

**“Poking Thorns in the Bed of Roses”: A
Feminist Critique of the Premarital &
Marriage Coaching Program (PMCP) of the
Diocese of Grahamstown**

By

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Declaration

As per University regulations and requirements, I hereby declare unequivocally that this dissertation has been solely produced as my original work unless otherwise indicated in the text. It has also never been presented to any other institute of higher learning other than the University of KwaZulu-Natal, (Pietermaritzburg Campus).

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This is to certify that the abovementioned dissertation has been language edited by Dr Karen Buckenham, an approved language editor for the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

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Abstract

This study's primary motivation is the domestic and gender based violence (DGBV) that takes place particularly in Christian families and homes. Besides personal encounter that brought awareness that DGBV is for real in Christian homes, it is also affirmed by the scholars and researchers on DGBV. The study has established from the existing literature that DGBV is indeed an indisputable actuality in Christian families that leaves women with psychological, physical and emotional scars that are hard to heal. Some women are even fatally wounded by DGBV incidents. This makes it imperative for the church to revisit its church teachings particularly about marital relationships.

The Anglican Communion locally and globally has taken initiatives against this violence. For instance, the Anglican Church in Southern Africa (ACSA) has raised its concerns about this violence through the prophetic voices of its leadership and a number of initiatives in different Anglican dioceses. This demonstrates that ACSA is committed to the attempts of curbing the escalating DGBV. It is for this reason that the Premarital and Marriage Coaching Program (PMCP) is investigated for its relevance in addressing DGBV during its premarital and marriage counselling sessions. This is an Anglican document developed in 2012 in the context of DGBV that has become a pestilence in democratic South Africa which raises a need for its contextual relevance. It is thus vital that its marital teachings meant for "the happily ever after" metaphorically referred to as the bed of roses, premarital sessions should conscientise the couples that the roses have thorns too.

The theoretical framework of this study has been coined from the body of knowledge of African Women Theologians and is called Feminist theory of triangulation. As a lens, this theory has helped this study to demonstrate that DGBV cannot be addressed with the exclusion of gender disparity issues which have cogently turned out to be the fundamental course of DGBV. The study has also clearly indicated that without cultural and biblical hermeneutics it would be impossible to address gender sensitive biblical texts and cultural norms, particularly those that elevate men's superiority over women in marriage. Regrettably, the PMCP has not attempted any of these hermeneutics, yet it uses some of the scriptures that are highly contested in their interpretation in the marriage context which renders it an accomplice to the repression of women in marriage. Hierarchists might find the PMCP user friendly because it maintains the status quo and does not challenge culture, religious beliefs and gender roles that are life denying to women. On the other hand Egalitarians, whose agenda is equality which was God's original purpose for human creation according to Gen. 1:26-27, might be relatively upset with the document.

Key concepts: Premarital counselling, Marriage Coaching, Program, Christian marriage-Anglican Church of Southern Africa, domestic and gender based violence, culture, religious beliefs and gender roles.

Acronyms/abbreviations in the study

PMCP	< Premarital and Marriage Coaching Program
ACSA	< Anglican Church of Southern Africa
KNI	< Khonza Nathi Igagasi
DGBV	< Domestic and Gender Based Violence
GBV	< Gender based violence
CDA	< Critical Discourse Analysis
APB	< Anglican Prayer Book
ACC	< Anglican Consultative Counsel
WHO	< World Health Organization
UN	< United Nations
HIV	< Human Immunodeficiency Virus
AIDS	< Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
NGOs	< Non - Government Organizations
FBOs	< Faith Based Organizations
SABC	< South African Broadcasting Corporation

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Chapter one

Introducing the study

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the study which is looking at the relevance of the Premarital and Marriage Coaching Program in addressing the prevalence of domestic and gender based violence in Christian marriages. The chapter begins by looking at the background and motivation for the study. Secondly, it outlines the research problem as well as the objectives and the key questions. Thirdly, it identifies the theoretical framework and the methodology that is used in the study. Finally, the chapter concludes by giving the structural outline of the whole study.

1.2 The background to the study

It seems to be the concern of the world-wide Anglican Communion¹ to come to terms and to deal with the escalating numbers of gender based violence against women. For instance the Primates² of the Anglican Communion met in Dublin in January 2011 where they listened to the accounts of this violence that came mainly from Africa and England. The response of the Primates indicates that there is a determination to change their attitudes and that of the Anglicans and to do something about curbing the escalation of this violence. For example they came to the consensus that Anglican Churches should accept accountability for perpetuating repressive approaches towards women. In contrition, humility and reliance on God the church should press on until it becomes a living testimony of a faith community that recognizes God's image in both men and women (Robinson, 2012:1). This was followed by a commitment to encourage the already existing endeavors to combat gender based violence in other parts of the Anglican Communion; and also to increase efforts on "raising awareness, engaging in advocacy, changing attitudes and behaviors that lead to violence..." (Robinson, 2012:1). A report was then compiled by Revd Terrie Robinson who is the Women's Desk Officer with the following objectives:

¹ The body of all Anglican churches across the country and it also refers to all Anglican churches and Provinces across the globe.

² Primates refer to Archbishops that represent different Provinces of the Anglican Communion worldwide.

To reassure that through God's grace and trusting in the Holy Spirit, Anglicans can make a strong and effective contribution towards ending gender based violence. To inspire further mission and ministry that empowers women, men, girls and boys. To live in right relationship with each other and with God and to emphasize the urgency of building on, and extending, the work already being done.³

This report represents Anglican responses to gender based violence which captures all the activities with which Anglicans across the globe are engaged in as a response to gender based violence. Among other responses were the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC)⁴ Resolutions of 2012 that were taken in its meeting in New Zealand. Resolution 15.07 was on Gender-based and Domestic Violence.⁵ Recommendation three of that resolution encourages all Anglican Seminaries to include gender based education in their curricula of the theological institutions. The intention is to bring the clergy in training on board with gender justice and domestic violence and to find ways of instilling affirmative approaches towards each other between men and women, boys and girls.⁶

It is against this background that this study intends to look at the relevance of the Premarital and Marriage Coaching Program [PMCP], a document developed for the Anglican clergy - in the context of domestic and gender based violence in Christian marriages. The PMCP is one of the documents that have been recently produced⁷ in the Anglican Diocese of Grahamstown. The document deals with premarital and marriage counselling. Many marriages are challenged by the prevalence of domestic and gender based violence as it is indicated in the motivation for this study. It is thus crucial to examine this document for its relevance in addressing domestic and gender based violence as experienced in Christian marriages. The aim is to assess how this document responds to domestic and gender based violence which has become one of the priorities in the Anglican

³ The Anglican Communion is actively involved in different activities worldwide as means of activism against DGBV, (Robinson 2012:1).

⁴ This is the Resolution making body for the Anglican Communion - all the matters of global church concerns, are dealt with by this body.

⁵ <http://bit.ly/Y9zoZQ> accessed on 11/3/2013

⁶ <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/communion/acc/meetings/acc15/resolutions.cfm#s7> accessed on 11/3/2013

⁷ The PMCP was produced in 2012 in the Anglican Diocese of Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape.

Communion. The study will critique the PMCP document from a feminist perspective.

The PMCP document was designed as a tool to be used by church leadership or marriage officers when preparing couples for marriage. It is part of empowering the couples to make them aware that there are poking thorns in this bed of roses. For instance Frankel (2013) asserts that “you cannot show people only the petals and not the thorns, it is not fair to them”.⁸ This implies that when clergy deal with the exquisite part of marriage, they should also prepare couples for the ugly counterpart of that beauty and equip them on how to prevent it. The PMCP document is also meant to enhance the clergy’s understanding of the significance of the premarital session to be conducted for those who want to get married. In the meantime it would help the married clergy themselves to revisit their own marriages to see if things are still in order.⁹

Since the Anglican Church is a communion, the PMCP document is now used across the South African Anglican Communion which makes it even a more important document. It has a potential of influencing more clergy with its teachings on marital relationships across the Anglican Communion. Despite the document being of great value to the Anglican Communion, it can also be questioned for its viability in addressing premarital and marriage counselling especially from a gendered perspective. For instance in the previous 2013 Lent season,¹⁰ Bishop Rubin Phillip, the Dean of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, urged all the ACSA members to utilize that season to acknowledge that silence about and ignoring gender based violence means connivance in its perpetration. During the church services, male members were to express their penitence and determination not to continue with acts of violence against women and children (Diocese of Natal, Izindaba Issue no. 55 - Feb. 2013).

It was also quite impressive that on the first of June 2013, the ACSA Men’s guild called Benard Mizeki of the Diocese of Natal had a campaign to end violence and abuse against women and children. In the same campaign, the Diocesan Bishop,

⁸ <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords> accessed on 10/29/2013

⁹ The information is from the PMCP document written by Tobo Thabede in 2012.

¹⁰ This is the season of prayer, fasting and penitence observed in the Anglican Communion which is a 40 day period before Easter.

Phillip challenged the church men to speak out against violence towards women and children as men are often perpetrators. He also made a call to the clergy to challenge perpetrators of violence against women and children in their sermons and repudiate this plague because some of the perpetrators are sitting in church pews. In the same campaign one of the leaders of the men's guild rightly argued: "As men we are here to say that we cannot sit and silently watch the upsurge of violence against women and children in our societies. We must be responsible leaders not only in church but even in our households by calling for an end to women and child abuse" (Diocese of Natal Izindaba Issue no. 72 - June 2013). It is significant to note that this member of the guild does not only speak of this violence as something out there in society but he is aware that this violence is also prevalent in Christian households. It is thus appropriate that every venue that has a potential to perpetuate gender violence be explored and exposed, particularly in structures such as Churches and its programs.

Therefore, it is heartening to embark on the critique of the PMCP which has developed in the midst of such an outcry on gender based violence even by ACSA members and its highest leadership. The prevalence of this violence is hard to ignore as we listen, read and watch it in the media almost on daily basis. This is evident from the Archbishop Makgoba's letter to God's people ("To the Laos" - May 2013) as he expresses his concern over the same issue. He articulates that South African media attest to awful atrocities against women and children. This violence cuts across society, though some remain silent about it. The Archbishop was also inspired to have learnt of the recent 'Ring the bell' campaign which is an Indian initiative that developed from the awareness of the unbearable intensity of domestic violence within homes. It is worth noting that it is not just a social prevalent violence but it is also pervasive within households.

The Archbishop further urged men and boys to follow the example of the initiative of 'Ring the bell' in order to partner with women and stop the evil legacy of men being mainly known as perpetrators of gender based violence. Archbishop Makgoba's comments are in accordance with one of ACSA's missionary priorities of the Province which is to fight against gender based violence. With the same priority, former Archbishop Ndungane articulates that the Gospel of Christ is about every person's growth into what God wants them to be.

It is the Gospel that equally liberates men and women from conventional stereotypes of gender, race, class, and culture. It also enables God's people to live harmoniously in diversity, which augments universal existence of humanity.¹¹ Considering all these valuable comments and citations, particularly from the top leadership of the ACSA that condemn domestic and gender based violence, one might expect that the Anglicans in this Province speak in one accord and that this call is taken seriously in every church activity or program. However, in reality this is proven differently in some parts of the Province as indicated by the motivation for this study. The study will therefore ascertain as to whether the PMCP has made any attempt to address this issue following all the responses from the church as reflected above.

1.3 Motivation for the study

During my four year pastoral service as a Rector in one of the Anglican Parishes in the diocese of Natal I would be invited by Khonza Nathi Igagasi Lobunye (KNI), a Christian community radio station based in Pinetown to conduct prayers, share the scriptures or address women's issues. It was usually a program called "Women Arise" that dealt with women's issues that I would be invited to on Wednesdays at 3h00 in the afternoon, In one of those radio programs I shared 1Timothy 2:12-15.¹² I explained the historical context of the text and interpreted these verses pointing out to the listeners that the Bible was written mainly from male perspectives and that if some passages are not well interpreted, they can be oppressive to women. I also pointed out that many churches use the scripture as a tool to oppress women at home in Christian families and also in the church.

After that radio session, some of the men got angry with me, but many women responded positively through telephone calls, pouring out their hearts on the dilemma they are facing in their marriages. Many expressed their emotional responses as to how oppressed they are by their male partners because of biblical based headship of men in marriage. Some of them, who preferred to remain

¹¹ <http://www.anglicansact.org/women-and-gender.aspx>, accessed on 04/29/2013

¹² "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing-if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety" (NIV).

anonymous, even touched on their health that had deteriorated due to being in abusive marital relationships. One of them confessed that she had been infected by the HIV virus, yet she got married to the pastor as a virgin. Her house had turned out to be a prison cell because she could neither disclose what the pastor was doing to her to the members of her family nor church members. To my incredulity I discovered that domestic and gender based violence is rife in Christian families and the worst victims are women.

Furthermore, as if the above experience was not enough, I was approached by a number of women from my own Anglican parish who shared their experiences of suffering in their marriages due to abuse by their partners. This experience was challenging and inconceivable especially to accept the fact that even in Christian marriages where couples go through some premarital counselling as per church requirement, women can still go through such kind of abuse. Therefore I started questioning the extent to which the contents of premarital and marriage programs were viable in equipping couples for the occurrence of domestic and gender based violence and its causes. My perception of these premarital and marriage coaching programs was that they create ideal platforms and were instrumental in shaping prospective marriages, in terms of promoting gender equality which would reduce the chances of gender based violence.

Consequently, my assumption was that the teachings that the couples receive from their clergy in their preparation for marriage resound a long way into their marriage either for better or for worse. For this reason the marriage counsellors can either negatively or positively influence prospective marriages. This motivated the choice of the PMCP, as one of the newly developed Anglican documents that is now utilized by the Anglican Communion in the Southern African context. For instance I first encountered the PMCP document with one of the clergy in the Diocese of Natal. He is not only implementing it, but has also utilised it in the formulation of his own personal notes based on its teachings since he believed that this is a perfect document for premarital counselling. His enthusiasm also contributed to the motivation for choosing this document because I thought I would get some solutions for women who approach me with marital difficulties such as domestic and gender based violence.

Through this study, the opportunity has thus presented itself to have a closer look at this document to see how relevant it is to the prospective and existing marriages. I am also personally motivated to carry out this study as a marriage officer because I assume that through this study my contribution to the problem of DGBV in the Anglican Church will make a difference. Therefore I use this study as a tool to equip myself to gain more insight into the challenges facing married women; and how they can be supported through gender sensitive forms of counseling. Thus I engage with the document as an insider and a concerned ordained woman affected by women's subjugation and prejudice in the hierarchical and male dominant church.

1.4 Outline of the research problem

As it has already been implicated, this study has been motivated by the pervasiveness of domestic and gender based violence prevalent even in Christian households. It has been indicated in the background of this study that the PMCP has been developed in the context of this escalating violence. The most disturbing part is that women in Christian families and the church are not spared from this kind of violence. For instance Mwaura (2010:110) affirms that women in Christian families and in the church are also wounded and they bear corporeal, psychological and emotional scars from DGBV. In agreement one of the key researchers in the field of domestic and gender based violence in Christian families, Phiri (2002:20) also accentuates that Christian women are of no exception when it comes to occurrences of domestic violence in their families. She further calls for the church in Africa to take heed of the distortion of God's image through the violence against women.

Scholars such as the above-mentioned have indicated the prevalence of DGBV even in Christian families. However, nothing much has been done in exploring and investigating premarital and marriage counselling as a viable platform or instrument in addressing domestic and gender based violence. This is because this counselling prepares couples for married life which makes it relevant as either a tool or platform to address DGBV issues as precautionary measures. That is why the problem that this study raises is the questioning of the relevance of the PMCP in addressing the domestic and gender based violence during the premarital

counselling that is offered by the church in order to prepare and equip the couples for marriage. For this reason the objectives and the key questions for this study are as follows:

1.4.1 The objectives of this study are:

- To examine the theological underpinnings of the PMCP.
- To explore gender dynamics that can be identified in culture, religious beliefs and gender roles portrayed in the teachings of the PMCP.
- To investigate the feasibility of the PMCP in addressing the pervasive domestic and gender based violence experienced in Christian marriages.

1.4.2 The main research question of the study is:

To what extent is the PMCP of the Anglican Diocese of Grahamstown relevant in the context of domestic and gender based violence?

1.4.3 The sub questions of the study are:

- What are the theological underpinnings of the PMCP?
- What are the gender dynamics that can be identified in culture, religious beliefs and gender roles portrayed in the teachings of the PMCP?
- How feasible is the PMCP in addressing the pervasive domestic and gender based violence in Christian marriages?

