriages Must Navigate:

- *Language and tone*
- *Authority structures*
- *Holidays and traditions*
- *Extended family involvement*

“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude...from every nation, tribe, people and language.”
Revelation 7:9 (NIV)

God delights in cultural diversity. Marriage should reflect unity in that diversity.

Discussion Prompt:

- *What cultural traditions are important to you?*
- *Are there any that you would want to pass on to your children?*

4. Personal Experiences: The Story You Carry

Each person has unique life experiences: joys, pains, milestones, failures. These experiences affect emotional availability and stability, trust, vulnerability, and how we relate to others.

Examples:

- *Trauma or abandonment*
- *Past relationships or betrayals*
- *Career highs or disappointments*
- *Church experiences (positive or toxic)*

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”
Psalm 147:3 (NIV)

Marriage does not heal past wounds, but it will expose them. Healing must begin before the vows.

Individual Reflection:

- *What significant past experiences have shaped your views on relationships?*
- *Have you fully processed and healed from them?*

5. Educational and Intellectual Compatibility: A Meeting of Minds

This is less about degrees and more about how you think; solve problems, and value growth. Do you both respect each other's intellect, even if one is more formally educated?

Compatibility Questions:

- *How do you handle disagreements in reasoning or logic?*
- *Are you both open to learning and growing together?*
- *Do you enjoy discussing ideas or avoid deeper conversations?*

"The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge, for the ears of the wise seek it out." Proverbs 18:15 (NIV)

Growing together intellectually helps couples make wise, united decisions.

Discussion Exercise:

- *Share a topic you are passionate about learning.*
- *Talk about how you would support each other's learning or career goals.*

Bringing It All Together: Compatibility is Cultivated

No two people will match perfectly in all these areas, and that is okay. What matters is mutual understanding, respect, and the willingness to grow together. Compatibility is not about sameness; it is about shared direction and commitment.

Marriage Principle:

You do not have to come from the same place, but you must agree on where you are going.

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:3 (NIV)

Prayer:

Lord, help us to understand each other’s backgrounds with grace. Where there are differences, give us wisdom to bridge them. Let our unity reflect your love, even in diversity. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

CHAPTER FIVE



Love, Commitment, and Sacrifice

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” 1 Corinthians 13:13 (NIV)

Understanding Biblical Love

In Scripture, love is more than an emotion; it is a deliberate choice and a way of life. The Bible teaches us that love should be unconditional, patient, kind, and enduring. This kind of love is not based on fleeting feelings or convenience; it is a reflection of God’s own love for us. As you prepare for marriage, understanding and practicing this selfless love becomes the foundation of your future together.

Love as a Choice

Love is a daily decision to put your partner’s needs above your own. It is a commitment to nurture and protect the relationship even when circumstances are challenging. In marriage, love calls you to:

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

- **Give Freely:** Love requires generosity with your time, attention, and care.
- **Forgive Easily:** Embracing forgiveness is crucial. Just as God forgives, you too must learn to let go of grievances and move forward with grace.
- **Be Patient and Kind:** Even when there are mistakes, maintaining a spirit of gentleness fosters growth and mutual respect.

Commitment: The Heart of Marriage

Commitment in marriage is more than a promise; it is a lifelong covenant. It means standing by each other through the highs and lows of life. This steadfast commitment mirrors God's unending commitment to His people.

Unwavering Dedication

Marriage calls for dedication that transcends daily ups and downs:

- **Consistency in Love:** A consistent, daily reaffirmation of your love builds a resilient bond that can weather life's storms.
- **Loyalty and Faithfulness:** Faithfulness is the hallmark of a committed marriage. Keeping your promises even when it is difficult demonstrates respect and honor for the covenant you have made.

The Power of Sacrifice

At the heart of love and commitment, lies sacrifice. Sacrificial love is modeled perfectly in the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It means putting your partner's well-being above your own desires and sometimes making personal sacrifices for the greater good of your union.

A Christ-Like Example

- **Selflessness:** Just as Christ gave Himself for the Church, a spouse is called to put the other's needs first. This kind of selfless love transforms a relationship and deepens trust.
- **Humility:** Sacrifice often requires humility; the willingness to admit when you are wrong, to seek forgiveness, and to work together to overcome obstacles.
- **Mutual Growth:** Sacrificial love is not a one-way street. It involves both partners striving to support and uplift each other, fostering an environment where both individuals can grow in faith and character.

Practical Steps to Cultivate Love, Commitment, and Sacrifice

1. **Daily Acts of Kindness:** Small, thoughtful gestures can have a profound impact on your relationship. Whether it is a sincere compliment, an encouraging note, or a simple act of service, these moments build a reservoir of love.
2. **Regular Check-ins:** Set aside time to discuss your feelings, challenges, and joys. Open communication reinforces your commitment and helps resolve conflicts before they grow.

3. Prayer and Reflection: Pray together daily, seeking God's guidance to love each other more deeply. Reflect on His Word to remind you of the standards of love, commitment, and sacrifice.

4. Invest in Each Other: Attend workshops, read books, and participate in couple's counseling or retreats focused on building a Christ-centered marriage.

Reflection Questions

- 1. How do you define love in the context of your relationship?*
- 2. In what ways can you actively choose to love your partner every day?*
- 3. How can you better demonstrate commitment and faithfulness in your current relationship?*
- 4. What are some practical ways you can practice sacrifice for each other as you prepare for marriage?*

Prayer Together

Lord, thank You for showing us the true meaning of love through your sacrifice. As we prepare for marriage, help us to embrace love as a choice, commitment as a lifelong promise, and sacrifice as a way to honor you and each other. Fill our hearts with patience, kindness, and forgiveness so that our union may be a reflection of your everlasting love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

This chapter lays the groundwork for a marriage where love is not only felt but also actively demonstrated through commitment and sacrifice. It invites you both to reflect on your current practices and envision a future where your relationship mirrors the selfless, enduring love of Christ.

