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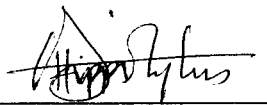
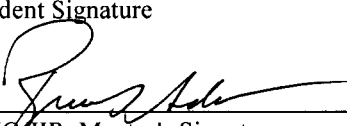
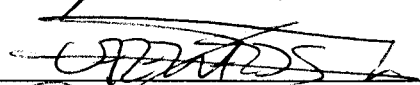
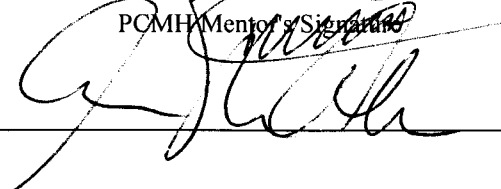
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Doctor of Ministry Project Final Approval

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**PASTORAL CARE AMONG NIGERIAN COUPLES IN
AMERICA**

**With particular reference to the inherent problems between the Traditional
(Igba Nwku Nwanyi) and Church Marriages**

By

Rev. Fr. Hippolytus Uchenna Duru

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Introduction

The question of marriage is as old as the traditions and customs of the people of Igbo land of Nigeria. Traditional marriage *Igba Nkwu Nwanyi* has been there before the coming of the missionaries. The traditional marriage is fundamental for every Igbo man and woman which is applicable in other cultures of the country. Before Traditional marriage *Igba Nkwu Nwanyi* could take place, there must have to be an agreement of both parties, in otherwise, their parents must give their consent. It is the process of marrying which “usually involves asking the young woman's consent, introducing the woman to the man's family and the same for the man to the woman's family, testing the bride's character, checking the woman's family background and paying the brides wealth”. Agbasiere, J. T. Women in Igbo Life and Thought p. 114. Problem arises when the young woman and the man marries each other without their parents' consent or when their parents imposes them to marry each other (an arrange marriage).

In Nigeria, we have three major languages namely: Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. There are more than 250 spoken dialects and the country is made up of 250 tribes scattered all over the states. Each tribe has her own way of marriage traditions and laid down rules and regulations.

Like other forms and definitions of marriage, it is seen in Igbo land as an arrangement which enables a man and a woman to live together and cooperate in an orderly social life. Without it one is not considered as complete in the society. For every Nigerian therefore, marriage is something that is considered very important of which every single man or woman who is single unless in the religious life becomes an object of ridicule among his or her peers.

While the traditional marriage allows a man to marry more than one wife, which is inherent among the Igbos in the South, Yoruba's in the West and the Hausas in the North, the church marriage/civil marriage limits it to one man, one woman.

Here comes the major conflict/problem between traditional marriage and church marriage. The couples are in conflict with the cost of both marriages (especially couples from very poor families) since you are expected to have both. If you do only church marriage without doing the traditional marriage, you plunge your entire family and community into shame and objects of discord among other families and clans. Also when a man does the traditional marriage which favors polygamy (one man, more than one wife), it goes against church/civil marriage. For every Nigerian couple especially the Igbos, the two different marriages are must do, otherwise problems ensure.

As a result of all these, Nigerian couples especially those living in Diasporas are constantly faced with this dilemma which results in psychological, emotional, and spiritual problems. Hence we have the problem of divorce, childlessness (bareness), financial mess resulting in the overspending during the two marriages. The man and the woman in the house are always in conflict with each other which results in domestic violence that at times lead to death of one of the couples. These problems extends both to the children in the family and to the community at large.

In all these existing problems on how to marry the two marriages that I intend to organize some group workshop of some of the affected couples and some Nigerian community living in America. The intention is to see what we can do to listen and share with each other throughout the period of the group workshop so as to offer some Pastoral Care and Clinical Counseling to

troubles couples/families thereby making some recommendations. We shall also try to bring mediations to both traditional and church marriages so as to save and salvage some of the huge financial expenses incurred by the bride during the two marriages, which is aimed at bringing peace and harmony to the couples after their marriage.

I hope to achieve this by organizing workshop among some of the affected Nigerian couples here in America that is seriously going through bitter divorces, emotional trauma/stress. It is also my intention to offer other pastoral form of prayer sessions and marriage encounters aim at restoring especially the dignity and respect of the woman in the house as well as helping the man in charge understand his true role in the family and how view his wife and other family members.

Chapter one which centers on marriage and family will give us some explications of terms like the meaning of marriage/family, types among Nigerian families. I intend to further explain the meaning of church marriage/wedding and that of traditional marriage (Igba Nkwu Nwanyi) among the Igbos of Nigeria.

Chapter two on the other hand will deal with both the theological/clinical concerns. Under the theological principles, I intend to explore both biblical/ecclesiastical teachings on marriage, its connection to traditional marriage (*Igba Nkwu Nwanyi*), I also intend to look into both the religious/pastoral needs of the affected couples at the same time look into some aspects of the mediations between the two.

Under the clinical principles, I intend to use some theories from the text on “Integrative Family Therapy” by Davis Olsen. These theories will be of great assistance in carrying out my project among the affected Nigerian Couples of my congregation. This will help me in the both the individual counseling sessions and during the general group sessions.

Chapter three which is the execution of the Project, will be the projection aimed at working with the affected couples from my congregation. My intention here is to form the affected couples in groups, work with them from the beginning to the end. The reason for this is make sure we work together as a group so as to avoid the problem of having loopholes, maintain continuity and be strict to program so as to achieve a better result. Before the group formation, I intend to develop questionnaire that will help us in achieving a better assessment of the group.

It is also my intention to respect the confidentiality of the individuals/couples, this I believe will yield us a greater result, the openness of the couples are also encouraged which is aimed at disposing other affected group members to open up and share their problems together.

Chapter four will be on the analysis of results that arises from the group discussions and the questionnaires and also on the developments that were never anticipated from the original project proposal. While chapter five will focus on projection/recommendations which include the implication of results, the contributions of my project to clarifying and expanding the religious and clinical principles, and the contribution of my project to ministry in wider context and for its implications for the future ministry.

Chapter One: Marriage and Family

1.1 What is Marriage/Family

Marriage is primarily defined as; “the state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband and wife in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law.” Broderick, R. C. Catholic Encyclopedia on marriage. It is a legitimate union between husband and wife.

"Legitimate" indicates the sanction of some kind of law, natural, evangelical, or civil, while the phrase, "husband and wife", implies mutual rights of sexual intercourse, life in common, and an enduring union.

Marriage is regarded by the Igbo people as the natural fulfillment of the purpose for which human beings fall into two mutually attracting sexes and by which they can perpetuate their existence in the world. Among the Nigerian people, it is regarded as a duty, a requirement from the corporate society, and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate. Otherwise, “he who does not participate in it is a curse to the community.” Basden, G. T. Among the Ibos of Nigeria, p59. He is a rebel and a law-breaker. He is not only abnormal, but sub-human hence there is always social pressure to be married.

According to Basden in his work **The Igbos of Nigeria** (1986),

“Marriage is a most important event in the Igbo’s life. From the time boys and girls are capable of thinking for themselves marriage is set before them as the objective to be attained. During the earlier years it does not assume a serious aspect, but question any boy or girl, and the answer is certain to be that, in due course they must marry. Unmarried persons of either sex except in special cases are objects of derision, and to be childless is the greatest calamity that can befall a woman. Hence a very high value is set upon marriage”

An important fact to note is that, for the Igbos, marriage and procreation are a unity; without procreation, marriage is incomplete. The first and foremost desire of a married couple is offspring. Children are regarded as the consummation of marriage. “Childlessness is therefore regarded as a calamity. A barren woman is treated almost as an outcast and has little influence among her fellows. She is everywhere despised and distrusted.” Uka, N. Growing up in the Nigerian Culture, p.35

Going further to see the meaning of marriage in the broader sense, it can also be defined as “the union of two different surnames, in friendship and in love, in order to continue the prosperity of the former sages, and to furnish those who shall preside at the sacrifices to heaven and earth, at those in the ancestral temple and those at the altars to the spirits of the land and grain.”

(Confucius) It is a union between two persons, who lived in harmony so absolute with each other, as to be independent of the world outside. (Thomas De Quincy)

The institution of marriage has probably developed out of a primeval habit, therefore it is the relations between the sexes and parental care among the invertebrate which includes both monogamous and polygamous unions. Westermarck, E., On family and human marriage, 2003

The question we could raise and ask ourselves is the followings: Is an unmarried couple a family? What about homosexual couples? Are adult siblings who share a household a family? Is a childless couple a family? Is the family necessarily a cohesive, loving, sexually exclusive unit? Do members of the family always live together?

“Sociologically, the family is a social group, a social institution, and a social system. As a social group, it is a collection of persons who recognize one another as family members and interact in

a sexually bonded, intimate, primary network. As a social institution, the family meets societal goals that centre on intimate relationships and the reproduction and socialization of children. As a social system, it has many interdependent components with major differentiations by gender, race, class, age and so forth.” (J. Ross Eshleman, 1998)

It is a union between a man and a woman such that children born to the woman are the recognized legitimate offspring of both partners. (Kathleen Gough) Viewing marriage in terms of the different types of rights it serves to establish, it is defined as a relationship established between a woman and one or more other persons, which provides that a child born to the woman under circumstances not prohibited by the rules of the relationship, is accorded full birth-status rights common to normal members of his society or social stratum. (Edmund Leach)

Furthermore, the definition of marriage is applied to the cultures which are associated with rights including sexual monopoly and rights with respect to children; therefore it is defined in term of having social access rights between a man and a woman. (Duran Bell)

1.2 Types of Marriage among Nigerian families

Marriage is an institute on which can join together people’s lives in a variety of emotional and economic ways. It usually leads to the formation of a new household comprising the married couple, with the married couple living together in the same home, often sharing the same bed, but in some other cultures, the tradition varies, thereby giving different types of marriage in different parts of the world. They are:

1.2.1: Residency: This act of living or occupying a place or position. Residency here implies a situation whereby one takes up a place as his or domicile whether married officially or not. Here

the man or the woman in question lives alone while having intimate relationship with other opposite sexes. This is never recognized as marriage.

1.2.2: Matrilocal marriage: This is the type of marriage whereby the husband moves into the household of his wife's mother.

1.2.3: Patrilocal marriage: The husband moves into the household of the wife's father.

1.2.4: Walking marriage: This is the type in which the husband and the wife do not live together.

1.2.5: Misyar marriage: This involves the husband and wife living separately but meeting regularly.

Marriage is an institution that is historically filled with restrictions. From age, to race, to sexual orientation, to gender, to social status, restrictions are placed on by society for reasons of benefiting the children, passing on healthy genes, to keep properly concentrated or because of prejudice or fear. Societies have often placed restriction on marriage to relatives though the degree of prohibited relationship varies widely. Marriage between brothers and sisters has been forbidden. Roman law, for example, enforced marriage as a union of man and woman and the inseparable association of their lives while some mainstream religions prohibit some marriages on the basis of the consanguinity (**Lineal descent**) and affinity (**Kinship by marriage**) of the prospective marriage partners, though the standards have varied and changed overtime. Also in some jurisdictions but not all, marriage relationships may be created by the operation of the law alone and is often called "common-law marriage" or marriage by habit and repute.

Within the Nigerian context, two major forms of marriage exist, monogamy which is marriage of one man to one woman. **Monogamy** is new social form and structure that was being formed with a conversion of many Igbo people to Christianity. It became a mortal sin to marry more than one wife. Those involved in polygamy were encouraged to get married in the church with one of their wives and to have nothing sexually to do with other wives.

Igbo land is predominantly Christians and has the greatest numbers of priests and religious in Africa, therefore the acceptance of monogamy was easier. Other factors that work in favor of monogamy, such as shift from agro-centric economy to an industrial one, western education, urbanization brought by civilization. Fear of quarrels and jealousies among wives help to promote monogamy. This is like a small pond in summer which gradually receded and dried up under the hash summer sunlight (Ogbalu, 1972).

In Igbo monogamous life, it reflects to the biblical passages of old and new Testament that speak of in the beginning, God made them male and female and that is the reason why a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife and the two become one flesh (Gen. 2:24, Matt. 19: 4-5). This religious tradition gradually gained its strength in the tradition of the people, and has been accepted. Today it is almost abominable for an Igbo man to have more than one wife unless he wants to be seen as a fallen Christian who is not in full communion with the church. Although, the new trend (religious tradition) has its own struggles and challenges in the area of fidelity and not having a male child. It also favors barren women in which the possibility of a second wife is strong.

However, it is interesting to note that most family in Igbo land are predominantly monogamous, or at least were, except in certain circumstances be polygamous.

Polygamy on the other hand is marriage of one man to two or more wives. This is a family system in which a man is allowed to have as many wives as possible. It is not the same as having concubines. Each of the wives is lawfully married and has the right to be called a wife among other wives.

The Igbo people are susceptible to polygamous life due to their values and worldview. As polygamy means a man marrying more than one wife at the same time, the legitimacy of any of the wives of a polygamist is not questioned as long as he duly performs the required traditional rites and ceremonies with the wife.

In polygamous system, a kind of hierarchy exists especially among the wives. The first wife is usually the head and *Primus inters paribus* unless otherwise stated by the husband. Each of the wives has a particular day or week she is supposed to meet with the husband and feed him and actually stay with him and be allowed to enter the living room of the head of the family (his *Obi*). Each of the wives is also usually settle with a house that she shares with her children, a portion of the farm is given to the wife that serves as a garden. Also each wife of is granted a certain amount of private accommodation in the compound for her use and that of her children.

There are reasons for polygamy in Igbo land, which one of them is for sexual reasons, though it is not a major factor. There is the belief among the Igbo that a man is not supposed to sleep with a pregnant or nursing woman and thus the need for more than one wife (Nwabude p.24). Hinted that among the Ibo, there is a practice that when a child is born, it takes three years to wean it and within this period, the man and his wife are not expected to have sexual relationship for very many reasons, one of which is that, it not good for the health of the child.

