

E.O. Malomo

Dr. E.O. Malomo, Department of Religions, History and Heritage Studies, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria.
E-mail: revmalomo@gmail.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8471-9279>

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BOOK REVIEW

Contemporary issues in Christian marriage: In commemoration of the retirement of Rev. Dr. Samuel Oluwafemi Oladimeji from active ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention

Afolaranmi, Adebayo Ola (Samuel Oluwafemi Oladimeji Publication, 2024), 181 pages, Price: 2000 Nigerian Naira, ISBN: 978-978-54632-7-9 (paperback)

This book is an edited compendium of short essays on contemporary marriage. Marriage is a cardinal point in every society. Many contributors have put their wealth of understanding into each of the topics addressed in this timely and relevant contemporary book. The writer of the foreword to the book, Rev. Dr. Israel Akanji, explains more about the subtitle of the book. The book commemorates the retirement of Rev. Dr. Samuel Oluwafemi Oladimeji from active ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention after 38 years of full-time service. The fifteen-chapter book has many sub-divisions, references, and quotations with a brilliant academic touch.



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Chapter One deals with “Discerning God’s will in selecting a marriage partner”, presented by Rev. Dr. Matthew Olusegun Oludare. The contributor argues that Scripture must take the lead in guiding present-day church members on the will of God in marriage. He outlines the conditions for the will of God that must be observed before choosing a future partner. The interesting part of his contribution is the mandate given to every man to have the right attitude. Marriage is explicitly defined in this Chapter as the institution of God. Finally, Oludare emphasises God’s guidance in choosing a marriage partner, as recommended in Genesis 24:1-67. The church is saddled with huge responsibility to teach worshippers the right attitude in honouring the will of God.

Chapter Two extensively discusses “Making the best of your dating or courtship period”, postulated by Rev. Dr. Gideon Olatunde Alabi. Nothing is automatic in marriage. Efforts are needed to discover the grey areas in the relationship. Alabi outlines positive and negative areas of courtship that require critical cooperation, dialogue, and prayers between the two parties. He underscores the imperativeness of the church in making the intended couple follow biblical injunctions during courtship. Churches of diverse confessions and traditions are propagating heretical teachings about marriage nowadays. This contribution is a clarion call to all to go back onto the right track.

Chapter Three is a critical factor every Christian married man or woman should note. The topic for consideration is “Counselling the intending couple on sex and sexuality”, contributed by Rev. Olusola O. Oyetunde. He argues the biblical views on sex, extracting what God says about sex, sex outside marriage is immorality and a detestable act before God. Inasmuch as one should not use spirituality to cover reality, the issues about sex must not be treated with levity. He diligently analyses the essence of sex to male and female genders. He admonishes couples to learn the skill of an enhanced romance and orgasm as a means to meet the needs of their partners.

Chapter Four explains “The effective Christian home ministry in a local church: Its need, personnel and organisations”, presented by Rev. Dr. Samuel Oluwafemi Oladimeji. The church is the cardinal centre of a Christian home. Homes form the church, society, and all institutions in our contemporary domain. The local church is indispensable in home ministry. Every family has its peculiarity and world view. Therefore, the church must make provision for all the members of a family. The reason for men, women or youth ministry in contemporary society is actually motivated by this singular vision. The presenter looks forward to helping humanity with this ample knowledge.

Chapter Five considers “Biblical parenting”, written by Rev. Dr. Festus Idowu Olatunde. He considers parenting a global phenomenon, with both responsibility and privilege. He supports his argument with Malachi 2:15, Genesis 18:19, and other relevant biblical passages. The author’s use of the scriptures indicates that parenting is a divine assignment. The task must be handled with care and a sense of responsibility. In his contribution, Olatunde saddles the parent and the children with what they should know about the subject matter from the Bible.

Chapter Six presents “Communication in the Christian home”, by Rev. Dr. Noah Adebayo Adigun. Communication can go a long way to brake or make. It is a powerful tool that is used for interaction and passing on the necessary information. Effective communication results in a healthy family. Adigun successfully explains the tenacity of communication in Christian marriage, known for better or for worse. One cannot afford to shy away from the fact that many homes break down for lack of effective communication or miscommunication. Adigun formulates the principle of CORAFES: Clarity, Obvious, Respect, Amiable, Family altar, and Empathy. He concludes that communication is needed in every sphere of life.

Chapter Seven discusses “Conflict transformation in a Christian home”, contributed by Rev. Joshua and Mrs Rebecca IbukunOluwa. The central argument is that conflict is a tool that the church can use as transformational strategy. This section of the book challenges ministers of the Gospel and ministries to view conflict as a powerful tool for propagating the Gospel of Christ. The contributors affirm that conflict is inevitable and can always be managed. They outline some sources of marital conflict. The most interesting part of the Chapter is about the benefits of conflict transformation in Christian marriage.

Chapter Eight on “The effects of social media on contemporary marriages” is written by Rev. Dr. Adebayo Ola Afolaranmi. This Chapter elaborates on the interconnectedness of the world through technology and other modern features. The world has become connected with the advent of science and technology. Afolaranmi clearly analyses the advantages and disadvantages of social media. He mentions various useful applications on the social media platform that enhance a marriage relationship. Modern technological equipment plays a crucial role in reaching out to the global community and homes. However, technology has limitations in the sense that modern technology cannot replace baptism, communion, effective Christian fellowship and discipleship, as well as the mentoring of children. The writer focuses on technology and how homes can profit from exploring its benefits, while remaining critical of its negative role. The Chapter argues that, through technology, the home can engage in internet and cybermeeting beyond the scope and geographical boundaries.