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

PART II: CONVERSATIONS YOU MUST HAVE

CHAPTER SIX



Faith and Values

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” Matthew 6:33 (ESV)

Establishing a Shared Faith Foundation

In a marriage built on faith, both partners commit to putting God at the center of their lives. Faith is not just a set of beliefs; it is a daily journey of trusting in God, aligning your decisions with His Word, and allowing His love to shape every aspect of your life together. When you enter marriage with a shared foundation of faith, you create an environment where God’s guidance and blessings are ever-present.

Living Out Your Faith Together

- **Regular Worship:** Engaging in regular worship, whether through attending church services or joining a small group reinforces your shared commitment.

Worship is more than ritual; it is a way to experience God's presence and power in your relationship.

- **Devotional Time:** Consider establishing a routine of joint devotional time. Whether it is reading Scripture, discussing its application, or simply praying together, these moments can deepen your spiritual connection.
- **Service and Ministry:** Using your gifts to serve in your church or community not only enriches your individual faith but also strengthens your bond as a couple committed to God's mission.

Aligning Core Values

Marriage is a partnership where shared values become the blueprint for your decisions, actions, and long-term goals. Core values rooted in Scripture guide how you interact with each other and how you navigate the complexities of life. When both partners agree on fundamental values—like honesty, integrity, and love; conflicts are easier to manage and mutual respect grows stronger.

Identifying and Prioritizing Values

- **Scriptural Principles:** Let God's Word be your guide in forming the values that matter most to you as a couple. Reflect on passages such as Micah 6:8, which calls for justice, mercy, and humility.
- **Discussing Life Goals:** Open dialogue about your expectations and dreams for the future helps align your values. Discuss topics like work, family,

finances, and community involvement to ensure you are moving in the same direction.

- **Building a Legacy:** Consider how you want to influence the next generation. Values such as commitment to truth, compassion, and faithfulness are not only vital in your marriage but also in the environment, you create for your children.

Navigating Differences with Grace

Even when both partners share a common faith, differences in opinions or interpretations can arise. Embracing these differences with grace is essential:

- **Respectful Dialogue:** Engage in conversations that are rooted in mutual respect and a desire to understand one another's perspectives.
- **Praying for Unity:** In moments of disagreement, turn to prayer. Ask God to grant wisdom and unity, helping you to find common ground even in diversity.
- **Learning from Each Other:** Recognize that differing experiences and backgrounds can enrich your understanding of God's love and truth.

Faith in Everyday Decision Making

Faith and values are not reserved for church or special occasions, they are meant to be lived out in every decision, big or small. Whether it is how you manage your finances,

interact with family members, or make career choices, let your faith inform your actions.

Practical Tips for Daily Living

- **Morning Check-Ins:** Start your day with a brief moment of reflection or prayer together. It sets the tone and helps center your priorities.
- **Scripture Reminders:** Keep verses or inspirational quotes around your home as daily reminders of your shared faith and values.
- **Accountability Partners:** Surround yourselves with fellow believers who can offer support, counsel, and accountability as you navigate life's challenges.

Reflection Questions

- 1. What are the core values that you and your partner hold dear, and how do they align with your faith?*
- 2. How can you integrate worship and devotional practices into your daily routine as a couple?*
- 3. In what ways can you support each other in living out these values, both in your relationship and in your community?*
- 4. How do you handle differences in opinion when it comes to matters of faith and values, and what steps can you take to foster unity?*

Prayer Together

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of faith that brings us together and for the values you instill in our hearts. As we build our future on Your Word, help us to remain steadfast in our commitment to seek your kingdom first. Guide our decisions, strengthen our bond, and fill our home with your love and grace. May our lives be a reflection of your truth and a testament to the power of shared faith. In Jesus' name, Amen.

This chapter invites you to intentionally cultivate a relationship where faith and values are not just ideals but the everyday reality of your lives. As you build this foundation together, you create a home where God's presence is felt, and His will is followed in every decision.

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

CHAPTER SEVEN



Finances and stewardship

"Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops." — Proverbs 3:9 (NIV)

God's Principle of Stewardship

Finances are more than numbers; they are a trust from God. As believers, we are called to view our resources as gifts to be managed wisely and generously. This chapter explores how to steward God's blessings in a way that honors Him and strengthens your marriage.

Understanding Stewardship

Stewardship means recognizing that everything we have belongs to God. It is our responsibility to manage these resources: our money, time, and talents, in ways that reflect His love and purpose. By embracing a mindset of stewardship, you build a foundation of trust, planning, and generosity that will support your marriage for years to come.

Biblical Guidance on Finances

Scripture offers clear principles that guide our financial decisions:

- **Tithing and Generosity:** Giving back to God through tithes and offerings is a tangible expression of trust and gratitude. It reflects a commitment to God's work and provides opportunities to bless others. Therefore, cultivate an addictive act of tithing as individuals and as a family.
- **Wisdom in Spending** “There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.” Proverbs 21:20. Wise planning leads to prosperity. Being thoughtful about spending helps prevent financial strain and promotes long-term security.
- **Avoid Debt:** While debt may sometimes be necessary, Scripture encourages us to live within our means. Planning and saving are key to avoiding the pitfalls of financial burdens.

Practical Steps for Financial Harmony

Managing finances as a couple requires open communication, joint planning, joint savings, though with mutual respect for each other's perspectives. Here are some practical steps to build financial harmony in your relationship:

Budgeting Together

- **Create a Joint Budget:** Sit down together to review your income, expenses, and financial goals. A transparent budget helps both partners feel secure and informed about the family's finances.
- **Prioritize Needs Over Wants:** Establish clear priorities: Cover essentials first, such as housing, food, education, and healthcare, and allocate funds for giving and saving.

