

# Introduction to Marriage & Family Counseling - BC 205

This course introduces the student to marriage and family counseling. In this course, students will learn how to apply effective tools and strategies to help the couples they counsel (counselees) within their local churches and communities overcome issues in their marriages, thereby strengthening and building lasting relationships. This course is NOT for licensed therapists, marriage counselors, or any other credentialed provider. It is a foundational course for pastors, other Christian ministers/leaders seeking to counsel, encourage and support Christian marital couples, about to wed couples, and families in their relationships.

## Introduction

Marriage is an institution that is widely recognized globally regardless of if you are a believer or unbeliever, rich, or poor. Unfortunately, it is also an institution that has been devalued and attacked the most in our society today.

### What is Christian Marriage?

To define Christian marriage, we must go back to the book of beginnings, Genesis.

*“And the LORD God said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” Genesis 2:18 KJV*

*“And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.*

*Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” Genesis 2:22-24*

God instituted the first marriage; it was blessed and consecrated by Him. Marriage is sacred, designed by God to be between men and women for His glory. Christian marriage is NOT a contract or agreement like many in the secular world label it as, but instead, it is a covenant made between God, the man, and the woman. *“So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate.” – Matthew 19:6*

God’s plan for marriage is to provide companionship, spiritual fellowship, raise godly children, and establish and build His kingdom. In today’s world, marriage has been turned into something else, something that is contrary to God’s will. The number of

divorces has skyrocketed in recent years alone; the sanctity of marriage has been devalued and seen as just a piece of paper to be signed. You see people of the same sex (homosexuals) getting married even in churches, churches that claim that they are built on biblical truths. you will see many justifying the practice of homosexuality. It is not a sin; it is an “alternative lifestyle.” they state. Many people, especially in the western world, are living together without being married. It has become the norm of society. Living out of wedlock is not sin; it is a responsible way to prepare for marriage. (another way to justify sinful actions). It is sad to see that even those who profess to be believers are engaged in such ungodly lifestyles.

### **The Godly Family (The Christian Home)**

The Christian home typically comprises the man, the wife, and the children. It is a home where God has been placed at the center of it. The following found on sermon central.com is one of my preferred definitions of a Christian home. “It is where husband and wife function as partners, submitting to each other in fear of God to establish God’s purpose for their lives. A Christian home is where children learn to respect and honor themselves and others.” I have always been taught that the Christian home is an extension of the church of Jesus Christ. It is from the home that communities are built. And it is because of this; the enemy has been waging for decades against the Christian home. The Christian home is Christ-centered, a place where members of the family join in regular fellowship, praying and studying the Word of God together.

*“Even ministry in the church and on the altar is directly affected by the situation in the home of the minister...It is a precondition for Christian service.”*

- A quote by Gbile Akanni

### **Marriage Counseling From a Biblical Worldview**

Counseling from a biblical perspective or worldview is founded on the premise that emotional problems are usually spiritual problems. Submission to Christ and His Word is the solution to man's problems caused by his sin. As pastors, ministers, and lay counselors, counseling couples from a biblical perspective is not an option. It is mandatory. The Lord God has provided the resources and tools needed to counsel His children the right way, and that is through the lens of Scripture. The Holy Spirit of God, the great Counselor, is the number one resource to be utilized in every counseling session. Through the intervention of the Spirit of God and the application of God's

Word, counseling is effectively done. "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit—the Father will send Him in My name—will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you." John 14:26.

Most believers/Christians seeking help and support in their marriages and homes ordinarily will not make secular counseling their first choice. They instead seek out licensed marriage counselors who share their same beliefs and values, or they go to their pastors or biblical counselors within the confines of their church community.

## **The Differences Between Christian Marriage Counseling & Secular Marital Counseling.**

Both faith-based (Christian) counseling and secular counseling share one thing in common: to help people overcome the challenges they face in their homes and marriages and find true joy and meaning in their lives. The strategies approach tools or resources used to accomplish that is where the two differ. Many things could be said about the differences between Christian and secular marriage counseling, but only a few of them will be highlighted in this course guide.

### **In Biblical Counseling,**

- Marriage counselors view life through the lens of Scripture. They help guide their counselees into seeking solutions to their problems using the Word of the God and guidance by the Spirit of God.
- Is very directive because God is directive in His Word.
- The goal is to identify his sin and to repent from it ~ Healing, freedom and recovery are results of repentance.
- Counselors help couples in implementing new patterns of living by replacing ungodly habits, mindsets with biblical models for life.
- God is the final authority, and it is only through the lens of Scripture, God's Word can all life issues including marriage can be resolved.
- Biblical concepts and principles are applied to help provide specific direction and accountability.
- Counselors are not regulated by the state laws or ethics. Biblical or Christian counseling is generally not covered by medical insurance and not for the treatment of mental health diagnosis.
- Counseling is seen as a ministry unto God.

