

ABSTRACT OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Master of Arts in Leadership

Adventist University of Africa

Title: A STRATEGY TO SOLVE TRADITIONAL MARITAL ISSUES
AFFECTING MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE GUSII
COMMUNITY, NYAMIRA CONFERENCE, KENYA

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When Christianity came to Gusii land for the very first time in the early 1900s, people were living primitively and practicing plural marriages. Besides one wife a man would have several others. Divorce was rampant, particularly when a woman was suspected to be barren or had only daughters and no sons. Women were beneath men. Women were there only to be seen but not to be heard. Even after conversion into Christianity, many still continue with these traditional tendencies.

This has led to the researcher as a church leader to develop a strategy to sensitize the church members to the need for living faithfully to their marriage vow in accordance with biblical principles and guidelines. A series of lessons on moral patterns and Christian societal norms were developed and employed in the training sessions.

After the training, the responses from both the leaders and general assembly were majorly positive. Many were remorseful about having abused God's gift of sex and promised to recommit their lives to Christ and to their spouses. They requested that such educational programmes be implemented regularly.

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COMMUNITY, IN THE NYAMIRA CONFERENCE, KENYA

A project
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree
Master of Arts in Leadership

by
Nico Ngare Asuma

June 2015

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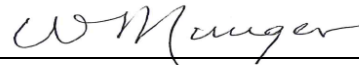
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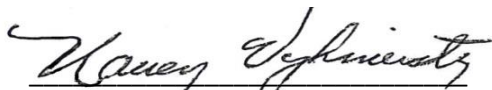
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To my helpmate and shepherdess Jane Moraa Nico Asuma and
my children, Jared, Milka, Bee, Deborah, and Ruth.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
OT	Old Testament
NT	New Testament
HIV/AIDS	Human Immune Deficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
STDS	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
SKC	South Kenya Conference
NC	Nyamira Conference

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The territory of the Nyamira Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church covers Nyamira County and includes some administrative areas of Kisii County. It is adjacent to the South Kenya Conference. At the time of this writing it has 59 pastoral districts and about 112,394 church members. More information about the organizational history and numerical growth of the Conference is discussed in chapter 3. The background here is to highlight the cultural issues that have affected marriage relationships in the families, despite the long presence of the church in the region.

The Adventist Church has been in the region for approximately the last one hundred years. The receptivity to the good news of the gospel is generally not a problem, and many Gusii people consider themselves Seventh - day Adventist Christians, even those who do not go to church regularly. However, many of the church members seem to exhibit the cultural aberrations that destabilize Christian families. Such aberrations include drunkenness, group or plural marriages, divorce, fornication, and adultery. When these aberrations are evidenced, there are always quarrels, lying (cheating), anger, depression, disrespect, and guilt in the family. The innocent partner is hurt the most. Essentially, the proclamation of the good news in this region does not seem to bring about qualitative difference in the lives of people. That is why the researcher is trying to formulate a strategy to help solve some of these cultural vices affecting marriage relationships in the homes.

Statement of the Problem

Although the Adventist Church in Nyamira has been in existence for about one hundred years, there is still a prevalence of aberrant behaviors and practices in marriage and marital relationships. This indicates that many Adventist Christians in Nyamira have not fully embraced the Adventist Christian lifestyle, or have failed to internalize Adventist Christian values. For example, many Christian young people, obviously encouraged by culture, do not apply Christian principles when they get married. It is even difficult to find a good number of Christian young people who uphold the standard of sexual purity before marriage. Tradition also comes in to negate what Christianity teaches about the sanctity of marriage and that the church and professionals working with the church need to be involved in preparing young people for marriage and solemnizing Christian marriage. As a Gospel worker within this Conference, I have noticed that in some cases young people just drift into marriage instead of carefully planning for it and going through proper counseling. Culture is deeply rooted in the people. As it was traditionally, even church-member parents may provide for arranging marriages of their children without the involvement of the church or young people may just settle for just “come and we stay together” until parents, guardians, through the existing system in the clan, arrange to regularize the marriage. Culture seems to be more important than the good news of the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ.

The practice of traditional approaches to marriage and family in Nyamira Conference, even among baptized Adventist Christians, is not consistent with the church’s biblical and theological understanding of marriage. Challenges are also exasperated by the reality that plural marriages or polygamy is accepted among Gusii people. Baptized Adventist Christians are under pressure to engage in plural

marriages, either serially or traditionally. It is evident that some church members revert to the practice of plural marriages/polygamy and other sexual irregularities even after their baptism into Christianity. There is, therefore, a need to address marital issues in the Nyamira conference of Abagusii in order to highlight real challenges which need to be faced, with a view of helping Abagusii Christians to become authentic disciples of Christ.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to unearth the root causes of the disturbing vacillation problem between Christianity and traditional practices which affect marriage relationships within the Abagusii community in the Nyamira Conference. These traditional practices have hindered the mission of God for a long time, not only among the SDA members, but also among members of other gospel churches in the territory. A clear understanding of the realities surrounding this issue, I developed strategies and a programme to help church members honor the institution of marriage and live by biblical principles. This will also assist Seventh-day Adventist lay workers to gain more access as they go about witnessing to the Abagusii and even other communities with similar practices. Furthermore, this work will be resource material, not only to the SDA church within the Nyamira Conference but to other church communities with similar problems.

Justification of the Study

This study is justified by the following factors: The church members, young and old, single and married, would benefit from this study spiritually and morally, as they are educated and helped to guard against pre-marital and extra-marital sex, and abstain from intoxicating beverages and other vices. This would, in turn lead to the

establishment of Christian homes with stability and harmonious relationships, which enhance the Christian experience. By being obedient to the biblical teachings, people's marriage relationships and homes will be built on the Christian principles of commitment and submission to one another in love and forgiveness of one another.

Delimitation of the Study

Although the traditional marital issues affect the whole of Gusii territory, this study is delimited to the Nyamira Conference where the researcher serves. Though the study briefly traced the origins of Nyamira Conference from within the South Kenya Conference, from where it was sub-divided, the research was confined to the traditional marital issues within Nyamira Conference.

Methodology

Following the roadmap of the project that is spelled out in the introductory chapter one, I will develop a biblically undergirded philosophy of marriage that informs all that is supposed to be done in order to fully address pertinent marital issues which affect the church in Nyamira. The philosophical platform is developed in chapter two. Chapter three discusses the reality as it is in Nyamira conference before designing the intervening strategy to be implemented and evaluated in chapter four. The last chapter will carry the summary, conclusions and recommendations.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms and their meaning for this study are explained below:

Marriage: A lifetime relationship between husband and wife.

Divorce: The dissolution of a marriage by judgment of court or accepted custom.

Culture: Behavior patterns, inner values, and beliefs generally held by groups of people in countries or regions.

Abagusii (Kisiis): Is one of the indigenous tribes in the upper highlands of Nyanza Province in Kenya.

Omogusii: One individual in Abagusii. community

Gusii (Kisii): The wider region of the Abagusii community. It will be used interchangeably with Abagusii (Kisiis) in this study.

Ekegusii: The language spoken by the Abagusii.

Conference: An administrative unit comprising a number of SDA churches in a given region.

Union: An administrative unit comprising a number of SDA conferences/fields/missions in a given political administrative region or country.

Sexual Dysfunction: Abnormal behavior or disturbance in the function of a couple's sexual relationship.

To elope: To run away with a lover to marry secretly especially without parental consent.

Concubine: A woman who cohabits with a married man.

Polygamy: A generic term which refers to any plural union; for example, a husband having two or more wives at the same time.

Levirate marriage or Widow Inheritance: Here a dead brother's wife is inherited by one of his brothers or cousins for the purpose of procreation, child upbringing, and support for the surviving widow.

Grave marriage: According to Abagusii culture if a grown son dies unmarried, the parents will choose a wife for him and ask somebody else to inherit her and produce children for their dead son.

Cohabitation: Living together and having sexual relation without being married.

Sexual ethics: Moral rules and principles pertaining to appropriate relations between sexes.

Fornication: The voluntary sexual intercourse between unmarried persons.

Adultery: Sexual intercourse between a married person and someone else, other than the spouse.

The above terms will be used in the chapters that follow, for instance, in chapter 2, the discussion of God's original design for marriage and what other writers say about marriage and sexuality. Some of these terms will be used to explain how the Omogusii traditional practices have destabilized this original design. Chapter 2 develops the biblical basis for marriage and sexuality.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

God's Design for Marriage and Human Sexuality

This chapter deals with marriage in terms of its origin, meaning, purpose, symbolism and sexuality. All the key concepts which may be unpacked briefly are taken from Scripture, although they may be additional insights from commentators who are recognized as illuminated by the same Spirit who inspired biblical writers and recognize what God has revealed. In this chapter the study delves into what is considered the foundational passage of Scripture which informs marital relationship as God designed from the beginning when He created human beings. The Genesis account of human creation sheds light on how marriage and human sexuality ought to be handled. It is important to know and understand God's blueprint for marriage and sexuality.

Marriage and sexuality go together and are to be understood as linked to each other. The instruction to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28) implies sexuality in marriage. The same can be seen when God brought Eve to Adam. 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" (Gen 2:21-23). In this same foundational passage, Genesis 1-3 we find key concepts and aspects of the origin of marriage, the purpose of marriage, the covenant of marriage, defining elements of marriage, and sexual intimacy in marriage. One of the questions which may be asked is: Why did God

create human beings, and why did He give them marriage? The following section attempts to answer the question.

The Origin and Purpose of Marriage

Genesis 2:18-25 highlights important aspects of God’s design for marriage. The message within this passage is that God instituted marriage to meet fundamental human needs for love, companionship, community, and satisfaction. Commenting on the same text Webster asserts that, “Marriage is the divine arrangement in which a man and a woman come together in intimate personal dynamic relationships. And within marriage each spouse is to offer satisfaction and find fulfillment.”¹ Writing about the purpose of marriage Ellen White asserts: “Marriage was for a blessing and sexual intimacy. Marriage was designed to be a blessing to mankind, particularly when entered with deference, courtesy, and love.”² Commenting also about God’s purpose for the husband and wife White says: “All who enter into matrimonial relations with a holy purpose—the husband to obtain the pure affections of a woman’s heart, the wife to soften and improve the husband’s character and give it completeness—fulfill God’s purpose for them.”³

What Ellen G. White refers to God’s creation of human beings in the image of God as the crowning work of creation.⁴ Genesis chapter 2 reveals that both man and woman

¹ Martin Wessler, *Christian View of Sex Education* (St Louis, MO: Concordia, 1967), 22.

² Ellen G. White, *Adventist Home* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1952), 15.