Another reason for polygamy is the case for a male child. Though a man may have numerous children by his wife, who helps in his farmland, but her inability to bear a male child is a potential reason for a second wife or even a third wife. The male child has right of succession and continuation of family lineage.

It should be noted that polygamy is favored and fostered equally by men and women, in the past women were the chief supporters of the system. It was the ambition of every Igbo man to become a polygamist, and add to the number of his wives as circumstances permit.

Polygamy is an indication of social standing and, to some extent, sign of affluence; in any case, they are counted as sound investment. Though, Christianity, western education and other factors have systematically relegated polygamy in Igbo land to virtually a non-existent reality, yet polygamous marriages exist still today.

In most cultural groups in Nigeria, traditional marriage is usually an arrangement between two families as opposed to an arrangement between two individuals, therefore marriage types in Nigeria depends on culture and tradition of the different cultural groups (ethnics) in the country. Focusing an attention to Igbo people as a major ethnic group in Nigeria, marriage is as old as their origin. This is due to the fact that the Igbo mythology claims that their progenitors were a couple “*Eri*” and his wife were sent from heaven by God to populate and inhabit the earth.

Marriage among the Igbos can be defined as a union between a man and a woman on agreement or organized by their parents, with the dowry and traditional customs performed, and they live as husband and wife. Common among the ordinary Igbo is the view that marriage is the lawful

living together or union of a man and a woman of different families for the purpose of having children, provided that the traditional and customary rites have been performed.

We have also what the Igbos call **child marriage**. Here many marriages begun as early as when a child is born. It was essentially between family friends and business partners or among age group. A father could arrange a wife for his little son from his friend's family. He could arrange with the friend as a female child is born. He visits the child and family and makes his intention known by official bringing with him a keg of palm wine and some kola nuts. This means that a child may get married at any age. The parents of both children would make it a point of duty to drum this arrangement into the mind of their children, so that they know that their future depends on it.

However, this kind of marriage arrangement may meet with opposition from one who happens to fall in love with someone else. The parents of the objecting person would discuss with the contracting family and have the marriage dissolved and the dowry returned back, though sometimes problems might occur during the process. What is behind child marriage is basically the fact that parents have had experiences of marriages and they are in a better position to detect the qualities in a prospective housewife. They make their interference from the life of the life of the parents of the child, which they believe would be inculcated in the child as she grows up. But an old philosophy of life, which says that a good parent would always rear up a good child. Good tree bears good fruit is just a basis of that philosophy which might work out in some qualities such as insanity, robbery, childlessness, laziness, quarrelsome and other things which are important for good cohesive peaceful living.

Today, child-marriage has completely disappeared from the system, and many factors contributed to that: education, Christianity, civilization and urbanization are some of the factors that completely discouraged child-marriage. Women's education was one of the greatest barriers, because girls in the past were not allowed to go to school. Mothers would gladly tell their daughters that their place was in the kitchen and farmland, and of course to bear as many children as possible.

1.3: Meaning of Church /Christian Marriage?

Christians typically regard marriage as instituted and ordained by God for the lifelong relationship between one man as husband and one woman as wife, and is to be "held in honor among all. According to the Catholic Encyclopedias; "Marriage is that individual union through which man and woman by their reciprocal rights form one principle of generation. It is cemented by their mutual consent to give and accept each other for the purpose of propagating the human race, of educating their offspring, of sharing life in common, of supporting each other in undivided conjugal affection by a lasting union". Catholic Encyclopedia on marriage Marriage is a contract and is by its very nature above human law. It was instituted by God, is subject to the Divine law, and cannot for that reason be rescinded by human law. Those who contract marriage do so indeed by their own free wills, but they must assume the contract and its obligations unconditionally. Marriage is natural in purpose, but divine in origin. It is sacred, being intended primarily by the Author of life to perpetuate his creative act and to beget children of God; its secondary ends are mutual society and help, and a lawful remedy for concupiscence. Human law certainly takes cognizance of marriage, but marriage not having been established by man, its essential properties cannot be annulled by such law. Marriage is monogamic and indissoluble;

death alone dissolves the union when consummated. Furthermore, the Catholic Church teaches that while all of these are important, none is what cements the marriage bond. Marriage is a covenant, a relationship established through the free, informed consent of both parties. It happens when two people who are free to marry and are physically and emotionally capable of marriage give themselves to each other, understanding that marriage means openness to life and commitment to faithful love till death. When that happens between two unbaptized people, a natural marriage bond is formed that is greatly respected by the Catholic Church. When it happens between two baptized persons, the Holy Spirit is poured out and the natural bond is elevated to a supernatural sacrament. The natural blessings of marriage are the companionship, mutual support and intimacy of the spouses plus the possibility of sharing in God's creative, life-giving work the procreation and education of children. In a sacramental marriage, there is an additional goal the spouses accept the vocation to be a prophetic, visible sign of the unbreakable covenant between Christ and His Church.

While marriage is honored among Christians and throughout the Bible, it is not seen as necessary for everyone. Unmarried who either have chosen to remain single or who have lost their spouse for some reason are neither incomplete in Christ nor personal failures. Except for a brief time during the middle Ages, the traditional Christian view has held that sex is reserved for marriage and that sex outside of marriage is a sin. We are going to see more deeply how important the two marriages: Church marriage and traditional marriage play key role in the life of the Nigerian couples especially those living in America.

1.4 What is traditional marriage (*Igba Nkwu Nwanyi*)? A traditional marriage is marriage between a man and a woman and never same sex marriage. This is the most acceptable form of

marriage in Nigerian society. The traditional marriage conforms to the traditional culture and religion. Ndigbo are known to be very cultural and traditional people. Aspects of Igbo culture are usually on display for all to see during certain ceremonies in Igbo land such as ***Igba Nkwu*** (traditional marriage ceremony), ***Ichi echi chi*** (title taking) and others.

The traditional marriage otherwise known as ***Igba Nkwu Nwanyi*** has different stages and it cuts across the entire Igbo land. For an Igbo man who is a Christian, white wedding is not enough and therefore incomplete without the ***Igba Nkwu Nwanyi*** (traditional marriage), and ***Igba Nkwu Nwanyi*** is incomplete without the white wedding. These are some of the ceremonies that go on during the ***Igba Nkwu Nwanyi***.

1.4.1: Marriage Enquiry “*ICHU or IJU ASE*”: Here the groom on finding a suitable life partner approaches his own family. The family on agreement sends emissaries to the home of the proposed bride, to communicate their intention of engaging the said daughter in marriage. This visit is normally done with a keg of palm wine and some cola nuts.

The bride family would subsequently communicate their decision either accepting the proposal or refusing same. Where accepted, a date for the bride pricing is fixed.

1.4.2: 1st Day (*MBOCHI MBU*):

Selected members of the grooms family visit the bride’s home with 2kegs of palm wine, kola nuts, palm oil, clothing’s and other gift items as may have been requested by the bride’s family. The elders are selected are they enter into a secluded place for the bargaining. This is normally done with cowries or broom sticks representing the amount that the families are both eager to

offer and accept respectively. At the reaching of a consensus, the money is paid and then the families go to spread the good message outside to the others who are anxiously waiting.

1.4.3: 2nd Day (*MBOCHI NKE ABUA*)

This represents the *Igba-Nkwu* “Wine carrying” properly, well wishers and the public in general are invited for this final lap in the marriage rites. During this stage, the bride’s father gives her a cup of palm wine and tells her to show the crowd who her husband is. She walks around with her cup of wine while the gentlemen in the crowd heckle her and ask for a sip. Finally, she comes to her husband, kneels before him, takes a sip and gives him the cup to drink. This tradition is so important; the ceremony itself is called "Igba Nkwu Nwanyi", which translates to "Wine Carrying Ceremony". Even the wedding cake and decorations are in the shape of palm wine containers.

In other cases, the bride presents a plate of Kola Nut to the eldest member of the groom’s family present. The groom subsequently feeds the bride with a chunk of the kola nut. A cup of the palm wine is also accepted from the eldest member of the bride family from the group both kneeling are prayed for and the groom feeds her in turn with the wine after he has taken a sip. Offering of the wine by the bride to the groom and the drinking of the wine followed by the blessings which serves as the exchange of wedding rings and its subsequent blessings. It is till after this initial feeding by the two that the invites can go ahead to eat and make merry. There are other cultural dances and entertainments during this ceremony. However, slight differences may occur in other parts of Igbo land with regard to this celebration.

Traditional wedding does take place outside the Igbo Land. People must travel home for this ceremony. No matter where one lives, must make every effort to be there for the marriage rite. If on the other hand the would be couples cannot afford the entire expenses, they perform everything with money where they cannot celebrate it in a bigger way but it is imperative that the bride has to take her fiancé to her kinsman and when the fiancé is very far away the member of the bridegroom must represent him and everything will be officially performed and the bride price will then be paid.

In most cases, some of the problems encountered with traditional marriage is financial aspect of it and since traditional marriage does not take place outside the Igbo land. It must and has to be carried out at the bride's family home irrespective of where they reside. If they can't afford to go home, people are designated to represent them on the ceremony.

Whatever might be the case, both marriages are very important among Nigerian Igbos both those living in America and other parts of the world. Since it is something very essential and at the same time a given for all, irrespective of the expenses that are involve, what we intend to do here is on what we can do to assist couples cope with running into excessive spending. All these I intend to explore in the proceeding chapters. Both Church marriage and Traditional (*Igba Nkwu Nwanyi*) marriage are part and parcel of my people that the removal of any of them will be difficult among the Igbos. It is because of all these inherent problems affects Nigerian married couples both abroad and at home that we deem it wise to address. Our aim is to see what we can assist the affected couples both clinically and pastorally.

Chapter Two: Theological/Clinical Concern

2.1: Theological Principles:

Marriage will be discussed here both from the Scriptural point of view as well as from the Ecclesiastical milieu.

2.1.1: Marriage as it relates to the Scriptures.

We shall look into the origin of marriage here from Old Testament as well from New Testament perspectives.

2.1.1.1: Old Testament (OT)

The word marriage signifies the one-flesh nuptial union, which became a model for the relationship between God and his people: “I will take you as my own people, and you shall have as your God” (EX.6:7). From this God-Israel marriage relationship springs the Jewish-Christian marriage tradition. The union of man and woman responds to the mandate to be fertile (Gen.1:27-28; 2:23-24) “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that crepes upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God, he created him; male and female he created them.”

Another version of God’s creation of man and woman is also seen in the chapter two of the same book of Genesis when God made Adam to enter into deep sleep and from his ribs he created Eve as his wife. (Gen 2.22) and verse 23 of the same book, Adam was so happy when he saw Eve, hence he retorted, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be

called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” The bible went further to comment on God intended for man “therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” (Gen. 2:24). Jesus Christ in his teaching on marriage made a reference to the Genesis account on the creation of man and woman. “Have you not read that he who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they two shall be one flesh? Therefore they are no more two, but one flesh.” King James Version of the Bible

Hosea portrays Israel as bride in covenant relationship with God, “she shall call me ‘My husband,’ ... I will espouse you forever” (Hos. 2:18, 21). In Jeremiah, Israel calls God, “the bridegroom of my youth...” (Jer. 3:1-5). In Ezekiel, God marries Israel by “spread the corner of my cloak over you to cover your nakedness” (Ez.16:18). The “bridegroom who exults over his bride” (Is. 61:10; 62:5), expresses God’s joy over Israel. Apart from their symbolic use of nuptial metaphor, three of the prophets integrated their own marriage experiences into their message. Hosea experienced difficult marriage with his wife Gomer (Hos 1-3); Isaiah fathered two children by his wife who is simply referred to as “the prophetess” (Is. 8:3) and finally Ezekiel lost his wife who is referred to as “the desire of your eye” (Ez.24:16). Worthy of note is the case of the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah provides the only illustration in Hebrew Scripture of divine call to celibacy: “Do not marry any woman; you shall not have sons and daughters in this place” (Jer.16:2). Though the reference to God as “jealous” (Ex.20:5) over Israel clearly defines a marriage relationship, it is the prophets who conceive the idea of God as the husband of Israel in their attempt to portray graphically God’s covenant election of Israel.

2.1.1.2: New Testament (NT)

The double imagery of God's covenant and spouse appeared also in the New Testament, with new emphasis on Jesus Christ fulfilling both roles: Bridegroom and Mediator of the New Covenant. John the Baptist described himself in relation to Jesus' mission as 'friend of the Bridegroom' (Jn.3:29). Faced with issue of fasting, Jesus unequivocally asserted his position as bridegroom: "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day." (Mk 2:19-20). The people of God of the new covenant, like Israel of old, became espoused to Jesus who, to redeem them from the slavery of sin, gave up his life on the cross which led to his subsequent exaltation. Jesus Christ was true to his covenant with man, hence he made his mission very clear in (Jn.10:10), when he said that "I came that my people may have life and have it to its fullness" Jesus Christ connected himself to mankind and enjoined husband and wife to remain and abide in each other, even when the Pharisees approached him with marital question (problem) on divorce, Jesus maintained reiterated on the need for unity and indissolubility of marriage. "He who made them made male and female, so they are no longer two, but one, therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matthew 19:6). This great revelation to God's people of the Old Testament, backed up by Jesus Christ, was its liberation from any false notions which means that marriage is natural and at the same time divine. God is always present in any human marriage. Every aspect of human marriage especially the sexual is part of God's own wonderful creation. This means that the basic implication and dimension of human reality of marriage is the union between husband and wife to make up a unity, hence marriage is basically the union of a man and a

woman, by nature complementary to each other both physically and psychologically for mutual love. This point is expressed very well by Rev. M. R. Prieur: “In creation, the human male and female were made complementary; one is made for the other, as a key is for a lock, or a bow for a violin. The unity is organic, not mathematical. They are made to function together. The unity of a man and a woman in marriage is not a unity such that one man plus one woman equals two human beings. It is a unity that creates a new bond between these two complementary persons while still leaving each with his or her own personality and individuality”¹ Prieur, M. R. Married in the Lord: A Handbook for Those Assisting Christian Couples to Prepare for marriage, pp. 17-18. Consequently, the act of marriage makes the two one, nothing more, nothing less. Thus the focal point of the spousal covenant is the creation of the most intimate communion of life, which is achieved through a special kind of love: conjugal love. In fidelity spouses bind themselves into conjugal relationship, interpersonal friendship, with spiritual and material support just as God entered into a union (relationship) with man through his son Jesus Christ for the Christians.