1.5 Theoretical Framework

As indicated above, the primary motivation for this study is the prevalence of domestic and gender based violence in Christian marriages. For instance, commenting on the domestic and gender based violence, Mwaura (2010:102) describes it as a damage caused by power disparity between men and women, usually victimizing women physically, psychologically, culturally, economically and sexually just because of their gender. Maluleke and Nadar (2002:14) further point to the role played by what they conceptualize as the “unholy trinity” in perpetuating violence against women. According to these authors, religion, culture and gender socialization are rarely sympathetic to abused women. These authors accentuate that there is a need to develop strategies to deconstruct and

demythologize oppressive religious and cultural beliefs from within culture and religion. They further assert that “for Christians such strategies and structures would include counter-acting both the abuse and the use of the Bible and other Christian teachings and practices in justifying and perpetuating the oppression of women” (Maluleke and Nadar, 2002:15-16). The PMCP transmits theological teachings to the clergy and the couples concerning marriage. It is of utmost importance that this document is scrutinized as this will help its users to be aware if it has any oppressive teachings so as to dialogue with them and liberate women in prospective marriages.

Following the arguments by Maluleke and Nadar, the theoretical framework of this study is located within the body of knowledge of African Women Theologians. It uses the feminist framework of triangulation as a lens with which to scrutinize the PMCP concerning its feasibility and viability in addressing domestic and gender based violence in Christian marriages. Within the feminist lens of ‘triangulation’ I have chosen three components, namely culture, religious beliefs and gender roles with which to scrutinize the theological teachings of the PMCP. This idea is derived from the body of knowledge of African Feminists such as cultural hermeneutics (Kanyoro, 2002), which will be the main work used in this study. African Women Theologians have identified these three components as problematic when it comes to gender issues. For this reason the feminist theory of triangulation has been coined for this study. For instance Kanyoro (2002: 92-94) emphasizes that just as the Bible was written in a patriarchal culture, similarly African culture perpetuates dominance and female derision. She further asserts that the marital relationship in Africa is one of the havens for nurturing women’s subjugation.

With similar sentiments Rakoczy asserts that women may not shut their ears when the scripture speaks of male headship and female subordination or discard those biblical texts that are full of patriarchal bias. However, biblical hermeneutics is the best approach to such scripture and biases (2004:43). Therefore, the African feminist theory of triangulation is used as a framework in the critical engagement with the PMCP’s theological teachings to establish if it is life denying or redemptive to women in terms of addressing domestic and gender based violence.

The question that can be asked is, how do these three components shape marital relationships in an attempt to promote gender equality? If these three are not addressed during the premarital counselling, they may have a great potential for the perpetuation of inequality which prepares a fertile ground for domestic and gender based violence in marriage. The three components of this framework are thus used to critique the PMCP at different levels by checking the various components of the programme and its response to challenges posed by each of these components. It is in the answering of the research question of this study that this African feminist theory is of essence.

1.6 Methodology

This study uses qualitative textual analysis methodology located in a feminist critical interpretative paradigm. The particular method of analysing the text is critical discourse analysis (CDA). According to Wooffitt (2013:2), this method concerns itself with the scrutiny of “how social and political inequalities are manifest in and reproduced through discourse”. In other words, any written text or spoken word, narrative and conversation are not above suspicion. For instance Bloor and Wood (2013:1) argue that “the discourse analytic view is that all features of talk or texts perform some kind of action (for example exercising power and control over others) and it is possible to analyse how language is used to achieve that action”. The performed action by either the talk or text may be expressed by the unspoken words or implications of the words used in the text. With the application of the proposed theoretical framework of this study, this method therefore helps to examine the ‘kind of action’ or actions suggested by PMCP in the form of theological teachings as written discourse. The method also helps to unearth some of the unspoken words and silent actions found in the written discourse of the PMCP document.

However, CDA goes further than just linguistic analysis which makes it different from discourse analysis. For example Wooffitt (2013:3) asserts that “critical discourse analysis extends its analytic focus to examine broader features of the production and consumption of discourse”. This method thus enables this study to scrutinize the ‘broader features’ of the PMCP as a written product such as its marital theological underpinnings and their implications in shaping marital

relationships. This methodology also helps to analyse the effects of the program on its audience who could be its readers or users such as men and women preparing to get married or those already in marriage. This is in accordance with CDA methodology, as Wooffitt (2013:4) accentuates that “All critical discourse analysts try to explore the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power relations within social structures. In particular they focus on the ways in which discourse sustains and legitimises social inequalities.”

In the case of the PMCP therefore, the focus is on how its teachings or theological underpinnings might sustain or legitimize gender inequality within the marriage which has a great potential of perpetuating domestic and gender based violence. Wooffitt further points out that CDA’s distinguishing feature is that it is stimulated by a cogent stance which is the preferential option for the subjugated. From the feminist perspective it is therefore a “preferential option for women” (Jones, 2000:5). Consequently, if there could be any life-denying cultural or biblical features to women in the PMCP, particularly those that might perpetuate domestic and gender based violence, they are to be unmasked, deconstructed and exposed.

1.7 The structural outline of the dissertation

Chapter 1

This chapter has dealt with the introduction of the study in terms of its background, motivation, outline of the research problem, objectives and the key questions, theoretical framework and methodology. It also includes the structural outline of the study.

Chapter 2

This chapter deals with the brief explanation of the Anglican Church and its position on Christian marriage, premarital counselling and the implication of this position for women in marriage. It also looks at premarital counselling from different perspectives. The chapter also discusses the work of different scholars on domestic and gender based violence with the intention of establishing the causes and prevalence of this practice in Christian marriages.

Chapter 3

This chapter deals with the theological underpinnings of the PMCP. The chapter first problematizes some terms as used in the title PMCP. It then gives a brief content summary of the PMCP document. It also demonstrates how the Anglican Church's theology of marriage influences the shaping of the theological underpinnings of the PMCP. The chapter also analyses the document's theological underpinnings as identified in its objectives and sessions. This is done by drawing and examining particular biblically grounded theologies in the document.

Chapter 4

This chapter explores gender dynamics identified in culture, religious beliefs and gender roles as reflected in the document. This is done by scrutinizing the three components; culture, religious beliefs and gender roles as reflected in the context of marriage. The chapter concludes with the illustration of the three components and PMCP teachings referred to as "Downward Model."

Chapter 5

Following the analysis and examination of the theological underpinnings of the PMCP and the gender dynamics identified in culture, religious beliefs and gender roles, this chapter deals with PMCP's feasibility in addressing the domestic and gender based violence. The chapter gives the overview of the study and its findings and evaluates the PMCP's feasibility in addressing domestic and gender based violence in terms of those findings. It also demonstrates a grave need for addressing gender based violence during premarital counselling. The chapter concludes the study and gives some recommendations.

Chapter 2

The Anglican Church's position on marriage, premarital counselling and domestic and gender based violence (DGBV)

2.1 Introduction

Having looked at the introduction to the study in the previous chapter, this chapter presents an explanation of the Anglican Church and its position on Christian marriage, premarital counselling and the implication of this position for women in marriage. It also explores the stance of premarital counselling from different scholars in order to establish teachings and topics by other researchers and their implications for women. The chapter also discusses the work of different scholars on domestic and gender based violence and its definitions with the intent of establishing the perceived causes and gravity of women abuse, particularly in Christian families. It closes by looking at the effects of DGBV on women and children in the family.

2.2 A brief background of Anglican Church and Anglicanism

The Anglican Church has its origins in England where it is still affiliated as part of the Church of England through the Anglican Communion (Anglican Episcopal family) that binds all Anglicans together globally.¹³ It is the third largest Christian Church, after the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox. "Anglicanism" refers to the beliefs, traditions and practices of the Anglican Communion which comprises of approximately 80 million Christians who are members of 44 various churches made up of 34 Provinces world-wide.¹⁴ It is a highly hierarchical Church with the Archbishop of Canterbury at the highest rank, Primates who are the chief Archbishops, presiding Bishops, and chief Pastors of the various Provinces of the Global Church family.

The Primates meet with the mandate of the autonomous churches they represent, and not as an independent 'body'. Their churches are autonomous, yet inter-

¹³ <http://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/being-an-anglican/anglican.aspx> accessed on 9/15/2013

¹⁴ http://stlukeschapel.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18&Itemid=25 accessed on 9/12/2013

dependent in their relationship with each other.¹⁵ This ensures the diversity in unity which of course is sometimes threatened by a number of current global issues such as human sexuality. However, the church is still dedicated to mutual respect as it humbly seeks God's guidance on the challenging issues of human sexuality.¹⁶ From the Archbishops of Provinces are Diocesan Bishops and Suffragan Bishops followed by Archdeacons then Rectors of Parishes, assistant Priests, Deacons, Layministers and lay people who are ordinary members of the congregations. In order to discuss and deliberate on matters that affect the Anglican Communion at large, particularly controversial matters, the Archbishop of Canterbury has a sole mandate to invite Archbishops and Bishops of the Communion to meet every 10 years in a body called Lambeth Conference.¹⁷

2.2.1 The Anglican Church's position on the Christian marriage and premarital counselling

The understanding of the Christian marriage and the Anglican Church's position is not the same in the world-wide Anglican Communion. For example in Canada, Murray, a renowned educator, therapist, and an ordained Priest in the Anglican Church of Canada runs a Marriage Preparation Program. The understanding of marriage in his program is that it assumes a life-long partnership of equals, which is lived as both a gift and responsibility; a prized possession to be nurtured and protected above all else.¹⁸ There are two noteworthy things in this understanding: i.e. that the couple comprises of 'equals' on whose dependability the marriage thrives and is cosseted. This is in line with the English understanding of marriage in the Anglican Church as portrayed by Hastings.¹⁹ Hastings (1973:79) acknowledges the teaching of the New Testament on marriage that Christians have to enter marriage with the intention and presuppositions that it is a life-long union and it is tantamount to a sin to cause a marital breakdown.

¹⁵ <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/communion/index.cfm> accessed on 9/12/2013

¹⁶ <http://archbishop.anglicanchurchsa.org/2013/10/pastoral-response-to-civil-unions.html> accessed on 10/28/2013

¹⁷ <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/communion/index.cfm> accessed on 9/12/2013

¹⁸ <http://www.marriageprep.com/testbrochure> accessed on 9/7/2013

¹⁹ Hastings compiled a report on Christian marriage in Africa that was commissioned by Archbishops of Cape Town, Central Africa, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

Simultaneously, Hastings also acknowledges that there are many reasons that may lead to irredeemable marital breakdown and hence a divorce. These include inter alia natural or man-made disasters such as wars or behavioral patterns of one partner in the union that makes it unendurable for the other partner in the marriage union. As emphasis to this stance, Hastings (1973:79) argues that the church should promote considerate monogamous relationships to display the fundamental gospel principles of “justice, mercy, and love”. Undoubtedly, from Murray’s and Hastings’ standpoints the premarital and marriage counselling would take a different approach altogether than the one in which everything is absolute because it is God-ordained. In another example the Anglican Parish of Drouin, diocese of Gippsland in Australia, follows the definition specified by Anglican Prayer Book for Australia. It defines marriage as a lifetime unification of a man and a woman “in heart, mind and body, to enrich and respond to each other and grow in tenderness and understanding. It is a gift from God’s unending love for his people”.²⁰

While it may not have the exact wording, the principle is the same as in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA). Canon 34 (VI) of the Constitution and Canons of ACSA (2006:17) “...affirm that marriage by divine institution is a lifelong and exclusive union partnership between one man and one woman”. In the Anglican Prayer Book (APB) the scriptural base of this definition is Genesis 2:24 which in the New Testament is confirmed by Jesus’ teaching in Mark 10:7-9 on the originality and durability of the marriage (APB, 1989:457). It further states that the couples’ oneness in flesh is a complete surrender to each other which begins during the wedding ceremony as the couple exchanges “their lifelong and exclusive vows to each other” till death (APB:457).

It is on this understanding that clergy base their premarital counseling so that the applicants may know what they are getting into. For instance when the applicant needs to remarry, section 5 (e) declares that a “Bishop may issue letters of Closure if satisfied that: the applicant understands the church’s teaching concerning marriage...” (ACSA, 2006:76). This customarily calls for marriage officers, for example clergy, to have premarital counseling sessions to ensure that applicants

²⁰ http://drouin.gippsland-anglican.org/?page_id=108 accessed on 9/7/2013

become aware of what the church teaches about Christian marriage. This underscores the need for premarital counselling.

Presumably, Thabede (2012:29) bases her marriage definition on a similar understanding as she says that “marriage is the union of a man and a woman as husband and wife according to the standard set out by God”. She also quotes Mark 10:9 as the basis of her definition and then links it with Anglican definition using the linking word ‘likewise’. Her scriptural quotation is even accentuated in bold as a sign of emphasis that “what God has put together let no man put asunder”. However, I concur with the open-mindedness of the aforementioned stance by other Anglican’s positions in that we can only make an assumption that it is God that brought the couple together because nobody knows for sure. Secondly, it is commendable that couples should enter marriage with the intention that it will be a lifetime union. However, if unforeseen circumstances such as DGBV cause the union to be unbearable to one partner, let the union be flexible to allow for an exit.

2.2.2 A feminist implication of the PMCP and the ACSA’s definitions of marriage

The very definitions and scriptural basis of the ACSA’s position of Christian marriage and the PMCP raise suspicions when looked at from the feminist perspective. This is because more often it is such scriptural basis that is used by pastors to dissuade women from initiating their liberty from abusive marriages. For instance Masenya in Phiri and Nadar (2005:54) affirms this as she says that

an abused woman, who approaches a male, or at best male-identified female pastor in order to seek guidance and counselling, may be advised to remain with her husband, dutifully submitting to him as a “godly wife”, recognizing him to be the God-ordained authoritative head over the household (Ephesians: 5:22-23; Colossians 3:18-19).

Religious beliefs are at play here. Just because Christians are believers, so the pastors use their position of trust and use the Bible as a tool to buttress women abuse. Therefore if the marriage is to work, a woman must be sacrificed at the altar of abuse in the name of being obedient to God. What is more disheartening is that perpetrators, i.e. men who abuse women, are normally acquitted by letting women carry the blame just as the counselling received by abused woman in

Masenya's citation implies. Sheffield in Freeman (1989:14) rightly argues that to blame the victim and acquit the perpetrator is a very common practice when it comes to the cases of rape, wife battery, incest and sexual harassment which are all components of domestic and gender based violence. She further warns that "Making a victim believe she is at fault erases not only the individual offender's culpability but also the responsibility of the society as a whole" (1989:14). This might be the most contributing factor in DGBV remaining unabated irrespective of the protests against it. Moreover, the ACSA is still a highly male dominated church in its leadership in spite of the ordained women. This implies that most of marriage preparations and coaching interventions are carried out from the male perspective which once again raises suspicions of patriarchy that goes with gender roles and cultural biases.

Another contributing factor that could work hand in hand with these religious beliefs that keep women in abusive relationship could be culture. As evidence to this, Dlamini (2005:64) argues that divorce is not an option in some population groups. A divorced woman becomes an object of social contempt and rejection so much that women choose to remain in marriage in spite of being abused. Thus religious beliefs and culture entrench women's insignificance while men are elevated to being God-ordained authorities over the household and women. This is not good news to women and it is hard to accept the idea that this is what Jesus meant when he declared marriage as a lasting and ultimate union of husband and wife in Mark 10:9. For instance, Hastings (1973:64) argues that Jesus' response in Mark was to challenge Jewish tradition and culture practiced in the name of the Law of Moses that had made divorce an acceptable norm even for petty reasons. In other words, Jesus was condemning another kind of gender based violence because Jewish women could be divorced at any time since Jewish males enjoyed permissibility under the Law of Moses.

2.2.3 Global premarital counselling programs and their stance towards women

This study has also drawn on other understandings of premarital and marriage coaching interventions globally, in order to hear the views of other scholars and researchers. The Western leading thinkers in this literature who initiated premarital programs that are widely used are Stahmann and Hiebert who together

invented '*integrative premarital counselling programme*' (Stahmann, 2000:110). Stanley and Markman also invented programs such as Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Programme (PREP) (Stanley, 2001:277). Premarital Personal and Relationship Evaluation (PREPARE) discovered by Olson and Relationship Enhancement (RE) created by Guerney (Stahmann, 2000:109,110) are among most valuable premarital programs ever invented. These are highly recommended and have been cited by a number of different scholars such as (Barlow 1999; Groom 2001; Stahmann 2000; Murray 2006; and McGrath 2012).

The above-mentioned researchers encourage the importance of premarital counseling as a means of preventing or reducing the divorce rate. They do not indicate how domestic and gender based violence could be addressed in case it might be encountered and become a cause of distress in marriage or how it could be prevented. Consequently they cover a wide range of topics with very little if any emphasis on gender based violence, cultural issues and biblical hermeneutics, particularly in scriptures that elevate patriarchy at the expense of married women's rights and wellness. While they include all the important topics to be addressed during premarital sessions, nothing is specifically mentioned about equity promotion or protection of each other's human rights in marriage. However, there is a mention of communication and conflict resolution skills as well as gender role expectations (Murray 2006:69). There is no clarity though, whether clergy or marriage officers that carry out these programs consider gender justice in their teachings on conflict resolution skills and protection of each others' rights.