Planning for the Future

- **Set Financial Goals:** Whether it is saving for a home, preparing for children, or planning for retirement, set realistic financial goals that align with your shared vision.
- **Emergency Fund:** Build a financial cushion for unexpected events. An emergency fund provides peace of mind and prevents stress during challenging times.

Stewardship in Daily Life

- **Regular Financial Check-Ins:** Schedule periodic meetings to review your budget and adjust plans as needed. This practice keeps both partners accountable and proactive.
- **Educate Yourself:** Consider financial workshops, counseling, or reading books on Christian financial management to grow your knowledge together.

- **Practice Generosity:** Discuss how you can support your church, extended family, and community. Generosity not only blesses others but also reinforces your faith and commitment to God.

Challenges and Opportunities

Financial matters can sometimes be a source of tension, but they also offer an opportunity for growth and unity. By approaching money management with transparency and prayer, you create a partnership that strengthens your bond and your faith.

- **Handling Differences:** It is common for couples to have different attitudes toward money. Discuss these differences openly and seek compromise that honors both partners' values in the light of the overall pursuing purpose.
- **Trust and Accountability:** Trust builds over time. Commit to honesty in financial decisions, and consider seeking counsel from a trusted financial advisor or mentor who shares your faith.

Reflection Questions

- 1. How do you view money and possessions in light of your faith?*
- 2. What steps can you take together to create a budget that reflects your shared values?*
- 3. How can you integrate generosity and tithing into your financial plans?*

4. What strategies can you employ to handle financial disagreements with grace and understanding?

Prayer Together

Heavenly Father, thank you for entrusting us with the blessings you have provided. As we prepare to merge our lives, help us to manage our finances with wisdom, integrity, and generosity. Guide us to make decisions that honor you and reflect our commitment to being faithful stewards. May our financial planning strengthen our marriage and enable us to serve you and others with grateful hearts. In Jesus' name, Amen.

This chapter encourages you to approach finances as a shared journey of stewardship; one that requires planning, communication, and trust. As you work together to honor God with your resources, you build a resilient foundation for your future and a marriage that thrives on mutual respect and faith.

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

CHAPTER EIGHT



Communication and conflict resolution

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”
Colossians 4:6 (NIV)

The Power of Godly Communication

Communication is the heartbeat of any relationship, and in a Christ-centered marriage, it becomes a sacred tool for building trust, understanding, and unity. God calls us to speak truthfully and lovingly, and this principle is especially vital when navigating the complexities of a shared life.

Foundations of Effective Communication

- **Honesty and Transparency:** Building a marriage on open and honest dialogue reflects God’s truth. Being transparent with each other, even about difficult topics, lays the groundwork for trust.
- **Active Listening:** Communication is not just about speaking; it is about listening with an open heart.

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

Active listening involves understanding your partner's perspective, validating their feelings, and responding with empathy.

- **Gentleness and Respect:** As you share your thoughts, remember to speak with gentleness. Words have power; when they are with grace and respect, they can heal and build up rather than tear down.

Navigating Conflict:

Conflict is inevitable in any relationship, but it does not have to lead to division. The Bible offers guidance on resolving disagreements in a manner that honors God and preserves the unity of your relationship.

Embracing Conflict as an Opportunity

- **Growth and Understanding:** When handled well, conflict can serve as a catalyst for deeper understanding and growth. It invites both partners to explore underlying issues and work together toward resolution.
- **Restoration and Reconciliation:** The goal in any conflict should be reconciliation. By following Christ's example of forgiveness, you can turn moments of discord into opportunities for healing.

Practical Strategies for Conflict Resolution

1. Address Issues Early

- **Don't Let Things Fester:** Address concerns as they arise rather than allowing resentment to build. A

timely conversation can prevent small misunderstandings from turning into larger conflicts.

- **Create a Safe Space:** Set aside a specific time and place for difficult discussions. Ensure both partners feel safe and heard, free from distractions or heightened emotions.

2. Use “I” Statements

- **Express your Feelings:** Use statements like “I feel...” rather than “you always...” to prevent your partner from feeling attacked. This approach focuses on your experience rather than placing blame.
- **Own your Emotions:** Taking responsibility for your feelings opens the door to understanding and minimizes defensiveness.

3. Seek God’s Guidance

- **Pray Together:** Bring your conflicts before God in prayer. Ask for wisdom, patience, and the ability to see each other through His eyes.
- **Reflect on Scripture:** Meditate on passages that encourage peace, forgiveness, and unity. Allow God’s Word to inform your responses and guide your resolution.

4. Practice Forgiveness

- **Let Go of Past Hurts:** Forgiveness is a choice that liberates both you and your partner. Holding on to

past grievances only hinders the growth of your relationship.

- **Extend Grace:** Remember that, just as Christ forgives you, you are called to forgive one another. This ongoing process of forgiveness is vital for maintaining a healthy, loving relationship.

When to Seek External Help

Sometimes, challenges in communication and conflict may require additional support. Engaging with a trusted pastor, counselor, or mentor can provide new insights and techniques for resolving issues while keeping God at the center.

- **Professional Counseling:** A counselor with a faith-based approach can offer tools and strategies tailored to your unique needs.
- **Mentorship:** Couples who have navigated similar challenges can share their experiences and offer practical advice from their own journeys.