2.2: Marriage as it relates to the Church

The code of canon law article 1055, section 1 of the Roman rite of the Catholic Church states marriage covenant as that: “By which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life, and which of its own very nature is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children, has, between the baptised, been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament” (1983 Code of Canon Law). Here, although there is no scriptural evidence of direct institution by Christ, the sacramentality of marriage is grounded in his saving mission. And since it is through Christian marriage that families come into existence it becomes an efficacious sign, the sacrament of the covenant of

Christ and the church. As an institution, marriage incorporates the various elements: spiritual, social, psychological, economic and biological. As a result of all these, special care is given to the preparation of persons who desire to embrace marriage, hence Pope Leo XIII wrote: Let special care be taken that people be well instructed in the precepts of Christian wisdom, so that they may always remember that marriage was not instituted by the will of man, but from the very beginning, by the authority and command of God; that it does not admit of plurality of wives or husbands; that Christ, the Author of the New Covenant, raised it from a rite of nature to be a sacrament, and gave to His Church legislative and judicial power with regard to the bond of union. On this point the very greatest care must be taken to instruct them, lest their minds should be led into error by the unsound conclusions of adversaries who desire that the church should be deprived of that power”. Leo XII, Encyclical, *Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae*, English translation from The Papal Encyclical p38

In marriage, one is continually required to focus on another and to be sensitive the other’s needs, as one would be to one’s own. Hence husband and wife ought to no matter their situation assist each and be therefore each other. They have to try their best to complement each other in every ways and means.

In a communiqué issued after their conference of 1977, the Catholic bishops of the United States expressed this complementary character of both sexes in marriage: “Marriage creates unity man and woman is psychologically incomplete until they have acquired the capacity to relate to each other with awareness, intimacy and spontaneity. It is not good for man (woman) to be alone. Marriage is a life-long friendship, and at the same time to grow in individuality.” Marriage Preparation Resource Book of the United States Catholic Bishops Conference, p. 39.

This capability of man and wife to complement each other in marriage is a constitutive human element of marriage, an element without which the marriage bond would enjoy a peaceful union. Philipon has made us to understand the fact that the Creator has endowed the mind and will of each with different aptitudes that are not only ordained to diverse functions in life but also intended by God to keep them united in one common and basic task.

“Marriage is above all a union of souls sharing the same ideals of life. When marriage is completely true to human ideal, so that husband and wife are joined in body and mind, sharing in the same joys, the same hopes and same sorrows and putting at the disposition of the other’s good all they are and have, then there is conjugal love, which is really the soul of ideal marriage”

Philipon, M. M. The Sacrament of the Christian Life, pp. 215-217

Marriage therefore becomes very essential and binding for men and women in the church. The church from this point of view sees marriage not only as divine but also as canonically binding for her members. Canon 1059 states that: “The marriage of Catholics, even if only one party is baptised, is governed not only by divine law but also by canon law, without prejudice to the competence of the civil authority in respect of the merely civil effects of the marriage” 1983 Code of Canon Law on marriage

Marriage is therefore sacred and must be respected and honored. It is human reality which offers man and woman in the conjugal society the opportunity for growing and developing in each other’s love and company, and above all complementing each other.

2.2.1: Marriage as a sacrament:

Marriage according to our catholic tradition is one of the seven sacraments of the church.

Sacraments present Jesus to us in the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection through acts of liturgy or worship. They nourish faith and are personal encounters with Jesus Christ and his believing community, the church. The sacraments present the Paschal mystery of Christ to us through visible, tangible and very human actions and objects. These actions and objects signify what they bring about hence the Council of Trent maintains:

“If anyone should say that matrimony is not truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the Gospel Law, instituted by Christ but an invention of man, not conferring grace, let him be anathema” Session xxi Canon 1, The Council of Trent

Marriage signifies and gives grace to the contracting parties for helping them to “...sanctify each other in their married life and in bringing up their children as children of God. The fact that the spouses are themselves ministers of this sacrament sets it apart on a new level of being” Session xxi Canon 1, (The Council of Trent

Marriage therefore is a sacrament consequently; a valid marriage contract cannot exist between baptised persons without its being by that very fact a sacrament. Marriage as a sacrament, the man and woman must out of their own free will decide to live together as husband and wife, they are obligated therefore to respect one another and do whatever it takes not to separate from each other hence “the essential properties of marriage are unity and indissolubility; in Christian

marriage they acquire a distinctive firmness by reason of the sacrament.”¹ And marriage is only possible when the man and the woman exchanges their consent without being forced into it, thus Canon 1057.1 maintains that “marriage is brought into being by the lawfully manifested consent of persons who are legally capable. This consent cannot be supplied by any human power.”²

The popes also have all through the ages restated and emphasized for modern man and modern society the sacramentality of the marriage of Christians. According to Pius XI in his encyclical

Casti Connubii:

“For Christians, Sacrament is not an empty name. Christ our Lord, who established and made effective the holy sacraments, raised the marriage of his faithful ones to be a true and proper sacrament and made it the sign and effective source of that special interior grace by which it perfects natural law love, strengthens indissoluble unity and sanctifies the partners. Since Christ himself made valid consent between the partners a sign of grace, Sacrament and Christian marriage are so intimately joined that there can be no true marriage contract between baptised people which is not a sacrament.” Pius XI, Encyclical Letter, Casti Connubii, 1938, AAS, 22 (1930) 548-549

This Encyclical is in fact a landmark as far as its doctrine on marriage is concerned. It is moreover particular in its treatment of the sacramental grace of matrimony. Moralists and Canon lawyers did promote the sacramentality of marriage.

The theological development of this sacrament is continued by the Second Vatican Council, which sees marriage as a sacrament because “authentic married love is caught up into divine love and because marriage has as its mission to manifest to all men the Savior’s living presence in the

¹ The Code of Canon Law, 1983

² Canon 1057, of the New Code of Jan. 25, 1983

world and the genuine nature of the church.” McHugh, J. J. *Gadium et Spes*, (G.S.) No. 48

Marriage in the Light of Vatican II, Marriage therefore is not only a reflection of loving covenant uniting Christ with Church (Eph 5:32), it is a participation in that covenant or a sharing in the partnership of love between Christ and the Church. As a way of conclusion, marriage is not only regarded as sacrament, it is also a vocation (God’s gift), calling from God to man. The most important calling is to follow Jesus Christ and to live his life. Thus for every Christian, our baptism expresses our fundamental vocation. Strengthened by grace, the community of love which constitutes the couple is called to become for them the sign and sacrament of the faithful and fruitful love which unites Christ with his Church. Thus both in the Christian and traditional point of view, marriage is both for the community and for God.

Throughout the history of the chosen people (Israelites) beginning from the call of Abram in Genesis chapter 12 following, God has ordained marriage to be only between man and woman with the valid intention of procreation hence a new family was formed, this is as opposed to same sex marriages there is the order of the day. Abram who later changed to Abraham after the birth of his son Isaac had an indivisible family even when Hagar was introduced into his family she was later sent away in order to maintain the divine family established by God during his call. After the death of Abraham, Isaac his son had two sons Esau and Jacob from his wife Rebekah (Rebecca) (Cf. Genesis 25:19-26) from Jacob a great Israelite family tradition was formed. (Gen chapter 29 following), with the marriage with Leah and her sister Rachel, we discovered that even polygamy was being practiced among the Israelites of the old. There were also different forms of concubinage being practiced during these periods up to the time of King Solomon whereby wives/women who were unable to give offspring to their husbands either offer their

maid servants or slaves to their husbands in order to have children on their behalf. This form of marriage arrangement is also found among the Nigerian people as far as our tradition and culture is concerned.

2.4: Its Connection to Traditional Marriage (Igba Nkwu Nwanyi)

There are some areas where theological principles do agree with the traditional principles and mores of traditional marriage.

2.4.1: Sanctity of Marriage:

Both the church and Igbo culture/customs of the Nigerian community upholds the sanctity of marriage. Both maintained that married is something that is sacred and must be kept holy and respected at all time. Any breach to this rule always ends the married couple into serious problems that might even result in separation or punishment from their God and the community.

2.4.2: Marriage as a covenant:

Theologically, marriage is considered as a covenant, the church teaches that marriage is ordained by God. It is ***b'rit carat*** in Hebrew meaning (to cut into two or to make treaty); we see that in the creation of man in Genesis chapters one and two in Genesis chapter 15, where God made a covenant with man. We find that also in the New Testament of the Christian bible teaching of Jesus Christ on marriage and that of the writings of Paul on the relationship between Jesus Christ and his church and that of married people. The same is applicable to traditional marriage, God (*Chineke*) is always at the center. Without God blessing the marriage through the elders, the would-be couples will never leave in peace and harmony.

2.4.3: Marriage as means of procreation:

Both scripture and culture encourages child bearing as means of procreation. God encouraged man in the both Genesis to increase and multiply and fill the earth. In traditional marriage, the primary aim is child bearing. Couples are always encouraged to have as many children as possible and in the church, the primary aim of marriage is mutual love and bearing and raising of children. Parents at times go through bitter and difficult moments if they are blessed with children. On a more extreme end, in traditional Igbo setting, divorces can occur as a result of infertility or the man marrying more wives or the wife arranging her maid or another woman to bear child for the husbands on her behalf. This as we know is opposed to the church's teachings and western view of marriage.

2.5: Religious/Pastoral needs for the affected couples

A lot of Nigerian couples in Diaspora face great challenges as result of custom and cultural values and cultural conflicts that have resulted into bitter divorces, divisions and separations and even domestic violence and deaths of either of the partners or both. For example, in Parish located in the Bronx, Mrs. Joy Anyanwu, a 46-year old Nigerian lady met her untimely death in the hands of her estranged husband, Mr. John Anyanwu, 48, on Thursday night, June 8, 2005. Their children in the first place were taken away from the house, they are now without parents. These have resulted in leaving their children into the trauma of living without their biological parents. Some of the children end up into foster care. Some of the children are secretly sent back to Nigeria to live with their grandparents and relatives.

There was also the problem of insecurity among some of the married couples before marriage hence some of the marriages were prearranged and of course, they eventually failed while some were based on lies and upon discovery of the truth, their spouses eventually file for divorces.

Some of the marriages were possibly based on control by one party who had the upper hand for a while and when the other party became confident and matured enough, they sought divorce. Financial problems at times do become the major part of their problems. For example some of the women complain of their husbands siphoning their joint accounts to do whatever they like without their permission or their opinion. Some of the women sleep at their jobs while their husbands will prefer to stay at the home in the name of babysitting their children.

Some of the divorces were caused by greed and a desire for more wealth on the part of a spouse subsequently leading to disagreements and divorce. Some men even go the extent of arranging work time table for their wives while at the end of the day, they will be the one to enjoy the paycheck. One of the couples narrated to me about one lady an easy going woman, who was loved by all and how her husband according to them drove all the way from Newark to the Bronx to end her life.

There is also the problem of being dysfunctional. Disturbingly, many Nigerian marriages are in trouble. Some have either ended in divorce or separation, while others are just fudging. Even in the face of the so-called tolerance, there is a violent temper coupled with anger simmering beneath the surface of some of these marriages.

This continued problems that takes place from different perspective among these families have escalated to perennial domestic disputes that have consumed them. With each passing moment,

domestic disputes among Nigerian families in the USA are becoming violent and sometimes, deadly. With all these problems, we discovered that there is an urgent need to address and help some of these families pastorally and through spiritual comfort. These we intend to accomplish during the group workshop. There is therefore the need for pastoral care and support for the affected families.

2.5.1: Mediations between the traditional/church marriages

I had been able to discuss with many married couples both during my trip to Nigeria from September to October last year in 2009, and among them living here in the US, we came up with the following mediation.

There is the need for both church wedding and Igba Nkwu Nwanyi ceremony to take place the same day. This will save the cost of over spending that eventually affects the couples in the future.

There is also the need for the parents and family members to be supportive to the young couples not only financially by not over burdening them but also morally and emotionally being there for them. This will eliminate the problem of any of the parties to take sides. Hence there will be a stronger bond and unity for the newly wedded couples. This will also reduce over demand of bride price which eventually help the newly married to save money for their future.

There is also the need for the newly wedded couples to be so supportive of each other and not to listen to the outsiders, they should listen and take advice of each other and love each other in very sincerely and transparent way.

There is also the need for both cultures: Church tradition and Igbo/Nigerian traditions to recognize and respect each other; this will eliminate the problem of dichotomy and division among each other.

2.6: Clinical principles:

I am going to use the “developmental theories of Carter and McGoldrick” that addresses the family life cycle. This theory “focuses on the family life cycle. They suggest six stages of the family cycle: the unattached young adult, the joining of families through marriage and the newly married couples without children, the family with young children, the family with adolescents, launching children and moving on, and the family in later life.” Olsen, D.C. Integrative Family Therapy, p.20. This theory will guide us as we navigate through some of the problems that the Nigerian married couples are going through here in America. This will also help us to identify problems where they are and see what we can do to assist throughout the group sessions.

