

ACHIEVING MARITAL UNITY (Gen. 27:1-23)

Couples Dinner, RCCG Rehoboth Haven Parish, Ajah

Nov 19, 2016

Introduction

We want to thank you for the privilege to share at today's Couples Dinner. We are grateful to Pastor & Pastor Mrs Odunayo for the opportunity to fellowship with you. It is our prayer that the Lord will use this forum to bless and heal your home. May the grace of God abound to help you conquer sorrow, pain and bitterness in Jesus name. Amen.

Our text is a very popular story which gives us very good insight into the disastrous consequences of marital disharmony and the lack of unity in any home. Marriage is the highest relationship among people, and bible-based marriages are at the peak of them all in terms of the stringency of values and the demand for noble behaviour placed on a man and his wife. God expects a man to leave His father and mother and cleave to His wife to form one new body. He expects both the man and His wife to be completely naked to one another and not to be ashamed about doing so. God expects oneness and transparency of thought and actions peculiar to couples that desire to practise the bible. There will be no hidden thoughts, no secret projects, no undisclosed passwords, no unshared income, and no private expenses.

God's expectation is that marriage would last a lifetime. It is one man one wife for life. Both will dwell in the same house, live in the same room, and sleep on the same bed all the days of their lives. They will have a single nuclear and extended family without discrimination or favouritism. This kind of marriage is defined in the bible as "one flesh". The King James Version specifies that a married couple is "one flesh". There is nowhere in that version of the bible where it says "two will become one". NO. When you get home, please read Gen 2:24, Matt 19:5&6, Mark 10:8, 1 Cor 6:16 and Eph 5:31. You will find that the bible does not say, "two will become one" but that "two will become one flesh". There is a huge difference between the two.

Do not make a mistake please. Divorce will set in when you misunderstand God's views on marriage. The understanding you must have is that the two of you have now become "one flesh" - a new mystical body that has flesh where the man is the head and the woman is the body from the neck downwards. Whenever marriage is contracted, this "one flesh" is birthed by the Lord and the couple is bound together for life until they are parted by death. There is a new union. They are not two separate people but one new body, just like the body of Christ which is real though mystical.

If you understand this, then you will know that in marriage there is nothing like "my life". My life is your life, your life is my life. In marriage, there is nothing like "my body". My body is your body. Your body is my body. In marriage, there is nothing like "my children". My children are your children. Your children are my children. In marriage, there is nothing like "my parents". My parents are your parents, your parents are my parents. In marriage, there is nothing like "my house". My house is your house. Your house is my house. In marriage, there is nothing like "my room". My room is your room, your room is my room. In marriage, there is nothing like "my friends". My friends are your friends, your friends are my friends. In marriage, there is nothing like "my phone". My phone is your phone. Your phone is my phone. In marriage, there is nothing like "my project". My project is your project, your project is my project. In marriage, there is nothing like "my money". My money is your money, your

money is my money. In marriage, there is nothing like “my ATM card”. My ATM card is your ATM card, your ATM card is my ATM card.

There is no room for divorce as far as the bible is concerned. Indeed, the word divorce is actually expressed in the bible as “putting away”. That is, a cutting off of the marital bond, a violent termination of the covenant relationship of marriage by the individuals involved. What we call divorce today is actually the culmination of the putting away of your spouse carried out secretly and quietly over time, and justified by reasons that only make sense to you and you alone. Couples who are unable to find the formula of unity will always find ways to put each other down and away, as we see so vividly in our text. We shall come to this in a moment.

What causes divorce?

According to the bible, there are 5 primary roots of divorce.

1. **Loss of favour** - De 24:1 “When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.”
2. **Hatred** – De 24:3 “And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife.”
3. **Weak spiritual life** - Mal 2:15 “And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.”
4. **Ceaseless Disagreements** – Am 3:3 “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”
5. **Hardness of heart** - Mt 19:8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

Time will not allow me to go into these matters with any level of detail or application. So let’s go back to our text to learn the consequences of marital disunity and the necessary adjustments we need to make in order to succeed at home. You can be a successful General Manager or businesswoman, but if you fail at home as a Christian your secular success is diminished. Any form of earthly success that does not include a rich family life is eternally worthless.

The actions of four people are described in our text. Isaac, Rebekah, Esau and Jacob. What they did is a reflection of four different types of Christian or four different phases in the life of a believer. The Lord has sent me to talk first to men in the house so let’s look at Isaac.