³ Ellen G. White, *Manuscripts* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1899), 16.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 44.

were created in the image of God, and that each needed the other. Bacchiocchi puts it more succinctly, when he expressed a need for a female companion by a man: “His hunger for wholeness stemmed from the fact that God made him a male with the need for a female companion. God made Adam incomplete without Eve from the beginning.”⁵ The woman, later named “Eve” (Genesis 3:20), was also created in the image of God and with a need for a male companion. Donald Joy examines the concept of human creation in the “image of God” as calling for a special kind of relationship between man and woman. He describes the desire between man and woman as “pair bonding.”⁶ Accordingly, the fullest expression of being human is that a man and woman engage closely with each other, according to God’s design, in an ever deepening heterosexual relationship. Thus it is stated in the *Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*: “Only as men and women together, in harmony and oneness, do we become fully human and realize the divine image. This happens—in part and paradigmatically—in the marriage of a man and a woman.”⁷ The two people, husband and wife, grow continually in companionship, in partnership, in social cohesion, in physical, psychological, and spiritual union. The desired process of bonding or moving on the desired journey of intimacy culminates in sexual intimacy. Furthermore, the passage underlines that the desire for intimacy between a man and woman is God-ordained as well. The language of Adam, the first

⁵Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Marriage Covenant: A Biblical Study on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage* (Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1992), 24.

⁶ Donald M. Joy, *Bonding Relationships in the Image of God* (Nappanee, IN, Evangel Publishing House, 1985).

⁷ “Sexuality,” in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, ed. David Atkinson et al. (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 71.

man to be created, when he received the woman from God is one that is expressive of jubilation and exhilaration.

In fact the phrase “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” is poetic and musical; this is as God would have it. The Bible also asserts this fact as seen in Malachi 2:14 and Proverbs 5:18-19. The human need for love and companionship is legitimate and divinely ordained.

The passage also implies that marriage is supposed to be between a man and a person referred to by Adam as “woman.” In Genesis 3:20, the male Adam gives this woman a name—Eve, which is interpreted to mean that she was the life-giving being the mother of all the living (Gen. 3:20). The two beings who get married must be members of the opposite gender to complement each other. Thus, from the very beginning, God designed that marriage should be a heterosexual relationship. As Bacchiocchi affirms: “The manner in which God created Adam and Eve reveals God’s design that there should be male and female,” with each one of them accepting “his or her sexual and functional roles as given by God.”⁸

Another question may be asked: What specific purpose did God have when He created marriage? A closer examination of the foundational statement in Genesis reveals a multifold purpose of marriage. The self-evident truth is that marriage was created for the needed companionship between man and woman. Pair bonding or the ongoing journey towards intimacy is a pleasant experience that God designed and intended for human beings when He created them in His own image. The process of pair bonding is, in some ways, a mystery about which Joy writes: “Pair bonding is nicely illustrated as a developing attachment which leads inevitably to the moment

⁸ Bacchiocchi, 24.

lovers become ‘naked and unashamed’.”⁹ God as the Creator is glorified when the two, man and woman, motivated by true love, move closer and closer to meet each other’s need for companionship. Another biblical image portrays marriage as mirror of the relationship between God and His people, the Church. God presents Himself as a husband who is married to His bride, the Church. Ellen G. White puts it clearly: “Christ honored the marriage relation by making it also a symbol of the union between Him and His redeemed ones. He, Himself is the Bridegroom; the bride is the church.”¹⁰ There are additional specific objectives for marriage which are best highlighted under the subtopic “ Human Sexuality” below. Although not spelled out clearly in this Genesis foundational passage, the language that is used is quite significant. It is a covenantal language which has led many students to assert that marriage is to be regarded as a covenant. Samuele Bacchiocchi devotes a significant portion of his book to elaborating the concept of marriage as a covenant.¹¹ Moreover, the language used in the foundational passages is covenant language, suggesting that marriage is a covenant.

The Covenant of Marriage

The covenant concept is dominant in Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments. God, Himself, is revealed as a covenant-making God, who graciously and unrelentingly commits Himself to saving the human beings He has created. The unconditional saving love of God is mirrored in Hosea the prophet who was directed

⁹ Joy, 34.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2005), 356.

to marry a prostitute, and take her to love her again in spite of her prostitution(Hos 1:2; 3:1). It is amazing to observe that God presents Himself as the compassionate and forgiving husband to His own sinful people. This same message comes out clearly and emphatically through other prophets of Israel. Through the prophet Malachi God dramatically shows how His covenant is violated by those who do the detestable thing of divorcing their wives. Divorce cheapens human life and God states that He hates divorce with passion (Malachi 2:15, 16). When Jesus came and taught about marriage, He reiterated that marriage was a covenant relationship between man and woman and could not be taken lightly. The prophets and apostles who called for faithfulness to the Covenant of God, also called for the same faithfulness between married man and woman.

After a clear exposition of the marriage relation as a covenant, Bacchiocchi states succinctly: “A marriage covenant is characterized by total, exclusive, continuing and growing commitment.”¹² With this kind of emphasis, the Good News of the Gospel must call for restoration of God’s covenant, which includes restoration of the marriage covenant to its original dignity, purity, and value.

In this particular case, the AbaGusii people of Nyamira need to understand this message clearly and apply it to their own personal lives. So far, the marriage and sex aberrations that are rampant in Nyamira reveal the extent to which the people there have been degraded by sin. There is an urgent need to apply the provisions of the Gospel among these people.

¹¹ Bacchiocchi, 31-63

¹² Bacchiocchi, 45.

God plans and designs that the two, man and woman be equal, and when they marry, they make a covenant with each other before God. This is foundational and can be seen in the covenantal language used by Adam when God brought Eve to him: “flesh of my flesh, bone of my bones” (Gen 2:23-24). In the biblical sense, the covenant obligates binding commitment which, in case of marriage, obligates the married couple to what is beyond the couple itself. The ultimate promises made before God cannot be broken. Life, itself, is broken when there is an attempt to violate the covenant made. For instance, Doss asserts that, “The Bible predicts that the family will collapse in the last days just before Christ’s second coming. Marriage will be broken by adultery. Young people will damage their marriages through premarital sexual activity. . . . People will love themselves so much that the family seems unimportant”¹³ (2Tim 3:1-5). As a result of this divorce will be rampant.

No one likes divorce because it destroys families. Divorce is generally disliked because of its effects on the children and the families involved. Since marriage is a permanent arrangement, divorce is only accepted as a regrettable last resort. Once the contract has been executed and vows made between the man and the woman in the presence of the public and God, nothing is to dissolve it. This is because marriage is not merely a contract between the couple, but involves many people and families. Similarly, its disruption concerns the relatives and the community. Collins comments, “Guilt, anger, resentment, fear, and disappointment often dominate the divorced person’s thinking, and frequently there is loneliness, confusion, lowered

¹³Gorden, R. Doss and Cheryl Brown Doss, *Christian Marriage: How You Can Have a Happy Marriage* (Pune, India: Oriental Watchman, 1994), 15.

self-esteem, insecurity, a sense of rejection, and the haunting concern about who was at fault.”¹⁴

Divorce is never easy. It breaks the promises of marriage, and can be one of the most agonizing choices that any couple can make. The lives of the children will be changed forever. For years, the divorced couple will continue to live with the ongoing pain and complications of a destroyed marriage.

This covenant of marriage also calls for specific obligations and privileges which constitute for meaningful life that was meant for life in all its fullness. The marrying couple makes solemn vows and seals the covenant pledging love, loyalty, and complete dedication to each other, as long as they both live (Prov. 2:17; Mal. 2:14). A covenant made by the couple to each other is like the covenant that God has made with His people. Marriage, therefore, calls for mutual and steadfast love that brings about mutual edification, faithfulness to each other as couple and exclusively so. In the book *The Adventist Home*, whose contents are taken from her other books, Ellen White says, “Making haste choice is one of the many reasons for formation of unhappy marriages.”¹⁵ Ellen White stressed further that, “The spirit that Christ manifests toward the Church is the spirit that the husband and wife are to manifest toward each other.”¹⁶ This is a fact because; “Marriage affects the afterlife both in this world and in the world to come. A sincere Christian will make no plans that God

¹⁴ Gary, R. Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide* (Nashville: TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 546-554.

¹⁵ Ellen, G. White, *Adventist Home* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1952), 45, 46, 61-64.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

cannot approve.”¹⁷ Therefore, marriage is not a cheap relationship that a person can walk into and out of at will. It is a relationship entered with complete understanding that the commitment is life-long. This is because marriage sets the tone and determines the quality of peoples’ lives. The marriage relationship determines the health and strength of the family. For that reason, in the New Testament, Jesus repeated what He had declared at the beginning through Moses and reminds His opponents of that foundational statement: “What God has joined together, let no one separate.” (Matt. 19:6). Marriage is for keeps and not for divorce. Even serial marriages are out of place.

The Foundational Elements of Marriage

Three foundational elements can be highlighted in the Genesis account of Genesis 2:24. This same text is quoted three more times in the New Testament (Matt. 19:5; Mark 10:7; Ephesians 5:31). The repetition of this foundational passage on marriage by the Lord Jesus Himself and His apostle Paul underlines the importance of the message carried here.

When God had united the man and the woman as husband and wife, He said, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife and were not ashamed” (Gen 2:24-25). The rendering of this passage indicates that marriage is an exclusive union between a man and a woman whereby each person who enters the marriage covenant detaches from the parental umbilical cord in order to attach to the spouse. This detachment from one’s parents and attachment to the spouse is

¹⁷ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 359.

elaborated later. The passage quoted above is the King James version of Scripture and carries three essential elements: 1. Leaving father and mother; 2. Being joined to each other; and 3. Becoming one flesh. Leaving implies emotional detachment and the creation of a separate and distinct unit made up of two people, man and woman who become husband and wife. When the two get married they are recognized publicly as a unit by their families, by the family of faith, and by the society at large. Cleaving is being joined together, which signifies mutual commitment to each other and is expressed as a formal marriage covenant. “Becoming one flesh” signifies more than the sexual union. It includes the process of growth in intimacy, ongoing bonding and fulfillment of oneness that God intended for a couple to experience in all aspects of their lives. These elements or phrases of leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh are foundational when it comes to the dignity, sanctity, and value of marriage. Commenting on these phrases of “leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh,” Foster states, “Here we are given the confession of covenant fidelity that sets the pattern for mature marriage. In his teaching Jesus gives depth and richness to this phrase ‘one flesh’ (Matt 19:6). The next verse says, ‘And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed’”¹⁸ (v.25). Foster observes further, “Here we have an idyllic scene of their sexuality integrated. There was no shame because there was wholeness. There was an organic unity within themselves and with the rest of creation.”¹⁹ Lewis Smedes has written, “There are two situations in which people feel no shame. The first is in a state of wholeness. The other is in a state of illusion. Naked and not

¹⁸ Richard J. Foster, *Money, Sex and Power* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1985), 94, 95.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

ashamed is not illusion, but wholeness.”²⁰ In wholeness, Richard Foster comments, “They knew their masculinity and feminity are the handwork of God, as is their passionate affection. Their differences also unite them; they are male and female but also one flesh. The two of them in relationship, in love –why should there be shame? Their sexuality is the creation of God.”²¹ In God’s provision, the language of verse 25 is quite significant. This language suggests that when a man and a woman get married, each spouse becomes the best gift to the other spouse. The best gift is the gift of self-disclosure. Nakedness is symbolic of that self-disclosure of the husband to the wife and the wife to the husband. With the gift of self-disclosure between husband and wife comes bonding and sexual intimacy in marriage. This takes us to the next section which zeroes in on sexuality itself.