2.6.1: Counseling sections for the affected couples

There was time and room allotted to the some of the Nigerian couples here in the Bronx New York. The counseling took place both individually and collectively. Within those periods, questionnaires were handed over to them; they were able to express their feelings, emotions as well as their crisis. They were also able to look and listen to each other’s side of their stories. Some of their children were interviewed and they were also able to share their own feelings and what that has been going on in their families. These gave us broader pictures in our group formation. To help elucidate this point, through the “*family therapy paradigms*”

“Most of the major models of family systems therapy accept some of the essential ingredients of systems theory but differ on the focus of family therapy. In order to understand family therapy

and to work effectively from an integrated model, one must know the basic paradigms of family therapy. The integrated model presented here incorporates the following paradigms: family problem-solving therapy, structural family therapy, interactional theory, multigenerational theory, and object relations theory.” Olsen, D.C. Integrative Family Therapy, p21

These theories were of very powerful tools for our group work and counseling. Here, the various families were able to trace their families of origin, discover their traits and tries to relate them to whatever they have been experiencing thereby finding ways to make amendments and corrections for a better peaceful home. Hence there was great decorum to listen to each other and to learn from each other.

2.6.2: Listening to the voices in the family

Under this section, I am presenting some of the case studies presented to me in the course of listening what was going on in their various families. I am doing this in the form of examination of their family dynamics.

2.6.2.1 Anthony’s Case

Anthony was born into a polygamous home; his dad had five wives and about twenty seven kids. His mom was the least favorite wife, so his mom and siblings automatically became the least favorite. Like many kids his age growing up in the 1950s, he had to do menial jobs to make ends meet. He survived going through standard school and secondary school because he was brilliant. Upon graduation, he got a western government scholarship to attend the University College, Ibadan to study medicine. After graduating, moved over to America and became a medical doctor. While in America, he met and married Mary and they had 3 girls.

Anthony never forgot the way his dad treated him, his mother and siblings. He promised that he would always be there for his own children and love them unlike he never was loved. Because of his success, Anthony became the pride of the extended family, and the dad who was never there for him, was now claiming the benefits of his success. He resented this.

He showed tremendous love for his girls. They had all the best things in life that money can buy, vacations at Disneyworld in America, Paris, France etc, best schools in Nigeria and many more. This family was much enmeshed. They called each other for everything; they told their dad every single detail of their lives. Anthony never got a life for himself other than things for his kids and family. All the hobbies he had before marriage were abandoned because of the vow he made to love his family.

The girls loved the attention given to them by their dad, until they got to the University and boys started to approach them. Their dad's reaction initially was weird but they could live with it. After the three of them went through University, they started to marry one at a time and their dad's reaction to the men in their lives was still not cordial. Never really having the time to separate himself from his girls, Anthony expected his now married daughters to still get everything from him including taking instructions from him. This of course created problems with the husbands of the daughters creating numerous conflicts in their homes.

2.6.2.2: Helen's Case

Helen is the first daughter of seven children. Their parents were sparsely educated but very loving and brought all the kids up in the fear of God. A lot of family responsibility fell on Helen, she told her siblings what to do and she basically was the "small mummy". Upon graduation

from the university, Helen, spent most of her resources on her family and would do whatever it takes to meet the needs of her siblings. When Helen got married, she did not separate herself from the role being the anchor in her parent's home. She went on trying to tell her husband what to do because she was used to doing that, her allegiance to her siblings and family, instead of her husband was not helping either. Her marriage ended up into in serious and bitter divorce.

2.6.2.3: Amaka and Uche's Case

Amaka and Uche married in America when they were in school. When they returned to Nigeria, Uche got a good job with one of the oil companies in the south eastern part of Nigeria, while Amaka went into teaching so she can be available for their children. Uche's success at work soon got to his head and like many of his colleagues, he soon had a girlfriend (mistress) and started to maintain a second family outside of his matrimonial home (this of course is not suppose to be normal). When Amaka found out about this second family, she divorced him and chooses to raise their children alone. Amaka did a good job raising the kids to be successful and respectful, but they never had a father figure in their lives. They actually have deep seated resentment for men. The daughters had problem trusting their husbands and kept waiting for their new husbands to have an affair, while the boys resent their father-in-laws trying to behave like a dad to them. The boys would deal with men at long distance as long as you don't come too close, or act as father figure.

2.6.2.4 Ola's Case

One of the men in the group shared with us this life experience.

As newlywed, Ola and I went through a very tough time with family of origin issues. She is from a closely knit family; I'm from a loosely knit family. Her experiences were definitely different from mine. When we got married, I discovered that my wife and her family called each other often (daily) and issues' concerning everyone was discussed by everyone. In my family, we were so dispersed that I can only remember one time that we got together to discuss anyone's issues communally and he say 'go to university, what you did at the university was your problem'. My father-in-law was more hands on especially with the kids' education. The blending of her parents hands on approach and my parents loosely knit approach created a big problem for us as a couple in the early years of our marriage.

I remember a particular time, when she was in medical school. This was two years into our marriage, she had received the result of a particular exam and she gave it to me, I took it probably scanned through it and left it on the table and just said congratulations, without any fanfare. I saw that she was not happy with me. That night, her parents called, and the way her result was talked about, looked like she had graduated. Years later when we talked about that night, I told her that, all I cared about was if she passed or not! The last time I showed my school report to anyone was in high school. It took many years for my wife to realize that our reaction to news is different. While you can see excitement all over my wife, sometimes you can't even tell that I'm happy about the situation (I joke with her that when we pray is when I show excitement, not when the answer comes).

We still have different issues stemming from our family of origin. She disciplines the kids with long term effects, I could not do that, I'll rather discipline them now and not have to deal with them telling me "please daddy" because I will give in. I'm still bad with calling people (I have

people on my mind and I really do pray for them - I just don't call). My wife is the life of the party while I'm the party pooper with my line "it's time to go home". Somehow, we have agreed on a lot of issues. I never liked vacation (never saw my dad have one - I believed it was a waste of time), now I do take time out for relaxation, we pray into the New Year (a tradition from my family); we host a bunch of people often (from both family).

Going through the case studies about the family dynamics, although determined by the environment and some genetics, one will be able to conclude that it is not the fault of the parents. They are also a product of their environment and the genetic pool they come from which is totally out of anyone's control. The difference in how kids react to the same environment is based on each kid's personality. In the most functional home there are dysfunctional stuff happening as well.

It is quite obvious to me that each one of us come with some good and some bad family of origin traits, however, I have also noticed that rather than admit the dysfunctional part of our own family origin traits we spend a lot of time pointing out the dysfunction in our spouses family of origin. "Your family must not love each other because they don't call each other", or "You are all too close and getting too much into my business", "You can talk to your family about yourself, but please not about me or the kids".

In all we were able to recommend some of the tools that will help of help to the group in order to overcome some of their Family of Origin issues that causes problems in their marriage

2.6.3: Recommendations:

Recognize the pattern that worked when you were at home with your parents but would not work with your spouse, because of his/her experience: Many newlyweds come into the marriage wanting to change their husbands into the mold of what they grew up in. And men want their wives to be like their mom in the kitchen and wife in the bedroom. The only person we should aim to change is first of all oneself before others. Admitting we have a problem, even in a functional system would help knowing what to solve. If you don't see the dysfunction in your family and you complain about your spouse's family dysfunction, your spouse would see you as a hypocrite and would either resent you for it, or would just not take you seriously.

In trying to bring about change, don't force him to call your family as often as you do, let him get to it himself. Wife should recognize that if your sisters-in-law don't call as much as your sisters, it might not be because they hate you but because they are not used to calling that much. Stop fighting your wife for what her parents did or did not do. Why take it out on her, when you don't like what her parents or siblings did?

Recognize that your husband/wife and children come before your parents and siblings. Many parents don't know when to let go of their children, they still get into his/her business even when that child is married:

On the question of a man leaving his parents and clinging to his wife, we are asked to leave and cleave to each other as husband and wife. Leaving and cleaving do not mean you are abandoning your parents or sibling, it however means, your allegiance and priority ought to change. Because parents know you, they'll use all sorts of boundary breaker to make you not blend (I have found

that they don't do it deliberately, they simply don't know when to let go), boundary breakers include lines such as "this is our culture", "remember how we raised you", "I don't believe you said that, he must have made you say that" etc.

We Africans have a lot of work to do in this area. Many African men don't know when to call their parents to order, when they are meddling in our family business. Women also tend to play the, your family and my family game. Cherish the advice from your parents, for what it is - advice.

Recognize that it takes time to blend two schools of thought together (and it might not really totally jell). In the Book of Deuteronomy 24: 5, “when a man is newlywed, he need not go out on a military expedition, nor shall any public duty be imposed on him. He shall be exempt for one year for the sake of his family; to bring joy to the wife he has married”. This therefore suggests that newlywed should take a whole year just getting to know each other:

We recommend we learn to love each other just the way we are. Realize that just because something is not the way you want it, does not make it bad. Condemning your husband or wife's upbringing because it is different from yours is a bad thing and it suggests pride on your part.

If your husband or wife's way of life is contrary to biblical values, then reason the issue out with your spouse and let her/him know where you stand. Since marriage is a marathon rather than a sprint, give each other time to buy into each other's ideology especially as it fits your set of values, the best way is to back up your argument is with biblical truth and scriptures. Remember, not to shove it down your partner's throat either. Don't forget to seek help as well when necessary.

4. Set rules and values that your family would live by; it helps if those values are based on biblical principles: We want the best for our kids and we will demonstrate it by the school and activities they participate in. We will show them what a marriage look like by living it for them, letting them know mummy or daddy is more important, like their wife or husband should be important when they marry. Ola and I have many rules based on our values that continue to guide us. We don't argue in front of the kids even if we disagree with what the other person is doing or saying. As for rules in dealing with the extended family, start by deciding what you share with the parents and what remain with both of you. Whatever rule that affects family one must affect family two. Decide on visitation, even when you start having kids. As the kids get older encourage them to know both side of the family, rather than one side of the family. It is unfair to be cozy with your family and condemn your spouse's family and then expect him/her to understand.

While it is difficult to change habits formed growing up or changing personalities, we need to recognize the ares in our upbringing that is adversely affecting our marriage or family and face it, it is now your responsibility to make change when necessary.

With all these tools at hand, it was ripe for the group to meet for our group workshop, counseling and healing sections.

Chapter Three

3.0: Formation of Groups

There was an announcement made in the church for the program, those who participated did it voluntarily. The members of the group were either affected directly or indirectly. We used the church hall for all the sessions while my office was used for the individual sessions or for couples that needed privacy and directions.

3.1: Background Information:

We have seven couples and three single mothers in all the sections. They were willing to share their experiences which include their moments of joy and their moments of sorrows. The ups and downs of their marital life, some of the couples have been married for over fifteen years, while three others ranges between three and ten years respectively.

We had five sessions and each session started with prayers and inter-personal encounter. The sixth and seventh sessions were never anticipated; we had to hold it as result of what came up among the group discussions and sharing.

We started with an hour of meditations, contemplations and reflections. Relevant literatures were offered to them to read prior to our meetings. I was able to dispose them on the importance of confidentiality and trust. The groups were also encouraged to put behind their differences and animosities for better and fruitful group workshop. Different ideas were exchanged from each other and after the hour of reflections, different prayer sections were offered before the day's work.

Interesting to note that one of the couples is from a different faith belief (Anglicanism). The group worked tirelessly for great positive results. It was really an eye opener of what some of our Nigerian couples in America were going through. It gave me broader opportunity to deepen my knowledge and for a greater key role to play in my ministry at the same time the direction to follow.

3.1.1 Workshop Series (1st Week):

This was the outcome of our first session. We started with prayers, and holy mass was celebrated. We had another 30 minutes of private time and reflection. These were the things discussed on the 1st day was on *“what is the meaning of marriage within the Nigerian context and what are the problems that are recurrent among Nigerian couples in America?”*

The group saw the meaning and celebration of marriage in Nigeria with all its problems as the same like any other marriage being celebrated in other parts of the world. According to them, the Nigerian couples living in America are not left out in the same problem. In fact theirs is made worse by the striking cultural differences they are forced to adapt to and live by its dictates. Worthy of mention and for emphasis is the fact that marriages often most times start off nicely no partner envisages misunderstandings or problem along the way but the common truth is that these problems will surely rise up its ugly head and as mentioned earlier certain factors magnify these misunderstandings.

Cultural differences serves as an umbrella where other factors like: The system belief in individualism, lack of trust, money problem, reproductive right issues, and lack of love etc takes

shelter. One may be tempted to ask, is marriage not universal? Why will cultural differences and place of abode affect its universal nature? In the first place marriage is universal and for the fact that there are several factors against its uniqueness does not remove or negate its universal character. The problem of cultural differences has been there and will continue to there. The question and the problem lie in the individual, because human beings tend to learn very fast the ills of a society than the good mores. The problems can be corrected only and only if the individual avails himself/herself every good tool and opportunity to embrace and at the same time accept the best from every new culture not leaving behind his/her own cherished and valued culture.

Nigerian couples in America face the striking cultural difference between their culture and that of America when it comes to marriage. This can be seen in the defined roles which each partner plays. In our culture, the man is the head of the family. The well being of his family is his expected duty. The society expects him to call the shots and make decisions for the family. He is regarded as the captain of the ship. The above scenario is different from what is obtainable in America or what the law and society expects of couples. Couples are regarded as equal; the duty of the bread winner is not regarded as the sole responsibility of the man. Anybody can call the shot and the law has a lot of legal benefits to the wife in cases of marital dispute.

The Nigerian couples who find themselves in this part of the world adopt this kind of lifestyle and this normally brings about friction. In case the man cannot live up to his expectations this will prompt her wife to try out her hands in various endeavors and if lucky she might start earning more than the husband. The reversal of roles is most times not handled well by most couples. This is due to the fact that it is a bit foreign to them. An adage in Igbo in the Eastern

part of Nigeria goes like this, “*onye nwunye ya na asu nri na eri nsi*” meaning that is “he that the wife feeds, eats poison”. This indicated that reversal of role is not well accepted as the norm where complementarily is a less bitter pill to swallow.