Reflection Questions

- 1. How do you currently approach communication in your relationship, and where might there be room for improvement?*
- 2. What steps can you take to ensure that the conflict is addressed early and respectfully?*
- 3. How can you incorporate prayer and Scripture into your conflict resolution process?*

4. In what ways can you practice forgiveness more fully, reflecting the grace that God has shown you?

Prayer Together

Lord, we thank you for the gift of communication and for the wisdom found in your Word. As we journey together, help us to speak truthfully, listen deeply, and resolve our differences with grace and understanding. Grant us the strength to forgive, the courage to be vulnerable, and the humility to seek your guidance in every conversation. May our words build each other up and reflect the love of Christ in all we do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

This chapter challenges you to view communication not merely as a daily task, but as a divine opportunity to grow closer, resolve conflicts, and model Christ's love in your marriage. Let it serve as a reminder that every conversation, especially those during difficult times, can be an act of worship and a step toward deeper unity.

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

CHAPTER NINE



Family background and in-laws

"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you." Exodus 20:12 (NIV)

Understanding the Role of Family in Your Marriage

Your family background and relationships with your in-laws are integral parts of your identity. They shape your values, traditions, and perspectives. As you prepare to be join together in marriage, it is important to understand and honor these influences while establishing a healthy, Christ-centered boundary for your new family unit.

Appreciating Your Family Heritage

- **Celebrating Your Roots:** Recognize the role that your family has played in forming who you are. Whether it is cherished traditions, cultural customs, or spiritual legacies, these elements can enrich your marriage when embraced with gratitude.

- **Identifying Influences:** Reflect on both the positive and challenging aspects of your family dynamics. By understanding these influences, you can intentionally carry forward the best and address any patterns that may not serve your future together.

Navigating Relationships with In-Laws

In-laws can bring both blessings and challenges. The key is to approach these relationships with respect, clear communication, and a commitment to honor God's design for family.

Building Respectful Boundaries

- **Defining Your Couple Identity:** Establishing your own identity as a married couple is essential. While your in-laws are important, your primary commitment is to each other. Clarify your boundaries early on to create a balanced and respectful relationship with extended family.
- **Open Communication:** Discuss with your partner how you both can maintain healthy relationships with your families. This includes planning visits, holiday celebrations, and handling disagreements or differing expectations.
- **Mutual Respect:** Show honor and appreciation for your in-laws while gently asserting your needs as a couple. Respectful dialogue can prevent misunderstandings and foster harmonious relationships.

Bridging Differences in Family Backgrounds

When two families come together, differences in traditions, expectations, or communication styles are natural. Embrace these differences as opportunities to learn and grow.

Strategies for Harmonious Integration

- **Share Your Stories:** Take time to share your family histories and experiences with each other. Understanding the narratives that have shaped your lives builds empathy and connection.
- **Create New Traditions:** While it is important to honor past traditions, consider establishing new ones that reflect the unique identity of your marriage. This can help both families feel included while celebrating the new chapter in your lives.
- **Seek Common Ground:** Focus on shared values and faith. When differences arise, let your mutual commitment to God guide your decisions and help you find balance between old and new.

Overcoming Challenges Together

Family dynamics can be complex, and challenges may arise. However, with Christ at the center, you can navigate these complexities with grace and unity.

Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation

- **Address Issues Early:** When tensions with family members or in-laws surface, address them

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

respectfully and promptly. Avoiding conflict can lead to misunderstandings and resentment.

- **Forgiveness and Grace:** Emulate Christ's forgiveness in your interactions. Remember that each family member is on their own journey, and extend grace where needed.
- **Seek God's Wisdom:** Pray for discernment in your relationships. Ask God to help you balance honor for your families with the establishment of healthy, respectful boundaries in your marriage.

Reflection Questions

- 1. How have your family backgrounds shaped your values and expectations for marriage?*
- 2. What traditions or practices from your family would you like to carry into your marriage?*
- 3. How can you create respectful boundaries with your in-laws while honoring them?*
- 4. What strategies can you use to bridge differences between your family backgrounds and form a unified vision for your new family?*

Prayer Together

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the families that have shaped us and for the blessing of new beginnings in marriage. As we join our lives together, help us to honor our pasts while building a future that reflects your love and unity. Grant us wisdom in

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

setting healthy boundaries with our in-laws and grace in navigating any differences. May our home be a place where your peace and love reign, and May we always seek to honor you in all our family relationships. In Jesus' name, Amen.

This chapter encourages you to thoughtfully navigate the complexities of family dynamics as you prepare for marriage. By understanding your own backgrounds and setting respectful boundaries with in-laws, you lay a strong foundation for a unified, God-centered family.

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

CHAPTER TEN



Intimacy and sexuality

“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.” Hebrews 13:4 (ESV)

Understanding God’s Design for Intimacy

Intimacy and sexuality are integral parts of God’s design for marriage. In Scripture, these aspects of relationship are celebrated as gifts that, when experienced within the boundaries of marriage; bring joy, unity, and a deeper connection between husband and wife. This chapter explores how to embrace intimacy and sexuality as holy, sacred elements of your future union.

The Purpose of Sexual Intimacy

- **A Reflection of God’s Love:** In a Christ-centered marriage, physical intimacy mirrors the deep spiritual and emotional bond that exists between God and His people. It is an expression of love, commitment, and unity.

- **Emotional and Spiritual Connection:** Sexual intimacy is not solely a physical act; it is a means of connecting emotionally and spiritually. It fosters trust, vulnerability, and a sense of oneness that strengthens the marital bond.
- **Mutual Pleasure and Fulfillment:** When approached with selflessness and respect, intimacy becomes a source of mutual joy, reinforcing the love and commitment that you share.

Purity before Marriage

While God created sex as a beautiful gift within marriage, He also calls for purity before that sacred union. Maintaining purity is an act of honoring both God and the future spouse, laying the groundwork for a fulfilling and respectful marital relationship. Haven said that, you must make time to exhaustively discuss your sexual expectations to ensure compatibility. In addition, if you have any sexual problems, discuss ways you intend to remedy it. Do not pretend or cover sexual problems, such as erectile dysfunction, sterility, low sperm count, sexually transmittable diseases, rape, or loss of sexual desires, among many.