Isaac

Isaac was a great man and I am unworthy to make any negative comment about his life as we are going to see him in heaven. He was a man who married a woman strictly on the recommendation of his Father (and I put father in capitals!) I’m not sure anyone can do that today! The woman he married did not give birth for 20 years and he not only stood by her but kept interceding for her until she gave birth to twins. I’m not sure many African men can do that today.

I also notice that at the end of the chapter, Isaac was quick to realise his mistake in allowing himself to be deceived and you could see quite clearly that he forgave both his wife and Jacob his son. This is also not common today. It is scarce to see men who walk in forgiveness and love, men who refuse to keep grudges, men who are not vengeful and vindictive, men who are eager to admit their mistakes and who are willing to move forward whenever they are found to have done a wrong. Men like Jesus.

But the bible lists certain mistakes he made in his family life and I humbly point these out. Isaac became spiritually insensitive to the point that both his wife and his second son connived to deceive him. He had no clue what was going on under his roof. Verse 23 says, “he discerned him not”. The lack of spiritual discernment for a man is a dangerous weakness. Why did he not have any discernment? His eyes were dim! We are told in Deuteronomy 34:7 that “Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.” We are told of Elisha whose eyes went with Gehazi as he procured the rewards of iniquity out of the hands of Naaman. We are told of Jesus who knew that the person eating bread with him at supper was going to betray him that very night. A man whose eyes are dim is a ‘short one’ in his own family.

Brother, your eyes are dim when your wife or your children have to wake you up in the morning to pray to your Maker. Your eyes are dim when you do not provide leadership in your own home. Your eyes are dim when you do not take direct and overall responsibility for solving the financial challenges of your family. Your eyes are dim when your wife is the driver of the family affairs and you have no idea what is going on. Your eyes are dim when people commit adultery or any other scandalous sin under your roof and you had no spiritual insight about it before or immediately after it happened.

The quality of your home as a man is a direct reflection of the quality of your spiritual life. When he was young, Isaac’s eyes were sharp. But as he grew old, he grew dull. His insight became poor. His foresight eliminated. There are many men like this. In your earlier years as a believer, you were quite sharp in spirit, but over time the cares of the world and the allure of the flesh has covered your eyes. You are now weak on the inside. Your passion for your work and activities in church has taken a priority over the health of your spiritual and of your home. This is a shame.

Isaac was aware that the blessing was reserved for the younger child. Remember he and Rebekah had been told in Genesis 25:23 that “Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.” So it was clear that the blessing of Abraham was to be transferred legally to Jacob. So why was Isaac so determined to bless the wrong son? It was because of VENISON. BUSH MEAT. What he would eat. Ge 27:4 “And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.” This is a man who would favour the child that puts meat in his mouth no matter what that child does. Recall that Esau had introduced polygamy into Isaac’s family by marrying two Hittite girls (Gen 26:34-35). This mattered nothing to Esau as long as he gets venison or bush meat. There are many parents, many pastors, many bishops, many leaders who favour only those who find “meat” for them no matter the evil habits of these “meat-suppliers”.

If you read the passage, you’ll see that Isaac actually felt uncomfortable with what Jacob was doing. Look at the questions and comments he made:

- o “Who art thou, my son?” (v. 18)

- o “How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son?” (v. 20)
- o “Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not.” (v. 21)
- o “The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” (v. 22)

But he could have avoided this problem if he had consulted with his wife. What we lose through selfishness is usually greater than what we gain through cooperation. By acting unilaterally, beloved brother, you actually lose more. All of the problems created in this chapter could have been avoided if Isaac had shared his plans with Rebekah. A man who does not communicate with his wife is a disaster already happening. **Communication is a key bond of marriage.** It is a safety valve and the principal tool for achieving marital unity.

If your spouse knows what is on your mind, most likely you will receive help. I have found in my short years of counselling couples that we do not teach the principles of communication. The practise of communication is very weak among Christians. I find a lot of short communication – *Hi, Hello! How are you? Fine! Where are you going? Out! When are you coming back? Soon!* I find a lot of one sided communication. You love the sound of your own voice and regularly impose your views and opinions on your spouse. But this cannot work in marriage. Prov. 18:2 says “A fool does not care whether he understands a thing or not; all he wants to do is show how smart he is” (GNB).