From the legal angle, a wife is given more benefits from the husband. In cases of divorce, the man is made to pay child support if there are kids in the marriage and at times the wife takes over their matrimonial name. But in Nigeria, a man can decide to divorce the wife and no one will question his decision. Although, legally he is expected to pay maintenance to his wife, kinds of child support. But this is normally calculated based on the woman’s financial contribution to the marriage. The question of taking over the matrimonial abode or the man packing out is very rare. The mentality of the Nigerian couple is that marriage is for life and that you should stick to it despite its odds and pitfalls, while on the other hand it is perceived that marriage for Americans is a contract that you are free to call it a quit if it does not favor you.

3.1.2: Wrong Interpretation of what America stands for:

The group maintained that what men and women in Nigeria think about their Nigerian counter parts in America is not always the case. According to them, a lot of people came over here thinking that the roads are paved with gold, they are rather disappointed and dejected and made to do so many menial jobs that they wouldn’t do at home or in their countries. This affects their level of self worth which affects their marriages negatively for those who are married, for those who are single, it is often the habit of Nigerian men to marry from home, this is due to the enormous belief that ladies from their country will be able to weather the storm with them and not see the marriage as a contract as the belief that ladies here do. This move and belief have seen proved to have backfired in several cases. The ladies whose marriage was arranged from

their countries came into the belief that all is well because their fiancé lives in America. Many have been disappointed only to come and see their wonderful husbands are doing menial jobs, living lower than what the wives are used to or even lower than the level of their other rejected suitors at home whom they left to come to America. This is where the problem starts, the initial professed love turns to tolerance and in cases if she gets a better deal she moves on. The above scenario results to lack of trust. The wife feels cheated and deceived and will not trust her husband again, and this gradually kills the marriage even before it starts.

Another area of friction is money. At times, the ladies take up jobs that are more lucrative than their male counterparts and in severe cases it makes them earn more. The men in most cases take up more strenuous jobs which in most cases do not pay more. Worthy to mention at this point is that these two individuals have dependents at home (back in Nigeria) who makes endless demands for money and assistance. If such situation arise, and the woman earns more, she will definitely give more assistance to her dependents who believes that she has made it since she is married to someone living in America. This makes the man angry in some cases because he feels if it were not for him, she wouldn't be in America and meeting up to this duty of assisting her relatives. If the man wants such hand of grace extend to him, he has to earn it in whatever way. Worthy of mention at this juncture is that most of these wives are much younger than their husbands. The man tends to go for naïve younger girls for marriage hoping to mould them to their taste. These in most cases have not been successful.

3.1.3: Lack of intimacy among some married couples.

Intimacy oils a relationship; lack of it makes it rusty and uneventful. Due to the strenuous work schedule of these couples, moments of intimacy is usually lost. The couple is like colleagues rather than lovers. A few sizzling moments in bed or in each other arms can go a long way to dilute all the pressures and give them room to bare their thoughts to each other. The session ended with some remedies and solutions.

3.1.3.1: Any Way Out:

First, there should be sincerity in communication. Both parties should be sincere to each other even before the marriage starts. Let all knew what to expect and what actually is each other worth. The communication should not stop but continue although the marriage. Communication should be between the couple not between partner and his or her friends. Discuss everything under the sun; don't assume an outcome of a discussion without first having the discussion.

Secondly, there should be a mentality change especially on the part of the man. You cannot call the shot all the time, allow your wife some space, and accord your wife, her own respect. On the part of the wife, that you at times make a greater contribution to the upkeeps, does not give you the right to misbehave. After all, there is no law that says that your husband has broken the law by not providing for you, rather only expectations exist. The old saying that, "if you go to Rome, behave like the Romans", does not hold water in such situation. But rather, "if you go to Rome, learn the good things that the Romans do and do likewise". In as much as the nature of good and bad is relative, but there are still kind of marriage our ancestors practiced out see their wives as equals but can still maintain the first among equals in the relationships. The wives likewise

should not totally embrace the carefree nature of their host community but apply severe restraint in certain areas, so as to allow peace reign in their homes.

In cases of many matters, let there be a sort of a poll, despite who earns more or not, and cases of expenditure let both be aware of how it is been spent; this will bring back trust, love, and peace. Make sure you both agree on what to spend it on. If there is no agreement, let that project be kept aside until both parties agree to its terms.

3.2: Second Session (2nd Week):

All the seven couples were present in this session. There were two other single mothers and single father who were also present. We started with opening prayer and readings from the Scriptures.

It will not be sufficient to be the controlling spouse. We will have to humble ourselves in the face of methods and purposes that exceed our expectations. This session was brief; the group decided to hold hands in prayers and at the end listed some of the problems they were encountering in their marriages. Some of the problems listed were: Fidelity, broken trust, emotional Neglect, addictive behavior especially on the part of the men, emotional and physical abuses, the Brink of divorce resulting from lack of respect, cheating and embezzlements. Other inherent problems listed are:

1. Boredom
2. Separation
3. A Stubborn Spouse

4. Emotional Infidelity
5. Silent Treatments
6. No Sex
7. Poor Communication
8. No Affection
9. Lack of Appreciation
10. Midlife Crisis
11. Failed Experiences in Marriage Counseling

3.3: Third Session: Marriage Problems in Individual Setting (3rd Week):

3.3.1: Social/ Economic

The decline in marriage since the 1960's has been accompanied by a rise in number of serious social problems. Children born out of wedlock or whose parents are divorce are much more likely to experience poverty, abuse and behavioral and emotional problems, have lower academic achievements and use drugs more often. Single mothers are much more likely to be victims of domestic violence. With the rise in these problems come high program costs to deal with the effects of the breakdown of marriage. For children whose parents remain married, the benefits are real. Adolescents from these families have been formed to have better health and are less likely to be depressed, are less likely to repeat a grade in school, and have fewer developmental problems. The implications of such mounting evidence for social policy are immense. Too many welfare programs continue to undermine marriage among the poor and must be re-evaluated.

The effects of these on children are:

- a. Serious Child Abuse
- b. Poor Family Background and Adult Criminality
- c. Adolescent Depression
- d. School Expulsion
- e. Poor Developmental Problems and Family Structure
- f. Behavioral Problems and Family Structure
- g. Teenage Sexual Activity and Family Structure
- h. Adolescent attitudes towards Out-of Wedlock Child Bearing and Family Structure.

3.4: Forth Session (4th Week):

Under this session, the reasons why some men travel all the way from America to Africa to marry their partners were discussed. Some of the couples maintained that women are the same whether married from foreign country or culture or from one's culture. What matters according to them lies in family upbringing; this according to some of them is some of the problems Nigerian couples in America face. These are some of the outcome of our discussions.

3.4.1: Discussions/Deliberations: (Some wrong notions)

A woman who has spent too much time in American and does not know how to cook or respect a husband or the African woman who was brought here and soon became "Americanized" is now calling police on her husband or running away with another man.

Some of the reasons include:

- Any woman from Africa would know how to cook and how to respect the husband.
- Any woman from Africa would understand African culture.
- Women in Diaspora are too sophisticated and "loose", in other words they don't know how to treat a man the way someone from Africa will.
- If I want a wife that will wait on me, cook and take care of the children without asking for help, then I'll go home and get for myself a village girl.
- Any girl recommended by my parents from home must be a good girl.
- It is good to marry a nurse, a doctor or a lawyer so that she can come over to America and make lots of money for the family.

These points they listed according to the group has been a wrong notion that has misled most of the Nigerian men going home to marry their partners instead of marrying here in America. The group went further to compare the Nigerian girl born in Nigerian and the one born here in America.

The young woman born and raised abroad would more than likely not to speak the native language and she thinks like a western person. Her definition of respect is totally different from what a typical Nigerian men and women calls respect. She is very educated and is more assertive in what she wants and not easily intimidated by the husband. She understands and knows her right and would absolutely not take domestic abuse under any circumstances. Depending on her parents, she is more likely not even know how to cook the native soup like "*ogbona*" or "*egusi*", nor does she know how to make "*Iba*" (made of cassava), "*Fufu*" (made of yam) or "*Amala*" (made of corn). She can make rice, macaroni and cheese and other foods made right here in America.

They usually do not know or follow the traditions of the people in Nigeria especially on the areas of respecting their elders including their will be husbands, they tend to call people by their names thereby breaking the norms and values of Nigerian cultures.

The group on the other hand noted also some of the problems associated with young girls/women who live back home in Nigeria. According to them, because of the Western influence, many of the women are now very educated and their view of marriage are now quite different with the Nigerian point of view of marriage. Many of them are now interested in watching what goes on in the western world.

They know how to cook good food and other delicacies, most of them have great respect and regard for the elders and they are tolerant in domestic abuses which they regard more or less as nothing. Their views might be different slightly if they went on vacations abroad regularly or has spent more than four weeks in a western country. They also speak their local languages, perhaps even the dialect from their villages.

Most women without the right foundation of principles and values from their parents but only with the view of marriage from the Nigerian cultural standpoint, will react negatively and demand or exercise "freedom" once they've been exposed to western cultures for some time. This reaction is the reason we hear and read the different stories of women who were brought abroad and are now behaving like "American wives" and why some men are going crazy and being the jury and judge.

In the course of our discussion, the group unanimously concluded and maintained that the main factors in deciding whom to marry should never be the geographical location, or cultural or

financial status, as these changes over time. The one important element that influences any person's life, according to the group is the family of origin, the values and principles that Mom and Dad choose to pass down are very critical. A young lady that grew up in a Christian and respectable home, regardless of where (Africa or America), is who any man should want to marry.

3.4.2: Right Judgment:

Here almost all the women in the room maintained either men or women should look very carefully before making their choices on whom to marry. Each one of us according to them has to decide what is important to us in the areas of compatibility, is a woman that can cook Nigerian dishes more important than someone who understands the culture of where I live? Is speaking my local language with my wife more important than marrying someone that is ready and available? Is respect as defined by prevalent Nigerian cultures more important to me than a wife that says "don't be stupid"?

The young ladies from home and those in Diaspora are both educated, what separates them are their views of marriage based on the culture they grew up in (African or western), the only group that might not know how to cook Nigerian foods or speak an African language fluently are those born and raised in Diaspora. It is important for the man to take into consideration that once any woman is exposed to the freedom of expression in a western country, it is a matter of time before she starts to seek or want such freedom, so marrying someone from the village in Africa because of what you call respect won't last too long. Also marrying someone because she is a nurse and

that her potential income will add more financial value to the home might seem like a good idea for a while, until she gets abroad and starts to have her own vision of what to do with her money.

It is ironic that the some men who go back home to seek a spouse, portray themselves beyond what they really are, so they can marry a "doctor", "lawyer" or "nurse", at the same time it is ironic that some women in Africa also marry any man from abroad because they desire to leave the poverty of Africa under any circumstances, with an agenda at the back of their mind, once settled abroad they abandon the man that brought them for some other person they have attraction for.

3.5: Fifth Session (5th Week):

3.5.1: Marital Traumas experienced by the Nigerian men in America

On the part of the men, many of our men, especially those that have been in this country for so many years, haven gone through difficult time to get situated in America finally want to settle down with a 'home girl'. Many men went through the 'African American women or white women' problems, getting his green card and citizenships through marriages to foreigners to get their papers. Some gave up on Nigeria and its problems a long time and after taking the decision to go back and find a wife from the home country. There have been lots of disconnections about what marriage to Nigerian women is all about. Some have been so acculturated with the western ideas. When they finally return to Nigeria, they become what Walter Rodney, a political scientist, referred to as "a new set as Africans with white eyes" (Rodney Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, p68). They become so different from whom they were before they left

the shores of Nigeria. They forgot that Nigerian women are quite different from western women. This leads to lots of frictions between these two cultures.

Another cause of the problem is that some men after staying in western countries for many years pursuing their careers, when they are ready to get married they come home to Nigeria. Most of them are in their late forties or late fifties. When they finally come home to get married, they discover that all their female companions before they left the shores of Nigeria have already got married. Some of their family members would line women up for him to sample. They end up getting married to ladies that are available; women they thought are the best for them. They know next to nothing about these would-be wives seeing them through the eyes of their sometimes over-zealous relatives whose agenda for recommending the lady may be different. Moreover, the better qualities then for marriage are mostly in their twenties, who are young enough to be their daughters. There is a generational gap between these spouses that creates lots of tensions. What is obtainable back in the days when our fathers or fore-fathers married young spouses are no longer obtainable. Marriage by then is by arrangement. They stay married because it was honorable thing to do when a woman stays in marriage despite getting raw deals from their husbands, old enough to be their grand fathers. Time has changed! Women are now so liberated that a 20 year old in this 21st century is not the same as a 20 year old in the 20th century. They demand more than what their grandmothers demanded during their time. These cause lots of frictions in marriages when the new found sweet 16s come to live with the husband abroad. The issue of being about to satisfy her sexually is one of the main problems.

Another problem which by far is the worst of all is that some men living abroad have two separate lives. One is the ideal lifestyle and the other is the real lifestyle. When they travel home,

they paint a cozy picture of life in the America; the kind of life that every lady back in Nigeria can only dream about. They pamper these prospective wives and buy them everything they want. They make them to believe that living abroad is next to paradise! Most of these ladies are the cream of the crop back home. Under normal circumstances, they will never date these men if they are not living abroad. These ladies feel betrayed when they arrive here and see for themselves that the streets of America are not plated with dollars. They got lied to by these men and got so much enticed with the prospect of marrying these men that they were ready to lose everything they have or worked for. Some men even make sure that they get them pregnant before they come over here for fear that the ladies would decamp once they come to learn that the ideal man is a fake after all. Some will not tell their prospective wives that they were previously married and had kids that they are already paying child support for. When their new wives come from Nigeria, they find out the truth. It now becomes a problem since the wife would not want part of her money to pay for a child support another person's child.