Therefore accountability remains with marriage officers whether they choose to be supportive of women or denigrate them through their teachings. For instance McGrath (2012:5-8) identifies two standpoints from which premarital counseling could be conducted i.e. Hierarchical and Egalitarian. Hierarchists on one hand support and perpetuate biblical male superiority and female submission as God-ordained. On the other hand, Egalitarians "...equip believers by affirming the biblical truth about equality and justice" (2012:7). This is very relevant for this study because the premarital teachings could be assessed to determine the stance from which the counselling of the couples in prospective marriages is done. This study proposes to promote premarital counselling and marriage coaching as

possible instruments or platforms that can be used for equality promotion in marriage relationships as preventive measures for DGBV. This will be done through critical and analytical assessment of the relevance of the PMCP in addressing DGBV in Christian marriages. Optimistically, this study might encourage gender equity in marriage so as to avoid male dominance that carries a potential of DGBV. Of course if patriarchy, cultural influence and distorted biblical interpretation could be addressed with prospective couples, divorce rates could automatically be reduced and a belief in “happily ever after” (Groom 2001:46) would probably become a reality and be sustained.

2.2.4 The importance of premarital counselling from an African perspective

The importance of premarital counseling from an African perspective is also acknowledged due to family instability and marital crumbling (Mwiti and Dueck 2006; Sigaba 1999; Benjamin 2008). Mwiti says that “African indigenous Christian counselors begin their premarital counseling fully aware that most people want to get married to live “happily ever after” (Mwiti and Dueck 2006:164-165). She also points out the worth of women as God’s image. However, she does not provide a systematic approach to the leading causes of inequality that threaten family stability and happiness in Christian marriages. She is silent about the teachings on oppressive scriptures to women, patriarchy and cultural gender roles in marriage. Sigaba mentions ‘couple happiness’ in marriage as one of the reasons for premarital counselling but he hardly mentions anything on equality. This omission normally becomes a source of a serious marital misery for women because it perpetuates DGBV experiences as it shall be seen later in this chapter.

Benjamin (2008:100) declares the Holy Bible as the essential basis for Christian counselling. However, if the counselor does not use biblical hermeneutics in the bible interpretation, he/she might maintain the status quo in teaching oppressive biblical interpretation towards women. This would reinforce women’s subjugation which prepares a fertile ground for DGBV and hence is life denying to women. For instance, Siwila (2011:142-143) expresses the menace of biblical misinterpretations due to the untrained marriage Guidance leaders in Zambia as she discovered that most of the content of Marriage Guidance Teachings were full

of biblical texts. She further accentuates that such uncritical biblical interpretations might be full of gender biases and hence be oppressive to married women. I agree with Siwila as it is the same gender biases that increase the chances of DGBV in marriage. It is thus imperative to pursue a deliberate, conscious focus in addressing the leading causes of DGBV in premarital and marriage counseling in order to make a difference for the married women who tend to suffer the most due to this violence.

2.3 Definitions of domestic and gender based violence

As mentioned earlier, the primary motivating factor behind this study is DGBV, particularly perpetuated in Christian circles within marriages. Therefore it is imperative to define what DGBV means particularly as used in this study. According to World Health Organization (WHO) '*Fact sheet N°239*',²¹ "The United Nations (UN) defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private". This definition however does not incorporate the element of intimate violence such as the one that occurs in marriage even though intimacy can also take place in cohabitating or dating couples.

The World Health Organization, from the same source, further explicates that intimate partner violence is "an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviors". Again, in this definition nothing suggests anything about domestic violence as it takes place in the privacy of a household. It is probably because some scholars differentiate between Gender based violence and domestic violence.²² Therefore, a separate definition of domestic violence is required. This is provided by Restored (2010:4)²³ as it says: "domestic abuse is the abuse of a person physically, sexually, psychologically, spiritually, emotionally, socially or financially within an intimate or family-type relationship and that forms a pattern of coercive and controlling

²¹ <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/> accessed on 9/7/2013

²² Baldasare A, 2012 deals exclusively with GBV while WHO breaks it into GBV, intimate partner violence and sexual violence.

²³ <http://www.restoredrelationships.org> accessed on 9/7/2013

behavior.” This domestic abuse can also be referred to as domestic violence. Considering the above definitions on GBV, domestic violence becomes inclusive and hence the DGBV acronym has been coined for this study.

However, it is worth-noting that domestic violence limits GBV to a family set up or to private intimate relationships whereas “The UN definition...recognizes that violence against women is gender-based, and that it goes beyond the private problems of individual victims” (Baldasare, 2012:1). Baldasare further acknowledges that GBV is instigated by supremacy of men over women from individual privacy to social structures to the government level. This is also in accordance with how Primates of the Anglican Church define GBV. Robinson (2011:1) captures their definition which says that “Gender based violence is a violence involving men and women, in which the female is usually the victim, and which is derived from unequal power relationship between men and women. Violence is directed specifically against a woman or a girl because she is a woman or a girl, or affects women and girls disproportionately...”

The significant issues that can be distinguished in this definition are that the primary cause of this violence is inequality and that it affects women inexplicably. This is one of the crucial reasons that this study should examine if issues such as inequality are addressed during premarital and marriage counselling so as to alleviate chances of this kind of violence. Therefore it is important to note that this study is limited to GBV as it occurs in intimate partnerships or family relationships and hence is referred to as DGBV. This is in accordance with Phiri’s definition as she says: “domestic violence is one form of gender based violence experienced by women and girls in their homes. It occurs in the form of battery, sexual abuse of female children and workers, female genital mutilation, dowry-related violence, marital rape, emotional, verbal, psychological, economic and spiritual abuse.” Though, DGBV against female children and workers is also important to address, the primary focus of this study is in the context of premarital counselling. There is a great likelihood that if a father and a mother have been taught during premarital preparation not to act violently, the rest of the family could be spared from violent scenes.

Another concurring explanatory definition is by Watts and Zimmerman (2002:1233) which says:

One of the most common forms of violence against women is that perpetrated by a husband or other intimate partner. Intimate partner violence - often termed domestic violence ranging from slaps, punches, and kicks to assaults with a weapon and homicide; and sexual violence takes forms such as forced sex, or forced participation in degrading sexual acts. These are frequently accompanied by emotionally abusive behaviors such as prohibiting a woman from seeing her family and friends, ongoing belittlement or humiliation, or intimidation; economic restrictions such as preventing a woman from working, or confiscating her earnings; and other controlling behaviors.

This definition is very fitting for the DGBV because besides being inflicted by an intimate partner, it also demonstrates a systematic vilification of a woman and the inequality that exist in the husband-wife relationship. This study also acknowledges the fact that violence against men and boy-children exist (Baldasare, 2012:2; Cooper-White, 2008:27). However, I agree with Cooper-White as she asserts that violence, just like all other women experiences, is gendered and thus disproportionately affects women than men. Therefore if pastoral caregivers are to be effective and gender sensitive, they need to pay more attention to the violence against women (2008:27). Premarital and marriage counselling is done as a form of pastoral care-giving and should also serve as a form of advocacy for prevention of DGBV, which is what is to be scrutinized in the PMCP.

2.3.1 The prevalence of DGBV towards women

It is thus imperative that the work of some scholars on DGBV is reviewed because it reveals the extent of atrocious suffering of women in marriages which could be prevented or minimized through being addressed during marriage preparations of the couples. DGBV is the worst form of oppression of women in marriage and it is notoriously pervasive globally. For instance Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS)²⁴ demonstrate the enormity of violence as a global phenomenon as they point out that:

²⁴ <http://www.bwss.org/resources/information-on-abuse/numbers-are-people-too/> accessed on 9/1/2013

- Globally the most common form of violence experienced by women is physical violence inflicted by an intimate partner. One in three women have been abused or subjected to gender-based violence in their lives.
- In Australia, Canada, Israel, South Africa and the United States, between 40 and 70 percent of female murdered victims were killed by their intimate partners.
- Up to 70 percent of women experience physical or sexual violence from men in their lifetime - the majority by husbands, intimate partners or someone they know.
- As many as 1 in 4 women experience physical and/or sexual violence during pregnancy which increases the likelihood of having a miscarriage, still birth and abortion.
- Women who are beaten by their partners are 48 percent more likely to be infected with HIV/AIDS.

Looking at the above cited statistics it is very clear that violence, particularly DGBV, is one of most ubiquitous types of violence affecting women world-wide. Moreover the atrocities that go with it are inconceivable in that it does not only affect elderly women but also the girl-children, teens and even the unborn. It is as if women were wrongfully created or are a misfit in God's creation.

2.3.2 The implications of inequality and DGBV pervasiveness in the South African context

Even though Africa and South Africa are also part of the global statistics, it is still important to have a closer look at the prevalence of this violence at our home-continent and country because the document to be scrutinized originates in South Africa. The prevalence of DGBV could probably be because of cultural influences that might aggravate the plight of abused women in the African context. One of the works that clearly demonstrates this is by Maluleke and Nadar (2002:6). Illustrating its pervasiveness, they use examples of brand-names and fast foods such as hamburgers and Coca-Cola to indicate the intensity with which violence against women and children has become widespread, rife and common in the cultures of South African communities. This indicates that violence against women and children has become a social nightmare in South Africa which signifies the need for it to be addressed wherever there is an opportunity, such as during the premarital sessions.

For instance Watts and Zimmerman (2002:1232) assert that violence against women is not just an upshot of sexism but also an intended method to preserve the status quo of inequality. Violence is used as a tool to deliberately subjugate women and buttress men's superiority in relationships or families. It could thus be a sad situation if clergy do the same in their teachings during the premarital and marriage counselling. Maluleke and Nadar (2002:7) further refer to the passion of violence particularly against women that permeates human societies as the 'covenant of death'. They argue that "It is a deadly covenant cultivated and reinforced in attitudes, teachings, practices and rituals..." That is why it is imperative to assess teachings such as that of premarital counseling and marriage counselling to ensure that the similar covenant is not adopted by couples in marriages in the form of DGBV. For instance among the accomplices to the 'covenant of death', Maluleke and Nadar (2002:7) implicate "pastors and church elders" because of the form of oppressive directives they usually give to abused women.

Even though Miles (2000:23) writes from an American context, there seems to be a parallel with South African context as he argues that clergypersons have hardly been supportive to abused women who want to leave abusive relationships. However, he also acknowledges that most of the pastors lack pastoral and counselling skills to deal with such issues. Ironically, he also observed during his research that male clergy in particular would be noticeably missing during the workshops where the subject of gender violence was being addressed (2000:150). Perhaps, it is for the same reason that Restored (2010:3)²⁵ warns that churches do not have proficiency in dealing with DGBV victims and "without proper training and experience in this field we can do more harm than good". It is thus important for the church to confront gender issues during preparation of the couples for marriage because those teachings have a role to play in shaping marriage life, especially for prevention purposes. Maluleke and Nadar (2002:8-12) also share two narratives of married women's experiences who suffered horribly at the hands of their Christian partners. The marital interventions by their pastors place these

²⁵ <http://www.restoredrelationships.org> accessed on 9/7/2013

women under double oppression because of patriarchal, cultural and uncritical biblical interpretations.

Another work that demonstrates the severity of DGBV that pervades Christian communities is by Phiri (2000:85-109). In her article entitled “*Domestic violence in Christian Homes: A Durban case study*”, Phiri makes it very clear that Christian homes suffer DGBV like other secular families and the worst sufferers are women. Mwaura (2010:119) affirms exactly similar findings in her study that includes a number of African countries - that the church is not spared from DGBV and again women are the worst sufferers. In their conclusions, Phiri and Mwaura also identify patriarchy, cultural beliefs and uncritical biblical interpretations that buttress male headship as the main cause of this kind of violence. In another article “*Why does God allow our husbands to hurt us? Overcoming violence against women*”, Phiri (2002:19-30) conducted the same research in Pietermaritzburg, Sobantu township using a methodology in which women related their stories in writing. She shares some of those narratives of married Christian women in her article where one of them is a pastor’s wife. The outcomes of her research once again point to the influence of African culture, patriarchy and biblical interpretations of male domination and wife submission as root causes of domestic violence.

Villa-Vicencio in de Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio (1994:187) argues that in any social order typified by social prejudice, the church needs to make a preferential option for the marginalized otherwise it maintains the status quo. Maintaining the status quo means to side with the oppressor or be an accomplice to perpetrators. Therefore in its teachings the church needs to ensure that it is on the side of the oppressed. This is also supported by West as he asserts that contextual Bible study has considered reading the Bible from the perspective of the deprived and the denigrated (including women). He further argues that it is in the same Bible that God has made a preferential option for the downtrodden, weak and discriminated against e.g. widows, orphans, women, strangers, the handicapped, the poor and the oppressed (West in de Gruchy and Villa- Vicencio, 1994:18). It is certainly important that every avenue of potential women subjugation and inferiority be explored, uncovered, disclosed and remedied to ensure the betterment of the suffering women in marriage.

Another work that also reveals similar findings is an article by Partab (2011:96-113) “*Why do violent men do what they do? Dialoguing on Privileges of Patriarchy and Domestic Violence*”. According to the author, attempts by legislation, NGOs and FBOs to curb this violence are ineffective. She further contends that men who seem to be the root cause of most women’s suffering are either justified or exonerated from the acts of violence against their women partners because of patriarchy and cultural influences. Other researchers who also identified power imbalance between males and females as the source of violence against most women are Abdool Karim and Frohlich in Turshen (2000:69-82). In their research about the spread of HIV infection in South Africa particularly KwaZulu-Natal, they discovered that most married women’s vulnerability to HIV and AIDS infection is due to male dominance and female submissiveness. Women lack assertiveness to their husbands to discuss protected sexual practices like using condoms in spite of knowing that their husbands have extra marital relationships, for fear of hostile reactions. Haddad (2009:10) concurs in her research conducted in the same province that married women cannot negotiate the use of a condom with their husbands since this might lead to misgivings and violent reactions. Therefore many married women make no attempt to persuade their husbands to practice safer sexual activities. This demonstrates that DGBV is mainly perpetrated through power imbalance and inequality between men and women.

2.3.3 Effects of DGBV on women

DGBV is a type of violence that makes marriage a health hazard for women. Women’s right to life is compromised. As evidence to this, other researchers from social sciences such as Jewkes, Levin and Penn-Kekana (2002:1604-1605) reveal in their research that DGBV is increasingly becoming a health hazard in South Africa. Its escalation has grown to the extent that five women are estimated to be fatally wounded at the hands of their intimate partners almost every week. These authors also indicate that it is inexcusably tolerated even among unmarried dating young people. Cogently, these statistics are worse today, almost eleven years since their research.

Turshen (2000:xvi) also points to even more ailments of women that result from DGBV as she asserts that “Psychologists sometimes precipitate mental illness, anxiety, depression, sleepless nights, loss of appetite or overeating, oversleeping, and constant fatigue are common symptoms that women report as tension builds up in the abusive relationship”. Jewkes, Levin and Penn-Kekana (2002:1603) also demonstrate similar findings; that mental and physical challenges related to violence are progressively distinguished as a public health concern particularly in the South African context. In agreement with Poling (2003), Tiftt (1993:9-10) also indicates that women battering can be a source of health ailments for women such as “high levels of psychological distress, depression, anxiety, somatic disorders and other health related problems”. All these arguments point to the menace of DGBV for women and how detrimental it is to their wellbeing and wholeness.

Another example is that of Phiri in Phiri, Haddad and Masenya (2003:10). She points out that “...marriage is also the centre of patriarchy, which constructs the subordinate position of African women. This position does not work well in the era of HIV/AIDS, when research shows that there are more new infections of HIV among married women than any other group...” Cogently, women’s vulnerability to HIV and AIDS infections remains a serious threat to their health. Phiri (2000:86) also indicates in her findings that “... violence is a leading cause of female injury in almost every country in the world and is typically ignored by the state, or only erratically punished”. She further asserts that the Human Rights watch reports that “... one in every three women in South Africa will be raped and one in six women are in an abusive domestic relationship”. The preceding arguments reveal that women are more susceptible to morbidity because of experiences of violence and it has serious repercussions to women’s health. These arguments also point to the fact that patriarchy remains a deeply entrenched source of all forms of violence against women which in turn leave women predisposed to health risks.

If patriarchy and inequality are confronted and addressed during premarital sessions and marriage coaching interventions, it could save a lot of women from such merciless sufferings. That is why I completely disagree with Isike and Uzodike (2008: 3-20) when they justify pre-colonial patriarchy stating that women’s importance was on their procreation and complementary position to

men, as if this is better in any way. Indubitably this had its own oppressive penalty for women; especially if the woman could not bear children, she would be denigrated to the point of becoming a social outcast. Patriarchy and negative effects of its related companions such as gender roles, culture and uncritical biblical interpretation need to be disclosed, deconstructed and deracinated (Maluleke and Nadar, 2002:15) in its entirety. This will ensure liberation of women from subjugation, objectification, victimization and debasement which would undoubtedly diminish chances of DGBV that leave women's health in jeopardy.

Even though not an African, Green (1999) has written a book on "*Gender Violence in Africa - African Women's responses*" which might probably be a sign of its escalation, that it attracts researchers even from abroad. What makes her work relevant is her argument that "It is now more widely accepted that gender-specific abuse constitutes a violation of the rights of fundamental freedoms of females that impairs or nullifies their enjoyment of these rights and freedoms" (Green, 1999:2). She then explores international bodies and organizations and their ways of protecting women's rights violation against all forms of gender violence.