Marriage and Sexual Intimacy

Sexual intimacy between husband and wife is an exquisite and sacred gift to human beings. Witteschiebe asserts that, “ God, himself, invented sex and gave it to human beings.”²² Witteschiebe argues convincily that God Himself created human beings as sexual beings to accept and enjoy the gift from the Creator. Marriage assumes sexual intimacy which is the integral part of the relationship and is reserved for marriage only (Gen 1:31; 2:23-25). The sexual relationship is designed by God to be an experience of love, bonding, celebration, and pleasure between husband and

²⁰ Lewis B. Smedes, *Sex for Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 47.

²¹Foster, 95.

²² Charles Wittschiebe, *God Invented Sex* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1974), 16.

wife. Sexual intimacy is a blessing from God to be enjoyed without shame. Scripture portrays the sexual relationship as a wholesome and delightful expression of oneness and ever increasing bonding, happiness, and security in each other. A loving marriage relationship is God's chosen setting to provide a secure environment for the procreation, care, and nurture of children.

Under this section of the Project, two specific objectives for marriage emerge: Marriage is for sexual intimacy which God designed to be a pleasurable experience. In her book, *Captivated by Love*, Alberta Mazat is candid about human sexuality. After exploring a few issues which have brought confusion about the gift of sexuality, and describing the experience, Mazat affirms sexuality or one flesh-ness. Thus she writes: "He (God) designed that this act of one-flesh-ness bring two committed people together in a throb of unity. And this union He designed to be the means of bonding a man and woman to one another in pleasure, in potential, and praise."²³

Another purpose of marriage is procreation. God's mandate in the beginning: was "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). God honored human beings by enabling them to have a part in God's creative work. Again, Bacchiocchi observes: "As sex consummates the act of marriage, so children consummate the sexual act."²⁴ Although the sexual union may not lead to conception, most married couples desire to have children. In the same vein Arthur Holmes states,

A sexual relationship is not confined to just two persons: it also involves God, the Creator and Lord of us all, who for his own good purposes made us the sexual beings we are. Sexual union and reproduction are part of God's creation, ordained from the beginning in the institution of

²³ Alberta Mazat, *Captivated by Love: Sharing and Enhancing Sexuality in Marriage* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1996), 41.

²⁴ Bacchiocchi, 76.

marriage...its ultimate meaning is not to be found in itself, in the act, the experience or even the social consequences. Its ultimate meaning is to be found in relation to God and his purpose.²⁵

Holmes goes further, “That is why even the Bible speaks of raising a godly heritage, of transmitting the faith and the hope in promises to successive generation. It is the combination of reproductive and unitive potential which makes that possible-children with ideals and influence which they in their turn could pass on to others.”²⁶

On the same note, quoting Hasting, Mary Getui notes, “Marriage is the permanent union and a lifetime commitment between a man and a woman. It involves sex, mutual companionship and assistance. And out of this union children can be procreated and reared as a result of God’s blessings.”²⁷ Thus, it may be seen that sexual intimacy was intended not only for pleasure, but also for procreation. Sexual intimacy may result in conception, which is the beginning of the formation of a new human being. In this process, God has designed that a husband and wife participate in the sacred work of “creating” another human being.

So far from the cited sources and even more others, it can be asserted that the Genesis account states clearly that marriage, including sexual intimacy, is a gift from the Creator, Himself. Commenting on this gift from the Creator, Ellen White also noted that, “God celebrated the first marriage. Thus this institution has for its originator the Creator of the universe. Marriage is honorable, it was one of the first gifts of God to man, and one of the two institutions that after the fall, Adam brought

²⁵ Arthur Holmes, *Ethics Approaching Moral Decisions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 109.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 110, 111.

²⁷ Mary N. Getui, Ed. *Responsible Leadership in Marriage and Family* (Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Publishers, 2005), 61.

with him beyond the paradise.”²⁸ Marriage is not an invention of creative people anywhere in the world. Much can be done to unpack the foundational statement on marriage and the place of sexual intimacy in it.

The people of Gusii, who are reeling under the gross distortions and aberrations connected with marriage and sex, need to know and internalize the essence of the biblical message on marriage and sex. Not knowing this message, many of the Abagusii people, still practice serial or group marriages. The research pointed out that many people, even those in the church, misinterpret Gen 1:28 as polygamy, when God said, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.” They also claim that the practice was prevalent in the OT times among God’s people and that God approved it. The question to ask is, “Was this practice biblical and in accordance to God’s ideal of monogamous marriage as it is in the Genesis account?” To answer the question and to shed light on the notion of polygamous practices in the Bible, what some of the SDA authors have said about group or serial marriages practiced in the OT times, is important.

For instance, Ezekiel Mafu notices, “It appears evident that in the OT polygamy was accommodated and tolerated. The polygamists were not cut off from the common wealth of Israel- but continued to enjoy the fellowship of the Israelites. In fact it appears that polygamy under certain circumstances, such as the levirate system, was encouraged.”²⁹

²⁸ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1943), 91-92.

²⁹ Ezekiel Mafu, “The SDA Church and Polygamous Adherents in Africa,” Seminar Paper, Andrews University, February 1998.

Alden Thompson comments, “Slavery, polygamy, and blood vengeance are all customs supported by OT Law codes but which most Christians would consider inappropriate for Westerners of the twentieth century.”³⁰ Russell Staples also noticed that “Levirate marriage in Israel was not simply a matter of choice, it was a definite responsibility. And whenever the levirate marriage is strictly practiced, polygamy is an inevitable consequence.”³¹ Notwithstanding all the citations from Scripture which may appear to endorse polygamy, the bigger picture of all biblical narratives reveals that polygamy was not God’s design for marriage. It is a practice that was tolerated and fell under God’s circumstantial will. With that in mind and to help the Abagusii and particularly those of the Nyamira Conference to abandon such unbiblical practices, including marrying more than one woman. God assigned the task to the man and woman in a monogamous marriage to procreate. To them marriage was a *mitzvah*, a religious duty, the means by which God preserved and sustained His elect people.”³² Roch also has it that, “The joy of witnessing oneself and one’s spouse is combined in offspring, and a renewed reverence and one for God, whose creative prowess makes life possible.”³³ The message as has been unpacked briefly, to show how crucially important it was that God saw fit to repeat it many years later after the flood, when God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: “Be fruitful and

³⁰ Alden Thompson, *Inspiration* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1991), 100.

³¹ Russell Staples, “Evangelism among Resistant Peoples with Deeply Entrenched Polygamy,” A working paper produced for the Global Mission Issues Committee, April, 2003, 14.

³² *The New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 71-76.

³³ Calvin B. Rock, “Marriage and Family,” *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 726.

multiply, and fill the earth” (Gen 9:1). The reward of offspring is also implicated in the Wisdom Literature Books. For example, it is stated in Ps 127:3, “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward.” In the discussion that follows below Jesus, His apostles, Ellen White and other authors uphold what was already revealed in the Old Testament.

The Marriage Message in the New Testament

When Jesus came to planet earth He affirmed the marriage relationship by being present at the marriage ceremony at Cana of Galilee and performing His first miracle there (John 2:1-12). Even Ellen White said, “Christ is the one who gave Eve to Adam as a helpmeet. When he performed his first miracle at the marriage festival he sanctioned marriage, recognizing it as an ordained rite that man and woman should be united in holy wedlock.”³⁴ In one of His long sermons Jesus taught that divorce was not acceptable to God. Jesus stated that there is no divorce at all unless one of the spouses violates the marriage vow in the act of adultery (Matt 5:31, 32). Jesus reiterated the message to the Pharisees when they tested Him on the issue of divorce and remarriage. He plainly stated that there should be no divorce. It is not God’s plan or design to cheapen the marriage relationship by severing it in any manner (Matt 19:1-10). In fact, He reaffirmed the foundational statement on marriage, as He had declared it at the beginning, when He reminded the Pharisees of that statement (vv. 4, 5). Here Jesus affirmed the indissolubility of marriage, the heterosexuality of marriage, and the monogamy of marriage.

³⁴ Ellen G. White, *Counsels for the Church* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1991), 229.

The Apostle Paul also repeated what Jesus said in Genesis (Gen 2:24), and in other passages in the Gospels (Matt 19:5; Mark 10:7-8). Paul repeats the foundational elements of marriage: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” (Eph 5:31). Commenting on this “oneness”, Clifford and Joyce Penner comment that, “Scripture is talking about the mystical union between husband and wife that includes the emotional, physical, and spiritual—the total person and that when this ‘oneness’ is affected, marriage is disrupted.”³⁵ Ellen White also claims that, “Jesus is the Creator who started the marriage Himself: he did not come to destroy it, but to restore it in its original sanctity and elevation.”³⁶ Jesus, as God the Creator of marriage, has spoken and spoken again, and His apostles and messengers have also spoken. The foundational statement concerning marriage is from God. In the epistle to the Hebrews we read: “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4). The apostle writes like after the fall of humankind after sin had contaminated, distorted, and adulterated marriage. Fornication and adultery are examples of results of the fall. The next section deals with the consequences of the fall that have affected marriage quite negatively.

Marriage and Human Transgression

The third chapter of the book of Genesis carries a concise statement on human transgression and the devastating consequences that resulted from that transgression. The main concept that captures the essence of this transgression is referred to as the

³⁵ Clifford Penner and Joyce Penner, *The Christian Guide to Sexual Fulfillment: Gift of Sex* (Waco, TX: Word, 2002), 7.

³⁶ White, *Counsels for the Church*, 229.

fall. When human beings sinned, they fell short of the glory of God and the consequences have ever been too terrible to contemplate. Human misery continues to accumulate as a result of that original fall. The Bible states that sin separates human beings from their Creator God (Isa 59:2). Marriage is so foundational a relationship that God has to be the foundation of it or human beings are vulnerable to all kinds of miseries.

The effects of the fall on marriage have had far-reaching implications for human suffering and pain. The original sin of Adam and Eve, and the personal sins of contemporary human beings have resulted in the loss of mutuality, unity, harmony, and intimacy in marriage. Genesis 3:7-12 indicates that the sinful marriage relationship, is now marked by guilt, fear, shame, and blame. As a result of sin the woman would suffer the inordinate desire for connectedness, and the man would assume supremacy over her (v. 16). The curse even spilled over to the rest of God's creation, including the ground itself. The woman would experience pain at childbirth and there would be struggles over many other issues (vv. 14-19). Women were reduced to being treated as men's property and even slaves in some cases.

The effects of sin on marriage are quite sad. Some of it manifests itself in misunderstandings, alienation, conflicts and failure to love. Violence and abuse as those prevalent today are among the most abhorrent behaviors in human relationships. All of these are results of the human fall. With sin as a reality in contemporary society, the most destructive forms of abuse and neglect undermine the marriage covenant.

All human beings have suffered as result of the fall. Some have suffered more than others. The Gusii people, for whom this project has been designed, are among

those who have suffered as result of the fall. Many challenges among the Abagusii have confronted the gospel minister and the Adventist Church.