Another problem is that many Nigerian men that want to get married to Nigerian ladies put the issue of money before love. We have these situations of Nigerian men targeting Nigerian ladies that are in the nursing and medical schools. They care less about whether there is love or not between them. They go after nurses, pharmacists and doctors. They get married for wrong reasons, which is for the wife to come over here, pass her board exam and make quick money for him.

Many Nigerian men work hard every day. Even before they get married, they are used to working two jobs to support their families. Many put their wives through schools; there is nothing wrong with that. However, some men become lazy after their wives start working and

making money. Most Nigerian women I know, especially those of them in the medical fields, work very hard. Some of them put 16hrs of work every other day to maximize their ability to bring fat checks home. But some men see them as their money makers. They left everything for these hard working women to take care of. The women will take over to pay mortgages and all the bills that the men used to pay. Some men take off to summer vacation in Nigeria every year to catch some fun back home in Nigeria. Many of them quit their jobs and depend on their wives' incomes.

Many fall victims to some disgruntled people whose marriage were broken and who hate to see other people succeed in their own marriage. Many men start to listen to external advice whenever they have a little domestic issue with the wife. They forgot that no two marriages are the same. That one marriage fails does not mean that the other would fell also.

Some men try to intimidate their wives immediately they come from Nigeria. Some try to start on time to 'cut her tails'. They try to maltreat them believing that if they do so; the women would not have the courage to do stupid things that some Nigerian women living in USA are notorious for. Some men even resort to verbal or physical abuse on these women that knew next to nothing about what life in USA is about. When these women finally get exposed to life here, and have some financial muscle. They try to get their own pound of flesh since they can now afford to threaten their men.

The women have their own share of the problem. There is this fallacy that this problem is prevalent among female Nigerian nurses. However, the main issue is that many women from

Nigeria become nurses when they come to USA irrespective of whatever their professions were back home in Nigeria.

Many women while they were single and living in Nigeria fall victim to material wealth. Many of them look at the men's pocket when they come to ask for their hands in marriage. Irrespective of what kind of person the man is or what kind of job he does for a living in America is immaterial to her. There are no more questions! Everything is based on assumption. Her mother would want to go to America for '*omugwo*' (baby sitting her grandchildren). The father will dream of getting a car and getting help in training the other siblings of his daughter. No one will ask any question about the prospective son-in-law. It is as a result of the economic condition back home that cheapens our value system. Every lady's dream is to marry a rich man, after all their parents went through to train them, they do not want to continue to struggle. So when they finally settle with the supposedly rich man living in America, they become disappointed when they come over here to live.

Some do not care how old their prospective husbands are or whether she has any atom of love for their husbands provided the dollars are there. Some even harbor the ambition of ending the marriage immediately they come to the states and receive their green cards. Some women back home in Nigeria have hardly seen a dollar back in Nigeria, but when they come over, and after their husbands put them through school and after their graduations on getting jobs and placed on good salaries, will want their husbands to turn into their house boys. When they start sharing financial responsibilities with their husbands, they start seeing themselves as breadwinners and now the boss. There will no longer be respectful to their husbands just because they are now in control of money. There was a lady that was boasting to people in a gathering that the house the

husband recently bought in Lagos was actually bought with her own money. “I bought the house for my husband”. No one asked her whose money was used to buy the house or how the house was bought.

Another problem is this issue of which wife was ‘imported’ from Nigeria and which wife was already here prior to marriage. Some women that got married after they have already been in the states see themselves as gold. Some feel so important and self-assured that there is nothing the man can do to her since she was already a self made lady. Some think that they know too much and that they are better than ‘imported’ ones. There was a lady boasting that: “I’ll kick him out of the house if he acts stupid, after all he didn’t parcel me here from Nigeria”. Some think that since they came here on their own and been to the states before their marriage, that she knows too much about US laws protecting women. They challenge their husbands to do their worse. When their husbands move out of their home, they may not be able to pay for the mortgage alone or carter for the kids no matter how much they won against the man for child support.

3.5.2: Any Way Out:

Here both parties (women and men) contributed towards a better understanding in marital lives among Nigerian couples here in the US. These are some of their resolutions.

First of all by our culture, marriages are meant to be forever. Divorce is strange to our culture. Strange in the sense that it has lots of stigmas and bitter taste to our respective families. Our fathers and forefather succeeded partly because they had no choice and partly because they saw it as an everlasting thing. They decided to put in lots of works to make it succeed. The group maintained that every marriage is worth fighting for and saving despite all odds. Marriage is not

meant to be all rosy and smooth. It could be very rough most times. They also noted that a woman or a man should not stay in an abusive and dangerous marital relationship just to fix it. If the man or a woman is dangerous to continue to live with, by all means leave the marriage. But if the marriage is workable, try and work it out. Successful marriages among Nigerian married couples in America were as results of team work. Both spouses work as a team.

Some men even want the wives to take care of cooking, doing dishes, and taking care of the kids etc even after long hours of work. We cannot have it both ways. It is either you want to be the man like our culture stipulates or you share the woman's duty which is mostly on the home front. It's either you are the bread winner or you are not. We live in a foreign land. It's either we live by our culture which puts a man in charge of the family or we live like our adopted country people. In this case, we get ready to cede some of the powers to the wives who have come to be co-bread winners.

The group saw nothing wrong or degrading about a man cooking for his wife, doing dishes, doing laundry or picking the kids up from Day Care. If the man comes back from work earlier than the wife, there is nothing wrong with that. This is what marriage is all about. If the bedrock of the marriage is love, every other thing is secondary. The relationship with our wives here should be in most cases that of partners, not that of a king versus his subjects. If we see our wives as part of our own body as God ordained in the book of Genesis, all these friction should be uncalled for.

There is nothing like a man's job or a woman's job in USA. Women do men's job and vice versa even at home. It does not make a man less of a man to wash her wife's dishes, do laundry,

change diapers, pick the kids from day care, baby sit the kids or even cook for your wife if you have the culinary capabilities (not many people have it). These are the intangible things that make for the intimacy between a man and his wife. These are the things that make love grow. There is nothing wrong with a woman helping her husband to pay bills. In Igbo, we say, '*aka nni kwoo aka ekpe, aka ekpe akwoo aka nni, aka adi ocha*'-right hand should help wash the left hand and left hand should help wash right hand, so that both hands would be clean.

Every couple should do what works for them. If the cap fits, wear it. Do not look at other people because all circumstances are not the same. You can only emulate good examples from others. We are Nigerians, no matter how long we stay here. We can only emulate American cultures that are good and leave the bad ones behind. We should be able to blend our cultures with their cultures that are beneficial to us. Women should know that whatever money they make belongs to both of them. The wealth acquired by both spouses belongs to each other, the law also says so.

Most of our men should also step up and be men. If you want respect from your spouse, you have to earn it. After God created Adam, He took pity on him and said "I will make him a helper fit for him" (Genesis 2). Our wives are our helpers if we look at the word of God. A helper does not need to take over the responsibility of the person needing her help! Our wives are here to support, assist, encourage etc and not to take over our job while we fools around. It is a different story if the man becomes incapacitated as a result of illness or some other things; then that's understandable..

We should always see our wives as part of our own body as God ordained in the book of Genesis, "the Lord said: It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him.

So the Lord cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. The Lord God then built up into a woman the rib he had taken from the man. When he brought her to the man, the man said: ‘This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called ‘woman,’ for out of ‘her man’ this one has been taken.” (Genesis 2, the New American Bible). Reflecting at this therefore will all these frictions about am in charge and superior should be uncalled for. However, all said and done, the bottom line is that a man is always the head of the family regardless of whatever his financial position.

Our relationship with our wives here should be of partners, not that of a king versus his subjects. If we see our wives as part of our own body as God ordained in the book of Genesis, all these friction should be uncalled for. Marriage is a full time job. If you put in much work in the marriage early enough, it pays most times.

3.6: Last Session (6th Week):

3.6.1: Do you think that traditional wedding (Igba Nkwu Nwanyi) and church wedding is necessary for completeness of marriage Nigerian Igbos?

Timothy led the group with a prayer and shared with us on this topic. These were some of the things he shared within the session.

- Traditionally, Nigerian couples get fulfillment and sense of acceptance into the community and also the joys and happiness of gaining some of the traditional assets and shares from the community. Church wedding on the other hand solidifies the union for those that believe in God.

- For every Igbo man and woman, marriage without Igba Nkwu Nwanyi (traditional wedding) is nothing and the marriage is invalid in the Igbo context. Traditional wedding therefore is very important and must be respected by anyone coming to marry in Igbo land.

3.6.2: Is there anyway traditional wedding and church wedding can take place the same day?

The group was divided on this topic; while some members agreed that it should take place on the same day others said no that both are to be celebrated on different days. According to them, traditional wedding is a process and goes in stages, any rush to it will damage its values, this is because this gradually ushers in the newly would be couples into married life. More still the Igbo believe that marriage is a community event, it has to undergo its normal traditional days, seasons and market days which tradition and customs has laid down to it. There is no way it can take place in one day. She however says that a lot has to be done before it can take place.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Results

4.1: Analysis of the data from the Group Sessions

The first session of our group discussions which centered on the meaning of marriage within the Nigerian context and that of cultural differences especially here in America was very difficult at the beginning. I noticed lots of anger especially on the side of the men in the group while the women tend to see the workshop as very great opportunity to express their feelings and emotions as well share what they have been going through here in America. One of the men by name Anthony was so upset that he openly regretted for moving over from Nigeria to live here in America. According to him, his family was okay while in Nigeria, his wife was very respectful and they do and share things in common. He blamed his wife for changing and losing all her cultural values and traditions she has before they came over to this country. Anthony was full pointing accusing fingers on other Nigerian women especially some of them in the nursing profession for influencing his wife to become another person. He complained bitterly that ever since then, their family has been on fire. The wife however did not hesitate in responding and reacting to what the husband said. According to her, the husband was a very respectable loving husband and at the same time was a very hardworking man but has also changed ever since they came over here from Nigeria. The group was really very emotional about the issues discussed. What really surprised me was their openness and I noticed that it was a wonderful opportunity they had been looking forward to. I notice also some of the women who remain quiet but were crying.

I also noticed a kind of transferred aggressions among some of the men in the group. One of them was yelling and cursing out his fellow men. One of the women laid the blame on American culture; however she said that there was nothing that can be done to correct that. All these at the

end gave me a lot encouragements knowing quite well that the best way to solve problems is first of all by confronting and be open to that particular problem. They however came to the conclusion haven pointed out some of the problems, I was happy when the encouraged among themselves a better communication between husband and wife and all in the family. They encouraged each other on the need for all in the family to have mutual trust and love and at the same time to educate and bring to the awareness of those back home by correcting the wrong impression people in Nigeria have about America.

The things discussed in the other sessions were very helpful to the group. I noticed some disagreements in one of the sessions when the question on 3.6.2: *whether is there anyway traditional wedding and church wedding can take place the same day?* Some welcomed it as a good idea that goes a long way to save costs thereby it will not be too much financial expenses for the newly married couples. Some preferred both marriages to celebrated on different days and the reason they gave was based on the fact that traditional marriage has its own (market days) which differ from one community to another.

Klee Thomas Object relation theory that helps psychotherapists in identifying and resolving human conflict was of great asset in helping the group to identify the various areas of their family lives where they have marital conflicts and where at the same time sought different avenues in resolving and preventing future occurrences. According Dr. Klee Thomas, “all psychotherapists are concerned with resolving human conflict, whether the conflict exists within an individual, between individuals, or among members of a group. Most orientations to psychotherapy employ various techniques to resolve these conflicts. However, object relations based psychotherapy offers a deeper level of resolution by identifying and resolving the

underlying causes of human conflict. This is because object relations therapy assumes that familiar conflicts from early childhood help create a blueprint of how the self-system will develop and maintain relationships later in life. To understand this we need to understand how the self-system develops”. Dr. Klee, T. Object Relation Theory, “*on how to resolve human conflicts*”.

Here the group was able to identify those aspects of their marital problems and needs and came up with some positive steps that help their families rebuild. Hence there were lots of positive steps taken for better understanding of each other’s role in the family.

4.2: Analysis of the data from the Questionnaires

Questionnaires were given out to some of the married couples as well as single parents within the Nigerian worshipping community at Angela *Merici* Church here in the Bronx New York and from those that worship at Blessed Sacrament Church in Newark New Jersey. I noticed that men had tendency of agreeing together while the women on the other hand tend also to agree with each other. There were some areas where both the men and women tend to agree with each other only with some isolated cases.

For example on the question “*do you think that Nigerian married couples in Diaspora are far better off to their counterpart back home?*” About 92% answered no while only 6% answered yes while the 2% gave the answer as relative.

The second question which is: “*What are the major problems common among Nigerian married Couples in America?*” 97% mentioned money as the key issue while 70% said that it is both money and parenting. Here some of the men blamed their wives as controlling their salaries while some of the women laid the blame on the men complaining that their husband were using

them as slaves. According to them the women make the money while their husbands are the ones enjoying the fruit of their labors.

The third question: ***“Do you think that the Nigerian married men in America are more honest than their counterpart in Nigeria?”*** 35% said yes, while 40% said no. Only 25% maintained that it is relative.

The question: ***“What do you have to say about the Nigerian married women based in America are like. Are they more honest, humble, respectful and hardworking than their counterpart in Nigeria?”*** 45% said yes while 40% said no. on the other hand 15% said that it is relative.

According to them people are what they are irrespective of where they live.

Is church wedding more important than the traditional wedding? According to the survey, 90% said that both traditional wedding and church wedding are very important and necessary. As a Nigerian, marriage without traditional one is incomplete and as a Christian, traditional wedding with church wedding is incomplete also. 7% said that they comfortable with traditional wedding while 3% said that they are comfortable with the church wedding. One of the major reasons given by those who said both weddings are necessary maintained that as a Nigerian, without the traditional wedding, one is not accepted or initiated into his/her community and without the church wedding, you cannot receive all the rights and privileges members enjoy in their religious faith belief.