The work that exhibits the grave and pervasive nature of DGBV in South Africa is by Anna van der Hoven (2001) from the department of Criminology at Unisa. Her study discloses alarming statistics of this violence, its perceived causes and the attempts to curb it that seem ineffective and leave it unabated. Therefore in the light of the work of all these scholars and researchers, it appears that DGBV within marriages is a systematic kind of violence which requires systematic attention and concentration. Presumably, one way this can be done is through assessing the viability of the marriage programs such as the PMCP in relation to addressing this violence during the premarital sessions.

Children are also not spared from being affected by DGBV. For instance Restored (2010:5)²⁶ argues that "Any children in a family where domestic abuse is perpetuated will be severely affected by this abuse". There are many ways in which they can be affected such as witnessing the beatings, being stressed,

²⁶ <http://www.restoredrelationships.org> accessed on 9/7/2013

inability to study or experiencing impaired concentration at school and the like. Bodian (2013:1)²⁷ also attests that men who grew up in a family where their fathers were perpetrators of violence are more likely to follow the same trend in their adulthood and marriages. Cogently, therefore, DGBV could be even transmitted to future generations. The cycle needs to be broken, and this renders another reason for it to be addressed in premarital and marriage counselling as a preventive measure.

The identified gap in the scholarly work and the research is that while there is an uproar of disapproval concerning the pervasiveness of domestic and gender based violence in Christian circles and the society at large, not much has been done in assessing the viability of the platforms or instruments such as the PMCP that could efficiently be used to eradicate or prevent this violence. The critical examination of the PMCP is therefore a point of entry into the ongoing debate about the perceived leading causes and perpetuation of DGBV and how these can be eliminated or reduced.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has briefly explained the Anglican Communion and how marriage is understood in other circles within the Communion. The ACSA's position on Christian marriage and the PMCP's definitions and implications thereof were indicated. Male dominance that is still prevalent in ACSA could lead to male perspective teachings during premarital and marriage coaching interventions. This increases suspicions that justice might not be done in promoting gender equity in marriage preparation. The chapter has also explored the global and African understanding of premarital and marriage counselling and its implications for women. Western scholars have systematic programs for premarital counselling that are mainly for divorce prevention but not to prevent abuse of women in marriage.

Similarly the African scholars acknowledge the need for and the importance of premarital counselling but there is no indication of how women in marriages

²⁷ <http://www.paho.org/genderandhealth/> accessed on 8/29/2013

could be protected from gender based violence or how it can be prevented in prospective marriages in order to promote family stability and happiness of both couples. The DGBV was defined and the different scholarly work and research has revealed how DGBV has permeated societies. Its intensity for married women in South Africa and even globally has also been indicated from the scholarly work. There was emphasis on the need to consider platforms or instruments such as PMCP as tools that can be effectively used to address DGBV and its causes as preventive measures for such violence in marriages. Hence, this study undertakes to examine the PMCP's relevance in addressing DGBV and its prevalence in Christian marriages.

Chapter 3

An examination of the Theological underpinnings of the PMCP

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has looked at the Anglican Church's position on premarital and marriage counselling as well as DGBV and its prevalence in Christian families. This chapter seeks to examine the theological underpinnings of the PMCP as stated in the first objective of this study. I begin the chapter by looking at the implications behind the choice of the terminologies used in the title of the PMCP. The terms Coaching and Program are problematized as used in the title.²⁸ The brief summary of the PMCP document is given. The theology of marriage of the Anglican Church is also outlined as it serves as the basis for the PMCP's theological underpinnings. The chapter also examines and analyzes the theological underpinnings and its implications, reflected in the objectives of the PMCP and in the marital understanding portrayed in the document.

3.2 Problematizing 'Coaching' as a term used in the title of the PMCP document

According to Longman Dictionary of contemporary English²⁹, this word has different meanings. One of them is that Coach refers to a person who trains sportsmen and sportswomen for games, competitions and the like. Sports coaching are mainly done to prepare people being coached for competitions. The demand of the activity of coaching in terms of competitiveness is strenuous and causes anxiety. The meaning of this word does not seem to fit well in defining what happens in marriage because in a healthy marriage relationship, there is no competition between the husband and the wife. However, other meanings of coaching, according to the same dictionary source as above, are to train, teach, and give instruction or advice. These meanings do make sense for the marriage counselor if he/she is to train, teach, and give instruction or advice to the couples

²⁸ The two terms seem not to fit in the context of premarital and marriage counselling, particularly in the context of the document's usage by the clergy of the Anglican Communion in Southern Africa.

²⁹ Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English-New Edition, 1987: Longman.

who want to get married. However, it is important to consider the perspective from which the marriage coaching is done.

Moving away from the dictionary meaning to other definitions of the word, Wise (2010:1) states that there are "... a huge number of different definitions and they vary between "regular" coaching, coaching psychology, co-active coaching ... and executive coaching."³⁰ Others include 'relationship coaching' and 'personal coaching'.³¹ As difficult as it is to conjecture why the author of the PMCP went for the word coaching, few of its definitions are going to be used to indicate that this term becomes really problematic when associated with premarital and marriage counselling. Joseph O'Connor and Andrea Lages define coaching as the word that "...originated in the world of sport, but now coaching is a distinct profession, clearly different from counseling, training, mentoring, therapy, or consultancy. What is remarkable is its sheer power and versatility".³²

This definition points to the fact that coaching is a profession on its own. Apparently it is a different profession from being just an ordinary clergy whose duties and responsibilities are to help give pastoral care and counselling to the prospective and already married couples. What astounds even more is that it is also different from counseling, training or mentoring which is normally what clergy do. This questions the wisdom of choosing this word because clergy do not have much expertise in marriage and counselling, particularly in the context where PMCP was developed. For instance Phiri, (2000:106) from an African perspective asserts that "the majority of pastors are not professional marriage counselors". With similar sentiments Mwaura (2011:111) and Miles (2000:6) also indicate that many clergy are not skilled and well informed or professionally trained when it comes to dealing with marital crisis and counselling - unless the person to conduct coaching is professionally trained to do so over and above being just an ordinary clergy who might have done one or two courses in pastoral care and counselling. From personal experience as a clergyperson I have observed that in other dioceses some clergy are considered for ordination even without any

³⁰ <http://karewise.wordpress.com/2010/05/20/what-is-coaching-10-definations> accessed on 9/02/2013

³¹ <http://www.voicedialogueworld.com/en/personal-coaching> accessed on 8/30/2013

³² <http://internationalinstituteofcoaching.org/coaching-defination.php> accessed on 9/2/2013

theological education. This places them in the field of pastoral care but with no expertise to face the challenges of professionalism, at times required by the field.

However, considering the fact that clergy are considered professionals in their own field, Veronica Cooper's definition seems to be relevant as she says: "Coaching is a professional service that uses proven methods of working with an individual to effectively achieve the results they want in any aspect of their professional or personal life. The purpose of coaching is to remove the obstacles that prevent individuals from achieving their objectives".³³ Cooper's definition does not consider coaching as a distinct profession and thus it can probably accommodate what clergy do during premarital and marriage coaching.

Another reason for the relevance of Cooper's definition is that the PMCP document could be one of the 'proven methods' used to work with individual couples to attain its main objective. The PMCP's main objective is to "minimize the possibility of divorce or unhappy marriages" (Thabede, 2012:19). This is most likely the reason coaching was preferred by the author of the PMCP. Even with this definition, clergy's perspectives on theological teachings of the PMCP remain vital. For instance, if it is taught from the male perspective, there is great probability that the theological teachings might not be redemptive to the women in marriage because of patriarchy. This could be an obstacle towards realization of the goal of the PMCP.

Eric Parsloe argues that "...to be successful a Coach requires knowledge and understanding of a process as well as the variety of styles, skills and techniques that are appropriate to the context in which the coaching takes place".³⁴ The question with this requirement is, where do clergy get that adeptness and competence since it has been pointed out that some clergy lack professional training as marital Coaches. Even though Thabede (2012:11) maintains that the PMCP is premeditated to provide clergy with the necessary expertise, proficiency, procedure and means to instruct the couples, its professional adequacy can be challenged. This is because there is no special training for the clergy on how to use the PMCP, particularly clergy from other dioceses of the Anglican

³³ <http://www.voicedialogueworld.com/en/personal-coaching> accessed on 8/30/2013

³⁴ <http://www.coachingnetwork.org.uk/resourcecentre/whatarecoachingandmentoring.htm> accessed on 8/30/2013

Communion of Southern Africa who also use the document. It is thus not feasible to conclude why the author chose this term without making further investigations.

As much as the author of the PMCP has chosen the term coaching, this study will use marriage counselling interchangeably with marriage preparation. The reason I choose marriage counselling or marriage preparation is that it is less strenuous for both male and female partners who are being prepared for marriage. Through their role as pastors, clergy can mentor, support and prepare the couple according to their experience or theological training. Experience is a bit dangerous though, because different people have different experiences of marriage. It is with the attitude of preparing the couple that premarital and marriage counselors can leave no stone unturned, particularly preparing them for any scenario such as DGBV and how they can be precautionary in preventing such scenes. Certainly, the couple comes with the excitement of being in love and wanting to spend their lives together in this bed of roses called marriage. It is the responsibility of the clergy to bring awareness and prepare them that there are thorns in the beauty of the roses so that they do not find themselves poked without warning.

3.3 Problematizing the term ‘Program’ as used in the title of the PMCP document

The word program presents almost similar problems as coaching as used in the title PMCP. The word program is used in various ways and therefore it is not easy to hypothesize why the author chose to use it in the title PMCP. However it is worth-noting that there is an association called *FUNDISANANI* with *TOBO* life coaching that operates in the Diocese of Grahamstown.³⁵ Apparently this association runs some workshops and programs for the diocese of Grahamstown. It appears that such activities resulted in the production of the PMCP document which is formulated and designed in the workshop style which is probably the reason why it is called a program. This is because one of the definitions of the word program is a performance (or series of performances) at a public presentation³⁶ which seems to fit in with the workshop trend. However, if that is the case it creates problems for the other users who might have not been exposed

³⁵ Most of its teachings are based or in line with the Anglican Prayer Book (APB)

³⁶ <http://www.hyperdictionary.com/dictionary/program> accessed on 10/04/2013

to such workshops because it means some if not most of the information is left out. Subsequently, this could be disadvantageous to the analysis to be done in this study because it will be based on the document as it appears and not on the possible missing information due to the fact that it was originally a presentation.

Other meanings of the term program are a schedule of activities or procedures to be followed or a plan of action to accomplish a specified end. It may also refer to a series of steps to be carried out or goals to be accomplished.³⁷ These meanings may also be relevant because as a written document, the PMCP is a scheduled action plan that needs to be followed by the clergy step by step with the couple in order to achieve the objectives of the PMCP. It comprises six sessions that include planned activities for each of the sessions and the process that needs to be followed by the users of the document. This does not leave any room for innovative ideas or input by the clergy in case there may be shortcomings detected in the document. As a program it needs to be followed as it is. However, as it has been indicated that it originated from the workshop setting, it could be the reason the author has chosen to use the word program in its title.

3.4 The framework of ACSA's theology of marriage

As an Anglican document, the PMCP is based on the theology of marriage of the Anglican Church³⁸ hence the need to outline this theology before analyzing the theological underpinnings of this document. As defined in chapter two, marriage is understood to be an exclusive lifetime relationship between a man and a woman. While there may be ongoing debates about other alternatives of marriage relationships such as those of same-sex marriages, the official current stance for ACSA is still holding on to the traditional understanding of marriage as per its definition. For instance in the recent pastoral response to Civil Unions, the ACSA's Primate, Makgoba, has maintained that "the church neither marries same-sex couples, nor ordains or licenses priests or deacons who live in same-sex

³⁷ <http://www.hyperdictionary.com/dictionary/program> accessed on 10/04/2013

³⁸ Even though the developers of the PMCP document have added their own theologies, the main theological understanding of marriage of this document is based on the Anglican theology of marriage. For example pages 13 and 29 of the document refer clergy to the Anglican Prayer Book for the customary understanding of marriage.

unions”.³⁹ The tradition of the marriage understanding is grounded on scriptural references such as Gen 24:24, Mark 10:7, Ephesians 5:21-33 and with Christian principles and accordingly Christian theology. The marriage is also understood as a sacrament⁴⁰ which means it is sanctified and indissoluble. This is in accordance with the tradition in which the priest binds the hands of the newly wedded couple by the stole saying: “Those whom God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (APB, 1989:457). In many instances the PMCP reflects and seems to be based on a similar understanding of marriage theology.

3.5 A brief content summary of the PMCP document

Subsequent to the earlier introduction of the document in the background of the study, the PMCP was produced as a response to the need identified by the facilitators⁴¹ among other areas of concern in Grahamstown Diocese. The document contains other sections that are not related to premarital and marriage counselling which makes it a thick document. Premarital and marriage counseling is a component of the document which begins on page 11 to 39 and forms the focus of interest of this study. In the preliminary section of the premarital and marriage counselling, there is an exposition of the document’s objectives which have some theological underpinnings. These will be analyzed and examined in this chapter. There is also a vital role of the clergy in the document as they are responsible for conducting the sessions. It is probably for this reason that clergy are given six steps to follow as they prepare themselves before premarital counselling sessions with the couples. The document further indicates the process that needs to be followed by the clergyperson and the couples as they journey together during six sessions of the premarital preparation. Even though not in the exact sequence in the document, the author, Thabede, assures clergy of the six sessions in the process as follows:

³⁹ <http://archbishop.anglicanchurchsa.org/2013/10/pastoral-response-to-civil-unions.html>
accessed on 10/28/2013

⁴⁰ The Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace. (APB, 1989:438)

⁴¹ This seems to be an association of *Fundisanani and Tobo Thabede*, apparently responsible for running a number of workshops for the diocesan clergy and ordinands of Grahamstown such Fellowship of Vocation and premarital counselling. Hence Thabede is considered the author of the document and each citation by Thabede refers to quotations from the PMCP document.

1. At the first session you will get to know the couple and they will also get to know you. The most important things to cover in this session are:

- Personal profiles for each partner
- Program that you will follow
- Where and how often you will meet
- How long each session will take
- Your expectations from the couple
- Emphasis on ethical issues (code of conduct) (P. 19)

2. Through premarital coaching you will help couples to: Know the reasons for getting married. (Look up APB pg 458, customs in regard to marriage...) (P. 13)

3. Through premarital coaching you will help couples to: Get to know each other in depth by exploring each other's background and history, understanding one another's families and knowing each other's passions and dreams (P. 13, 20).

4. Through premarital coaching you will help couples to [understand]: What is marriage? (PP. 29-34)

5. Through premarital coaching you will help couples to: Share each other's expectations when married and take time to share sensitive aspects of themselves like medical conditions, previous sexual relationships and fears and shortcomings. (P.34)

6. Through premarital coaching you will help couples to: Plan for the future together. For example where they will live, roles and responsibilities, religion and religious practices, children, finances, eating styles, in-laws [and the like] (PP. 34-38)

It is in regard to these sessions that more theological underpinnings are also identified and scrutinized in this chapter - particularly session four which explicates the marriage understanding portrayed in the document. The most apparent observation is that just as ACSA's theology of marriage outlined above, the marriage understanding in this document is biblically based through numerous scriptural references. It is on these scriptural foundations that the marriage understanding of the document is pinned. However, some parts of the document are attached as an appendix to this study while the whole document can be accessed on this website.⁴²

⁴² www.diocesegramstown.co.za/subpages/marriagecoaching.pdf

3.6 The analysis of the theological underpinnings of the PMCP document - *Christian Theology*

According to Thabede, the PMCP document is intended to provide wise, Christian-based coaching (2012:11). Thus the main theology on which the PMCP is based is Christian theology. This is expected since the association of *Fundisanani* and *Tobo* which produced the PMCP as indicated above, operates within the Anglican Christian Diocese with the theology of marriage as understood in the preceding paragraph. However, the very fact that it is based on Christianity raises suspicion because some Christian scriptures are not very friendly to women. For instance Rakoczy warns that when women have become aware of patriarchal cultures that pervade many societies and meditate on scripture, they will discover similar oppression. The Bible mainly depicts women as sustaining organisms for men who are the chief beneficiaries from its androcentric nature (Rakoczy, 2004:153). In the same vein, Oduyoye (1995:480) disparages African churches for not being able to redeem "...Christianity from its image as a force that coerces women into accepting roles that hamper the free and full expression of their humanity".

Rakoczy and Oduyoye have pointed out the androcentric nature of Christianity. This raises questions about this objective of the PMCP if it promises to direct clergy to provide prudent Christian-based coaching. The question is how does a commonly unfriendly Christian theology to women become a 'wise' coaching to women who are undergoing marriage preparation? Oduyoye (1995:479) further warns that Africa hardly gets any nourishment from the imported "uncritical forms of Christianity" that originate from androcentric pyramids. These hierarchies would gladly receive services of women while treating them as voiceless servants who are at the bottom of those pyramids. Oduyoye's argument clearly exemplifies the gender imbalance between males and females which permeate uncritical forms of Christianity which exhibit patriarchal theology.