The Importance of Purity

- **Honoring God's Command:** Scripture calls believers to pursue holiness in every area of life, including their sex lives. Abstaining from sexual activity before marriage is a way of honoring God's design and timing.

- **Building Trust:** Waiting until marriage to express physical intimacy builds trust and sets a foundation of mutual respect and self-control.
- **Healing and Wholeness:** For those who have experienced past wounds or struggles related to sex, pursuing purity can be a step toward healing and restoration. Embracing God's forgiveness and grace paves the way for a renewed sense of identity and hope.

Navigating Challenges and Embracing Healing

Intimacy and sex can be complex subjects, particularly if past experiences or cultural pressures have left their mark. Recognizing and addressing these challenges together is essential to building a healthy sexual relationship in marriage.

Addressing Past Hurts

- **Open Dialogue:** It is important to discuss past experiences with sensitivity and understanding. Sharing your stories in a safe, non-judgmental space can lead to mutual healing.
- **Seek Guidance:** Counseling, mentorship, or trusted spiritual guidance can provide valuable support as you navigate any emotional or relational challenges.
- **Embrace Forgiveness:** Forgiveness is a cornerstone for healing. Both partners should commit to forgiving past hurts and moving forward with a renewed focus on God's promise of redemption and love.

Cultivating a Healthy Sexual Relationship

Once you are united in marriage, cultivating a healthy sexual relationship is an ongoing process of communication, understanding, and intentional care.

Practical Tips for Building Intimacy

- **Prioritize Emotional Connection:** True intimacy begins with emotional closeness. Regularly invest time in each other through meaningful conversations, shared activities, and acts of kindness.
- **Communicate Openly About Needs:** Honest discussions about desires, boundaries, and expectations are essential. Create a space where both partners feel comfortable expressing their needs.
- **Celebrate Your Unique Bond:** Recognize that every couple is unique. Celebrate the distinctive ways your intimacy enriches your relationship and honors God.
- **Keep Christ at the Center:** Pray together for guidance, wisdom, and a deeper connection. Let Scripture be a constant reminder of the sanctity and beauty of your union.

Reflection Questions

- 1. How do you view the role of intimacy in a marriage, and what does it mean to you from a spiritual perspective?*
- 2. In what ways can you honor God's design for sex by practicing purity before marriage?*

3. *How can you create an environment where both emotional and physical intimacy can flourish in your future marriage?*
4. *What steps can you take together to address and heal any past wounds related to intimacy?*

Prayer Together

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of intimacy and the beauty of sex as designed by you. As we prepare for marriage, help us to embrace purity, foster deep emotional connections, and nurture a relationship that honors you in every way. Guide us in healing past hurts, communicating openly, and celebrating the unique bond you have created between us. May our physical and emotional intimacy be a reflection of your love and grace, drawing us ever closer to one another and to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

This chapter invites you to see intimacy and sex as sacred gifts that, when embraced within marriage, it enhances your connection and reflect God's profound love. Let it be a guide to building a relationship that is both physically fulfilling and deeply rooted in spiritual unity.

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

CHAPTER ELEVEN



Roles and responsibilities

“Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.” Ephesians 5:22-23 (NIV)

Biblical Foundations for Roles in Marriage

In a Christ-centered marriage, roles and responsibilities places the man and the woman on unique positions to fulfill their roles for the harmonious progress of the family; hence, the abilities He endowed each of them differs so as to complete each other. The Bible provides guidance on how husbands and wives can serve in their roles and work together to build a strong, unified home.

Understanding Biblical Roles

- **Husband’s Role:** The husband is mandated to lead with love, wisdom, and sacrificial service. His role in the family is to be priest-leader, protector, provider, and peace-setter; mirroring Christ’s love for the

church. He is a servant of Christ, head over his wife, and father to his children. Leadership in marriage means making decisions that reflect integrity and the well-being of the family, not ignoring his wife's voice.

- **Wife's Role:** The wife is mandated to embrace her role with grace and strength, contributing her unique perspective, nurturing abilities, and wisdom; respecting her husband as her head and leader. Though her role is subservience to her husband, she offers him mutual support, encouragement, care, and companionship in every decision. She is a vital contributor to the health and growth of the marriage.

Mutual Submission and companionship

While Scripture outlines distinct roles, it also calls for mutual submission, where both partners honor and respect one another. Ephesians 5:21 instructs believers to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ,” establishing the foundation for a balanced and loving relationship.

Embracing companionship

- **Shared Leadership:** Both partners are leaders in their own right. They work together, combining their strengths and insights to make decisions that best serve their family.
- **Mutual Respect:** Respecting each other's roles means valuing what each partner brings to the relationship. It is about listening, supporting, and affirming one another.

- **Teamwork:** In every aspect of life, from financial planning to raising children, teamwork is essential. A successful marriage thrives when both individuals actively contribute and work as a cohesive unit.

Practical Ways to Live Out Your Roles

For Husbands:

- **Lead with Love:** Show care and protection through actions that reflect Christ's sacrifice as you lead and direct the family the way they should go in the light of the overall mission and purpose of the family. Be both the physical and spiritual leader by encouraging prayer, Bible study, and church involvement.
- **Make Inclusive Decisions:** Involve your wife in important decisions, considering her insights intuitive counsel. This creates ownership, built on trust and mutual respect.
- **Support Her Dreams:** Encourage her personal growth, interests, and ambitions. As her development is to support the husband's dreams and enriches the entire family.

For Wives:

- **Offer Encouragement and Wisdom:** Share your thoughts and insights, contributing to the decision-making process. Your wisdom is a gift that can help shape your family's future. However, do not become vindictive when your counsel is not implemented, or

disconnect from subsequent developments of the family vision.