Church wedding and traditional wedding, which one should come first? 98% of the survey maintained that traditional wedding should be celebrated first before the church wedding. Only 2% said that church wedding should come first before traditional wedding. However, they said that they are open for any flexibility on either doing the two together or separately but both taking place the same day.

What is your opinion about doing both traditional wedding (Igba Nkwu Nwanyi) and church wedding the same day?

80% of the survey said that it is very important to do both marriages same day. This according to them will save costs. It reduces stresses and makes life very easy. 20% of the survey on the other hand opposed the idea of doing both weddings the same day. According to them, this will diminish or devalue the beauty of both marriages.

In order to save cost, do you think that it is necessary to perform the traditional wedding ceremony outside the motherland (Igbo Nigeria) rather than sending people to represent and or to travel home for its celebration?

78% maintained that it is necessary to travel home for the celebration. That is why it's called traditional wedding. The idea of sending people to represent the bride and the groom is uncalled for and should be discouraged. 14% on the other hand, said that the young couple could send representatives on their behalf if it is inconvenient for both to travel home for the ceremony. 8% however said that the ceremony could be celebrated outside one's home or where both couple resides.

What is your opinion about too much expenses encored by the groom and family during the traditional wedding ceremony? What are its effects on the future relationship on would be husband and wife and on their children?

89% of the survey said that moderation should be encouraged, couples should not end bankrupt because of marriage celebrations, rather though always plan for their future. 9% on the other hand were of the opinion that if you have the money, then you should spend it because both traditional and church wedding is a life time event and should be enjoyed. 2% of the surveys were indifferent to either over spending or cutting costs.

Who should oversee the financial expenses in the house, the man or the woman?

84% were of the opinion that both couples should oversee the finances while 13% said that men should control the finances since they are the head of the family. 3% on the other hand said both should decide who runs the finances.

4.3: Developments not anticipated in the Original Proposal

I never had any intention of including or inviting children of the affected couples nor any of their family members for any group workshop. It was during the workshop sessions with my group that made us to invite them toward the end. I invited the affected children of these couples, open invitation was also offered to the other children within the community. These children saw this program as a great opportunity. They were so open to share their experiences from their various families. They were very supportive of each other and some of them were very embittered with what has been going on in their families with regard to their parents. That became an avenue of healings and encouragements among themselves. At the end, the children came up with following resolution:

1. Being supportive to their parents in time of need, problems, misunderstanding and their difficult moments.
2. Constantly reminding their parents the need to forgive and tolerate each since the term forgiveness is one of the powerful key to restoring and maintaining peace.
3. The need for the children to learn from their parents' mistake so as to become better future couples.
4. The constant need of learning their cultural and traditional practices, these according to them will always keep and strike a balance between Western (American) and their native cultural values.

5. The need to forgive their parents' disappointments and neglects and the need to remind their parents especially when they are going the wrong path.
6. Finally the need to explore more on their Nigerian cultural heritages especially on the ones that pertain to *Igba Nkwu Nwanyi* (traditional marriage). So as to not make mistakes and learn from the mistakes of their parents.

Chapter Five: Projection/Recommendations

a) Implication of results

Having heard from and shared with different family groups, we have come to the conclusion that it is very important for both the government and church leaders to pay special attention to married couples and those finding their marital life difficult. Through this project, we have come to realize that lots and lots of our Nigerian couples are dying in silence; there is various level of cold war going on in different various families of which something need to be done. We are very grateful to God that for have been able to organize this group workshop. At least, those Nigerian married couples that attended the workshop benefitted in one way or the order. We are looking forward to seeing members of our religious faith belief in a better peace and harmony. We were able to achieve this through two principles: Religious and clinical.

The contributions of my project to clarifying and expanding

- **Religious Principles:**

As we conclude our discussion on both traditional (Igba Nkwu Nwanyi) and church marriages, it becomes very necessary for me to point out some of the religious principles that will be of greater and immense help to married couples and to those planning to do their traditional marriage and church marriage. From our workshops and a various discussions especially we treated in chapter two and from the questionnaire, we have come to discover that both the traditional marriage and church marriage are necessary and very important for every Nigerian couple, there is therefore the need to posit some of those scriptural and religious teachings that will help and sustain the couples, their children and the community in which they live.

1. Marriage is instituted by God:

“The Lord God said: “It is not good for man to stay alone. I will make a suitable partner for him. So the Lord formed out of the ground various wild animals and various birds of the air, and he brought them to the man to see what he would call them; whatever the man called them would be its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals; but none proved to be the suitable partner for the man.

So the Lord God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. The Lord God then built up into a woman the rib that he had taken from the man. When he brought her to the man, the man said: ‘this one, at last, is the bone of my bones and the flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called ‘woman,’ for out of her man’ this one has been taken.’ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two become one body (Gen 2:18-24).

Here one will discover that from the beginning, God created man and woman and thus instituted marriage. This is where I am strongly opposed to the same sex marriages or any other form of marriage that is not between a man and a woman. For me, and according to my faith belief, marriage is and should always be between a man and a woman. Anything outside this becomes an aberration of what God has established for mankind. God is from this Genesis account portrayed as a potter molding man’s body out of clay. According to the commentary of that Genesis account, there is a play of words in Hebrew between Adam (“man”) and *adama* (“ground”) being literally, seen as ‘soul.’ There is also a play of words on similar sounding of Hebrew words *ishsha* (“woman”) and *ishah* (“her man, her husband”). One body literally means one flesh. The sacred writer therefore stresses the fact that conjugal union is willed by God. Jesus

Christ in his response to the Pharisees on marriage and divorce also referred the Genesis account when he said “Have not read that from the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’ and he said, ‘for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. And he added, therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.” (Matthew 19:4-6). Marriage therefore both traditional and church, should be respected and kept since marriage is not manmade but of divine origin.

2. Jesus Christ as head of the Church and Family: (Ephesians 5:21-32).

Paul in this letter enumerated what are the expectations of husbands and wives in the family. “Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (Eph. 5:2), this particular verse tends to give some kind of equality to both partners. However, verses 22 up to 24 of the same chapter have a different tone of men’s superiority over women. This I would say cuts across cultures and traditions of different communities and people of the world. Hence Paul wrote: “Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the head of the body, as the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything.” (Eph. 5:22-24).

This is one of the most controversial verses in Pauline writings that raises eyebrow each time people come across it especially women. This I would say has been misconstrued and misinterpreted in different ages and time. Some men tend to justify their actions towards their

wives as being superior while women are the inferiors. This is one of the greatest problems that run in many families and homes. Based on this, some of the Nigerian men if not all, always capitalized on it to justify their untold and inhuman abuse and character towards their wives. However, many tend to forget that the continuation of this Pauline teaching was based on not inequality rather on equality between husbands and wives. There is therefore the need for both parties to respect each other in every ramification hence Paul went further to explicate his stand on this:

“Husbands love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So also husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.” (Eph. 5:25-30).

This section of Pauline letters became a very powerful tool in ministering to my group. It became an eye-opener for the members and I believe it has send a very great message and signals to them towards building up rebuilding a better happy marriage in their families and communities. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” (5:31). Paul therefore advised and at the same time encouraged both parties to love, respect, cherish and be there for each other. Paul maintained that the question of strong mutual love should be embraced by married Christians, hence holding with Genesis 2, 24 that marriage is a divine institution (Eph. 5:31), Paul sees Christian marriage as taking on a new meaning symbolic of the intimate relationship of love between Christ and the

Church. The wife should serve her husband in the same spirit as that of church's service to Christ, and the husband should care for his wife with devotion of Christ to the church. Paul here gave the Genesis passage its highest meaning in the light of the union of Christ and the church, of which Christ like loyalty and devotion in Christian marriage are a clear reflection. This religious principle reminded the various couples the need and importance of respect, tolerance and love for one another. It reminded them the need of helping and reaching out for each other. This will help to reduce if not stop the problems that arises out of both marriages. With this there will be mutual understanding in the running of the family's affairs in all its ramifications. The question of lack of trust, Infidelity, greed, bitterness and rancor and who controls the account will be minimized.

Though some of the group members were bitterly hurting as a result of their experience in the past, some saw the workshop as liberation and a new beginning in the marital lives. The group workshop gave some of the couples a new opportunity of change and reconciliation; it also evoked in them the need of reordering and reorganizing their lives especially bringing the couples, children and the entire family members together.

The church should always play her leadership role in helping couples navigate their way toward better and happy families. This I would has been ignored in the past. There is the need for the church to take up her active role in order to recognize the emotions and psychological feelings of her members especially the Nigerian churches here in America. There should be not only premarital instructions, but also an ongoing catechetical awareness either by weekly or monthly for all the married couples and their family members.

- **The clinical principles**

The program has really broadened our horizon. It has revealed in us that though religion and psychology are separate disciplines and thoughts, they are at the same time very essential and necessary in the up keep and balance of the human mind. Just as philosophy is ancillary to theology so also is psychology to theology. Human beings need both religion and psychology not only for their spiritual growth but also for the physical up keep. Through the counseling sessions, we have come realize and at the same time discover that a lot of Nigerian married couples go through different and untold depressions and some go through bitter divorce. Because of the culture and tradition of the people, those who having marital problems who do not go through divorce end up in having domestic violence with no one reporting them and at times lead to one or both parties killing themselves.

In the course of our counseling sessions, some of the married couples opposed the idea of reconciliation. For example Ifeoma who is now single mother vowed that though the workshop has really helped her, that she will never in her life think of going back to her ex-husband nor will she ever think of marrying another man. Another widow Tina who separated from her husband thought of going back to her marriage once more, haven realized the mistake was of hers. She plans of doing this through her Parish priest and the Nigerian community living here in America.

I tend to agree with Jung in his theory on marriage as a psychological relationship. According to Jung, “unconscious motivations are of a personal and of a general nature. There are the motives deriving from parental influence. The relationship of the young man to his mother, and of the girl to her father, is the determining factor in this respect. It is the strength of the bond to the parents that unconsciously influences the choice of husband or wife, either positively or negatively.

Conscious love for either parent favors the choice of a like mate, while unconscious tie makes the choice difficult and imposes characteristic modifications”. Jung, C. G. The Basic Writings , p661. I noticed all these during our group discussion, when some of the members complained that some the marriage problems some Nigerian married couples go through is as result of imposed or wrong choice of partners from their parents. Some men and women engage in marriage out of emotions which Jung referred to as “unconsciously” with really understanding each other. It also reflected in the wrong and false notion committing oneself into marriage for some selfish reasons without true love.

The rest of the group were so happy and appreciated the group workshop.

I was able to accomplish all these through various theories and some of the psychological principles. The book on “Psychopathology” by Susan W. Gray, especially the area that treated Mood disorder was very helpful to me. Especially the section that told the story of

“Anita Richards was admitted to the hospital psychiatric unit after being brought in by the mobile Crisis unit (MCU) which responded to her suicide threat made over the telephone. The intake report notes that she threatened to slash her wrists with a razor blade. Anita Richards is a 38-year Hispanic divorced mother of four (ages 15, 12, 11, 9). Ms Richards has been hospitalized on three previous occasions. According to her medical records, she has been diagnosed with major depressive disorder, recurrent.” Gary S. W., Psychopathology”, A competency-based Assessment Model for Social Workers, p108

When the social worker tries to interview her, her response was “I’ve got lots of problems that just don’t seem to go away. My boss fired me six months ago and I haven’t been able to find work since. Every time somebody calls him about me, he tells them not to hire me because I was always late to work. Sure I overslept a few times, but that’s not enough to ruin my getting another job, is it? Because of him, I can’t support my four kids. The oldest two live with their

father out in Arizona, and I never see them. My younger two live with my mother. I'm going to get them back as soon as I can...." Gary S. W., Psychopathology", A competency-based Assessment Model for Social Workers, p.108. She shared with the social worker other details stories of her problems. Anita's problem here helped me to identify a woman with a similar problem who was at verge of killing herself among the group, but on hearing this similar case confided in me of her plans. I was able to assist her and referred her to a counselor; she is right now undergoing counseling sessions with counselor.

The theory of transference was of great help to me in identifying and assisting a member of the group who identified her childhood experience as the cause of the problem she has been having with her husband. Transference according to Sigmund Freud is "the process whereby a person projects his or her experiences, impulses, feelings, fantasies, attitudes, conflicts, and defenses arising from relationships with childhood authority figures onto current relationships. Unaware, the person finds her-or himself acting out these indiscriminate, nonselective repetitions of the past and coloring or ignoring reality" Austard, S. C., Counseling and Psychotherapy Today, Theory, Practice, and Research, p.70.

I noticed that one of the men in the group had this same transferred aggression without knowing it unto his father in Law. He has a defensive mechanism against his father while growing up, this he always mistook his father in law for his own father as result it has been bringing quarrels, yelling and misunderstanding between himself and the wife. The way he reacted in the group revealed him as having transference and during my one and one session with him, he was able to realize that he has transference in him. "The degree to which a person distorts reality reflects the intensity of the pathology." Hence an early childhood experience shapes future emotional health.

For example a “patient reacts to the analyst as she did to her parents. If she was afraid of her abusive father when she was 5 years old, then she will also fear the current authority figure (the analyst). If the patient is afraid of the analyst, it is not because of any action on the part of the analyst; it is because the fear has been transferred from the early childhood situation to the analyst in the present.” Eagle., & Wolitzky D. L. (1992). *Psychoanalytic theories of psychotherapy*, In D. Freedheim (ED.), *History of psychotherapy: A century of change* (pp.109-158). This was exactly what happened to a member of the group.