I also find a lot of miscommunication – what is being said is not what you are hearing. But the bible way to communicate is to give high priority to listening and very low priority to speaking. “The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things” (Prov. 15:28). We are to speak with soft words and not harsh words. Prov. 15:1 “A gentle answer makes anger disappear, but a rough answer makes it grow” (ERV). We are to speak with concern for how the other person will feel. It is not important to win the argument. What is more important is to win your spouse. But if you’re a poor communicator, whenever you cannot win your spouse over with words, you will resort to blows. This is a shame. And I can go on and on.

From our text it is actually possible that Isaac did not see any reason to speak with Rebekah. Many men are like this. They are distant and unapproachable. They are in their own world, a world of only one person. Your wife married you but you have married your laptop. Your wife cannot speak with you and be heard. In my short experience of life, I have found that many men do not have anyone around them who can speak the truth to them. This is very dangerous. It is pride that makes a man ungovernable and unreachable. No one can talk to you on earth. Because you are who, sir? A pastor who does not have a pastor is actually a fool. Brother, if you have no one who can draw *fuel out of the carburettor* of your head when it is hot, you are heading towards hell fire.

Remember the bible says that one shall chase one thousand and two shall chase ten thousand. But if the two are not chasing together, one of you would not even be able to chase anything. When there is no marital harmony, both of you would actually be the ones being chased about by the circumstances of life and the devil. The bible says two are better than one. There will never come a time that one will be better than two. And don’t tell me two good heads are better than one. Whatever one does at all, two would do much better. You deceive yourself to think you can do without the counsel, views and opinion of your wife. You may not always take the advice but you should always listen to it. Your wife is

your greatest asset in life, not your business, not your ministry, not your properties, not your bank accounts. The wisdom of a man is acutely limited when he does not consult with his wife. In any case, who supplied the venison that Isaac wanted all so much to eat in this passage? It was the same woman that he refused to consult with in the first place! When a man is not eating out of the hands of his wife, that family is *quarter to divorce*.

If we stop here, all the sisters in the house will be very happy. But let's quickly move to the woman as our time is almost done.

Rebekah

Rebekah's role in this passage is not salutary at all. You would not find anywhere in the bible following this where she is commended for what she did. Please listen to me, beloved women in the house. You hold the power of life and death over your household. Women are responsible for everything in their families. That is the power God has given you but most of you do not know. Look at Proverbs 31:12 with me. "She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." The woman has the capacity to do her husband evil but this virtuous woman does not. She can nag the man to the point where the man will take his own life. She can harm the man and reduce him to nothing. She can take over his life so as to destroy him if she wants. She can bring him down to a piece of bread. Every woman has as great a capacity for evil as they have for good. But the virtuous woman has chosen a righteous path and she will not depart from it. She has made up her mind to do the man good ALL THE DAYS OF HER LIFE. Look at that. She will do him good not just all of the days of his life on earth but as long as she lives.

Turn your bible with me to Proverbs 14:1

"Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands."

"A woman's family is held together by her wisdom, but it can be destroyed by her foolishness."
(CEV)

"Olukuluku ologbon obinrin ni nko ile re, sugbon asiwere (omugo) a fi owo are re fa lule."
(YORUBA)

Let me say to you again that nothing can be established except a woman is involved. If something is built, it is because of a woman. If something is destroyed, a woman is involved. If a home is built, it is because of a woman. If a home is destroyed, a woman is involved. If a church is built, it is because of a woman. If a church is being destroyed, you go and look at the women on ground. No man can rise above the quality of his wife. No fellowship can rise above the quality of the women. No ministry, no mission, no church can rise above the quality of the women. Men are not as wise or as strong as they think. If you see a proud and boastful man, go and check his wife. If you see a greedy and covetous pastor, go and look at his wife. If you see a lazy and indolent man, go and look at his wife. There are just too many examples in the bible, history and in modern times to prove this fact. Who killed John the Baptist? Was it Herod or Herodias? Who killed Naboth? Was it King Ahab or Jezebeel? Who got the decree to destroy the Jews in the time of Esther and Mordecai? Was it Haman or Zeresh his wife? Who brought Jesus to earth? Was it Joseph or Mary? Eve's mission in Adam's life was to help him, not harm him. But what did she do? For every good woman, there are probably ten bad ones. Women who have no interest in the wealth and welfare of others. Women who can do anything for power, money and

position. Women who have no fear in God in them. Women who are so unruly that when they show up in church in this mode, they must be forced to keep quiet.