Therefore, uncritical acceptance of Christianity and considering everything it teaches as wisdom with which people can be guided is not redemptive to women. This is because there is no wisdom in treating women with prejudice and denigration as this is still prevalent in Christian institutions such as marriage. As

evidence to this, Phiri asserts that African Women Theologians have demonstrated that marriage is one of the most valued institutions in Africa. However, it is also characterized by patriarchy which keeps African women in subordinated positions (Phiri, Haddad and Masenya 2003:10). With similar sentiments Dreyer (2011:3) states that “Feminist criticism has also exposed the victimization of women in marriage as a patriarchal institutional belief system”. Therefore this objective of the PMCP seems to be dangerous to women preparing for marriage because it might buttress similar subordination of women through patriarchal theology perpetuated by both culture and religious beliefs.

3.6.1 Christian theology and its connotation for marriage

Christian theology confines marriage into Christian marriage. The definition of the Christian marriage was given in chapter two where ACSA’s position on marriage was indicated. This is understandable because as a Christian church, everything done should be based on Christian principles, customs, traditions and values. However, Christian marriage does not take place in a vacuum. The context plays a pivotal role in shaping the kind of Christian marriage to be followed. For instance in a multi-religio-cultural context such as South Africa, for some communities anything to do with Christianity is associated with Western thinking.

Therefore even if married in church, some couples would still engage in extra African, cultural and traditional customs of marriage. In Zulu, for example some of those are called “*umabo*” which refers to the tradition of a gifting ceremony in which the bride has to give gifts to all key people from the in-laws side of the family. This is in accordance with what Siwila (2011:91) points out as she asserts that African Women Theologians do not have a standardized method of understanding marriage. This is followed by her recommendation for a “multi-sectoral approach to Christian Theology of marriage” (2011:136). This, she argues, would challenge the norm of defining marriage from an exclusive Christian viewpoint. This is logical in that the very exclusive Christian definition of marriage carries its traditional and cultural biases from where Christianity originated.

For instance in agreement with Rader, Baloyi (2010:2) asserts that “...the bulk of Jewish literature viewed a woman as a secondary creature who was created as

man's helpmate - a view that served to justify and reinforce the separate and unequal roles of men and women in Jewish culture". Christianity originated in that kind of culture and if it is accepted without a hermeneutics of suspicion it might cement African culture which has an almost similar view of a woman. As evidence of this, Masenya argues that a woman has no personality of her own in African culture just as in other patriarchal cultures; she is possessed by her husband who makes decisions for her (Masenya in Phiri, Haddad and Masenya 2003:116). In simple terms, this is women objectification, which will be further explored in the next chapter. That is why I agree with Siwila (2011:142) as she asserts that "... a theology of marriage that uses feminist cultural hermeneutics to address biblical, cultural, and social issues that have affected the definition of marriage in the church is needed..." This is the reason I argued about the inflexibility that the term program introduces to this document. Even if clergy might be well informed with feminist theology and want to introduce innovative ideas in premarital counselling and marriage such as the one that Siwila has suggested, they are hindered. The new marriage theology is indeed required in order to liberate women but the inflexibility of the program leaves no room for it.

Thabede (2012:19) heightens the indispensable need of the premarital and marriage preparation as she asserts that "any member of the congregation that is going to get married must undergo premarital coaching as it is crucial for the couple to be well prepared for their marriage to minimize the possibility of divorce or unhappy marriages". This objective calls for a compulsory premarital preparation of the couple which is a worthwhile attempt if marriages are to survive. However, if the premarital counselling will only be based on Christian marriage theology, which does not challenge the status quo, much will still be at stake for the couples. Once marriage keeps women abased and denigrated by male cultural and biblical interpretations as Masenya has pointed out in the preceding arguments, there is no hope of successful marriages. For instance Peacock (2010:40) argues that "traditionally, the institution of patriarchal family and marriage has been expounded as the will of God for the world". He further calls for a rethinking of family and marriage theology towards a mutual partnership of men and women in marriage. However, this call for rethinking needs to start with premarital counselling. If the clergy is not well equipped to initiate such a change

of mind and attitude it might not be feasible to achieve thriving marriages and to avoid marital separations.

3.6.2 Christian theology as a solid foundation for marriage

Another objective of the PMCP is to enable clergy to help couples to lay solid foundations on which to construct joyful and gratifying marriages through Christian theology (Thabede, 2012:11). According to the author of the PMCP, a great deal of effort needs to be put into premarital counseling as a preventive measure for unexpected challenges that might face couples in marriages (2012:13). Yet, as it has already been pointed out, the greatest challenge is the traditional thinking in the Christian theology of marriage, with its ambivalence to women. The question is how do clergy deconstruct that ambivalence in order to empower women to become equal partners with men so as to prevent inequality in the marriage relationship? All the steps that clergy need to take in their preparation for the premarital sessions according to (Thabede, 2012:14-19) have nothing to do with how to help couples to deal with issues of equal partnership in marriage.

The PMCP does not seem to have done a good job through its silence in the area of inequality in marriage because DGBV does not occur in a vacuum. There are always deep-rooted causes emanating from cultural, biblical and gender constructions about womanhood and manhood in marriage. For instance, Partab (2011:104) asserts that a number of men claim lack of acquiescence from the wives as a justification of their violence against them. Therefore, no matter how best clergy may be prepared for premarital counselling sessions, the exclusion of how to prepare them for promoting equality in marriage does not help to strengthen the durability of that marriage. It also challenges the core intention of this objective which is to lay a solid foundation for marriage. There are also other theologies upon which the success of the marriage depends that are emphasized in the document that accompanies Christian marriage theology.

3.7 Openness and transparency as one of the marriage theologies

Openness and transparency is theologically based on Genesis 2:25 where both Adam and Eve were naked and never felt humiliated or uncomfortable about each

other's nakedness (Thabede, 2012:13). This goes beyond being exposed to each other in terms of being corporeal nude as in sexual intimacy; the author puts a great deal of emphasis on the need for the couple to be transparent to each other. The author's concern is that numerous couples hardly know each other when they get married, if they have not explored each other's backgrounds during premarital counselling (2012:20). Hence the document has the whole session dedicated to the couple's getting to know each other in depth as indicated above. She suggests that the couples need to share almost everything including sensitive information about their past experiences such as sexual relationships, as this would strengthen their trust of each other. Keeping secrets and hiding true feelings about self are not helpful for a marriage relationship. She further argues that "Openness and truthfulness strengthen relationships" (2012:30). Indeed this theological understanding of marriage is very important as it enables the couple to balance the four pillars of marriage, which are love, trust, respect and understanding (2012:36-38).

However, from the feminist perspective, it is unlikely that a woman who is kept in subordination and an inferior position can enjoy the privilege of opening up to her superior partner without fear of violent reactions. This is made worse by the fact that Thabede (2012:29) uses Ephesians 5:21-33 to confirm the stance of the church about marriage. As it has already been insinuated above, scriptural references can be life-denying to women particularly if used without hermeneutics of suspicion as advocated by African Women Theologians. As evidence to this, Rakoczy (2004:154) asserts that for the scripture to be liberative to women, hermeneutics of suspicion when approaching the Biblical text is imperative.

The interpretation of this scripture reference has become one of the highly contested texts in the theology of marriage as this will be further elaborated in chapter four. Some interpreters (Masenya in Phiri, Haddad and Masenya, 2003:118-119) push for male headship and female submission through this scripture which is strongly denounced by feminists and gender sensitive theologians. Moreover, as it was indicated in the previous chapter, Siwila (2011:141) discovered in her research in Zambia that the marriage Guidance Program used many biblical references in its teachings about marriage. She then raises a concern that without proper training in Bible interpretation and

application of hermeneutics of suspicion, there is a risk of misinterpretation of scriptures. Particularly, with uncritical biblical interpretation, women might find themselves oppressed by such interpretations.

In addition, Miles (2000:27) indicates in his research in America that 158 Clergy completely disapproved of domestic violence, viewing it as totally unacceptable. Ironically some of the very same pastors (male and female) believed the biblical teaching on male headship and female submission emanating from Paul's teaching in Ephesians 5. According to Miles, the emphasis was on wives that ought to submit to their husbands with no emphasis on the accountability of the latter to the wife. With similar understanding, Masenya in Phiri, Haddad and Masenya (2003:111), condemns the uncritical reading of this text. She elaborates that male headship and female subordination was never intended in its original context, which was the primary emphasis of Greco-Roman world's patriarchal status quo.

Masenya also accentuates that the headship of a man in the literal interpretation of this scripture contradicts the loving of the wife as his own body. Even the feminist re-interpretation of this scripture can hardly affirm women because of the dominant androcentric interpretation that has an appeal to most of African cultures and hence African churches (2003:120-121). Therefore the well-argued theological understanding of openness and transparency of the couples is threatened by the uncritical use of this scripture in the document because it cements gender disparity in a marriage relationship. It would not be practicable for the couple to develop such a sense of trust and openness to each other about every area of their lives in an unequal marital relationship. This would be even worse in the context of an abusive relationship.

3.8 Theology of indissoluble oneness: “...to have and to hold, till death do us part” (Mark 10:9)

Thabede (2012:29) defines marriage as “...the union of a man and a woman as husband and wife according to the standard set out by God. It is an exclusive and indissoluble union - ...no human being then must separate what God has joined together (Mark 10:9)”. She then equally adds the definition by the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA) as it affirms the marriage as divinely instituted and lasting unification of a man and a woman. While this definition

might have been formulated from believing the biblical teaching about marriage, it raises some problems from feminist's perspective, particularly when the author says: "According to the standard set out by God." This is questionable in that nobody knows who determines God's set standards. It is hard to differentiate between the standard set by God and the standard set by males for females in marriage because of the androcentricity and patriarchal biases of the scriptural interpretation. For instance in agreement with Fiorenza, Rakoczy (2004:154) asserts that "...Scriptures are saturated with corrosive poisons of negative views of women which are essential to kyriarchal domination". She further points out that "Feminist scholars work with the texts "not as absolutes but as faith responses..."

The theology of the indissoluble oneness as portrayed by the 'union of a man and a woman' is also problematic in the context of male domination. For instance Masenya in Phiri, Haddad and Masenya (2003:114) asserts that in some Christian circles women are kept in subordinate positions by men in the name of God. This theology is therefore seriously challenged by the marital power imbalance caused by patriarchal biases; though the author of the PMCP puts a bolded emphasis on this theology of unbreakable oneness that is cemented by God in Mark 10:9. Whereas there may be nothing wrong with the theology of indissoluble oneness as such, it is, however, threatened by the inequality between men and women that is not addressed in the PMCP.

The document does not equip clergy to promote equality of the couple during preparatory sessions whereas gender inequality is normally the main cause of DGBV in marriage. For instance, Oduyoye (2002:43) asserts that when gender disparity is acknowledged in theology, violence against women can be dealt with. The theology of indissoluble oneness becomes even more problematic if women find themselves in abusive relationships. They may not be able to leave the marriage due to its theological implication of permanence as both definitions of marriage by the PMCP and ACSA insinuate. Moreover, the theology of indissoluble oneness is in accord with the ACSA's theology of marriage as a sacrament which implies the sanctity of marriage.

3.8.1 Religious beliefs and sanctity of marriage

Under normal circumstances there is nothing wrong with the sanctity and permanence of marriage per se. However in an abusive marital relationship, women may consider themselves as offending God by liberating themselves from abusive husbands because of the religious belief instilled by these theological teachings. Believing that God would compel a wife to stay with an abusive husband is not only a dangerous religious belief, but it also puts women's lives in precarious and harmful positions. Even though Masenya in Phiri and Nadar (2005:54) writes from a Pentecostal context, her arguments are very relevant to many other Christian circles. She states that from such teachings as sacredness of marriage in Mark 10:1-12, many Christian women are influenced to believe that divorce can never be an alternative, irrespective of obnoxious marital relationships that place their lives on the verge of death. If they want to exercise their agency and leave the marriage they might be dissuaded and coerced through the abuse of the scriptures. It is called scriptural abuse because it may not be God's will for any women to suffer and even be at risk of death just because of the theology of sanctity of marriage.

The citation "*...to have and to hold till death do us part*" in the subtitle of this section also appears on the cover page as a subtitle of the PMCP document. While these words may be life-giving to the mutual loving and equal partners in marriage, they may be life-denying to the woman in an abusive relationship. For instance, Siwila (2011:117) gives a practical example of the T-shirt campaign on violence against women they once had in the University of KwaZulu-Natal during the 16 days of activism. The T-shirt had these words: "*Till Death Do Us Part: Does This Mean Until He Kills Me?*" These words exhibit the menace of remaining in an abusive relationship. If the premarital counselling were relevant to addressing DGBV and its prevalence in Christian marriages, warnings would be given to the couples that nobody deserves to remain in the abusive marital relationship even unto death. If the clergy would be equipped to address gender issues in premarital counselling that are linked with DGBV, it would probably save the theologies of marriage sanctity and indissoluble oneness, and the marriage would not be threatened by divorce.

3.9 The theology of cleaving (Mark 10:8 - *'And the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh*)

Thabede, (2012:29) bases this theology on Gen 2:24 "...a man leaves his father and mother holds fast (cleaves) to his wife, and they shall become one flesh". Unlike the theology of indissoluble oneness discussed above, the emphasis here is on 'leaving, cleaving and one flesh'. Thabede argues that leaving involves fundamental and essential adjustments of other relationships that the couples had before marriage. While those relationships such as child-parent, friend-friend or colleagues' relationships may remain unbroken, they become secondary relationships compared to the primary relationship of a husband and a wife. This is an important theology for a married couple as Thabede (2012:30) asserts that if the couple's relationship does not take priority, the marriage could remain at risk.

Once again Thabede makes another strong point in her definition of cleaving as she says that it precludes any other intimacy in the couple's relationship besides God. She further states that "a new single entity which is oneness in every aspect (physical, emotional, intellectual, financial and social)" is born. In addition she asserts that being one flesh is not an automatic process; it requires a resolute effort of both marriage partners such as constant communication (2012:31). The PMCP can be commended for this warning because some people do not change their relationships either to friends, siblings or parents prior to marriage. For instance, my elder brother got married when I was still young. He worked far from home and would only visit once in a while. As siblings we had a very close and a warm relationship and because of that he would not honour his marriage by spending time with his wife. He would stay with us until early hours of the morning regardless of being reminded that he was a married man then. That marriage did not survive; my sister in-law ended up with a severe mental depression and they separated.

At the same time, Thabede warns that parents should not be abandoned, because Exodus 20:12 says that parents should be honored. Therefore they need to be appreciated, cherished, accepted and acknowledged for their role in bringing up their children. While this may be very true, it needs to be done with serious caution because other couples do not know where to draw the boundaries between

their marital relationships and the other relationships, particularly the parents. Thabede, however, addresses this as she warns that it is the dependence on parents that need to be completely broken, particularly during marital crisis. With similar sentiments Mwiti also suggests that “the new couple needs to form a gentle but firm boundary between themselves and the in-laws on both sides, providing freedom to grow more deeply together” (Mwiti and Dueck, 2006:178). This challenges some of the cultural beliefs though; in Zulu culture for instance, if the couple experiences some problems in their marriage, they normally involve the extended family in trying to look for solutions, such as parents, aunties and uncles or family elders.

3.9.1 Love, affection, intimacy and procreation

The theology of cleaving for Thabede means that the couple needs to be glued to each other. They need to have an exclusive love relationship where they become passionately intimate. It also signifies openness to each other and becoming one flesh as highlighted in Mark 10:8. She asserts that this requires a determined exertion, particularly in the area of total exposure to each other. According to Mwiti “cleaving, or uniting, is the basis for oneness in marriage, in which two people form an inseparable union. This union is evident in emotional and sexual loyalty” (Mwiti and Dueck, 2006:178). It is here that Mwiti scripturally supports this union as God ordained. In other words, there is no theology of indissoluble oneness that has been discussed earlier on without cleaving that has to occur between the couple.

This leads to sex and affection which according to Thabede (2012:33) calls for a total surrender of the couple to each other so that each sexual act becomes fulfilling. This is based on 1Corinthians 7:1-6. These verses might exhibit different theologies and interpretations but Hastings (1973:64) gives a relevant interpretation as he asserts that 1 Cor. 7:3-4 calls for reciprocity and mutual acceptance of the married couple. He further accentuates that this obligatory mutual reception means that the wife’s body belongs to the husband while the husband’s body also belongs to the wife. This demonstrates equality of the couple which the theological teachings of the PMCP should be promoting. According to Thabede (2012:33) it is in this kind of affection and sexual intimacy that children

are born into an environment of care and safety as per Psalm 127:4-5. She also emphasizes that when this happens, the couple needs to take parenting sincerely as they become God's representatives to the growing children.