- **Build Up Your Husband:** Provide support, prayer, and affirmation, helping him lead with confidence by the way you respect him and trust his judgement. A united front strengthens the marital bond.
- **Nurture the Home:** Use your natural gifts and material substance to create a welcoming, loving environment where faith, hope, and love flourish.

Overcoming Challenges in Roles

Every couple may encounter challenges as they navigate roles and responsibilities. Recognizing these challenges early and addressing them together can lead to growth and deeper understanding.

- **Open Communication:** Regularly discuss how each partner feels about their roles and adjust as needed. Honest dialogue can preempt misunderstandings and foster growth.
- **Seek Spiritual Guidance:** When in doubt, turn to God's Word and trusted spiritual mentors for direction. Prayer and reflection can bring clarity and wisdom.
- **Adaptability:** Life's circumstances may call for flexibility in roles. Embrace change together while holding fast to your core values and commitment to one another.

Reflection Questions

- 1. How do you understand the biblical roles of husband and wife, and what strengths do you each bring to these roles?*
- 2. In what ways can you practice mutual submission and teamwork in your relationship?*
- 3. How can you ensure that your approach to roles and responsibilities remains rooted in respect, love, and Christ's example?*
- 4. What practical steps can you take to support one another in your individual callings while harnessing both to fulfill the overall single purpose of the marriage?*

Prayer Together

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the blueprint of marriage as designed in Your Word. As we prepare for this sacred union, help us to embrace our roles with grace, strength, and mutual respect. Guide us to lead and serve one another in ways that honor you, and help us build a home where your love, unity, and wisdom are evident in all that we do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

This chapter challenges you to see roles and responsibilities not as burdens, but as opportunities to grow closer together and reflect the perfect partnership God intended. By embracing these principles with humility and love, you lay the foundation for a thriving, Christ-centered marriage.

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

PART III: BUILDING TOGETHER

CHAPTER TWELVE



Vision, purpose, and calling

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)

Discovering a Shared Vision

A Christ-centered marriage is more than the union of two hearts; it is a partnership with a divine purpose. When you align your vision with God's calling, your marriage becomes a powerful testimony of His love and grace. This chapter encourages you to explore the unique vision God has for your union and to discern how you can serve Him together.

Understanding Your Individual Callings

Each partner is uniquely gifted and called by God. Recognize and celebrate the talents, passions, and dreams that He has planted in your hearts. These individual callings are the foundation for the shared vision of your life together.

- **Self-Reflection:** Take time to reflect on your personal gifts, interests, and areas where you feel called to serve. Journaling, prayer, and seeking counsel from mentors can help clarify your purpose.
- **Spiritual Gifts Inventory:** Identify the spiritual gifts you each possess. These gifts are not only meant for personal growth but also for building up your community and advancing God's kingdom.

Aligning Your Vision as a Couple

When two individuals come together, their individual callings can merge into a powerful, God-given vision. This shared vision guides your decisions, fuels your passion, and provides direction for your future.

Creating a Unified Purpose

- **Vision Casting Together:** Spend dedicated time as a couple discussing your hopes, dreams, and the impact you wish to make in the world. Be intentional in seeking God's guidance through prayer and Scripture as you define your shared goals. I always teach, "Do not follow a man that has no vision, who doesn't know where he is going" and "do not marry a woman that is not willing to marry your vision."
- **Setting Goals:** Develop both short-term and long-term goals that reflect your God-given vision. These might include plans for ministry, community service, family life, or personal growth.
- **Revisiting and Refining:** Understand that vision is dynamic. Regularly revisit your shared goals and

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

allow them to evolve as you grow in faith and understanding of God's plan.

Living out Your Calling Together

Your shared vision is not just a plan; it is a calling to actively live out God's purpose in your marriage and beyond. Embracing this calling involves practical steps and a commitment to serve one another and the community.

Practical Steps to Embrace your Calling

1. Prayer and Discernment:

Begin each day together with prayer, asking for God's wisdom and clarity. Allow His Spirit to direct your steps and decisions.

2. Service to Others:

Identify ways you can serve within your church, local community, or even on a global scale. Serving together strengthens your bond and magnifies the impact of your union.

3. Continual Learning:

Engage in learning opportunities such as couples' retreats, workshops, or Bible studies that focus on discerning and living out your God-given purpose.

4. Mentorship and Accountability:

Surround yourselves with a network of mentors and fellow believers who can offer support, encouragement, and constructive feedback as you pursue your shared vision.

Overcoming Challenges with a Unified Vision

Every journey has its obstacles, but when your marriage is anchored in a God-given purpose, challenges become opportunities for growth. Keep your eyes on the higher calling and lean on God's promises to guide you through any trial.

- **Resilience in Adversity:** Remember that challenges are part of the process of refining your vision. Through trials, your reliance on God deepens, and your partnership grows stronger.
- **Mutual Encouragement:** Celebrate successes and learn from setbacks as a team. Encouraging one another to keep moving forward builds resilience and unity.

Reflection Questions

- 1. What are the unique gifts and passions God has given you individually, and how might these contribute to your God-given vision?*
- 2. How can you intentionally seek God's guidance to shape your future as a couple?*
- 3. In what ways can you serve together in your community and church, reflecting your shared calling?*
- 4. What practical steps can you take to ensure that your vision remains flexible and responsive to God's leading as your marriage grows?*

Prayer Together

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the unique calling you have placed on our lives. As we are join in marriage, help us to discern and embrace the vision you have for us. Guide our steps, align our hearts, and inspire us to serve you and our community with passion and dedication. May our union be a living testimony of your love and a beacon of hope for others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

This chapter challenges you to see your marriage as a divine union, a shared calling where your individual gifts come together to fulfill a greater purpose – a vision. As you pursue this vision, may your union be a testament to God's faithfulness and a source of inspiration for all who witness your journey.