There was also a member of the group who share with us in the presence of her husband the secret behind her successful marriage with her husband in spite of the rough marital life they have been having. According to her, her husband was always very aggressive and at the same time very abusive verbally, but the last he will do was lay his hands on her. According to her, it was better that you were beaten up than to withstand his scolding voice. Because of that she had to develop a technique of saying in her mind and talking to herself each time the husband abuses or yells at her, your yelling can only kill a dead rat and not me. Saying that reminded me the theory on “Identification with the aggressor” by Ann Freud. Here, Ann told the story of the “little girl who tried by means of magic gestures to get over the mortification associated with her penis envy. This child was purposely and consciously making use of a mechanism to which the boy resorted involuntarily. At home she was afraid to cross the hall in the dark, because she had a dread of seeing ghosts. Suddenly, however, she hit on a device which enabled her to do it: she would run across the hall, making all sorts of peculiar gestures as she went. Before long, she triumphantly told her little brother the secret of how she had got over her anxiety. There’s no need to be afraid in the hall, she said, you just have to pretend that you’re the ghost who might meet you.” Freud, A., The Ego and the Mechanism of Defense, pp.110-111. Both couples

however in the course of the workshop reconciled officially and the husband promised her wife a change of attitude towards in the future.

Looking at these stories and experiences, we have seen that married couples need counselors in their lives. The clinical principles were of immense help and a powerful tool for a success group workshop we had.

b) The contributions of my project to ministry in a wider context.

Since after our series of workshops that I organized with the group members; there has been a tremendous new lifestyle among the worshipping community. Some of the Nigerian married couples living right here in this part of America, has realized the importance of living in peace and harmony. According to them, nothing will come in between their marital lives. Recognizing the importance of Igba Nkwu Nwanyi (traditional marriage) and church marriage, both of them are inseparable for them, they have come to realize that both can be accomplished without spending too much or beyond their financial strength. Some of the members have vowed to spread the news and become crusaders of peace makers among their counter parts and among those with marital issues.

On the question of going home for the traditional marriage ceremony (Igba Nkwu Nwanyi), they came to the conclusion that only those who can afford travelling home should go. Those who cannot afford it should all perform the rites here in America and could then send video coverage and photos back to Nigeria for people at home to watch. This according to them will help towards reducing over spending among the newlywed; hence will help them safe for the future.

The question of watering down our Nigerian cultures and traditions has been shunned down among group members in the community here is this part of the world. My project has spur them on to revitalized our most beloved and cherished cultures. They have vowed to teach and inculcate the same traditions and culture to their children; this according to them will help in a long way of preserving our cultural heritages.

They have also promise to become custodians and brothers keepers of each other, in this way they will spare their time and resources to help one another especially couples having marital problems. They have also alerted other married couples to speak out when they needed help so as to offer their assistance in any way they could help.

We have started among the Nigerian community especially the Sundays we have the celebration of the Mass, to catechize the worshipping members and also encourage one another the need to live happily and also the need for the members to open up share their problems whenever they needed help.

Furthermore, my project has gone in a far way of helping members on how to manage their finances so as safeguard each other's interest and in the interest of their children. It has also encouraged them on the need to trust and rely on each other. Hence openness and transparency will always bring lasting peace and harmony in their marital lives.

C). Implications for future ministry

Having gone through this program, I have come to realize that if nothing is done for our people both living in this part of the world and beyond and to those ling back home in Nigerian, the problem will continue to increase. In lieu of that, I hope to bring my message back to Nigeria. As

an ambassador, I hope encourage our people on the need to take both marriages seriously. The need if possible to perform both ceremonies (Igba Nwku Nwanyi) traditional and church wedding the same day, its merits and advantages will be explained to my people.

I also hope to encourage members of the clergy irrespective of denominations to give and avail themselves the opportunities to learn the program so as to teach and inculcate the same message to their congregants. I hope also to establish learning centers for those in the ministry and teachers and bring the awareness to our leaders; this I believe will go a long way to alleviate the problems being encountered by the married couples. This will also reduce the untold hardship and inhuman behavior men inflict on their partners. It will also reduce both sexual abuse and other forms of violence in various families.

Conclusion

Among the Nigerian communities especially the Igbos, marriage ceremonies and being married has been the centre life cycle of the people. Removing the traditional marriage and leaving the other (church marriage) can never in any way work out for the people. Both are inseparable. Since both are vital in the life of the people, it becomes very important to have counselors, spiritual directors/leaders and chaplains to help teach and encourage the various communities on the best ways to do the two ceremonies without encoring more financial problems to the newlywed and those already married. This will eventually help to ameliorate the problems being encountered by those already married and their family members.

Since most Nigerian married couples go through difficult and untold complex problems, there is the need for our Nigerian priests and ministers to help them navigate their ways towards a better

and happy home. If the Nigerian counselors and clergy men and women who live in America and knows what their own people go through here in America like financial problems, lack of trust (infidelity), who is superior and who should be under in the family, the taking of undue advantage on their wives by the men and vice visa, both the unreported domestic violence and sexual abuses, should sacrifice their time and resources, there will be a tremendous change and will therefore reduce the volume of all these problems.

Since both marriages are sacred and cherished by the people, there is therefore the need for all our people to try and do whatever it takes to protect the two. Nigerian people are very religious and spiritual, we are also deeply rooted in our cultural values, all hands should be on desk to preserve what God has given to us so as to protect and safeguard the fruits of marriage which is the children the future tomorrow, love and trust that bring unity and peace in our society, and mutual assistance and identification that makes us social being. There is therefore the need to continue to give our Nigerian married couples both pastoral and clinical assistance in order to support, safeguard and protect one of our basic cultural values which is marriage.

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7. Session xxi Canon 1. (*The Council of Trent*)
8. The New American Bible, Catholic Bible Publishers, Wichita Kansa, 1994-1995 edition
9. The New American Bible, *Saint Joseph Edition on the Book of Deuteronomy*, Catholic Book Publishing Co. New York, 1987
10. The King James Study Bible, Thomas Nelson Inc. USA, 1983

Appendixes

Copy of the Questionnaire

i. Questionnaire

These are some of the questions that were formulated to help the group in our discussion.

1. Do you think that Nigerian married couples in Diaspora are far better off to their counterpart back home?
2. What are the major problems common among Nigerian married Couples in America?
3. Do you think that the Nigerian married men in America are more honest than their counterpart in Nigeria?
4. What do you have to say about the Nigerian married women based in America are like. Are they more honest, humble, respectful and hardworking than their counterpart in Nigeria?
5. Is church wedding more important than the traditional wedding?
6. Church wedding and traditional wedding, which one should come first?
7. What is your opinion about doing both traditional wedding (Igba Nkwu Nwanyi) and church wedding the same day?
8. In order to save cost, do you think that it is necessary to perform the traditional wedding ceremony outside the motherland (Igbo Nigeria) rather than sending people to represent and or to travel home for its celebration?
9. What is your opinion about too much expenses encored by the groom and family during the traditional wedding ceremony? What are its effects on the future relationship on would be husband and wife and on their children?

10. Who should oversee the financial expenses in the house, the man or the woman?

ii. Case of Joy and her American husband

Joy had a promising career in one of the leading oil company in Nigeria. She was well paid, lived in a beautiful flat in Port Harcourt city in River State of Nigeria which she shared with a colleague of hers. She got married to this man after knowing this man that was introduced to her by a mutual friend within one week! They did their wine carrying ceremony (*Igba Nkwu Nwanyi*) and church wedding within a month. Joy felt highly embarrassed and betrayed when she came over to America only to find out that most things that she assumed about her husband and America appear not to be the case. Her husband was too old for her as it started to show in everything they do. She started to discover all that the man told her while she was in Nigeria were all lies. The man was living in a dilapidated one bedroom apartment in one the streets of Newark New Jersey. This man has a good job. He has been a pharmacist a few years before Joy was born and he works for the leading US drug company. However, he had a very nasty behavior. He is a chronic womanizer and gambler. He makes lot of money as a supervisor in the pharmaceutical company but can barely afford a roof over his head. Joy found out too late that the man has been leading a life of dissipation. He gambles a lot and chat with many strange women on the internet. Joy later found out that the man writes lots of checks to strange women he met on the internet chat rooms every month. When Joy confronted him about that, the man became very hostile and told her either to deal with it or leave. Their marriage fell apart after accusations and counter accusations between them.

Verbatim:

C1: Hi Joy how are you today?

J1: Am doing okay today Father, God has been good to me.

C2: I am glade and grateful to you for participating in this group workshop.

J2: It rather you that I will express my gratitude. You don't the impact you have created among us. Everybody is happy and grateful for your time and initiative in making become aware and recognize our problems and all the evils that have been going on in our various families.

C3: I am happy that I was able to do that. But I must thank you and others for responding to my call and invitation.

J3: Father, I feel that I was the one that benefitted in the workshop. I am now encouraged by what transpired among the group, I can now feel and have that sense of closure. Like I shared with you, I had one of the best job carrier while in Nigeria and here my husband denied me my job, my happiness, my pride and in all he deceived me by bringing to America for me to suffer all these abuses, emotional, sexual, domestic violence of beating and fighting me. In short, I would have planned to inflict something terrible on him even after our bitter divorce and separation. But I want to thank you for making me have a change of heart.

C4: Sorry about all you went through in his hands and I am glad you were able to hold on up till this day. Please could you share with me what you meant by inflicting something terrible on him, are you comfortable sharing that with me?

J4: Yes Father I am very much comfortable to share that with you. It was you that made me change my intention. Previously after all went through my husband and after the bitter divorce we had, I intended to kill him and after was planning to commit suicide (she started crying and I held her hands). But father, I am thanking you for sparing my life. I thought life was no longer meaningful to me. I planned to burn down our apartment in course of all these problems. But now I have new life, I am planning to travel back to Nigeria as soon as possible.

C5: I am happy for you especially for changing your mind for plan. Why do plan to go back to Nigeria?

J5: Like I told you Father, I had a very lucrative job in one of the leading company in Nigeria. My boss knew all that has been happening in our marriage and so he reserved my position for me. my plans now is that as soon as I get little savings, I will fly back and have a new beginning, let me see what God has in stock for me. Am very grateful to you once more, I just want to thank and I will always remain very grateful. Please father; continue the program you are doing for our people here in America. This is because a lot of our people are going through bitter and difficult marital lives and many of them are dying in silence, while majority are not willing to report abuses that go on in their homes, some also are not willing

to go for therapy of any kind. Thank you and please keep up the good work. Our people need someone like you to liberate them from their bondages.

C6: You are welcome. I am wishing you the best of luck and I promise to keep you in my prayers. Try to keep in touch (and we exchanged contact numbers) take care bye now.

iii. Parents' influence on the newly married couples

Many marriages break up due to parent-in-law problems and friends influence. Most people get off well in their marriages as they come to understand each other. They have fashioned out a system that works for them taking into consideration the kind of society we find ourselves in. However, when one of their parents or relatives visit them, things start to change. Some men start to behave differently for fear of being seen as weak. In order to show that they are in charge, they start to command or boss their wives around. They demand they do certain things that were not the case before their august visitors came. They give their parents some reasons to step in and hijack their domestic affairs.

There was an old woman that came to visit her daughter and husband. When she came, she found it difficult to believe that her daughter would come back home without asking her husband what he wants her to cook for dinner. It was surprising to the old lady to find her son-in-law in the kitchen trying to warm some food already stored in the refrigerator for his wife that just came back from long day of work. She got on her daughter for letting America change all she had

taught her in Nigeria. She failed to understand that that is the way they have been taking care of each other and that this has been working for them.

iv. Ifeoma's Experience:

Using myself as an example, I am now a single mom of three, I was deceived by my husband who came to Nigeria and promised me heaven and earth, he lied to me about his profession and where he lives in America. He deceived my family and people from my community and stole me away from my parents. I was a registered nurse in Nigeria and was well paid. I never knew that the major reason he asked my hand in marriage was for me to come over and become his slave worker. With lots of problem which ranges from his abusiveness, denying me of sexual life, cheating and his financial mismanagement. I am now already separated with my husband. I am planning very hard to relocate to another State in the US.

v. The Story of Beatrice:

Another single lady by name Beatrice also shared her ordeal to me about her marital relationship with her ex-husband. According to her, she has two university degrees. She was a well-mannered lady brought up in a very decent, conservative and staunch catholic tradition. She got married to Ben in her final year as a law student. Beatrice and Ben had known each other when Beatrice was in her 1st year in the university. Ben was already a medical doctor in Nigeria. But while in Nigeria, their relationship wasn't that intimate. It was off and on as the lady wanted only a platonic relationship. Ben later left the country for USA but they still retained their relationship. He came to USA and passed his board exams. They wrote each other and he continued to visit home during summer every other year and they see each other but their relationship remains

platonic. Finally they decided to get married. It was on the night after the marriage that they knew each other sexually. Their platonic relationship spanned over 10 years before marriage. One would think that the fact that they knew each other for a long time was a plus, but it was actually a minus. However, unknown to Beatrice, Ben was leaving a life of play-boy. His life style as a chronic womanizer, liar and cheat continued even after Beatrice came to live with him. He put her through hell. He was domineering, mean, condescending. He taunts her, brought other ladies home when she leaves for work and even gave her some form of STD. He didn't even tell other women he was dating that he was already married and they still call his house even after his wife arrived. When she started to complain about his behaviors, Ben became aggressive and began to accuse her of being ungrateful after bringing her to USA. He refused to file for her permanent residence and even made arrangements to have her deported to Nigeria.

Finally Ben became very abusive to Beatrice and they were involved in a very serious altercation which culminated into a deadly physical abuse. She spent about a month in the intensive care unit in the hospital as a result of injuries she sustained from the attack. Their marriage had since hit the rocks; just 4 months after Beatrice came to live with him.

Later she find out that Ben married her in order not to lose her to other suitors coming her way while in Nigeria, and not because he was ready for primetime. She is now undergoing counseling in order to have a new life. She regretted marrying her Ben and for leaving her parent and siblings in Nigeria to come over to America. According to her, married men and women who live in Nigeria are better off than those who live here. Beatrice is working hard to move to another State and move on with her life.