Today, after more than one hundred years of gospel proclamation in the area, marriage still faces many challenges from sexual irregularities such as fornication, adultery, divorce, and remarriage. This comes as a result of the misuse of God's gift of sex and misunderstanding of Scripture. There are those among the Abagusii who violate God's commandment by arguing that since little was said about fornication in Scripture, therefore, it is not really morally wrong. There are those who ask, "Why should society be threatened, since adultery is a private matter and a right of the individual's own choice"? Others ask, "In the OT times Moses permitted divorce; now, if the two married individuals are not matching in their marriage relationship, couldn't divorce and remarriage be the solution"? Responses to such questions can be thrown out on the basis of what has been learned from the biblical narratives of the OT and NT.

Although quite prevalent among Abagusii, fornication and adultery are forbidden by the commandment of God (Exod 20:14; Matt 19:9; Acts 15:20; 1 Cor 6:18). Adultery is the violation of the seventh commandment, "You shall not commit adultery" (Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18) together with the tenth commandment, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife (Exod20:17). In the OT, the penalty for adultery was death for both partners. "Moreover you shall not lie carnally with your neighbor's wife, to defile yourself with her" (Lev 18:20). " If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die-the man who lay with the woman, and the woman; so you shall put away the evil from Israel" (Deut 22:22).

The severity of the punishment suggests that adultery was viewed not just as a private violation of a spouse's right to exclusive sexual enjoyment of the partner, but

also as a serious threat to the fabric of the society. In OT law, also those who engaged in fornication (premarital intercourse) were obliged to marry for life without divorce (Deut 22:28-29). All the prohibitions indicate that God's standards are the norms from which no society may deviate and expect harmony, happiness, security, and over-all wellbeing.

For those who think that more is said about adultery than about fornication; the general position held by Scripture is that fornication is morally wrong. It also violates the virtue of purity. It is forbidden by God. "If a man entices a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he shall surely pay the bride-price for her to be his wife" (Exod 22:16). This is because it is a misuse of one's body which is the temple of God. It also violates the virtue of purity (I Cor 6:12-20). In 1 Cor 6:18 we read "The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body."

In the NT, Jesus extended adultery and fornication to the inner evil thoughts and desires of the heart where moral offence has its origins. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication... These are the things which defile a man" (Matt 15:19-20). Jesus also emphasized the spirit of adultery by saying, "You have heard that it was said . . . you shall not commit adultery.... looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt 5:27-28; John 8:3-8). It is reasonable to suppose that this also applies to a woman who looks at a man lustfully. All thinking, speaking, and acting, which are inconsistent with Scripture, and lead to a destruction of marriage are regarded as adultery.

Additional Insights in Connection with Marriage and Human Sexuality

Other writers assert that God is the originator and Creator of human beings and human sexuality. After creating them male and female God saw them to be “very good,” their body organs included. For example, Penner notes,

To understand the OT input regarding sexuality, we must understand the Hebrew view of the human person as an integrated whole. The Hebrew never divided people into body and soul, as did the Greek dualists, or into body, soul and spirit as some of us tend to do today. Rather, the Hebrew thought of a person as a unity. The physical, emotional, and spiritual were various dimensions of a person, but they were closely related and were often used synonymously or interchangeably.³⁷

Each day of creation for the first five days, God saw everything as “good” (Gen 1:4, 10, 18, and 21). But after creating human beings (v.27), He saw that it was “very good” (v.31), all their body organs included. Tim La-Haye, an expert on human sexuality, has asserted, “God has not made the human body with good and bad parts. He has made it all good. This therefore means that God did not create some organs as evil and some as holier as some tend to think.”³⁸

NT writers tell us that God is the originator of all things, including sex and sexuality. For instance, the apostle John says, “All things came into being by Him [Christ] and apart from Him nothing came into being” (John 1:3). Paul in Colossians 1:16 tell us “For by Him [Christ] all things were created, both in heaven and on earth.” Being male and female, therefore, is a part of God’s wonderful plan and design in creation. Arthur Holmes affirms this fact when he notices that “A sexual

³⁷Penner and Penner, 42-44.

³⁸Tim La Haye, *How to be Happy Though Married* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1968), 21-25.

relationship is not confined to just two persons. It also involves, God the Creator and Lord of us all, who for his own good purposes made us the sexual beings we are.”³⁹

Writing that sex pervades God’s creation Wessler states that “All things created, be it animals kingdom, plants kingdom (including trees and grass), and birds kingdom are created male and female and they possess both male and female reproductive system. It is not by accident or miscalculations, but by the deliberate design of God that sex pervades so much of created life.”⁴⁰

Because some people regard sexual organs as dirty or evil, sexual intercourse is regarded as a dirty game or unclean rite. On this, Wittschiebe, an Adventist scholar, writes, “Surely it was a strange rite for God to ordain if the sexual organs are dirty or inherently more sinful than any other parts of the body, and if we should never refer to them in a spiritual context.”⁴¹

This information will help us to refute what the secular world teaches that sex and sexuality are evil and sinful in and by themselves. It will also help us to correct the negative view the church in Nyamira Conference has held for long about sex education. This is because to a certain degree, the church in Nyamira Conference has been anti-sexual and anti-pleasure. It has failed to be consistent with the understanding of what marriage is and what the Bible has to say about sex within marriage. Following are what others have suggested about what marriage is.

³⁹ Arthur F. Holmes, *Ethics Approaching Morals Decisions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 109.

⁴⁰ Wessler, *Christian View of Sex Education*, 22.

⁴¹ Charles Wittschiebe, E. *God Invented Sex* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1974), 16.

The SDA Church on Sexual Irregularities

The common belief in the SDA Church is that marriage is a divine institution. This belief rests upon the Holy Scripture. So far, from the Genesis account, Jesus and the apostles' teachings, it is clearly seen that God is the author and officiator of the institution of marriage. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus declared plainly that there could be no dissolution of marriage tie, except for unfaithfulness to marriage vows (Matt 5:31; 19:9). That means that God intended that marriage be monogamous and that there should be oneness in the home of the husband and wife. The church Manual states that "The church should adhere to this view of marriage and the home without reservation. Any lowering of this high view either for unfaithfulness to the marriage vow or any other sexual irregularities is to that extent a lowering of the heavenly ideal."⁴²

This position of the Adventist Church shows that the church believes in the law of God and also in the forgiving mercy of God. It believes that victory and salvation can as surely be found by those who have transgressed in the matter of divorce remarriage as by those who have failed in any other of God's holy standards.

Before coming to description of local setting of Nyamira Conference in chapter three, it needs to be reemphasized that the biblical position on marriage and sexuality is one that the Adventist Church must stand by.

⁴² *Church Manual 18th ed.* 2010, 151-15.⁴²

CHAPTER 3

THE LOCAL SETTING OF THE NYAMIRA CONFERENCE

At the time of writing, the Nyamira Conference had 59 church districts, 481 organized churches, and 298 companies. It had 5 stations, 1 secondary school, 7 primary schools maintained by the church, 66 secondary schools and 63 primary schools sponsored by the church, and 13 Health Centres. The Nyamira Conference is part of the East Kenya Union Conference (EKUC) of the Seventh day Adventist Church. Initially it belonged to the South Kenya Conference. On 1st March 1995, it was taken from that conference and given its full conference status. Compared to other territories within the same Union Mission, Nyamira Conference and South Kenya Conference are experiencing rapid numerical and structural growth. However, the quality growth in terms of conceptual, moral, and spiritual maturity leaves much more to be desired.

Geographical Location

Nyamira Conference is located within Nyamira County, in the western part of Kenya, in Nyanza Province, and the southern part of the Rift Valley Province. Initially the whole Gusii region had only one Conference, the South Kenya Conference. In 1995 it was sub-divided and gave birth to what is now the Nyamira Conference. Traveling from Nairobi, one has to go by the Nakuru-Kericho highway to arrive in Nyamira. It is along “Narok road” that goes through Kisii to Migori and up to the border with Tanzania at Isebania.

Organizational History and Numerical Growth

One cannot talk of Nyamira Conference without briefly tracing its Adventist roots from its origin at Gendia (Kendu Bay) in Luo land and into Nyanchwa (Gusii land) in the South Kenya Conference.

According to Moronya and Sinkira, “The Adventist message stepped into Kenyan soil in 1906 at Gendia (Kendu Bay) in Luo land, by Pastor A. G. Carscalen from England. Ira Evanson opened a station at Nyanchwa in Gusii land in 1912. The new station at Nyanchwa became a base for missionary operations into the interior of Gusii and Maasai communities.”¹

According to the records of the Ministerial Department of South Kenya Conference, “Under the Principal Worland, out of the very first ten converts; four were trained as the very first Abagusii pastors. These four were the pioneers of the Gospel work in all other parts of Gusii land.”² The number of converts increased in South Kenya Conference (the whole Gusii Region by then). By then, This increment of converts was one of the factors that led into sub-division of Nyamira Conference from South Kenya Conference in 1995. From the very first membership of ten who became the first baptized converts, now South Kenya Conference stands at 133,736 and Nyamira Conference at 108,808. This is as per 27th May Statistical Report when both the two Conferences celebrated the Centennial (100 years) of the Adventist

¹ H. Moronya, D. Sinkira, *History of the Adventist Church in Gusii and Maasai* (Kisii, Kenya: Oak Computer Center, 2006), 3.

² Ministerial Secretary, Pastors Records, South Kenya Conference, 2011.

Church in Gusii, Maasai and Kamagambo communities. This can be seen in chart 1 in Appendix A.

At the end of the 4th Quarter, December 2012, the Nyamira Conference membership had grown from 108,808 to 112,394. This information comes from the Statistical Report given by the Nyamira Conference Executive Secretary, Zablon Nyaenya Ayiera during the 1st Quarter 2013 meeting of church elders and pastors. Together with the achievements and challenges from the Secretariat Department, these tables of numerical growth are attached in Appendix C.

For easy administration, Nyamira Conference is divided into five stations namely: Kebirigo, Tombe, Matutu, Mbanda and Gesura. The quarterly numerical growth of membership in each station in the year 2014 is as shown in the Table 1.

Table 1. Membership 2014

No	Station	1st Quater 2014	2nd Quater 2014	3rd Quarter 2014	4th Quarter 2014
1	Kebirigo	33,447	33,683	34,565	35,007
2	Tombe	39,073	39,649	40,378	40,643
3	Matutu	13,356	13,584	13,875	13,952
4	Mbanda	13,219	13,464	13,656	13,877
5	Gesura	17,117	17,233	17,325	17,243
	Grand total	116,212	117,613	119,799	120,722

Table 1 shows that the numbers did not remain constant throughout the year. Sometimes they may vary by members coming in through the new baptisms, profession of faith, and transfers in. And sometimes the numbers may be affected by losses through dropping, deaths, missing and transfers out as shown in the Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. Members added in 2014

Quarter	Baptism	Profession of Faith	Transfer in	Positive adjustment	Total members added
1st Quarter	1386	355	288	31	2,060
2nd Quarter	2009	316	524	59	2,908
3rd Quarter	2500	102	30	108	2,760
4th Quarter	1339	468	739	43	2,589
Grand Totals	7,234	1,241	1,601	241	10,55

Table 3. Losses in 2014

Quarter	Dropped	Deaths	Missing	Transfers out	Negative adjustment	Total Memberships subtracted
1st Quarter	695	150	63	636	12	1556
2nd Quarter	523	83	34	826	41	1507
3rd Quarter	290	111	44	198	22	665
4th Quarter	339	83	144	1011	28	1605
Grand Totals	1847	427	285	2,671	103	5,333

Besides death, missing a great number of members drop out of the church quarterly due to indulgement of Abagusii traditional marital practises. After the record of the church membership growth in the Conference, what follows is the discussion of marital issues affecting the marriage relationships in the Conference. This is the main core of this study.