Beloved sister, you keep blaming your husband, but God is blaming you! How did Rebekah destroy her family? She took over the baton of leadership in the home. She aggressively sought her own will. She separated herself from her husband. She manipulated the situation in her favour. She prioritised the well-being of one son over the well-being of her husband. She divided her children when she gave up on Esau and when she taught Jacob the art of deception.

Up to this point, Jacob was a novice to *ogbonge* lies. Infact when Rebekah came up with the plan, Jacob screamed, 'Mummy, daddy will discover and curse me'. But Rebekah said "upon me be your cause" (v. 13). It was Rebekah's plan. She fetched the animal and roasted it in a way that Isaac could not resist. She knew that the only way to get blessings out of Isaac was to roast something into his mouth. Women certainly know how to get what they want from their husbands!

She was the one who fetched and dressed Jacob in Esau's attire. She taught him what to say. And would you know, based on the seeds sown into his life by Rebekah, Jacob grew to become the *world record holder* for deception in the bible. He went further not just to swindle his father and his twin brother; he also cheated uncle Laban out of his property. Deception that was unleashed by Rebekah never left the household. Jacob was swindled by Rebekah's brother and was given a *spare tyre wife* on his wedding day against his wishes. His wives swindled him. The master swindler was even swindled by his own children. The sins of the parents are usually amplified in the children except they are terminated through prayers, anointing and the mercy of God. Sister, when you introduce your children to sin, you don't know the long lasting generational impact of your actions. When you reject the leadership of your husband, you don't know that you are creating hell on earth for yourself. But today, the Lord will have mercy on you in Jesus name.

Your husband is not your mate – even if you are older than him. He is not your *gang* – even if you are richer than him. He is not your boy- even if you are wiser than him. He is your head and you must recognise and treat him as such. He is your principal. Your potential in this life can only be maximised when you submit to him. Stop making celebrities of entertainment and female icons of business your standard otherwise you would never be able to submit to your husband. Your role models for becoming a godly wife are in the bible starting with Sarah. If your husband is a fool like Nabal, Abigail is the role model to follow. If your husband is given to rage and tantrums like Ahasuerus, your role is Esther. If your husband is an invisible brother like Lapidoth, your role model is Deborah. The bible contains good examples that you can emulate. Sister, have you ever studied any of these wonderful women?

What was the motivation for Rebekah's action? I find perhaps two reasons. One, I think that she sincerely believed that her husband was about to act contrary to divine instruction concerning the children. I think her original motivation was pure. However in going about it unilaterally she created more problems for herself. She designed a plan and implemented it without consulting her husband. But God cannot be helped. Whenever you help God, you end up destroying yourself. I can also suggest a second motivation for her actions. She despised the authority of her husband. Why do I say that? Once she heard what Isaac had said, what do you think she should have done? She should have gone up to him to say, 'Daddy, what did I hear you say? You want to bless the wrong son???' She did not communicate her discontent. She just acted it out so cunningly and so blatantly. The bible says, "she

spake unto Jacob her son” (v. 6) NOT Isaac her husband. When a woman wants to get at her husband, she can do it in very strange and unholy ways – without thinking of the damage that would be done.

Would you know that Rebekah was directly responsible for the vengefulness and bitterness generated in Esau? As a result of her actions, Jacob became a fugitive and lost at least 23 years of his life wandering about the world. She poisoned the mind of her children against one another. Twin brothers became enemies forever because of the seeds planted into their hearts by their own mother. Indeed, her home became desolate by her actions and she died without a son to bury her. May this not be your portion in Jesus name. We know of Sarah who wanted Hagar driven away but who allowed her husband to do that dirty job even when it seemed impossible for a man to get rid of his first son. We know of Mary who became mysteriously pregnant and who waited for God to convince her husband of the genuineness and holiness of that pregnancy without her taking up any action by herself. We know of Jacob who in his old age blessed Ephraim over Manasseh in the presence of Joseph their father without the family being divided. But Rebekah would not allow the authority and leadership of her husband. She would not curry it. Instead she would act against it not minding the consequences.

It seems the emphasis that God wants to give us tonight is for each of us to return to the practise of communication as the primary method for working together as couples. I would have wished to speak more on these matters but I must stop now as my time is up. Let us pray.