

DEVELOPING A MANUAL ON INTIMACY AMONG CHRISTIAN COUPLES  
IN APATA BAPTIST CHURCH, IBADAN.

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## ABSTRACT

The researcher set out to find the causes of loss of intimacy among Christian couples in Apata Baptist Church. This was done through the Administration of Questionnaire to sixty couples. The death of intimacy often makes marital relationship vulnerable to spousal abuse, abandonment, marital unfaithfulness even divorce. Many Christian marriage are experiencing a loss of intimacy. The loss of intimacy has made some couples who started out as 'soul mate' degenerate to the point of becoming mere roommate. This project is a response to the problem of loss of intimacy in marriage. The main purpose of this project is to develop and test a manual that would promote intimacy among Christian couples especially those who worship in local churches operating within the Nigerian Baptist Convention. As a discipleship pastor for five years in Apata Baptist Church, I grew up within the system to discover that most couples that come to worship are either staying together but separated in mind or staying apart completely, some of them have turned their homes to a battle ground. This can be describe as unfortunate situation, because God never instituted marriage to be so. The manual developed is an attempt to make Biblically sound information available to couples, so as to help them retain nurture or recapture their vitality. The manual discusses the subject of commitment, communication, conflict resolution, romance and Biblical characteristic in Christian marriage. Anger in Christian marriage, building intimacy in marriage. Sixty couples actively participated in the study of the manual. They evaluated the contents of the manual as being highly relevant. They also appraise the materials as being readable and easy to comprehend. Through this manual, more homes will be prepared to positively change their negative orientation about marriage. In the face of marriage that are crumbling because of lack of love, commitment, poor communication, poorly resolved conflict, poor money management and anger management. The Nigerian Baptist Convention must compliment the effort of the local churches by producing resources that would restored vitality to sagging marriages, this manual is contribution towards making the kind of instruction available. I will like to recommend that couples should not wait too long to seek for enrichment programme, it should be done at interval. Couples could be reminded that marriage is an institution instituted by God and it will require that they allow God to handle every situation or challenges that come on their ways as they approach God in prayers for help.

CHAPTER TWO

UNDERSTANDING

COMMITMENT AND

INTIMACY AND MARITAL COMMUNICATION

INTIMACY AND AGREEMENT

## Conclusion

When intimacy diminishes in marriage, the relationship between husband and wife drops progressively into a dismal and devastating state. Without intimate relationship, we tend to get lonely and become depressed. An emotionally flat and chronically dull marital relationship is a precursor to spouse abuse, hostility, violence, marital unfaithfulness, separation and even divorce.

There are pastors, church leaders and local churches that are not taking the issue of developing and nurturing marital intimacy as an essential ministry of the community of faith. Some of them even regard intimate couples as people who have been brain-washed by "Western Missionaries. The problem is that these churches are running the risk of increasing the population of those who are enduring their marriages. If married believers find themselves, perpetually 'managing' or enduring their marriages, their effectiveness both vocationally and professionally may be negatively affected.

Intimacy in marriage is a serious matter. If couples are not growing together by growing closer, they would inevitably start growing apart. Marital intimacy lifts the relationship out of the common place and into the unique and irreplaceable. A high degree of intimacy between two lovers or spouse contributes to the happiness and emotional stability of both. Growing closer in marriage is usually the product of intentional acts that stem from appropriating the graces of God. Deep marital intimacy would not happen accidentally, love is a living thing and needs constant feeling if it is expected to last indefinitely.

The following factors were mentioned by participants as some of the factors that usually equeleh the growth of marital intimacy in their cultures; ignorance, wrong beliefs, poor mate selection process, lack of premarital counseling, unwholesome cultural practices, parenting, poor resource management, marital unfaithfulness, friends, in-laws, lack of money, poor health and lack of goodness.

There are Christians who still are their culture and tradition as the final authority on marital issues, especially the issues of roles and relationship in marriage. The wrong perception of a husband as the Lord or even a quasi-god and a wife as his vassal, often makes intimacy at the best fleeting and compensational in nature, though in most cultural marriages husbands regard their wives a property, the source of sexual satisfaction and the bearer of children, on the contrary the Bible teaches that all human beings are divinely and equally created in the image and likeness of God. Both male and female have equal standing in Christ Jesus and are co-heirs of the kingdom of God. The word of God commands husbands to be considerate to their wives and treat them with respect because they are on equal terms with men. If a man fails to treat his wife with respect his prayers would be hindered (I Pt. 3:7 (NIV)). Each women should regard herself as one made in the image and likeness of God. Likewise, the husband should not regard himself as a superior human being.

The process of mate selection and courtship activities of the couples also affect the quality of marital intimacy. In some cultures, the union of a man and woman is usually informed by parental choice and arrangement this is based upon the reputation and background of the families concerned. In essence, the couples are not allowed to make their own decision on mate selection. The extended family members have overriding decision. Often clan members take charge of the affairs within such

arranged marriages. How couples come together would affect the quality of their intimacy. In the light of this, the researcher made some recommendations.

### Recommendations

The problem of intimacy is a perennial issue that will ever remain a thorn in the flesh of the Church. As such, the Church must always have positive responses to it. Part of the responses should involve preventive and curative measures. Prevention, they say, is better than cure. It is far better to prevent marriage from breaking down than to look for solution after it has broken. The following recommendations were offered by the researcher in order to prevent the prevailing occurrence of loss of intimacy and to cure its root causes.

First, the Pastor and the Church should endeavour to teach believers the love of God for the family. The purpose of solemnization of marriage should be taught so that people, both old and young, will understand what marriage stands for. It is believed that if this awareness is made known to the congregation, loss of intimacy will be a thing of the past. Seminars are also needed. Both married and singles may have separate seminars where each group will be taught according to the need of the people involved.

Apart from this, symposia, where many believers will participate in the thorough discussion of intimacy are also necessary. Seminar is an effective way for both preventive and curative measures against broken marriage and divorce. The teenagers and adolescents should also be educated very well on issues relating to marriage and choice of career. If they are nurtured from the grass-roots, there will be a good number of them who will make successful homes in future, and more percentage of them will escape loss of intimacy in their marriage. The Church could