Marital Issues

These issues are many but only a few of them will be considered. Alcoholism, drugs, and polygamous marriages are among the many traditional issues damaging the institution of marriage within the Abagusii community of the Nyamira Conference.

The majority of Abagusii people in Nyamira Conference are peasant- farmers who grow subsistence crops for their daily survival. A few are professionals, and others run small-scale businesses. Some of these people have their membership in the churches in Nyamira Conference. The acute problem with some of these members is that they indulge in the community traditional practices. This will be seen along the discussions that follow below.

Traditionally most of Abagusii men are considered idlers and roamers who spend time and money on alcohol, drugs, and women. Surprisingly, even men who profess to be Christians and even hold membership in the Adventist Church get drunk. They join non-church people and roam about chasing after women for sex, drinking alcohol, and also using intoxicating beverages such as marijuana, "*miraa*," etc. When they get home and are asked as to why they don't live up to the biblical standards; they begin yelling, quarrelling, fighting, and chasing wives and children out of the home. This disrupts the stability of the home and brings reproach on the name of God and the Adventist Church.

Another marital issue is women's inheritance, which is common in the Abagusii community. A dead brother's wife is inherited by one of his brothers or cousins for the purpose of bringing up the children and supporting the surviving widow. The widow is still regarded as the wife of the dead man and any future children she carries will be regarded as his. It is similar to the practice of levirate marriage in OT (Deut 25:5f), in that the inheritor may already be married. If he inherits the widow, he instantly becomes a polygamist. Church men and women are caught in this trap of levirate practices. As a result, most couples have been infected with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). When I was doing the research, the cry was in every home because of the orphans and sickly people left behind. They live in extreme poverty because every cent is spent on medication and burials. This also hinders the advancement of God's mission in the territory.

Another traditional practice by Abagusii is grave marriage. If an adult or middle aged son or even a senior bachelor in the family dies without being married, leaving neither wife nor child to perpetuate his lineage, his parents or siblings will find him a lady and marry her in his name. If there is another son who is still alive, within the family or a hired outsider, he will play the role of levirate to raise children for the dead son. But the responsibility for the care of the married woman and the children who will be born will be upon parents or siblings of the dead man and not upon the hired one.

Other plural marriages are surrogate marriages. These are for sterile and barren cases. When, for example, the husband is sterile, a brother may quietly perform the sexual duties on his behalf, thus saving the marriage. On the other hand, if the wife is barren, the husband may take her sister or any other woman, but keep the first

wife. This is also another trap to church members. This practice also impacts families negatively and homes are left desolate.

Another traditional situation occurs when when both husband and wife have grown old and have never had a child to propagate their lineage. In this situation, they will marry an unmarried woman with illegitimate children, born out of wedlock. Or, if the couple are aging and have only girls and have no son, they will likewise marry an unmarried woman with sons, or one without children. Whatever the case, an outsider is hired to raise children with the newly married woman in order to propagate the name of the aging couple's lineage.

Causes of polygamy among Abagusii are many. Among these causes are peer pressure, begotten son, disability, migrant labor and cohabitation, social pressure and low schooling, childlessness, and gender. The factors which lead to polygamous unions are briefly unpacked below:

(a) **Peer Pressure:** Among the Abagusii, polygamy was acceptable and honorable. It raised the social status of a family—a large family earns its head (husband and father) great respect in the eyes of the community. One can become polygamous through normal betrothal, widow inheritance and concubinage, or when the wife is childless. The old tradition is that a man with one regular wife is like a man with 'one eye.' And that if the one eye is damaged the man becomes crippled and is rendered of no use. He could be despised, ridiculed, called 'one-eyed', and could not go round drinking liquor, sacrificing and eating with other males who had many wives. With many wives there also could be plenty of food for one to share with one's age group, and many daughters to bring in cattle at their marriage. This could make the husband and father wealthy and respected head of the homestead. And again when a family is made up of several wives with their households, it means that in times of

need or crisis there will always be someone to help. It was also believed that many wives helped to prevent or reduce unfaithfulness and prostitution. However, this is not true. With all this great wealth and honor in the community, even Adventist men are tempted to become polygamists.

(b) **Only Begotten Son:** This takes place when there is only one son, with no brother or sister. The parents and the community would influence such a one to marry many wives. By so doing, he would produce many children, of whom some would take the place of brothers and sisters. The practice still continues and may create pressure upon the Adventist families of Abagusii of Nyamira Conference. This practice has crippled the young Adventist males who are the only-begotten sons in their families. They may drop out of the church because they have been influenced to become polygamists.

(c) **Disability:** This happens when a wife becomes crippled or ill and cannot have children. In some instances the Omogusii (Kisii) wife might decide to tell her husband to marry another wife to release the family from this situation.

(d) **Migrant Labor and Cohabitation:** Some of the Abagusii men have mistresses for sexual gratification. For instance, an employed man in town leaves one wife in the countryside to look after the homestead and children. In a far place he takes another woman to look after the family business in the town where the husband is employed.

(e) **Social Pressure and Low Schooling:** Many middle-aged men, who are well-to-do and 'successful,' live and work in urban areas where also the sophisticated elite live. In their youth they may have married under social pressure and probably to an unenterprising wife with scant schooling, who is now unable to mix with the sophisticated urban elite. Some of these men have been tempted and taken second

wives, who are sophisticated enough and can entertain his colleagues, as well as attend parties and cocktails.

(f) **Childlessness:** In a situation of childlessness, a man is encouraged by the peers, extended family, relatives, or even his first wife to take a second wife. Traditionally, there is a strong feeling among the Abagusii that the house is not complete without the presence of children. In most cases the blame is put on the childless woman, who is often accused of being barren. If she could not produce children she was put/ thrown away and another woman was tried. Even church members who are childless find themselves under tremendous pressure to marry another wife.

(g) **Sex of the Child:** The gender of children is another issue of conflict among the Abagusii. The problem occurs when a wife bears only females. To Abagusii or Omogusii a home is not a complete home without a male child. This is because a boy is seen as the one who continues the family line. The father views a boy as the source of continuation for his family. The mother views her son as security in her old age, after all girls get married and leave home. Girls are seen as a source of wealth. The lack of a girl means no wealth while the lack of a boy means no future. These attitudes about children, especially when a couple cannot get the gender they desire, can sometimes lead to tension and conflict, polygamy or even divorce, even among church members. These attitudes affect the church members of Nyamira Conference negatively.

Seeking for medical counsel about this situation of barrenness and gender, the researcher found Hylene Bosire, a medical practitioner at Isecha Health Centre, and interviewed her. I wished to know what medical science has established concerning

barrenness, the sex of a child, marriage with or without children, and the counsel that can be given to the couple in such a situation.

In response to the researcher's questions Hylene has the following to say:

Modern medical techniques have established that both males and females can be infertile. It is not exclusively a feminine problem.”

In addition, scientists have found out that it is the father's sperm cell, not the mother's eggs, which determine the gender of children. Many men have foolishly rejected fertile, healthy wives when it was the condition of their own bodies that created this situation.

It is true that barrenness can result from sexual diseases or problems in the woman's uterus or fallopian tubes, or with the man's sperms.

Each childless couple should remember that, before God, their marriage is complete, with or without children. There are two options for childless couples; to be content with their childless state or try adoption. The husband should protect his wife whichever the situation.³

It might be asked why all this must be cited. These cultural practices are so rooted in Omogusii that even church people are trapped and indulge in them. By so doing, they damage their legal marriages, offending and hurting their partners. When the offended or hurt partner tries to ask the offender, there is no respect at all. Instead, there is name calling, remarks about in-laws or relatives, wild threats of divorce or suicide, stubbornness, arguments, yelling, and even physical violence. There may be very little sleep, refusal to speak to each other, and thus, no communication. This causes pains and suffering to the marriage relationship. And if communication breaks down between husband and wife, it also affects their relation with God, the church, and the community. And as a result, there are cases of separation, desertion, divorce, prostitution, remarriage, and STDs in many families. Due to such aberrations STDs

³ Personal Interview with Hylene Bosire, Clinical Officer, Isecha Health Centre, 2011. See the text of the interview in Appendix F

such as gonorrhoea, syphilis, and AIDS are spreading like wild fire and destroying marriages and families at large.

As a result of the above cases I wished to know how many STDs and, more particularly, how the worldwide AIDS crisis has shaken the family structure among the Abagusii community. To gather information, I chose Mwabosire Sub-Location, in Sengeru Location, Manga District, in Nyamira County, as an area to study. There I met Francis Masani, the Assistant Chief of the area, and interviewed him. Here is a summary of his opinions. The full interview appears in Appendix G.:

The worldwide AIDS crisis has shaken the family structure in Gusii land. More particularly in Nyamira County, the elderly are being left to raise their grandchildren because parents are gone. Family resources stretch beyond the breaking point as sick and orphan aged relatives need food, finances and the general care. The fear of AIDS has brought new stress to marriage relationship. There are school drop-outs; cases of theft, marriage breakage, children are left to suffer, prostitution and many other vices. Family life education has become an urgent matter, a matter of life and death. To create awareness, the Government should create forums for AIDS seminars for free and open discussions. And also the long-term Christian solution to the AIDS Crisis is needed to strengthen the family. Christians should intensify prayers and ask for God's intervention.

According to statistics, Mwabosire Sub-Location has 172 people positively living with HIV AIDS. Out of these, 37 have made self-groups supporting one another. Recently, out of the 37, 4 men and 3 women died. Currently there remain 30 who are active and still going round contributing and helping one another. Currently in the whole Location there are 1020 people living with HIV/AIDS. Out of these, 500 are actively out warning the public of the AIDS Crisis.”⁴

Sexuality and Regulations among the Abagusii Community

According to Abagusii community, sexuality is not a private matter. They believe that the goal of sexuality is to keep together the community entrusted to them by their ancestors and to bestow ever new life on this community. From experience as

⁴ Personal Interview with Francis Masani, (Assistant Chief Mwabosire Sub-location, 2011).

one of the community member of Abagusii I understand that the community must prepare young people for a responsible sexual life (and sexual pleasure), psychologically and physically. Wise men and women teach them the correct relationships with their bodies and how to refuse every abuse of sexuality. This takes place above all in the period of initiation, which is the best school for self-control and is oriented to the future of the community.

The Abagusii community has moral rules and principles pertaining to sexual ethics between sexes, especially with reference to mutual attraction and to the satisfaction of desires resulting from it.

The survey and interviews with the old men and women above age 80 showed that sexual activity is only morally appropriate within the bounds of marriage. Both pre- and extra-marital sexual activity is regarded as immoral.