Chapter Nine makes the case for “The incidences of absentee spouses and how to deal with the enigma in contemporary homes”, written by Rev. Kehinde Michael Anani. He notes that marriage is designed for a relationship between husband (male) and wife (female). He analyses the effects of not staying together as husband and wife. There are two advantages and six disadvantages of not living together. The writer proffers solutions to the enigma at the end of the Chapter.

Chapter Ten enhances the scope of Christian marriage. It is titled “The practising patience when God has asked you to wait: Admonition for waiting for couples” and written by Rev. Mrs Esther E. Babalola. Whether one likes it or not, there are always challenges in Christian life. Patience and waiting for children can be very difficult, but there is always an appointed time for God to act. Christian believers should use the patience and waiting opportunity to read the Word of God and ask for strength and mercy from God. Waiting can be painful, but testimonies of heroes of faith abound in the scriptures. Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Hannah, and Elizabeth, among others, had waiting periods. The Chapter suggests how to practise waiting, the gains of waiting, and some essential factors of waiting.

Chapter Eleven on “Christian ethics and artificial reproductive technology (ART)” is written by Rev. Dr. Francis K. Adebayo. He underpins that ART offers a platform for personal and corporate understanding for those who want to get involved. The church should be well educated about it, as knowledge is increasing on a daily basis. ART is another means that God uses to produce, refine, and transform lives. Infertility is prevalent in our world and the engagement of the church in marathon prayer and fasting will be drastically reduced when ART proffers a solution. ART becomes the best option rather than child buying.

Chapter Twelve reflects on “Church response to the plight of widows and widowers”, by Rev. Dr. Sunday Abraham Egbisola. This current issue is a threat for society and the church of God in Africa. Egbisola quickly states the commandment of the Lord to the Israelites as a conscious and deliberate responsibility that no one should abandon (Ex. 22:22-24). The writer explains, in not less than six points backed by verses of the Bible, the mind of God about widows and widowers. The most cautious is that God fights for the widow (Mal. 3:5). He emphasises that caring for the widow is a spiritual and worship obligation. Providing for the widow is an integral part of Christian service to God. He talks about the African concept of “widowhood”, then analyses the plights of widows and widowers in this Chapter. Suggestions are made on how to help widows and widowers in the church and society in general.

Chapter Thirteen reviews a book titled, *Lively hope: A widow's testimony of God's faithfulness in and out of season*, and written by Mrs Olawumi Gbenle. The review is by Rev. Dr. Sunday Adeleke. The author knows the value of testimony to various backgrounds, cultures, traditions, and tribes. The writer of this book argues that the contemporary church needs to learn to testify in the 21st century. The writer's experiences as widow has, over the years, helped her explain this aspect of the book with deeper understanding and passion. This also calls for sensitivity to the situations of local assembly members. In a nutshell, she asserts that widowhood is not an excuse not to raise godly children and neither to be idle.

Chapter Fourteen titled "Do it yourself, a basic biblical study on deliverance from demonic attack" delves into the issue of deliverance and is contributed by Rev. Dr. Bamidele Oyekola. The Chapter lays down a well-reasoned out and hard-hitting argument that the church largely focuses on winning lost humanity but has done hardly anything to set them free from satanic bondages. Oyekola insists that the church has failed in the area of deliverance. He calls the church's attention to this critical but urgent mandate, as given by the Lord of the church, to develop people into maturity. Finally, he suggests some basic knowledge about Christian authority over demons and outlines some points that will guide the believers in deliverance ministry for bedevilled homes and marriages.

Chapter Fifteen draws attention to "The pastors and sexual abuse, marital violence, and other challenges in the home: A legal perspective", written by Barristers Mrs Oladoyin Fesobi and Mrs Jemima Adeola Aiyewa. The writers view these challenges as barriers that may confront the bearer of the Gospel. These barriers include, but are not limited to problems arising from within the church's formal religious system. This Chapter examines the legal implications of the pastor's involvement in cases of sexual abuse, marital violence, and other vices at homes. The contributors affirm the pivotal roles of pastors in the church and society at large. Nevertheless, they outline reasons for reporting cases of sexual abuse, marital violence, and other vices. One of the major reasons is to save lives. The pastor may be facing challenges of inappropriate actions and should be ready to cooperate with appropriate authority and his superior to facilitate his deliverance and restoration.

The book also contains an addendum on the short biography of Rev. Dr. Samuel Oluwafemi Oladimeji, in honour of whom the book was compiled. The biography includes his early life and education, initial seminary education, pastorates of some local churches, educational qualifications, positions held at Baptist Building, the headquarters of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, and other places, his family life, and publications.

One of the significances of this book is its response to contemporary issues and the placement of Jesus Christ at the heart of its readers. Most of the times, in the process of being spiritual and mature, the worse ensues in marriage. Marriage commitment is for better or for worse, but wisdom must be applied where the husband or the wife behaves like a psychiatric patient. It is not spirituality to cover sin; any suspicious character must be challenged. Some contemporary issues such as, for instance, divorce, remarriage, surrogate parent, and artificial intelligence roles in marriage are not treated as the reviewer expected. In the future, it is hoped that the author will consider some of the missing attributes of contemporary issues and address the matters appropriately.