

## What To Do With A Tangled Mess!

Institutional Authority and God's Design.

Introduction

Opening Illustration –

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"I now pronounce you husband and wife..."

"You may now kiss 🥰 the bride.."

These are phrases you will not find on the lips of any "minister" in the bible but the average contemporary adult Christian has heard these phrases proceeding from the mouth of preachers and priests time and time again over the course of their lives.

These and many more narratives have given rise to an indelible impression that it takes a priest or a preacher as the case may be to change the legal status of a single person to married. However, from the beginning, this was not so.

In Bible recorded history, you will not see a single place where a priest was required to pronounce a couple married. In case you see it, kindly let me know.

Before the law given by the hands of Moses, during the time of the patriarchs, it did not happen. During the law era, it did not happen.

In the early church, none of the disciples were joined in "holy matrimony" by any pastor or apostle. In fact, I have not seen any evidence that ceremonies related to wedding formed a part of any church meeting.

The question that should be begging for answer is this - at what point did it become the ministerial duty of pastors to join couples in matrimony? Who vested that authority on the church? At what point did pastors become the authority decide when the groom should start kissing 🥰 his bride?

Undoubtedly, there is ample theological evidence in the Bible to show that wedding is purely a family arrangement and by implication, cultural perspectives have to come into play. However, over the years, family has had to play the second fiddle and in some cases, their roles are completely dwarfed by the involvement of the church in wedding couples.

In Nigeria, back in the 70s, when the activities of the Christian group popularly called the Scripture Union was sweeping through the continent of Africa, there were overzealous Christians who despised the role of culture and their own parents when it came to wedding. Thankfully, reason prevailed at some point and pastors started requesting intending couples to seek the consent of their parents before considering coming for church wedding.

In my own culture, parents have a say in whom and how you will marry. For us, this is normal. I have also interacted with some other cultures that consider a couple married even if the man elopes with the girl. All they require is that the man shows up sooner or later to meet family requirements. At first I found this approach ridiculous because I judged it against my own culture. God helps a man who wants to elope with my daughter because he won't escape a jail term 😂.

In a nutshell, there are various cultural practices around weddings and they are meant to be respected. In some cultures, once two people agree to marry themselves, then they are good to go. In some others, once parents give their consent then they are "home and dry". Yes the man can kiss the bride and "do the do". However, the church has to be informed in order to be recognized as married so they could be held up to their responsibility as married Christian couples.

Furthermore, the State also has to be officially informed by way of registry. The certificate you are given is to let you know the law of the land recognizes you as married. This is good for law, order and accountability, both in the church and the society at large.

Please note that the marriage certificate issued in church is obtained from the State's marriage registry. The license or authority to wed couples by the church organization is obtained from the State and not from God.

There is no anointing for wedding couples. No pastor has that God-ordained authority to pronounce any couple as man and wife, except he is giving out his own children in marriage. You heard me right sir! When the church lost focus of raising disciplined sons for God, she began to hijack roles that don't statutorily belong to her. She began to officiate weddings, officiate funerals and build elaborate religious rules and regulations around them. It is all about forcing control.

1. Who's in charge of marriage?
  - a. Two Individuals
  - b. Family
  - c. State
  - d. Church
  - e. Cultural traditions!
2. Who's in charge of the church's theology?
  - a. Jesus
  - b. Holy Spirit
  - c. Apostles
  - d. Scripture
  - e. Pastor
  - f. Teachings of Elders, Scholars, Church Fathers, etc.
  - g. Government?

Illustration – 325 AD

Who or What is Jesus? Created being?

The East focused on hierarchy in John 3:16.

The West focused on equality of the Godhead. Isaiah 6:3

Church underwent 150+ years of being persecuted and killed for their faith.

Constantine converted to Christianity and legalized it.

What do you do when your empire is about to be torn apart by a religious battle?

3. Jesus confuses things!
  - a. Honor your parents. Matthew 15:4;
  - b. Redefine family. Matthew 12:46–50;
  - c. Divide the family. Matthew 10:34–37
4. Jesus explains things! Mark 10:2–12
  - a. The law. Mark 10:2–4; Deuteronomy 24:1
  - b. God is in charge! Mark 10:5–9
  - c. The morality of disobedience. Mark 10:10–12

Closing Illustration –

Closing Thought