Mzee Okebiro Mochama (92 years), said,

As a general principle, in Abagusii ancestral religion, sexual intercourse is governed by regulations, taboos and acceptable forms which should not be violated. Fornication between unmarried persons and adultery between a married person and someone else, other than the spouse is prohibited. Sex before marriage and after marriage outside legal marriage is discouraged and severely punished.⁵

Commenting on the same, Mama Agnes Mboga (78 years) of Manga District, Nyamira County, says, “A girl for example, is expected to be chaste until marriage. For this reason virginity is highly valued and rewarded. Extra-marital sexual intercourse when committed by the wife may lead to divorce.”⁶

⁵ Personal Interview with Okebiro Mochama, (Ikuruma Sub-location Nyamira County, 2011).

⁶ Personal Interview with Agnes Mboga, (Manga District, Nyamira County, 2011).

Ombwori Ontieri (81 years), a retired primary school teacher of Bumburia Shopping Center, Nyamira County, further commented:

In the old days young people intending to get married often met in the company of other people. Strict moral codes were put in place to guide them regarding their responsibilities and appropriate behavior during the time of courtship. A man who impregnated a girl was ostracized by his peers and made to pay a fine to the parents of the girl and marry her. This also applied to the male teachers who used to impregnate their female students. A girl who allowed herself to become pregnant brought much shame to her parents and the community at large.⁷

Some of these traditions and practices were somehow fair. They upheld the morality of the society. Young people were expected to abstain from sexual matters before marriage. When the boy or the girl was at the full age of marriage, it was the responsibility of parents from both sides to make the negotiations and arrangements for them to get married. This is almost similar to biblical culture.

Punishment and Rewards among the Abagusii Community

Although there is a wide difference between Abagusii traditional practice or culture and biblical culture, it is possible to find some parallelism between the two. The greatest barrier for early white missionaries to witness to Africans is that they condemned everything black. Perhaps greater contextualization would have helped.

I wanted to establish how traditionally Abagusii corrected such like aberrations. I did so in order to see some parallelisms and compare the traditional forms of punishment with biblical forms of punishment. I interacted with Okebiro Mochama and was able to find out that, “Generally, parents and elders were strict

⁷*Personal Interview with Ombwori Ontieri, (Bumburia Shopping Center, Nyamira County, 2011).*

when it came to proper behavior and character formation of children among the Abagusii community. Errors in behavior did not pass uncorrected.

When a person behaves in approval or appropriate way, he or she is rewarded for it, directly or indirectly. Similarly, disapproval or improper conduct is punishable in a variety of degrees and ways, by the community.

For instance, if a girl becomes pregnant before marriage was meant to be married to an old man as a third or fourth wife. Or she would be married to an old barren woman who had no child. But, if she proved to be virgin on the very first night of the marriage, by stains of blood spilled on the white bed sheet, she and parents were rewarded heavily. They were given lots of cattle, goats and other gifts in addition to usual dowry. Punishment and rewards in the long run became mechanism for social control and techniques to compel members of the group to conform to the norms of the society.”⁸

Likewise in the OT, the penalty for sexual irregularity was death for both, the adulterer and the adulteress (Lev 20:10). Sexual irregularity is also condemned in the NT (Matt 5:27-28). The general position held by Christianity is that sex outside marriage is morally wrong because it is a misuse of one’s body which is the temple of God, and it also violates the virtue of purity (I Cor 6:12, 13, 20).

So far it can be seen from OT and NT and Abagusii community that when either couple abuses God’s gift of romantic love, there is always problems and threats. For instance, at times men and women who hold membership in the church and who profess to be Christians practice serial marriages such as women inheritance, and

⁸*Personal Interaction with Okebiro Mochama* (Ikuruma Sub-location Nyamira County, 2011).

other forms of polygamous marriages and some even involve themselves in alcoholism, fornication and adultery. Suchlike practices violate biblical principles of monogamous marriage and heterosexual sex. The Bible also states clearly, “You shall not commit adultery nor covet your neighbor’s wife.” These evil practices bring so much pain and suffering to the marriage relationships. Those who are not yet converted and living in those traditional practices cannot see the difference between them and those who call themselves Christians. As it has been the practice, the advancement of God’s mission in Nyamira and in Gusii at large has been hindered and slowed because of such aberrations. But the good news is that whatever romantic mistakes one has made, when genuinely confessed, God forgives and heals. To this the researcher called and still do call upon the Gospel workers of Nyamira to design programmes and tirelessly embark on training both the young and the old to avoid any sex irregularities and live up to biblical norms.

It therefore follows that to set the very first example, researcher had to develop and design a programme to train the community of believers right from the children, young people and the adult on how to prepare for responsible sexual life both psychologically and physically. Particularly, children and young people are to be trained right in their tender ages so that they can become so much tough mentally that they learn to refuse every abuse of sexuality; and to learn the correct relationships with their own bodies. The designed programme with its targeted age groups, duration and the object lessons is as it follows in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4
PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION
AND EVALUATION

Programme Design

The first part of the strategy I conducted was to train the ministers and the lay church workers on the biblical principles about marriage and human sexuality. Then, the ministers and the lay church workers were to assist as facilitators in the training of all members, from the children to the adult. All these groups were trained in sessions with specific objectives. I trained the general church workers (departmental leaders and church elders) and the pastors in the months of November and December 2010.

The trained church workers, in turn, would facilitate the training of children, youth, and adults, separately, in sessions with specific object lessons as is shown below. In these separate sessions the trained church workers were to use the contents of the programme as I highlighted to them during their very first training session. The church workers were to instruct the adult church members on how to teach and train their children about the norms and standards of Scripture in regard to marriage and sexuality. The sessions were conducted subsequently as shown below:

Session I

This was to be the very first session to train lay church workers and ministers as it has been already stated above.

Target Group: Local lay church workers and key leaders(the pastors)

Duration: Two weeks (November 11 to 18 and December 17 to 23, 2010).

Objectives: To instruct the general church workers to teach the adult church members how to train their children about the norms and standards of Scripture in regard to marriage and human sexuality.

To explore key Bible verses in the Bible that contain models of parents who brought up their children in the ways of the Lord. Children are to know whom God is and have relationship with Him as the originator and institutor of marriage.

Session 2

Church sensitization campaigns. The general trained church workers went out to individual churches to sensitize the members about the programme which was to follow later on.

Duration: Three months (February -April 2011) 90 days (four hours per day)

Objectives:

1. The church workers and the clergy are to teach the members the importance of the Christian education during the early life of the child. They have to remind the parents their role given to them by God. This is because parents are the first teachers and models to their children.
2. To use good models of the parents in the Bible who trained their children the fear of the Lord the originator and designer of marriage and human sexuality. Parents also are to urge the children to look to Jesus and emulate Him as the best model in society as portrayed in the Bible (eg. Luke 2: 52). And that there is need for the children in their childhood age and youthful age to uphold Christian standards in the church and in the society where they live.

3. To bring to parents' attention that there are biblical key passages to refer to and use when handling matters about marriage and sexuality. E.g. Gen 2:24; Cant; Matt 19:3-12; John 2:1-11; Eph 5:21-33; etc.
4. To also challenge both the parents and the church that being a divine "order of creation", this institution of marriage is to be upheld and there has to be consistency teaching and training as a reminder to all people.

Implementation of the Programme

The first step was to seek permission to carry out the program. The permission was granted by the Nyamira Conference and the local district and station ministers. The ministers also helped to create centres in their districts and stations for the implementation of the programme. The training of both ages of the church people was facilitated by the church workers (departmentals, elders and pastors) who had been through their training in the first session, where they had already been instructed and trained as noted above.

The trained church workers and key leaders trained the children, the youth, and the parents separately in intervals of sessions as shown below:

Session 3:

Training of the adult children leaders, their teachers and the children, from February 20 to 26, 2011.

Target Group: Children's leaders and children ages between two and thirteen years.

Duration: One week, February 20 to 26, 2011(four hours per day)

Objective: To sensitize the children's leaders and teachers to train the child about social norms. This is because from childhood a person learns the language with which to communicate, skills with which to cope with the environment, the games played in

one's community, what to eat and when to eat and many other things. The children learn the social norms that guide them to relate to other members of the community.

Towards puberty, teaching proper behavior should be intensified. Make sure children are told the things they should never do rather than tell things they should do. Discourage vices like disrespect to elderly, betraying one's relatives or friends, stealing, fighting, and pre- and extra- marital sex.

Session II:

Training of the junior and senior youth, aged between 15 and 22, March 20 to 26.

Target Group: The adult church members and the youth present.

Duration: One week (Mar. 20th -26th 2011) (four hours per day).

Objective: To sensitize the adult members in the hearing of the youth, that the church and the community must prepare the young people for a responsible life (and sexual pleasure), psychologically and physically. They should be taught the correct relationships with their bodies and how they can learn to refuse every abuse of sexuality. Dating, courtship and seeking every good counsel are good steps.

Vices like reading pornography, watching loose sexual films, pre- and extra-marital sexual activity should be discouraged. Tell them sexual activity is only appropriate within the bounds of marriage.

Session III

Training of the parents from April 9 to 15: 2011(four hours per day).

Target Group: Parents together with the children being present.

Duration: One week (April 9th -15th 2011).

Objective: To remind the parents of their God-given role. They are the first teachers for their children. It is their duty to bring up children to the love and obey the Lord. In

the homes, children should be taught to share love to each other, and respond to the needs of others. Respect for the common good, self-restraint, helping one's neighbor etc. And parents are to make the world better for their children, having an environment that is favorable for their world and Christian education. Being a good example, they should teach them even to follow Christ as a good model (Luke 2:52).

Finally, the facilitators outlined in brief to the members the principles and regulations of marriage as stated clearly in the Scriptures. For instance, from Gen 2:18-24 are three distinctly Christian views of marriage:

1. Marriage is to be permanent: Marriage is not temporal or short time lived contract as some suppose it to be. Being a life long commitment it should be lived until death do the couple apart.
2. Marriage is to be monogamous: God's ideal of marriage is one man one woman (monogamy) and heterosexual. thus, sex between human male and human female. Polygamous marriages is not in line with biblical principles.
3. Christian marriage demands fidelity: Married couples are supposed to be faithful to their marriage vows and decrease from all sexual irregularities. For God will judge the fornicators and adulterers.

Evaluation of the Programme

After the implementation of the programme by the ministers, the local lay church workers, all those who had been trained as shown in the sessions above were called from their respective churches and wherever they were. Again, they were met in Camp Cenres. The youth, women, and men (around 628) met in different and separate camp grounds from May 18 to 20, 2011. Boys and men were called and met on their separate days, and girls and women were called and met on their separate

days. This is so because according to Abagusii traditions, you cannot mix together parents and their children or men and women and expect to get enough and accurate responses of what you are looking for

As the respondents came on from their respective places they were were asked to respond and give their views verbally and fearlessly about what they learned from the programme and the training sessions. Most of the respondents chose that the facilitators should ask general questions and then they would answer by the show of hand and the facilitators could count the raised hands. At this session 628 respondents gave their views. Below is the data from the survey for the evaluation of the programme.

Quick Survey: Tick or circle T for true and F for false.