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

CHAPTER THIRTEEN



The importance of community

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)

The Role of Community in a Christ-Centered Marriage

No marriage exists in isolation. A thriving, God-centered relationship is nurtured by the support, encouragement, and accountability of a community of believers. In this chapter, we explore how engaging with a supportive community not only strengthens your marriage but also deepens your individual walk with God.

Why Community Matters

- **Spiritual Growth and Encouragement:** Being part of a faith community provides opportunities for spiritual growth through collective worship, Bible study, and prayer. Fellow believers offer encouragement during

challenges and celebrate your victories, fostering an environment where both partners can thrive.

- **Accountability and Guidance:** A strong community offers accountability, helping you stay true to the commitments you have made to God and each other. Whether through mentorship or regular fellowship, the shared wisdom and experiences of others can guide you through difficult times.
- **Modeling God's Love:** Community is a living reminder of the Body of Christ. When you surround yourselves with believers who model Christ-like love and service, you are inspired to reflect those qualities in your own marriage.

Building a Supportive Network

1. Intentional Fellowship

- **Join a Church or Small Group:** Find a local church or a small group that emphasizes on the life and teachings of Christ. Regular attendance and active participation allow you to build deep, meaningful relationships with others who share your values.
- **Attend Couples' Retreats and Workshops:** Engaging in events specifically designed for couples can provide fresh perspectives and tools for nurturing your relationship. These gatherings offer both spiritual enrichment and practical guidance.

2. Mentorship and Accountability

- **Seek Out Mentors:** Identify couples or individuals whose marriages reflect the values and qualities you aspire to emulate. Their insights, advice, and prayers can be invaluable as you prepare for your own journey together.
- **Establish Accountability Partners:** Choose trusted friends or mentors who can help keep you accountable in your spiritual and relational goals. Open and honest conversations with these individuals can provide clarity and encouragement when needed.

3. Cultivating a Spirit of Service

Your community is not just a support system; it is also an opportunity to serve others. By sharing your gifts and time, you contribute to the growth of the Body of Christ and reinforce the bonds that hold your community together.

- **Volunteer Together:** Serving in ministry or community outreach projects as a couple can deepen your bond and provide a shared purpose beyond yourselves. It is a practical way to live out your faith.
- **Support Others in Their Journey:** Just as you benefit from the support of others, be intentional in offering your time, listening ear, and resources to those in need. Acts of service not only bless others but also reflect God's love in tangible ways.

Reflection Questions

- 1. How has being part of a faith community influenced your spiritual and relational growth?*
- 2. What steps can you take to build a stronger network of support as you prepare for marriage?*
- 3. In what ways can you contribute to the community that nurtures your faith and relationship?*
- 4. How can mentorship and accountability play a role in helping you stay aligned with God's purpose for your marriage?*

Prayer Together

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of community, a place where we can find encouragement, accountability, and inspiration. As we prepare for marriage, help us to actively seek and build relationships that draw us closer to you and to one another. May we both receive and extend support, wisdom, and love through the fellowship of believers. Guide us to serve our community with open hearts and to be a beacon of your light. In Jesus' name, Amen.

This chapter invites you to embrace the strength that comes from being part of a caring, supportive community. By connecting with others who share your faith and values, you create an environment where your marriage can flourish, grounded in the love and accountability of the Body of Christ.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN



Planning a Christ-centered wedding and beyond

"Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Colossians 3:17 (ESV)

More than a ceremony, it is a covenant

Your wedding day is one of the most memorable days of your life, but it is not just a celebration, it is a sacred moment where you enter into a covenant with each other before God.

In the midst of flowers, photos, and seating charts, it is easy to lose sight of the deeper purpose. This chapter will help you plan a wedding that honors God, reflects your faith, and sets the tone for a lifetime of Christ-centered love.

Keeping God at the Center

As you plan, it is vital to constantly come back to the "why". You are not just organizing an event; you are inviting God to be the foundation of your marriage.

Practical Ways to Keep God Central in the Planning Process

- **Pray Before Every Decision:** Whether it is choosing a venue, picking music, or finalizing a guest list, invite God into every detail. Let prayer be your first step, not your last resort.
- **Choose Scripture-Focused Elements:** Incorporate Scripture into your vows, programs, or even decor. Let God's Word guide the tone and message of your ceremony.
- **Include Worship:** Consider incorporating praise and worship music during the ceremony or reception. Worship invites God's presence and sets a spiritual tone for the day.
- **Honor God in Your Vows:** Write vows that reflect your commitment not only to each other, but also to God. Let your promises echo His love and grace. In a situation where a priest or pastor prepares the vows, read and discuss it together okay it before it is used. If it does not reflect the commitments you planned to share, suggest modifications to incorporate your shared commitments.

Preparing for the Marriage, Not Just the Wedding

Many couples pour hours into planning their wedding but neglect the preparation for the life that follows. A wedding lasts a few hours. A marriage is for a lifetime. Prioritize what matters most.

Spiritual and Practical Preparation

- **Complete Premarital Counseling:** If you have not already, go through a structured, Christ-centered premarital counseling course. This strengthens your spiritual and emotional foundation. **(We offer professional yet faith based premarital classes. Call and reserve your session.)**
- **Discuss Real-Life Issues:** Ensure you have talked through topics like finances, roles, conflict resolution, and future plans. These conversations reduce misunderstandings and increase unity.
- **Set Spiritual Rhythms Together:** Decide how you will pray together, study the Word, attend church, and serve as a couple. Start these rhythms now so they are naturally part of your new life.

A Wedding That Reflects Your Faith

Your ceremony is an opportunity to reflect your values and faith to everyone in attendance, believers and unbelievers alike. Let it be a testimony of God's love and design for marriage.

