

A THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO THE  
PROBLEM OF LATE MARRIAGES IN  
NIGERIA.

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AN ESSAY PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY  
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## ABSTRACT

Late marriages or getting married at an age considered late by young people is gaining ground and almost becoming a fad. Also the excuses given by various individuals for not getting married at the right time are quite appalling. Ranging from economic, social, religious, spiritual even physical factors among others. This essay then seeks to create an awareness of this phenomenon, expose its root causes, highlight the danger inherent in late marriages and proffer a theological response to the problem.

Lagos and Ibadan Cities were selected as sample field for research and members of Bible Believing Churches were interviewed at various intervals. Workshops and seminar-like gathering was employed whereby various facilitators (Christians) from all relevant professions to the essay were used. It was discovered that over 70% of the participants never considered the issue as a problem until when confronted with the resultant effect of late marriages on the individual, family, church, community and the nation at large.

The meetings brought into fore the major parameters that constitute a major barrier to marriage at God's own timing. The harsh economic climate in the country was rated highest among the other factors. And the root cause of this was traced to the early '70s oil boom which changed almost completely our value system on wealth and wealth acquisition. It was equally discovered that the effect is general and has greatly affected the church of God in the country.

Taking each of these factors or parameters being used to determine the timing for marriage as suggested by the contemporary society, the essay brought to light the right perspective in viewing all the parameters theologically in order to determine God's proper timing for marriage. It equally proffers solution to all levels of the society that contribute to the improper timing.

In all, young people are being encouraged to seek divine timing as elucidated by the Lord Almighty through His words.

## B. RECOMMENDATION

From the foregoing conclusion, my recommendations are thus tailored to the following:

1. The individuals
2. The extended family
3. The Church
4. The Community
5. The Government

### 1. The Individual

The Bible enjoins us to plan, watch, and pray. It is no means a fact to know that *“the Holy key to proper management only comes when we give our Lord “the whole deal” and work with the parts as he gives them to us”*<sup>2</sup>. Some individuals just like the Pharisees in Matthew 16 can decipher the timing for other things but the “real thing” of life we find it difficult to understand. We must however note that *“time passes at a predetermined rate, no matter what we do. It is a question not of managing the clock but of managing ourselves with respect to the clock”*<sup>3</sup>. My first recommendation, therefore to an individual is to give his or her life’s all first and foremost to the

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<sup>2</sup> Charlse W. Shedd, *Time for all Things* (Nashvill: Abingdon Press; 1962), p14

<sup>3</sup> R. Alec Mackenzie, *The Time Trap* (New York:Mcgraw Hill Book Company; 1972), p3

Lord... *“before old things shall passed away, we require an inner honesty, which faces facts and knows where the problems are”*<sup>4</sup>.

There is need to do a thorough examination of ones plan, person and purpose for living. A thorough examination of these three “P’s” in line with the Word of God will expose many disjointed parameters being used by the general society in determining the perfect timing for marriage. It will equally help the individual to find its footing in God’s plan.

#### **a) Plan**

The individual needs to ascertain God’s plan for his/her life in all ramifications. It is upon this that he/she can then plan. The timing of God on any issue differs from individual to individual. In the issue of marriage and getting a partner, the individual needs to know the plan and purpose of God in marriage.

“A lot of today’s adult think that marriage just happens, that, it is a relationship that will magically iron itself out. No way!”<sup>5</sup>. The planning is not only for the wedding day only but also for life. Maturity is not solely an issue of age, so God’s plan for you can be an early marriage and a successful one as it has been in many cultures. Do not tarry trust, God and go for it.

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<sup>4</sup> Shedd, C.W, *Time for All Things*, p.42

<sup>5</sup> George Barna *The Future of American Family* (Chicago Moody Press; 1993) p40

Though “early marriage in which the couple are about twenty, or younger .... Is not synonymous with hasty marriage<sup>6</sup>”. But one should note that too early marriages without the leading of God and the support of the community will create unnecessary problems, one of which is – “overemphasis on sex and physical attraction” – marriage is more than just sex.

## **b) Person**

Since the individuals make-up a home in a marriage setting, it is therefore imperative to consider ones individuality thoroughly and expose such to the standard of Gods Word. Many refuse to consider individual differences, up-bringing, cultural and social background and even religious differences when considering marriage. No man is an island, water and various teeming creatures surround even an island. As earlier mentioned, the individual must be ready to be sincere with himself if indeed in love. “The chief characteristic of love; it asks for everything, not just for a little but, or a while lot, but for everything, and unless one is challenged to give everything one is not really in love<sup>7</sup>”. And you can only give everything you know that you have.

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<sup>6</sup> Richard T. La Pierre Marriage for Modern (New York: McGraw - Hill Book Company; 1942) p126

<sup>7</sup> The mystery of marriage (Portland: Multnomah Press; 1978) p.15