1. Sex before marriage is wrong. T or F?
2. Sex before marriage is not wrong. T or F?
3. Sex outside lifetime partner is wrong. T or F?
4. Sex outside lifetime partner is not wrong. T or F?
5. The church in my clan/sub-county is immune from separation and divorce. T or F?
6. The church in my clan/sub-county is not immune from separation and divorce. T or F?
7. A man can become 'one flesh', with many women. T or F?
8. A man cannot become 'one flesh' with many women. T or F?
9. Fornication and a little adultery are healthy. T or F?
10. Fornication and a little adultery are not healthy. T or F.
11. God Himself being a witness, honestly, in the recent past I have been involved in sexual activities. T or F?

12. God Himself being a witness, honestly, in the recent past I have not been involved in sexual activities. T or F?

In their general remarks, the youth and the middle people claimed that a man can become ‘one flesh’ with as many women as he wishes; that fornication and a little adultery are ‘healthy.’

The youth in the church appeared to be involved in sexual freedom. In the recent past, a good percentage of boys and girls and even men and women had had more sexual activity. This activity is primarily recreational not meant for marriage. More information is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Responses from True and False Questions

Item	Frequency	Percentage %
The youth who answered sex before marriage is wrong	123	20.4 %
The youth who answered sex before marriage is not wrong	121	19.3 %
The middle people who answered sex before marriage is wrong	97	15.4 %
The middle people who answered sex before marriage is not wrong	66	10.5 %
The women who answered sex outside lifetime partner is wrong	51	8.1 %
The women who answered sex outside lifetime partner is not wrong	40	6.4 %
The men who answered sex outside lifetime partner is wrong	31	4.9 %
The men who answered sex outside lifetime partner is not wrong	29	4.6 %
Those who answered in their clan the church is immune from separation and divorce	27	4.3 %
Those who answered in their clan the church is not immune from separation and divorce	23	3.7 %
Non respondents	15	2.4 %
Total	628	100 %

Table 5 below shows the causes that affect marriage relationships in the Nyamira Conference as given by the respondents. Violence in personal relationships (117 or 18.6 %) was the answer of the largest number of respondents followed by 105 (16.7 %) respondents, who said that there was poor communication among the couples. Lack of transparency and accountability reported the least number of respondents. Non respondents (98 or 15.6 %) seem to have not known what they were supposed to do.

When responses from these groups were put together, participants seemed to agree that the programme was generally enriching. Of the church boys and girls, 123 said that the programme helped them to realise that sex before marriage is forbidden in the Bible. Of adults, 121 people, some who hold responsibilities in the church, also lamented having been involved in sex outside marriage. Of the adults, 82 confessed that, though holding membership in the church for many years, the training found them to having fallen victims of Abagusii traditional practices.

From the general responses it came out clearly that in the recent past, negatively impacted by marital traditional practices, quite a good percentage of church boys and girls, men and women, had had sexual activity, primarily for recreational purposes. The programme also helped them realise that alcoholism and drugs have also been causes of poor communication and violence in personal relationships among many couples. According to 254 couples, the training of the programme has had positive impact on their lives, and God helping them they will reform, be faithful to their marriage vows and live as by biblical principles.

In their general remarks, the youth and the middle-age people confessed that, caught up in their traditional webs, they have been claiming that a man can become ‘one flesh’ with as many women as he wishes; that fornication and a little adultery are

‘healthy.’ The youth in the church seemed to be involved in sexual freedom. In the recent past, quite a good percentage of boys and girls and even men and women had had more sexual activity. This activity is primarily recreational not meant for marriage.

Table 5. Causes that Affect Marriage Relationships in Nyamira Conference

Item	Frequency	Percentage %
Violence in personal relationships among the couples	117	18.6 %
Lack of spirit of kindness	78	12.4 %
Separation and divorce rate	51	8.1%
Lack of commitment to spirituality	45	7.2 %
Lack of true conversion	30	4.8 %
Barrenness	21	3.3 %
Lack of fidelity	33	5.3 %
Poor communication among the couples	105	16.7 %
Alcoholism and drugs	32	5.1 %
. Lack of transparency and accountability	18	2.9 %
. Non respondents	98	15.6 %
Total	628	100 %

Resolutions

The promotion done by the researcher on marriage and human sexuality reawakened and rekindled the spirit of the respondents. The impact of the programme made both the clergy, the laityandas well as the respondents to resolve;

1. To abide with biblical principles on matters of marriage and sexuality.
2. To hearken to Ellen White’s writings and other inspired authorities who assert God’s ideal of marriage.
3. To be remorseful and correct errors made, and stabilize their marriages and families.

To regularly promote good morals, Christian values, and Christian education based on the programme development through seminars.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of the study was to develop strategies to solve the problem of traditional marital issues, and more particularly, the serial marriage practices which have been detrimental, not only to family relationships, but also to God's mission in the territory of Nyamira Conference. As seen from the Scriptures, to God, marriage is monogamous, heterosexual, and not polygamous. Polygamous marriages, which even the church people of Nyamira have become captives of, is man's making resulting from the human fall.

In the historical background, it is given that Nyamira was divided from South Kenya Conference in March 1995. due to the increment of membership and the need to expand the work of God in the whole of the Gusii region and beyond. But since its inception to date, the Conference has been experiencing setbacks from practices like alcoholism, drugs, and some forms of sexual irregularity. These aberrations have crippled and still do cripple the rapid growth of the church in Nyamira. Many church goers have a form of godliness but no true spiritual conversion. To remedy this, I developed and implemented a programme to train the entire membership about God's ideal of marriage and human sexuality. After the implementation of the programme I evaluated the respondents who were trained in subsequent sessions.

The general remarks of the respondents during the evaluation of the programme indicate that the church is not immune from these evil practices, for both

young people and the adults are all impacted negatively. The evaluation of the programme showed that the participants, both clergy and laity, were enriched, for they confessed and felt sorry for being captives of such evil practices. They promised to reform and to bring changes through Christian education and to live by exhibiting good morals.

Conclusion

In general, the implementation of the strategy discussed in this paper to solve the traditional marital issues has brought tremendous changes to the Abagusii Church members in Nyamira Conference. A great number of members have been revived, reformed and quitted practising the aberrations discussed in this paper.

As it can be seen from the study of God's word, the practice of serial marriages and violence in personal relationships is wrong. The word of God encourages the spirit of kindness, love, and forgiveness as the husband and wife seek to affirm and build each other up. Therefore, husbands and wives should adopt the most appropriate and acceptable ways of relating to each other, so that their union will be happy and fulfilling.

Finally, I suggest that the programme be developed and implemented regularly. It is also imperative and urgent for the church leadership to take urgent solutions to heal the wounds of marriage relationships among the church members and families. This can be done by Bible study, prayer and providing pastoral counseling.

Recommendations

The study pointed out clearly how God the creator and designer of marriage expects marriage to be. Marriage is to be monogamous and not to be dissolved. The

teaching of Jesus and the apostles, the writings of Ellen White and even other writers assert this. Now since the marital traditions are still practiced even within Christian circles, and have brought on marital conflicts, the recommendations coming from this study are as follows:

1. Considering the respondents' confessions during the implementation of the programme, members should truly live reformed lives. The Nyamira Conference membership, at all levels, should abandon the aberrations discussed and depend upon God for successful marriage relationships.
2. The programme developed in chapter four should be regularly implemented in order to help church members revive and reform.
3. From the evaluation done, it was clear that marriage relationships in Nyamira Conference were destabilized, not only by sexual irregularities but also by violence in personal relationships. Gospel ministers should render pastoral counseling to any erring couples and help families improve their relationships.
4. Biblically, Christian couples should not be involved in these societal traditional practices. But if such problems happen, the situation calls for forgiveness. Christians should cultivate the spirit of forgiveness as the Bible asks Christians to forgive one another (Mark 11:25; Eph 4:32).
5. Revival seminars on family life and marriage relationships should be conducted regularly.
6. Finally but not least, I recommend the programme development to be implemented not only in the SDA of the Nyamira Conference but also by the other conferences and fields with similar issues within the Kenya Union Conferences and elsewhere.

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a Master's student of the Adventist University of Africa (AUA), conducting a research on the traditional marital issues affecting marriage relationships among the Abagusii of Nyamira Conference church. My fellow ministers and other church workers have instructed and trained you more on this. I request you to respond to this questionnaire/survey in order to assist me to generate data to accomplish this mission. Any information you provide will be treated as confidential and will only be used for the study.

Personal Information

(Tick as appropriate)

1. Full name: [optional] _____
2. Gender: male [] female []
3. Marital status: married [] single [] widowed [] polygamist [] divorced [] remarried []
4. County: []
5. Sub-county: []
6. Clan name: []
7. Age: bracket [in years] Below 15 [] 15-30 [] 30-50 [] 50 and above []
8. Level of education: Primary [] Secondary [] Tertiary [] University []

Biblical or Christian culture and Abagusii traditional practices

- Key: 1. Excellent/most important 2. Good/important 3. Average/less important
4. Poor/not important 5. Unacceptable/useless

1. How important is the marriage concept in the Genesis account to you?

1	2	3	4	5

2. Do you think a man being one flesh with one woman is important to you?

1	2	3		5

3. How being faithful to the first marriage important to you?

1	2	3	4	5

4. Do you think that fornication and a little adultery is healthy to you?

1	2	3	4	5

5. Is sex as a recreational activity important to you?

1	2	3	4	5

6. To what extent is polygamy important to you?

1	2	3	4	5

7. How important is separation and divorce as asocial acceptance to you?

1	2	3	4	5

8. To what level does Christian culture contradict Abagusii traditional culture?

1	2	3	4	5

9. Do you think traditional knowledge transmission mechanism is important to you?

1	2	3	4	5

10. Do you think the Abagusii belief in chastity before marriage is important to you?

1	2	3	4	5

11. How important are Christian values to you?

1	2	3	4	5

Chat 1

Appendix A

FROM ONE CHURCH IN NYANCHWA, THE CHURCH HAS SPREAD THE AREAS COVERED BY THE TWO CONFERENCES.

	Memberships	Churches	Companies	Church maintained	Sponsored School	Health centers
SBC	133,736	675	164	1 college 3 secondary's 4 primaries 1 special school -deaf	1 70 150	5
NC	108,808	481	298	1 college 1 secondary 7 primary	66 63	13
	No. of Pastors Credential	License	Office Employees	NAC employees	Health centers employees	Le,s
SBC	64	7	11	119	23	Credentia 43 License 11 Identifi cation 65 Status 8
Broadcasting House			Office Employees			
HOPE CHANNEL TV			10			
	No. of Pastors Credential	License	Office Employees	Maturu Employees	Health centers employees	Le,s
NC	62	2	17	26	36	Credentia 24 Licenc e16 Identifi cation 101 Status 0
Broadcasting House			Office Employees			
KISUMU RADIO FM			3			

APPENDIX B: SPREAD OF CHURCH FROM NYANCHWA

Appendix B

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
SOUTH KENYA CONFERENCE

LAUNCHING

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS

1912 - 2012

GUSII
STADIUM
KISII
KENYA



Pr. Dr. Ted Wilson
(General Conference President)

27TH
MAY
2012



Pr. BLASIOUS RUGURI
ECD PRESIDENT



Pr. PAUL MWASYA
EAU PRESIDENT



Pr. Shani Ngoko,
NC President



Pr. Jonathan Hwangi
SMC President
Host



CURRENT OFFICE - BUILT IN 1980



NEW OFFICE - BEING BUILT IN 2012

South Kenya Conference, P.O. Box 22 - 40200, KISII - Kenya
Cell: 0725 300723, 0722 460248, 0720 265366
Phone: 058 30703
Website: www.skadventist.org

APPENDIX C: CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS OF 100 YEARS (1912-2012)

4.0 GAINS

The Nyamira conference has realized gains through baptisms, professions of faith, transfers in and positive adjustments as shown in the table below.