Ideas for a Christ-Honored wedding

- **Unity Ceremonies:** Include symbolic acts like lighting a unity candle, cord of three strands, or taking communion together to reflect spiritual unity.

- **Share Your Story:** Consider having a brief moment during the reception or where you shares your testimony of God’s work in your relationship.
- **Pray Publicly:** Invite a trusted spiritual leader, parent, or mentor to pray over you during the ceremony. Public prayer invites God’s blessing and shows your dependence on Him.

Preparing for the “After Party” Life after the Wedding

Once the wedding is over and the honeymoon ends, real life begins. Preparing for the marriage beyond the wedding means setting expectations and building your life on Christ daily.

Post-Wedding Priorities

- **Stay Connected to yourselves and to a Community:** First, make quality time together to bond and perfect your oneness. Then continue to build friendships with other married couples and mentors, who will walk alongside you. However, be very selective as not everyone may share the same values with what you intend for your home.
- **Continue Learning and Growing:** Read marriage books together, attend workshops, and check in regularly with your spiritual mentors.
- **Keep Dating Each Other:** Intentionally set aside time to pursue each other even after marriage. Fun, laughter, and romance should remain part of your journey.

- **Face Challenges Together in Faith:** Life will bring challenges, but you are not facing them alone. You have each other, and you have God. Keep Him at the center of every high and every low.

Reflection Questions

- 1. How can we make our wedding ceremony a true reflection of our faith in Christ?*
- 2. What spiritual rhythms and disciplines do we want to establish in our marriage from the beginning?*
- 3. In what ways can we keep our focus on the covenant of marriage rather than just the celebration of a wedding?*
- 4. What are our expectations for life after the wedding, and how can we prepare for them spiritually and practically?*

Prayer Together

Lord God, we thank you for the gift of this covenant we are about to enter. Help us plan a wedding that brings glory to you and points others to your love. More importantly, help us prepare for the marriage that follows, one that is rooted in faith, filled with grace, and empowered by Your Spirit. May our union be a reflection of Christ's love for His Church, and may we always seek you first in every season. In Jesus' name, Amen.

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

FINAL WORD



Your wedding day will be beautiful—but your marriage can be even more so when Christ is your cornerstone. Let the joy of the day be the launching point for a lifetime of love, purpose, and faith-filled partnership.

Conclusion: Saying “Yes” to God First.

“Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” Mark 10:9 (NIV)

As you stand on the threshold of marriage, preparing to say, “Yes, I do” to the one you love, remember that the most important “yes” you will ever say is the one you say to God.

This journey of engagement is not just about planning a beautiful wedding; it is about laying a solid, spiritual foundation for a covenant that reflects the heart of God. Marriage is His idea. It is holy, purposeful, and powerful. In addition, when two people enter it with Him at the center, it becomes more than a relationship, it becomes a divine covenant.

What You’ve Learned

Throughout this book, we have explored the key elements that make a marriage thrive:

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

- Understanding the sacred covenant of marriage, not as a contract, but as a lifelong spiritual bond.
- Building a relationship rooted in Christ, marked by love, service, and forgiveness.
- Communicating with intention, resolving conflict with grace, and embracing vulnerability as a strength.
- Understanding roles and responsibilities not as rigid expectations, but as callings to serve one another in love.
- Aligning your individual callings and shared vision for your future with God's greater purpose.
- Surrounding your relationship with a strong, faith-filled community to walk with you and speak truth into your lives.
- Preparing not just for the wedding day, but also for the marriage that follows, the journey of a lifetime together in Christ.

Your “Yes” Is Just the Beginning

When you say “yes” at the altar, you are not just agreeing to a life with another person, you are agreeing to become one flesh, one team, and one testimony. You are stepping into a promise that goes far beyond emotion or romance. You are entering into a sacred covenant, sealed by the Spirit of God.

That “yes” means choosing grace every day. It means loving when it is easy and when it is not. It means learning,

BEFORE YOU SAY — YES, I DO

growing, repenting, forgiving, and staying committed to what God has joined. It also means this: you are never alone.

God goes with you. He strengthens you. He surrounds you with wisdom through His Word, and with love through His people. Moreover, when your marriage reflects Him, it becomes a living, breathing testimony to the world of His faithfulness.

Final Encouragement

Before you say, “Yes, I do,” say, “Yes, God, I trust you. I invite Jesus into my life as my Lord and personal Savior, as well as in every part of our lives. I surrender our marriage to your hands.”

When God is the author of your story, your marriage will not just survive, it will thrive.

Now, go forward with joy. Love boldly. Serve humbly. Forgive often. Moreover, never stop seeking Jesus together.

Because the best love, stories always start with Him.

Final Prayer Together

Heavenly Father, we surrender our love story to you. Thank You for bringing us together and preparing us for this sacred covenant. As we move toward marriage, help us to keep you at the center of it all. Teach us to love as you love, to serve as you served, and to build our lives on your truth. May our marriage be a light in a dark world and a reflection of your grace. Strengthen us, unite us, and use us for your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Before You Say *Yes, I do*

Are You Truly Ready to Say “Yes, I Do”?

Marriage is more than a beautiful ceremony—it is a lifelong covenant designed by God. This book is a practical guide for engaged couples who desire to build a Christ-centered foundation before saying “I do.” Inside, you will discover:

Spiritual, emotional, and relational readiness

Compatibility and communication essentials

Conflict resolution strategies

Biblical roles and responsibilities

Red flags to watch out for God’s purpose for marriage



With scriptural insights, real-life examples, and practical exercises, this book equips couples to prepare wisely for a lifelong commitment.

“Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established.”

— Proverbs 24:3 (ESV)

Ishaya Abdulmalik is a seasoned faith-based counselor and mentor passionate about helping couples build godly, lasting marriages.

ISBN 978 9912 44 286 3

Sanifu Jalada na
DL Bookstore, Arusha