### **In Secular Counseling,**

- There are few absolutes; values are conditional, they are frequently changing and fluctuating, often in relation to society's standards or norms.
- Various theories and models are used to resolve marital conflicts and other issues in the home.
- Credentialed therapists create treatment plans that may include medications, and other therapeutic services.
- The counselor takes personal credit for any positive change in client. The counselor does not give God the credit.
- Counseling is seen as an occupation, vocation, or profession.
- Secular counselors for example in the United States are typically licensed by the state and must abide by the rules the state creates in terms of laws, ethics, and standards.
- The counselor often encourages the individual to seek his own solutions and is often "non-directive". Secular counseling does not recognize the need to adhere to God or any deity morals or values.

### **Biblical Principles for Christian Marriages and Homes**

Let us look at some biblical principles for Christian marriages and homes.

1. Both husband and wife must be born again; and live a life that is holy and pleasing to God. Ephesians 5:1-2, 1 Peter 1:15-16, 23.
2. Love Christ and love each other wholeheartedly. Colossians 3:14, 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, Ephesians 5:25.
3. Couples should honor, be submissive(wives) and cherish each other always. 1 Peter 3:7, Colossians 3:18-19.

4. Couples should be in unity, working and walking in one accord. The author, Gbile Akanni states that the man and wife coming together enhances their life together and makes it complete and completed in every aspect. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, Ephesians 5:31, Genesis 2:18.
5. Recognize who the enemy of your marriage and home is. John 10:10, Ephesians 6:11-12. Stand together to fight the enemy and not each other.
6. Do not be judgmental and critical of each other – Be ready to accept your faults in any issues, confess it, repent, and forgive. 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Ephesians 4:32,
7. Speak words of life, words of comfort and encouragement to each other. 1 Peter 4:8, Ephesians 4:2-3, Proverbs 18:21.
8. Try to spend quality time as a couple and as a family. Ephesians 5:19, 1 Peter 1:22, Hebrews 10:25.
9. Do not make it a habit to always invite others (aside from God) into your marital issues. Allow the Lord to guide you when necessary to seek godly counsel. Apply godly wisdom. Genesis 2:24, Ecclesiastes 4:12, Psalm 32:8,
10. Proactively practice patience and kindness in your relationship -Galatians 5:22-23, I Corinthians 13:4-8.
11. Learn to listen to each other – Be proactive in your listening. Hear what your spouse is saying to you, both orally and verbally. Be fully present in the conversation.
12. Avoid stress related to money/finance. Spend and invest wisely as a couple. Seek financial counseling or coaching when necessary. Luke 6:38, Job 36:11, Philippians 4:11-13, Philippians 4:19, Proverbs 10:22.

## **Strategies For Empowering & Equipping Christian Marriages and Homes**

It is impossible to say that you will not encounter storms or challenges in your marital relationships and families. However, the Lord Jesus has assured us that he will be with us through the storms of life, which includes challenges in the home. He has provided the above-listed principles to help guide our homes. In addition, through His ministers whom He has given the mantle and ministry of counseling, strategies have also been designed to help deal with and overcome obstacles/challenges in christian homes. Let us look at some of them.

- Put aside all sinful behaviors and attitudes. *“Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” Hebrews 12:1.*
- Instead of complaining all the time, pray regularly about everything. *“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.” Philippians 4:6*
- Put on the right mindset ( godly mindset). *“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:4-6*
- Apply godly wisdom and put your whole trust in Him. *“Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation” Isaiah 12:2.*
- Always seek peace. Learn to dwell in peace with your spouse and children. Strive to be a peacemaker. *“If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.” Romans 12.18, “So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.” Proverbs 14:19*

The Christian marriage and home are very crucial to God’s plan & purpose for His people and as biblical counselors, and ministers of God, we must take seriously the ministry of reconciling homes and families back to each and to God. The Lord hates divorce (Malachi 2:16) and does not want to see His children continue to take it as an easy way out when His Holy Spirit along with spiritual tools, biblical principles and strategies are readily available to be used to help restore homes and help strengthen and building lasting marital and family relationships.

### References:

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