TABLE 3

No	Stations	1 st Quarter 2012	2 nd Quarter 2012	3 rd Quarter 2012	4 th Quarter 2012	Total Reached	Rank
1	Kebirigo	641	1'208	2'262	1129	5'240	1
2	Tombe	453	519	1'644	996	3'612	2
3	Matutu	127	1'005	150	709	1'991	4
4	Mbanda	654	596	513	310	2'073	3
Total		2'156	3'328	4'686	3'945	14'728	

APPENDIX D: NYAMIRA CONFERENCE NUMERICAL GROWTH

5.0 LOSES

The Nyamira Conference has sustained ^{APP} losses through removal from books, missing, transfer out and negative adjustment. The table below details the loses.

TABLE 4

No	Station	1 st Quarter 2012	2 nd Quarter 2012	3 rd Quarter 2012	4 th Quarter 2012	Total	Rank
1	Kebirigo	315	821	743	589	2'468	2
2	Tombe	488	1'186	670	702	3'046	1
3	Matutu	96	546	283	191	1'116	4
4	Mbanda	102	392	776	142	1'412	3
5	Gesura	35	467	218	260	980	5
Total		1'036	3'412	2'690	1'844	9'022	

6.0 CHURCH ATTENDANCE AND SABBATH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE SECOND SABBATH COUNT

The church attendance and Sabbath school counts has not picked well. The second, third and 4th quarter, 2012 statistical reports indicate that attendance is lower than the church membership.

APPENDIX D: NYAMIRA CONFERENCE NUMERICAL GROWTH

Chart II

Appendix D

SOUTH KENYA MISSION, FIELD AND CONFERENCE SINCE 1912-2012				
	Names of leaders	Home land he came from.	Time in office	Years of service
	As A Mission Station		1912-1946	
1	Pr. I.R Evanson	England	1912-1914	3
2	Pr. L.E.A Lane	England	1918-1920	3
3	EV. Jacob Otwa	Karachuonyo	1918-1925	7
4	Pr. E. Beavon	Canada	1920-1930	11
5	Pr. Gilbert A. Leis	England	1930-1943	14
6	Pr. Conrad J. Hyde	Germany	1944-1946	3
	As Mission Field		1947-1980	
7	Pr. K.G. Webster	England	1947-1955	9
8	Pr. Hancomb	England	1955-1956	2
9	Pr. G. Fred Thomas	England	1957-1960	4
10	Pr. Abraham Oirere	Kitutu- Kenya	1961-1962	2
11	Pr. Elizaphan M. Nyamweya	Nyaribari- Kenya	1963-1964	2
12	Pr. Christopher Odera	Migori- Kenya	1965-1968	4
13	Pr. Hezron K. Kengara	Nyabari-Kenya	1969-1971	4
14	Pr. Peter Chief Mairura	Nyaribari- Kenya	1972-1980	9
	As A Conference		1981 to date	
15	Pr. Stephenson M. Maturi	Bassi - Kenya	1981-1982	1 ½
16	Pr. Nathan Ongera Ogeto	Kitutu - Kenya	1982-1989	7 ½
17	Pr. Peter Chief Mairura	Nyaribari – Kenya	1989-1997	9
18	Pr. Joel Okindo Ndege	Majoge – Kenya	1998- 2000	3
19	Pr. James N. Onwenga	Bassi - Kenya	2001-2005	5
20	Pr. Samuel M. Makori	Majoge – Kenya	2005-2006	1
21	Pr. Obed Nyamache	Nyaribari - Kenya	2006-2010	4
22	Pr. Jonathan Maangi	Nyaribari – Kenya	2011 to date	—

APPENDIX E: MISSION, FIELD, CONFERENCE SINCE 1912-2012

Chart III

Appendix E

NYAMIRA CONFERENCE INAUGURATED

01/03/1995

POSITION		POSITION		POSITION	
EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS	YEAR OF SERVICE	EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES	YEAR OF SERVICE	EXECUTIVE TREASURER	YEAR OF SERVICE
Pr. Shem Bundi Ngoko Mar 1995- 1995 Dec.	1	Pr. John Nyamwanda Mar 1995- 1995 Dec.	1	Alfeo Ateka Nyaribo 1995-1998	3
Pr. Joel Nyarangi 1996-1998	2	Pr. Richard Momanyi Nykego 1996-1998	2	Alfeo Ateka Nyaribo	
Pr. Richard Momanyi Nyakego 1998-2005	8	Pr. Thomas Onchaga 1998-2000	3	Nelson Miyogo 1999-2001	3
		Pr. John Nyamwanda 2000-2002	2	Isaiah Okioga Acting 2001-2003	2
Pr. Samuel Onchwari Acting when Pr. Nyakego was sick-hospitalized		Pr. Samuel Onchwari 2003-2005	1	Lamech Anyona 2004-2010	6
Pr. Shem b. ngoko 2005- to date	7	Pr. Zabion Ayiera 2005- to date	7	Mrs Rebecca Onguso 2010- to date.	2

APPENDIX F: NYAMIRA CONFERENCE INAUGURATION 1995

Appendix F

ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OF AFRICA



A SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH INSTITUTION

An interview/Questionnaire with medical health care practitioners

Hello Sir/ Madam,

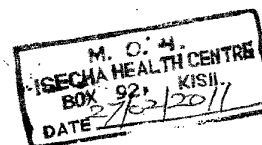
I am Pastor **Nico Ngare Asuma**, a student from AUA. I am carrying a research on cultural issues that destabilize marriage relationships among Abagusii community in Gusii land.

I had made an earlier appointment with your office. Thank you for according me humble time as we talk and share together.

Kindly allow me to ask you the following questions as I write down your responses:

1. In most cases Abagusii community or family puts a lot of pressure and blame on the childless woman, who is often accused of being barren. According to medical establishment, is barrenness exclusively a feminine problem?
2. Medically, is it the father's sperm cell or the mother's eggs which determines the gender of a child?
3. Can a marriage without children be complete?
4. Is it true that barrenness can be as result of STDs?
5. Can a marriage without children be complete?
6. What counsel or option can be given to the couple in this situation?

FORWARDED BY
H. KINE N. BOIRE
NURSE ONLY OFFICER/K
HJ



APPENDIX G : INTERVIEW WITH MEDICAL OFFICER

Received on 20/05/2011

Appendix G



ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OF AFRICA
Private Bag Mbagathi, 00503
Nairobi, Kenya

An interview with the government officers on AIDS Crisis

Hello Sir/Madam,

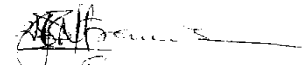
I am Pastor Nico Ngare Asuma, a student from AUA. I am conducting a research on how much the AIDS Crisis has shaken the family structure in Gusii land, and more particularly in Nyamira County. My most interest is within Nyamira County, because I work as a Pastor with Nyamira SDA Conference which is within Nyamira County.

I had made an earlier appointment with your office. Thank you in advance for according me some of your busy time so that we can share together.

Please allow me to ask you some questions on AIDS Crisis as I write down your responses.

1. How far are the elderly people affected with the AIDS Crisis within the infected families in your Sub-Location?
2. What do you think about the family resources that are to care for the left orphans in your Sub-Location?
3. Some spouses are not faithful to their marriage vow. What is your view on the marriage relationships as in regard to AIDS?
4. As a Government administrator, and as a Christian, what do you think should be an urgent solution to this Crisis, not only to your Sub-Location but to the public in general?

**ASSISTANT CHIEF
MYABOSIRE SUB-LOCATION.**

Forwarded 
20/05/2011 FRANCIS M. MWANJANI
0712 684000

APPENDIX H : INTERVIEW WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICER

Appendix H
LETTERS



ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OF AFRICA
Private Bag Mbagathi, 00503
Nairobi, Kenya

March 19, 2012
The Executive Committee,
Nyamira Conference,
P.O Box 285-40500
Nyamira, Kenya

Dear Members,

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT MY MA LEADERSHIP RESEARCH
PROJECT ON CULTURAL ISSUES**

I am humbly requesting that you allow me to conduct the above research on the cultural practices affecting the marriage relationships at all levels within Nyamira Conference territory.

This is according to AUA requirement that I should seek the approval of the local conference committee where I will be carrying out my research.

Thanks in advance for your genuine consideration.

Yours in Christ's Vineyard

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pr. Nicó Ngare Asuma".

Pr. Nicó Ngare Asuma
Student AUA

CC: Executive Conference Officers
Education Director – NC
Academic Dean - AUA

APPENDIX I: LETTER



SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

NYAMIRA CONFERENCE,

P.O BOX 285, TEL: 058-6144010, NYAMIRA, KENYA.

OFFICE OF: **THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

DATE: **11TH APRIL 2013**

ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OF AFRICA
PRIVATE BAG MBAGATHI, 00503
NAIROBI KENYA

Dear Sir,

RE: **NICO NGARE ASUMA**

Christian greetings in Jesus name.

Pr. Nico Ngare Asuma who is a worker of the Seventh day Adventist church Nyamira Conference. He is doing Masters in Leadership in your Institution and has requested to carry out a research in our organization. We have granted him permission to collect data for his studies.

Thanks and God bless you in abundance.

Yours in service


ZABLÓN NYAENYA AYIERA (0734780875)

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
NYAMIRA CONFERENCE

CC: OFFICERS

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CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

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Date of Birth -23/12/1953
Marital Status - Married
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Nyamira, Kenya
Cell Phone - 0726757487/0732348469
Email - pastornicoasuma@gmail.com

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

2010-2015 -Pursuing MA Leadership Degree at AUA
2003-2005 -Bugema University BTH
1991-1995 -Pan Africa Christian College (PACC) BTH
1982 -Advanced Certificate of Education (ACE)
1981 -Kenya Certificate of Education
KCSE (O-Level) Private Candidate
1977 -Kenya Junior Secondary Examination
Certificate (KJSE)
1972-1974 -Secondary Education (FM I-III)
1965-1971 -Kenyoro- Nyakeyo Primary School
CPE Certificate

WORKING/ RESPONSIBILITIES

1978-1980 -Assembly Pastor with Pentecostal Assemblies of God(PAG)
1981-1984 -Primary Teacher with Teachers Service Commission (TSC) (Kilifi,
Mombasa)
1985-1995 -Pastor/ Evangelist with PAG Kenya
1996 To Date -District Pastor with SDA Church, NC
In between those years I have been a BOG member in primary and secondary schools