However, the author does not deal with the disappointment that might happen when the couple is not able to procreate. In many African cultures children are the key in a marriage. In Zulu culture for instance the woman can even be labelled with names such as "*inyumba*" which means a sterile woman, and can be treated as an outcast, particularly by the in-laws. However, this will be discussed in-depth in chapter four. It is thus one of the shortcomings of the PMCP that this issue is overlooked in the document. For instance the couple could be warned during the premarital counselling that "the purpose of marriage is not procreation but rather love and mutual companionship" (Peacock, 2010:40). It could happen that the couple does everything in terms of leaving and cleaving but only to find that they are not blessed with children, which might seriously threaten their marriage if not addressed during the premarital counselling.

3.9.2 Inequality in marriage as a threat to the theology of cleaving

The threatening question is how does this cleaving happen in an unequal relationship where one is dominant and the other is inferior. It has been indicated that male and female relationship in uncritical Christianity and many African cultures is characterized by inequality. As a result of patriarchy men tend to expect sexual subservience of the wife any time he demands it. For instance Phiri in her research on domestic violence in Christian families discovered that some of the women participants would share that their husbands do not care whether they are sick or angry after a fight, they would just demand sex (Phiri, 2000:97). With similar sentiments Baloyi (2010:2) also asserts that many married women are forced or coerced into sex unwillingly just because some claim to have paid for them in the form of the bride-price or dowry. This is pure objectification of married women as this will be further explored in the next chapter.

Therefore, the well-presented arguments on the theology of leaving and cleaving are threatened by patriarchal biases where men seem to possess women as sexual objects and women are denied equality to men. There is also no sexual loyalty where men are allowed to engage in extra marital relationships just because they

are men and women have to put up with it. This is another tendency in patriarchal cultures such as Zulu culture where even a married man proves his masculinity by having a lot of women and it is culturally accepted as normal. Women are expected to quietly accept it as customary and they cannot do the same because they will be labelled as loose - they have to remain intact for their husbands. This also challenges what Thabede (2012:36-37) refers to as the four pillars of marriage relationships that work, which are love, trust, respect and understanding. The question here is how can wives balance these four pillars with the husbands who treat them as their inferiors? The danger in this could be unreciprocated love, trust, respect and understanding which might lead to emotional abuse and depression on the part of the woman. Thus inequality is the key aspect in addressing all the theologies that have to do with marriage because they may be futile exercises if the issue of gender inequality is not tackled during premarital counselling. It seems to be the main source of all troubles in a marriage relationship.

3.10 The PMCP's preparation of clergy on how to handle forgiveness in marriage

The PMCP seems to have put extra effort into preparing clergy and couples for forgiveness. Undeniably forgiveness is one of the most common and valuable Christian virtues. It is in fact a core theology of Christianity because its existence depends on the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God through Christ's crucifixion. It thus comes as no surprise that the PMCP has a lengthy discourse on forgiveness. As vital as it is, forgiveness could be problematic from a feminist perspective when looked at in the context of DGBV in a marriage. In step No. 2 which is the 'emotional preparation' of the counselor, Thabede (2012:16) calls for the ability to show empathy on the part of the counselor. She defines being empathetic as having "...a clear understanding of what the other is feeling as you have experienced that feeling yourself". Then she argues that one may never appreciate the value of or encourage forgiveness without the pleasure of having experienced it. I may not be able to hypothesize the logic behind placing the definition of empathy and experiencing the delight of forgiveness in juxtaposition. Nonetheless, it leaves an impression of what most clergy are prone to doing when

counselling couples with marital crises such as DGBV, which is to quickly ask the battered woman to forgive her husband.

As an example, Miles (2000:143) gives a scenario of a couple that had a crisis in which a devoted member of Pastor David's church, Alan, had abused his wife for ten years of marriage. Having learned of this, David (the pastor) encouraged Fran (Alan's wife) to forget about the abuse and forgive her husband immediately so that they may reconcile and she could spare her marriage from crumbling. Miles contends that "These miscalculations lead victims to believe that ministers are rushing the forgiveness and minimizing the abuse" (2000:143). In addition there is no empathy in the rushing of forgiveness and minimizing abuse because it leaves victims vulnerable and predisposed to even more abuse. In the first place, the pastor, clergy or counselor may not understand what the violated woman had gone through at the hands of her abusive partner. Thus, they may have no clue about the hurt of being betrayed by someone you love and you thought also loved you. Instead of being empathetic to an abused wife, some clergy normally empathize with perpetrators just as it could be seen from the above-cited scenario. In addition, Poling (2003:76) also asserts that pastors and church members normally lack empathy for the victims when they persuade them to quickly forgive their abusers without fairly dealing with the reality of the harm they have caused the sufferers. These are the issues that the PMCP would have addressed if it had prepared the counselors to address DGBV during premarital counselling.

Therefore I concur with Miles as he asserts that a wife should only forgive her husband when she is treated and accepted as an equal partner in a marriage. For Miles, the very nature of domestic violence typifies inequality in a marital relationship. He thus vehemently discourages clergy from coercing abused wives into immediate forgiveness. He suggests that clergy should rather encourage them to recognize and concentrate on their need for protection, security and wellbeing (2000:137). In normal and healthy marital relationships, indeed forgiveness is a must on daily basis because there are moments where couples might disagree on some issues. Moreover, forgiveness is also one of the Christian values and practices, therefore Christian couples do need to keep forgiving each other for the marriage to survive.

However, in abusive relationships, it places the life of the victim in perpetual danger of even being murdered by the abusive partner who might keep asking for forgiveness in order to keep controlling the victim. Coming back to Thabede's argument, even if clergy might have experienced and "felt the joys of forgiveness" (2012:16), they need to be careful of being quick to convince sufferers to forgive the perpetrators because that might render them accomplices in jeopardizing the safety and security of the former who are normally women. For instance Miles (2000:143) further warns:

...forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation. Therefore, even if a victim chooses to let go of the anger, bitterness, and other feelings resulting from her partner's brutality, clergy people must not encourage or pressure the victim into a quick reconciliation. In fact, we should strongly discourage a victim from returning to a dangerous and unhealthy situation with a partner who needs both treatment and spiritual counselling

3.10.1 Forgiveness goes with accountability

According to Phiri (2000:108), forgiveness is one of the religious beliefs that endorse abuse against female partners in marriage. She concludes that "Many Christian women stayed in abusive relationships because after each abuse, the husband asks for forgiveness. While it is necessary to forgive, at the same time there is a need for accountability of one's actions". Moreover culprits are seldom called to account either by clergy or church leadership for abusing their wives; instead abused women become easy targets for coercion through religious beliefs such as being encouraged to forgive their husbands so that God may forgive them too. As evidence of this fear inculcating religious belief, Thabede, (2012:30) says that "failure to forgive one another locks the doors of forgiveness from God..." This is based on Matthew 5:12-15 where Jesus taught his disciples how to pray - *forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* This kind of belief held by an abused woman might keep her in an abusive relationship, probably till death for the fear of locking God's doors of forgiveness.

This religious belief is life-denying to women if during the premarital counselling, it is not addressed properly in terms of the dangers it may have in the case of an abusive relationship. It also does not give a chance to the perpetrator of abuse to see himself as a wrongdoer. For instance Phiri (2000:108), concurring with Heggen, warns that “pushing for quick forgiveness and cheap mercy not only trivializes the victim’s depth of pain and woundedness, but may also rob the perpetrators of the opportunity to experience true repentance and redemption”. I totally agree with Phiri in this regard because it is the lack of accountability on the part of the perpetrators that deteriorates a relationship where there is DGBV. As evidence to this, Partab (2011:96-97) asserts that men have been identified by many researchers as perpetrators of violence against women but they are not made to account for their actions of violence.

Another theological teaching of forgiveness in the PMCP is based on Matthew 18:21 where Jesus responds to Peter’s question about forgiveness - *I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven*. The author interprets this scripture by saying that “Jesus’ view was that one has to keep forgiving until forgiving becomes one’s second nature” (Thabede, 2012:30). Under normal circumstances forgiveness is certainly a Christian requirement which needs to be a lifelong practice. Probably as it was hinted earlier in the citation by Miles, if couples were treating each other as equals in marriage, then they need to forgive each other as per scriptural bidding.

However, if the PMCP were to equip clergy to address during premarital sessions the prevalence of violence in Christian marriages, the author would probably have realized the danger of encouraging this kind of belief in an abusive relationship. Using such scriptural quotations would be devastating and life-denying to the victim in an abusive relationship. The PMCP addresses the issue of forgiveness very well for Christian couples who live peacefully, but those who may be threatened by DGBV are not assisted. One valuable warning would be to tell them that God cannot lock the doors of forgiveness if the abused woman leaves the perpetrator for her safety. She may find grace to forgive her abusive husband but that does not mean she is obliged to remain in the abusive relationship.

3.11 Implications of the theological underpinnings of the PMCP on clergy

The PMCP document seems to be a premarital and marriage counselling instruction manual with all the answers for the clergy. This is evident from its author's assertion to the clergy that "You will be able to take couples through a meaningful, helpful, educational, practical and inspirational process which will help couples lay rock-solid foundations on which they can build happy and fulfilling marriages" (2012:11). It is probably for this reason that clergy play a central role and are to be responsible for the success of marriages. However, it was indicated earlier that from the African context most of the clergy have limited training as professionals in marriage coaching. It has also been indicated in the preceding arguments that the PMCP has not empowered clergy to empower couples, particularly in the area of using hermeneutics of suspicion in biblical interpretation and promotion of gender equality in marriage. This is not helpful to clergy who are used to the status quo and traditional understandings of marriage where gender disparity between men and women in marriage is a norm. The PMCP thus does not prepare clergy on how to empower couples for DGBV scenarios and how to prevent them or help women in abusive marital relationships. This would perpetuate normative ways of premarital counselling in which clergy become unconsciously or consciously complicit in the exacerbation of marital inequality and hence DGBV.

In the six steps of the clergy's preparation for premarital sessions, the emphasis is on physical, emotional and spiritual preparation with a great deal of scriptural references as a way of seeking God's guidance during the sessions. While it may be a good thing to pray for God's direction, it remains risky on the part of women if clergy's traditional attitudes and cultural beliefs about marriage have not been transformed or challenged. Therefore, the question that remains is; what is the attitude and expectations of the clergyperson towards women in marriage? Unfortunately, in the six steps of clergy preparation, this question is not addressed. Similarly, the clergy are not prepared with the biblical interpretation that would be redemptive to women. For instance Masenya asserts that:

It is, however, worthy to note that the Bible has mostly been interpreted for African Christian women by male preachers and teachers. Thus women have been socialized to male interpretations of

the Bible. Therefore any attempt by women liberation scholars and preachers to make the Bible message more accessible to women, is still most likely to meet with disapproval” (Masenya in Phiri, Haddad and Masenya, 2003:115).

If the clergy conducts the premarital sessions with similar disapproval of the liberative biblical message to women, justice is not done in those counselling sessions on the part of women. For instance Kay & Weaver (1997:146) argue that “Christian counseling guarantees [that] the counselor will act in the best interest of the counselee”. Subsequently, the PMCP’s silence about clergy’s confrontation of their own biases about women in marriage will never serve the best interest of the women in marital preparatory sessions and that disempower women even more. Instead, it could be the maintenance of the status quo of inequality between men and women relationships in marriage, thereby perpetuating women’s subjugation and increasing the chances of DGBV.

3.11.1 Complicity of the clergy

Maluleke and Nadar (2002:7) acknowledge that pastors, clergy or church elders are not spared from participation in what they call the “unwritten covenant with violence” that becomes visible through the kind of council and warnings they give to abused wives who want to quit abusive marital relationships. These church leaders often remind them that they need to be obedient and compliant to their husbands. Similarly, affirming that there is complicity of the clergy towards abused women, and it is of significance to quote him at length here, is Miles as he substantiates:

Clergy people have often not been helpful in dealing with the problem of domestic violence...Clergy say things like, “you have to work harder at being a better wife.” “Submit yourself to your husband. He is the head of you, as Christ is the head of the Church.” “Pray so that you’ll be able to endure this pain. Remember, God will never give you more than you can bear,” “Divorce is a sin. You must do everything possible to keep your family together,” and “the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does” - The phrases perpetrators often use (Miles, 2000:23).

Masenya in Phiri and Nadar (2005:54) and Phiri (2000:107) also point to similar distorted religious beliefs that keep women in abusive marital relationships. If

such teachings are addressed during premarital sessions and DGBV is explicitly addressed, many women could be spared from having to choose between saving themselves or their marriages. For instance, Peacock (2010:40) argues that if there is violence in a marriage, it has lost its real meaning of being a marriage in which even “the concept of saving the marriage does not arise”. Cogently some clergy maintain the status quo of inequality of a husband and a wife in marriage relationships which is detrimental to women’s wellness and wholeness. Clergy need to be assisted by documents such as the PMCP in changing their attitudes from normative forms of counselling towards more gender sensitive counselling.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter problematized terms Coaching and Program as used in the PMCP title. The chapter has also demonstrated that ACSA’s theological framework on marriage theology serves as the basis of the PMCP’s theological underpinnings, even though it may be an independent document from the Anglican Prayer Book. It has also analyzed and examined the theological underpinnings of the document as they are identified in the objectives and the sessions of the PMCP. The apparent challenge of the marriage theologies portrayed in the PMCP document is their setbacks in sustaining durable marriages due to inequality in marriage relationships. Same theologies could also be oppressive to abused women. The implications of these theological underpinnings on clergy have been also looked at. It has become clear that if the DGBV is to be addressed in premarital and marriage counselling, gender disparity issues cannot be overlooked. This chapter has established that the main cause of DGBV is gender inequality which threatens all the theological underpinnings of marriage if not addressed during premarital and marriage counselling sessions.

Chapter 4

Exploration of gender dynamics that are identified in culture, religious beliefs and gender roles

4.1 Introduction

The examination of the theological underpinnings of the PMCP in the previous chapter has indicated the importance of addressing gender inequality during premarital counselling. This chapter connects with the second objective of this study. Thus it scrutinizes gender dynamics that can be identified in culture, religious beliefs, and gender roles portrayed and affirmed by the teachings of the PMCP. This is done through the identification of the PMCP's contextual location. It then analyzes gender dynamics behind the contextual preconceived ideas about marriage as identified in culture, religious beliefs and gender roles. Simultaneously, it also looks at how the PMCP reproduces or affirms similar ideas through its teachings. The gender dynamics perpetrated by culture, religious beliefs and gender roles and affirmed by the PMCP are illustrated in the form of a model on how they shape the marital relationship of the couple to the detriment of women in marriage.

4.2 The PMCP and its contextual location

Since the PMCP has its origins in Grahamstown, South Africa, it is located in the African context. This context has its own socio-cultural milieu which influences actions and perspectives of its people. The PMCP developers could not have escaped this milieu because it is where they have been socialized and have internalized the African way of life. This is because African way of life has its views and ideas, cultural values and norms about marriage. Consequently, even though the PMCP is biblically based, it has got many conscious or unconscious implications for cultural aspects of marriage in its teachings due to the influence of its African socio-cultural locale. For this reason, it is imperative to analyze gender dynamics identified in culture, religious beliefs, and gender roles that emanate from the PMCP's socio-cultural setting. This underscores the importance and the need for this document not to be blindly followed by its users. The users of this document will also have been socialized in the same socio-cultural milieu.

Therefore the producers as well as users of the PMCP will approach premarital counselling with preconceived African-based ideas about manhood and womanhood in marriage.

4.2.1 Cultural preconceived ideas about being a man or woman in marriage

Clergy as well as the couple do not approach premarital and marriage counseling as 'blank or clean slates'. In any given social context there are preconceived ideas as to what is understood about being a man and a woman in a marriage relationship; in this case, the African context. Some of these ideas may be embodied in the culture, which are easily transferable to the church setting because they may be deep-rooted norms and ideas. For instance Dube (2007) gives an example of a type of cultural counselling by old women on how to keep the marriage sustained - through elevation of a husband at the expense of a wife. It is referred to as cultural counselling because most of the instructions about marriage from the elderly women to the younger brides emanate from culture and its constructs. This is another source of strong cultural influence that reinforces women subjugation in marriage.

4.2.1.1 Culture prepares women for unequal marital relationship

Dube elaborates how the elderly women in her context would spend time with a newly wedded bride, overwhelming her with how much sacrifice she needs to do, enslaving herself and submitting to her husband to ensure that the marriage succeeds. Even if she is being battered and bruised, she should use something else as a scapegoat for her husband. If her husband has extramarital relationships, she has to quietly put up with it because he is a man. Submissiveness and loyalty to the husband as well as meeting his needs on time are a must if the marriage is to survive (2007:352).

This kind of counseling demonstrates that these elderly women were socialized to believe in male superiority, so much so that they completely internalized it. Men's superiority has become hegemonic to them. Unknowingly they have become janitors of those cultural influences and perpetuate such internalization with every young bride so that from the onset she should know that in no uncertain terms would she be an equal partner to her husband. For instance Kanyoro (2001:159)

asserts that “Women in Africa are the custodians of cultural practices. For generations, African women have guarded cultural prescriptions that are strictly governed by the fear of breaking taboos...often making women objects of cultural preservation”. Even if it is detrimental to the very same women, they still transmit culture. The illustration by Dube above highlights the gender dynamics that are reinforced by this cultural counselling that keeps women subjugated as it is done for the benefit of men in marriage.

In my Zulu cultural context as well, when a young woman is preparing to get married, she is not supposed to expose herself in any way. She is given a period of about two to three weeks of hiding away from the public, which is a cultural norm described as “*ukugonqa*”. It is during this episode that the elderly women or experienced women in marriage around the village come and give her advice on how to ensure that her marriage survives. I witnessed this from the marital preparations of my two elder sisters. This takes place irrespective of whether they are Christians or not. Most of the advice given to my sisters were almost the same as in Northern Sotho’s context. For instance it was mainly about keeping quiet when a man does not come home on time or having spent a night away from home.

Another example from African context that prepares women for unequal marital relationships is cited by Moyo in Phiri and Nadar (2005:131-133) as she totally condemns the perpetuation of the cultural sexual activity called ‘*chilangizo*’ that instills sexual servitude of women to men in Malawian context. She asserts that this is perpetuated by church leadership in premarital and marriage counselling. Among other things, young women are taught proper behaviors of womanhood such as ‘gentleness, submissiveness and self-sacrifice’ which are supposed to be Christian virtues and fruit of the Holy Spirit. However, to benefit men’s patriarchal privileges, young women are socialized in this way to be more of service to men than God. All these are neither challenged nor disputed by the PMCP teachings. It could be noted in chapter three that uncritical use of some scriptures such as Ephesians 5:21-33 buttress similar inequality in marital relationships. This companionship and complicity of religious beliefs and culture display gender dynamics in marriage which empower men as against women.

4.2.1.2 Culturally women have no agency in marriage

In African culture, a woman in marriage cannot do anything independent of a husband without serious repercussions either from the man himself or from the society. It is a cultural norm for a man to go and come back whenever he likes but not for a woman. For instance, there is a Zulu cultural saying that “*Indoda ayibuzwa*” which directly means that a man is not questioned and it implies that a married woman has no right to ask where the man has been or where he is going. Masenya also confirms this in Sotho culture as she points to the proverbs that are used in her context with the underlying meaning that a woman need not be worried by her husband’s whereabouts because he will come back but she should be found intact (Masenya in Phiri, Haddad and Masenya, 2003:116). This benefits a man, who then enjoys freedom of movement while a woman has to remain homebound and faithfully wait for her husband to come back. The best she can do is to quietly serve him either with food or find out what he needs, and then she will make a ‘good’ wife.

If she is being maltreated, she needs to cover up for her husband by not telling the truth of what is happening in marriage, as it has been indicated in the preceding arguments. Similarly in Malawian culture, an abused woman need not disclose her husband’s shortcomings and ill-treatment. Even if she might have visible marks of having been assaulted, she needs to protect his dignity by saying that something hit her (Moyo in Phiri and Nadar, 2005:133). All these cultural beliefs are full of gender dynamics which are not challenged by the PMCP. Instead this gender dynamics challenge the PMCP’s teaching on the theology of indissoluble oneness in which a woman needs to be a voiceless object in that union. Moreover, the teaching on this theology becomes vulnerable because there is no accountability for the marriage survival on the part of a man; it only rests with the woman. It is indeed life-denying to a woman that needs to obediently conform to whatever is done in her new family and according to her in-laws’ expectations, for the marriage to survive.

4.2.2 Childbearing and its implications in African culture

As indicated in the last chapter, in its teaching on the theology of cleaving in which sexual intimacy may result in procreation, the PMCP prepares the couple

for parenting and even allows the couple to discuss how they shall do it. This is one of the essential topics to cover during the premarital counselling; however, there is an assumption that every couple that gets married will definitely be blessed with children according to the scriptural reference of Psalm 127. This does not allow room for disappointment and how the couple will deal with the situation in case they are incapable of procreation because of cultural expectations. One of the greatest expectations in many African cultural contexts is the bearing of children by the newly wedded woman, which has serious implications of DGBV if it does not happen. For instance, Mwititi reverberates this as she says that “In Africa, having children is not a choice, but an expectation” (Mwititi and Dueck, 2006:194).

Affirming similar argument from the work of African Women Theologians, Nyengele (2004:35) asserts that “the expectation to marry is followed by the cultural prescription to procreate, to be a mother”. The worst part of this expectation is that if there is no conception within few months of marriage, the community and the in-laws, including the husband, quickly jump to the conclusion that it is the woman who cannot conceive. This is echoed by Mwititi as she asserts that when the couple cannot procreate the woman becomes the first suspect. If it could be medically proven that she is indeed barren, she experiences a great deal of emotional distress ranging from rage to shame and dejection (2006:194). As an example, Kanyoro narrates a story of a young Kenyan woman who could not conceive within a year of her marriage and she was ridiculed by everybody including her husband. He started abusing her so much that the marital relationship became intolerable for her and she returned to her family. Her situation was exacerbated by having failed in her marriage and she was deliberately rejected by her own family, until she left to look for jobs to earn a living. Ironically she met another man and after the first sexual encounter she conceived (2002:15-16).

This story demonstrates gender dynamics of the cultural expectation in which a woman is always at fault when something goes wrong in a marriage, in particular with child bearing. This is the cultural consignment with which African Christian women approach premarital and marriage counselling. Similarly, the man and the clergyperson could have similar ideas about the marriage. If the premarital and

marriage counselling does not challenge these cultural norms, then it is about maintenance of the status quo that is life-denying to women, particularly because this cultural expectation has a potential of being a cause of DGBV. These maintained gendered cultural norms result in the performance of dangerous masculinity that has harmful effects on women. Therefore the PMCP has not helped to address this problem and does not equip clergy to help couples during the premarital counselling to deal with the possibility of childlessness. It is important to do so because this problem usually becomes a cause of serious marital distress, one which might result in the DGBV as it has been seen in the narrative by Kanyoro, and the victims are normally women.

4.2.3 The cultural implications of the in-laws and extended family

The instance where the PMCP's teaching touches on a cultural matter is when Thabede (2012:27) acknowledges that "In the African culture one does not just marry the one they love but marries into a family". She further warns that if the couple does not break deep-seated parental and family ties and stick to each other within the boundaries of the love relationship, it might "result in great conflict for the couple". Indeed this is one of the notorious disturbances of the marital relationship. I have a first-born sister who was compelled to stay together with the in-laws and her husband because he was the only son in his family. This put her through significant emotional, psychological and physical misery because of the endless feuds that almost caused her and her husband to break up as he would usually side with his family against her.

Mwiti in Mwiti and Dueck (2006:210) also warns about the in-laws that "...early intrusions into a very young marriage may interfere with the couple's ability to bond because of lack of private time. A new couple needs to be left alone for at least the first two years of marriage - free to love, make mistakes, rest, and entertain without the intrusion of family members". However, as indicated in chapter three, this is a challenge in African culture where the concepts of community, "*ubuntu*" and extended families are emphasized. In some cases, for instance, the elders of the family or the village become the arbiters of the marital crisis, particularly where there is DGBV. This could be an example of contrasting ideas between African Christian and Western Christian ideas about marriage.

Indeed, a warning about the in-laws was a point worth mentioning by the PMCP as a cultural preconception during premarital counselling. In some cases, for instance, the wife tends to be more receptive to her own relatives than her in-laws while in some it is the husband who sides with his family at the expense of his wife, such as in my sister's case. That is why it is important that the issue of families and friends is thoroughly addressed during the premarital counselling so that the couple may be in harmony as to how to handle them.

Regrettably, the latter is the only cultural issue that is mentioned in the PMCP. The rest of the cultural preconceptions or expectations about marriage such as the ones mentioned above are ignored. Yet, some of them have a serious potential of causing DGBV in marriage as in the given examples of the preceding arguments. I agree with Mwiti as she suggests that "Counselors need to assess any cultural issues that might exacerbate marital problems" (Mwiti and Dueck, 2006: 210). Even though Mwiti does not talk of cultural hermeneutics as advocated by African Women Theologians, she recognizes the need for "reeducation on negative cultural elements that might cause stress in marriages" (2006:211). She even commends churches who commit to such premarital counselling as the excellent guides of God's people. Premarital counselling is certainly one of the best platforms or instruments for conscientizing the couples about harmful cultural aspects that jeopardize marriage relationships from the onset. Lamentably, this does not happen in the teachings of the PMCP, which renders it an accomplice in maintaining the status quo of gender dynamics displayed in some marriages which perpetuate DGBV prevalence.

4.2.4 Gender cultural constructs and their patriarchal implications for marriage

For lack of suitable words, it is hard to portray a true picture of the contribution of some of the patriarchal African cultures in the reinforcement of women's marginalization through gender cultural constructs. In this study I adopt Nyengele's strategy as he argues that he at times uses intentional repetitions in order to "reiterate the conspicuous and pervasive nature of the gender issues..." (Nyengele, 2004:32). The deep-rootedness and invasive nature of gender issues are also confirmed by Dube (2007:353) as she reiterates that "they pervade our daily lives so much so that sometimes we think they are natural". The teachings of

the PMCP on Christian theology coupled with patriarchal theology reinforce gender dynamics as they are not addressed through a hermeneutics of suspicion.

Dube defines gender as social and cultural constructs and therefore not natural or God-ordained. She further argues that “the problem with the gender constructions is that they empower men and disempower women. Power of leadership, property ownership and decision-making, are largely in the hands of men”. This implies that women in marriage are subject to men’s power, domination and control in a family structure. With similar sentiments, Oduyoye (2002:36) maintains that “gender, in current parlance, signifies the power relation between masculine and feminine. Gender ideology presupposes that the masculine encompasses the female, or takes priority in relation to the female and is entitled to expect subordination and submissiveness and self-abasement of the female”. In agreement with African Women Theologians, Nyengele (2004:33) further accentuates that “African cultures, generally, operate to the advantage of men who are socialized to dominate family relations and structures”.

The dialogue between these cited scholars demonstrates gender dynamics of inequality between men and women which permeate every sphere of life in many African cultures including the marriage relationships. The message that is cogently conveyed is that men are constructed as superiors and women inferiors, something which normally becomes the source of DGBV. In fact, according to Dube (2007:354), these gender inequalities that saturate every social configuration, association and organization endorse hostility against women. Therefore she upholds that gender inequality is itself violence against women.

Mwaura (2010:107) also argues that culture is utilized by some African population groups to rationalize prejudice against women and to refuse them fundamental rights as human beings. She further asserts that this reduces women’s standard of living, and their gifts, aptitudes, hopes and desires in life are shattered and at times their lives are intimidated. It is very true that many African women suffer abuse and DGBV in the name of gender cultural constructs that need to be challenged and deconstructed. In the form of premarital and marriage counselling this can be done for the benefit of couples whose relationships will be shaped by such counselling. Unfortunately, the PMCP does not equip clergy to help the

couple address the issues of inequality. Instead it affirms it through its teachings on the theology of patriarchy, which only maintains the status quo of gender cultural constructs and norms that demean women.

4.2.5 Patriarchy and gender inequality as common causes for DGBV

Patriarchy is the source of gender inequality from both religious and cultural perspectives. For instance, Dayam (2010:34) argues that “Theology in general, has taken patriarchy to be divinely ordered human structure of power ... this in turn has legitimized power being concentrated with men and its perpetual dehumanizing effects on both women and men”. In this argument, a direct link is established between patriarchal theology and women’s inferiority. Chitando (2010:28) also affirms that patriarchy is a biblical norm and culture in which men are central figures, concerted with power and authority whereas women and children hardly mean anything as humans.

In substantiation, Rakoczy (2004:199) counts almost all Christian denominations among those whose teachings perpetuate patriarchy and propel the entrenchment of gender disparity and female denigration. She also defines patriarchy as “...ideology, a way of thinking, feeling and organizing human life which legally, politically, socially and religiously enforces male dominance and power. Culture, society and religious bodies, including the Christian church, are all structured on this principle” (2004:10). She also emphasizes that in patriarchy a male is a real representation of a human being while almost all women are of less significance as humans. This definition reveals that patriarchy is a deep-rooted and hegemonic ideology which is a menace even for the women that are being prepared for marriage, if not addressed.

In addition, many scholars acknowledge that inequality and gender role imbalances in marriage are common causes of domestic and gender based violence. For instance, in her research Partab (2011:104-111) has consistently indicated how men in patriarchal cultures have justified their abuse of women. Most of them behave as if women are either their servants or their property. Once the woman does not show compliance to the man’s demands, then she deserves a slap on the face or a beating. Haddad in Phiri, Haddad and Masenya (2003:150), and Haddad (2009:10) also demonstrate associations of gender inequality and

sexual violations of women in marriage. Bodian, (2013:2)⁴³ also exhibits a link between gender inequality and men's violent behavior as she advocates for boy's positive socialization from childhood. She suggests that the family is the best place where boys could be taught to resolve conflicts amicably and that girls are their equals and so they need to be treated as such in every respect. With this kind of socialization, it is unlikely that boys would grow up pursuing dangerous masculinities that glorify violence.

Phiri (2002:19) also asserts that violence is an upshot of male dominance which has turned it into a "power game". Even though these scholars and researchers argue from different perspectives, what remains common in their arguments is that violence is mainly caused by patriarchy and gender inequality. It is thus cogently a very important initiative to address these issues during premarital and marriage counselling. If not so, marriage counselors would be indirectly admitting that patriarchy and gender inequality, which are common causes of violence and women's suffering, are natural. For instance Baloyi (2010:2) asserts that "Therefore, if patriarchy as a system of domination is perpetuated by religion which naturalizes male superiority and female inferiority, men will automatically find the violation of the female body natural too". Therefore, unless the issue of patriarchy and its gendered power dynamics is fully addressed in premarital counselling, women will always be victims of DGBV and their security as individuals will remain a dream.

For that reason, there is a dire need for a new approach in preparing premarital and marital teachings in which gender sensitivity and the equity of marriage partners would play a pivotal role. Thabede (2012:29) once again cites the Anglican Prayer Book (APB) as it specifies that "the union of husband and wife in heart, mind and body is given for their mutual comfort and help in prosperity and adversity". However, in the light of the preceding arguments there is no possibility of this kind of unification where premarital and marital teachings place wives in a subservient role while husbands enjoy a dominant and overriding role. That is why I agree with Mwititi as she underlines that "the process of becoming

⁴³ <http://www.paho.org/genderandhealth/> accessed on 8/29/2013

one is built on mutual love and honour between the couple ...” (2006:179). It also calls for a rigorous effort on the part of premarital and marital counselors to encourage mutual love of the couples, particularly in the area of promoting gender equality in marriage that would subsequently reduce chances of domestic and gender based violence. However, the silence of the PMCP’s teachings on gender issues encourages gendered cultural norms such as “*lobola*”, which promote women’s objectification.

4.2.6 Lobola as the gendered cultural norm for women’s objectification

Even though initially *lobola* was not meant to buy a woman, in many cultures it has turned out to be a tool of objectification of women. Maluleke and Nadar (2002:14) also confirm this as they argue that although “the practice of offering a bride price and dowry may have originally been meant well, they are open to blatant abuse so that they become oppressive and violent instruments”. These authors’ argument is very true of many patriarchal African cultures where women are reminded that they have been paid for, in case they decide to free themselves from abusive relationships. This reminds me of a story from my younger sister who was abused so much by her husband that she nearly died from being severely beaten and her head bashed on the ground. When doing this he would remark that nobody can do anything to free her including herself because she cannot bring back the money he had spent on her in the form of the *lobola* and the gifts that he used to buy for her. He even dared to mention that it is only death with which she can pay him back what he had spent on her.

Masenya in Phiri, Haddad and Masenya (2003:118) also asserts that the difference between husband and wife in an African marriage setting is that the former benefits from patriarchal structure while the latter is repressed. This is due to the fact that a woman has been paid for through *lobola* to her family and thus the man automatically takes charge of her life. The payment of the *lobola* seems to be a license for the man to do as he pleases with the woman because she has become a man’s property. For instance, Phiri (2002:24) affirms this as she cites a quotation by a certain African man in Malinga’s research who openly admitted that in African culture a wife is not a man’s equal. Just like his children, she is his property because the man has paid “*lobola*” for her and subsequently they cannot

be equals. This is also affirmed by Mwuara (2010:111) as she asserts that women are considered as men's belongings in many African and patriarchal cultures and men have unrestrained rights over women's bodies even if it means hurting them. Baloyi (2010:2) emphasizes the same point as he relates a story of a man in Driefontein near Piet Retief in South Africa who had been summoned by the elders for wife-beating. This man responded by questioning those elders as to what is wrong in beating his own wife. This response indicates that his cultural belief is that he owns the wife and so he has a right to beat her.

Baloyi, in agreement with Dreyer, also indicates that such men persist in battering their wives because they claim to have paid *lobola* for them. Therefore some women experience not only battering, but also strangling and forced sexual intercourse because the men have paid for them. It is as if *lobola* authorizes them to dehumanize, debase and keep their wives in constant objectification through cruel battering and assault. Another good example of such African culture is also cited by Nyengele (2004:33) as he states that "Male-headed families are the ideal family model in Zimbabwe. Within these families, the male has ultimate decision-making power. He controls all forms of property - including his wife, who in some groups is also regarded as his possession".

The gender dynamics demonstrated by these scholarly observations about *lobola* point to the total objectification of women in an African marital relationship. However, the PMCP developed in the same African context is silent about such issues in its premarital teachings and does not equip clergy to deal with them. The PMCP's teachings are not only silent about addressing this cultural practice, but also affirm gender dynamics portrayed by such understanding of *lobola* with its subsequent objectification of women. This may have happened unconsciously but one of the African understandings is that silence means consent, for example in Zulu culture.

4.2.6.1 Culturally, women may not leave marriage

Despite all the injustice, abuse, debasement and objectification of women through this gendered cultural norm, women may not leave marriage. Just as the PMCP's teachings on indissoluble union and sanctity of marriage imply, some of the African cultures, in collusion, have no room for divorce. Baloyi (2010:2) gives a

good example of this from his Sotho cultural context as he explains some of the African idioms that are oppressive to women. One of them is '*Lebitla la mosadi ke bohadi*' which literally means that "the grave of a woman is in her marriage or in-laws". According to Baloyi, this advocates for the woman to remain in an abusive marital relationship in spite of life threatening situations.

In Zulu culture as well when I grew up in my community, a woman who had come back from her marriage would carry a social stigma of being defined '*Isibuyakwendeni*' describing her as a woman who has failed in a marriage. This demonstrates religious beliefs and culture working hand in hand in keeping women in bondage for the rest of their lives. The omission of equipping the clergy to address such cultural biases by the PMCP during premarital counselling leaves women in marriage vulnerable to constant abuse and probably until death, as demonstrated in chapter three. As it has already been indicated, if the clergy were equipped as to how to help couples prevent DGBV during premarital counselling, the PMCP's teachings would not be seen to be conniving with culture, against women.

4.2.7 Consequences of the PMCP's teachings and its affirmation of gendered cultural norms.

The power disparity between the couple in marriage has serious upshots for the women involved, which the PMCP makes no attempt to address. As indicated in chapter two, Abdool Karim and Frohlich (2000:69) point this out as they argue the reasons behind the unabated spread of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. They consider its spread to be linked with the imbalance of power between men and women, and that the inferiority of women is a major causal factor behind the susceptibility of women to the epidemic. The main reason for this is that women can hardly negotiate with their dominant sexual partners for safer sexual practices such as using condoms. Haddad (2009:10) verifies this as she explains that some of her findings among married women in KwaZulu-Natal were that husbands oblige women to have sex and hardly ever allow the use of condoms. She asserts that "in fact requesting the use of a condom often evokes anger and suspicion, so women desist from insisting on its use during intercourse. Many are aware that their husbands engage in extra-marital relationships, but are unable to negotiate

safe sexual practices and are sometimes obliged to engage in dangerous practices such as 'dry sex'.

This exposes the cultural supremacy of men and its detrimental effect on women. This is also a dangerous masculinity practice because men too are not immune from HIV virus. For instance, WHO (2010:24), in its exploration of risk factors in intimate partner and sexual violence, discovered that some "...men may seek out multiple sexual partners as a source of peer status and self-esteem, relating to their female partners impersonally and without the appropriate emotional bonding". WHO also argues that such men have a great likelihood to be perpetrators of violence against women - however, in the process of exercising their desire to demonstrate their masculinity, they expose themselves to serious health jeopardy through their becoming vulnerable to contracting HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. The worst victims though are women who cannot exercise any agency with their bodies when they have to yield to sexual whims of their husbands irrespective of their risky sexual behaviors. All these cultural traits are "based on patriarchal ideologies that locate women in positions where they become property of male members" (Siwila, 2011:164).

I also agree with Siwila (2011:164) as she further suggests that "Masculinity, just like gender, needs to be addressed on topics related to marriage and sex". It is a profound argument in that it could be because of dangerous and negative masculinities that some men think that married women have no right over their own bodies. This is aptly illustrated by the true story shared by Baloyi (2010:1) from City Press where a woman from Thabazimbi, a place near the border between South Africa and Botswana, and a mother of two, was beaten to death by her husband just because she had used a contraceptive pill.

Baloyi (2010:1) further expresses his regret over that story and asserts that there are many other women in South Africa who experience silent suffering because of the cultural belief of male-dominance and women's inferiority. The cruelty of this husband in killing the mother of his children just because of something they could talk about is a sign of a dangerous masculinity that says married women have neither a voice nor decision-making when it comes to sexual matters, even if involving their own bodies. This makes Peacock's proposal of rethinking the

marriage theology and family relevant in which he contends that “in the context marriage based on a just and equal partnership each partner must understand that they do not own or control the other’s body, sexuality or fertility” (2010:41).

However, in African culture Peacock’s advocacy might be challenging to some men who have ingrained beliefs on gendered cultural norms that have been indicated above. Mwaura (2010:111) also asserts that “abuse has also been interpreted culturally as ‘disciplining’ women and the women even expect it”. This is a very disturbing cultural norm because some women are even fatally wounded in that process of being “disciplined” by their husbands. That is why I totally agree with Kgalema Motlanthe, South African Deputy President, as he was addressing Brothers for Life gathering in Gauteng on the 24th of August 2013, reported on the SABC - news. He called on men not to hide behind culture to justify and perpetuate gender based violence against women. All these cultural attributes are mainly social norms with which the clergyperson and couple approach premarital and marriage counselling. It is thus pitiful that the PMCP makes no attempt to equip clergy to address these cultural biases so that it does not promote repression of women in marriage. This renders it an accomplice in perpetuating inequality in marriage, and the adverse effects on women who are on the receiving end of objectification and denigration.

4.3 Religious beliefs and premarital counselling in the African context

There are silent messages underlying the teachings of premarital counselling that come in the form of religious beliefs. Almost all that has been said about cultural norms can also be equally said about religious beliefs brought about by uncritical Christian teachings and the male perspective and interpretation of the Bible for women. For instance, Mwaura (2010:110) asserts that the prevalence of DGBV among Christian families could be “reinforced by uncritical reading and observance of biblical texts and negative theology”. She further highlights that the biblical notion of “self-denial, self-sacrifices and perseverance in the context of abuse” as being the most desirable qualities, particularly for women, could be the most contributing factor in the perpetuation of violence against them.

Similarly, Bently in Adams and Fortune (1995:154-156) vehemently condemns the theology of selflessness, sacrifice and suffering in the context of battered

women. She elucidates that some church and biblical teachings have endorsed the inferior position of women in families while glorifying a theology of affliction, which prevents battered women from leaving abusive relationships or look for help. Bently also upholds that self-sacrifice would be worth doing only if it would augment reciprocal love. She maintains that it has an adverse effect as it encourages the perpetrator to apply more ways of power and control which constantly counteracts woman's worth as a person. Therefore it is one of the religious beliefs that can be life-denying to women in the context of DGBV.

It was pointed out in earlier chapters that culture and religious beliefs, whether from traditional African Religion or Christianity, are close and inseparable companions. Even though this was not mentioned under cultural norms above because the arguments given were not exhaustive of the endless list of engendered cultural norms, it is worth-noting that in African cultures women are expected to do a great deal of sacrificing. It could be in the form of sacrifice for the community, children or husbands. This is particularly evident where a woman has to cover-up for her husband's abusive behavior or has to maintain silence even in the midst of risky sexual behavior by her partner, for the sake of marriage.

Indisputably, it is more than self-denial and sacrifice to engage in unprotected sex with a man who has multiple partners in the age and era of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. In fact it is as if the woman is compelled to make a choice between her safety, security and well-being and safeguarding her marriage. Thus in this camaraderie of culture and religious beliefs, women are placed in a dilemma. Masenya in Phiri, Haddad and Masenya (2003:115) asserts that African Christian women, who are ensnared between the beliefs from literal biblical interpretations and African culture, observe patriarchy at its extreme which makes life dreadful for them. Just as it has been noted above, the PMCP does not equip the clergy to deal with uncritical Christian theology or androcentric interpretation of the scriptures. This leaves women, particularly those in abusive relationships, in jeopardy of applying uncritical religious beliefs to their lives, and to their own detriment.

According to the teachings of the PMCP in its theology of indissoluble union and the sanctity of marriage, the woman is incarcerated into marriage for life even at

the great cost of suffering. While the PMCP does not explicitly say this, it is affirmed through its theological teachings that do not address the issue of DGBV and how women can exercise their agency in the context of abusive relationships. It is also this kind of theology of marriage that glorifies suffering as predestined by God, particularly for women. They are seen as true followers of Christ through suffering (Phiri, 2000:108). It would be much better if it were not women only who are expected to be ‘suffering servants’ in the marriage, but both men and women. Thus the PMCP implicitly supports the idea of perseverance of women in marriage even in abusive relationships, through its teachings.

4.3.1 Patriarchal ideology and theology as religious beliefs that demonstrate power dynamics in marriage

The PMCP does not indicate the problematic nature of patriarchal theology in marriage as it impacts power dynamics in marriages. It has been indicated above that patriarchal theology promotes abuse in marriage because of its maintenance of the power disparity between men and women. This fact is confirmed by Phiri (2002:34), who asserts that the power imbalance between men and women in the African church and society is a reality. African Women Theologians have identified this as the source of all forms of violence against women and children. Surely, the silence of the PMCP endorses patriarchal ideology in marriage because women are expected to observe the superiority of the fathers even to the detriment of their well-being. This also goes hand in hand with the self-sacrifice of women indicated in the preceding paragraph because it is all about pleasing the man in the marriage. That is why it does not make much sense when Thabede (2012:29) claims that marriage is “...the nucleus of both spiritual and psychological security of the individual and the community”, yet so many things that could promote this are disregarded in the document.

The research also proves differently, as Phiri indicates that African Christian women do suffer badly spiritually and psychologically at the hands of their husbands even in Christian marriages. For instance, in one of her case studies a pastor’s wife who had been married for over 30 years was spiritually and psychologically abused by her husband. He would reprimand her at home and remind her that she is a failure. He would also interrupt her and other church

women in their prayer services telling them that she knows nothing and so is not in a position to edify them on anything. Consequently, she would feel embarrassed and worthless to say or do anything in church irrespective of the encouragement she would receive from other church women that she was the source of inspiration to them (2002:22). Something is terribly amiss in the theology of marriage when there is emphasis on male superiority in the marriage context and the same applies with the premarital and marriage theological teachings. Furthermore, those who prepare such training manuals, teachings or programs such as the PMCP should ensure that their theological teachings do not cement and maintain the status quo of women's subjugation and the promotion of patriarchal ideologies that in turn promote DGBV.

Furthermore, Poling (2003:8) censures the church's patriarchal theology that elevates men's rights over women and children. He observes that "the male-dominated heterosexual nuclear family" does not bring about any resolution to social evils because it is where even greater evils of violence against women and children are perpetrated. It is quite regrettable that the family structure is fed with patriarchal theology by the church structure, which leaves the former vulnerable to DGBV. If marriage counselling is conducted from the male perspective, it is hopeless to expect that issues of gender inequality, male-dominance and patriarchal ideology could ever be confronted. Yet as rightly disparaged by Poling, patriarchal theology is a contributing factor to DGBV and it is critical that it be discouraged during premarital counselling, which unfortunately is overlooked in the PMCP.

Rakoczy (2004:11) further states that "related to patriarchy is androcentrism, the equally false understanding that the male is the norm of human life. To be truly human is to be male and thus females are inferior and deficient type of being, most probably a divine mistake". Certainly, it is a false ideology because if women were deficient beings and a divine mistake, then they would not produce a norm of human life i.e. male, in terms of procreation. As much as the offspring is the product of both seeds of male and female, the female carries a child for nine months, gives birth, nurtures and nurses the baby from a tiny infant to adulthood. Therefore it is not feasible to be part and parcel of an incomplete and fortuitous human being for such a long period and come out as a perfect model of humanity.

Thus, patriarchy and androcentrism are unrealistic ideologies that are meant to systematically keep women subjugated for the benefit of men.

These ideologies also contradict the scripture in Genesis 1:26-27 that places men and women on the same par, i.e. God's image. Dube (2007:354) upholds a similar argument as she asserts that Gen.1:27-29 conveys God's original intent for human beings - which is equality because God made both male and female in God's own image. It is also worth-noting that according to Dube gender inequality only emerged because of the fall of humanity into sin. Gender roles and male domination are legitimized by God as a punishment for sin. Indubitably, this is one of the scriptures that need biblical hermeneutics because it is harmful to women. Many men and women hold Eve accountable for the fall of humanity to this very day and so women deserve suffering.

Catherwood in Lees (1984:26) affirms this as she espouses that Eve's initial sin was seizing the leadership role in the confrontation with the adversary, Satan, and so guided man into sin. She thus earned herself the harsh Divine judgment that she will be ruled by her husband. Important to note is that, Catherwood interprets this scripture to mean that a woman deserves a subjugated role in a marriage because women still carry Eve's Divine judgment. This is a very repressive interpretation for women. Despite the reversal of this when Mary became instrumental in restoring humanity back to God through the birth of the Saviour of the world Jesus Christ, women are still blamed for the fall. I have never heard any man or woman in my context giving women credit because of Mary's role in bringing salvation through Christ, but they are always held responsible for Eve's sin. Therefore, the PMCP's teachings that promote patriarchal ideologies leave married women vulnerable either to bow down to these ideologies in marriage or to risk DGBV.

4.3.2 Submissiveness of women in marriage as a religious belief

In the previous chapter it was indicated that the PMCP uses scriptures uncritically to cement its teachings, one of them being Ephesians 5:21-33. It is now going to be demonstrated that women's submission in marriage is one of the highly contested religious beliefs in Christian circles. In many Christian churches worldwide, there are those who take Ephesians 5:22-33 and Colossians 3:18-19 to

mean men must be elevated over women in marriage as the wife is commanded to submit to her husband. This is seen in responses of pastors or clergypersons when abused married women approach them for help and counselling - the women are normally reminded of this scripture. A number of scholars point this out, including Masenya in Phiri and Nadar, 2005:54; Miles, 2000:26; Maluleke and Nadar, 2002:7&11 and Phiri 2000:107 as shown in chapter three. Often the reminder goes together with blaming the abused woman. She is normally asked how she had offended the husband for him to abuse her. Once again God is drawn in as the one who ordained the man as a head of the family therefore the woman has to submit even at a cost of her life.

Catherwood advocates for women's submission in marriage and even warns against the overconfidence of a feminist spirit (Lees, 1984:28). She also strongly warns that if a woman is not prepared to submit to her husband, she should rather remain unmarried because unsubmitiveness in marriage is a sin against God. She backs her arguments with Paul's letters in Ephesians 5:22 and 1 Corinthians 11 where it says that the head of the woman is the man and the man needs to submit to Christ whose head is God. She acclaims this as the best parallel for women. However, this interpretation automatically brings out the hierarchical pyramid, placing God on top of the pyramid and man lower than God and at the bottom of the pyramid are women.

On the contrary, Oduyoye (2002:40) contends that "Gender is a human and a social construct that should not be applied to God. Men must not continue to co-opt God into this hierarchy of being by reading into the scripture an order of male over female as ordained by God". In fact, to add on Oduyoye's argument, it is very dangerous to use God in encouraging gender inequality between men and women as this would imply that the DGBV resulting from that disparity would also be sanctioned by God. However, Catherwood advocates for women's submitiveness as a biblical truth that needs to be observed by all married women. Her theology of submitiveness is harmful for married women in Africa who have gone through heartrending experiences of being violated by their husbands due to gender disparity in marriage. For instance, I had a colleague in my former teaching profession who was severely abused by her husband almost on daily basis. She only took steps of liberating herself by leaving him when he had

attempted to burn her alive. The PMCP proposed the use of Ephesians 5:22-33 without any hermeneutic of suspicion which would confirm that such an interpretation as advocated by Catherwood and others is life-denying for women.

On the other hand, some scholars uphold that this scripture can be interpreted in a redemptive manner to women even though written from the androcentric perspective. For instance, Masenya maintains that the male headship and female subordination interpretation in Eph.5:22 loses sight of the opening verse of that scriptural passage. Eph.5:21 is a fresh eye-opening verse as it calls for mutual submission of husband and a wife for the sake of Christ - mutual submission is meant to shape the marital relationship. This was supposed to distinguish Christian marriages as unique from those of the Greco-Roman context where inferior social status of women affected marriages, unlike Christians who belonged to the same body of Christ (Masenya in Phiri, Haddad and Masenya, 2003:120).

If Christian marriages in our contemporary context were to be characterized by a similar understanding, the problem of gender disparity in marriage and the DGBV it fuels would diminish. Likewise, Hastings (1973:64) also provides a redemptive interpretation of the same scripture as he argues that “the thrust within the Christian marriage vision is towards recognizing equality in right and duty, towards reciprocity, towards mutual service: Be subject to one another (Eph.5:21)”. He further maintains that in verse 22, Paul conformed to the structural inequality of his context one that was characterized by the subordinate status of women, and that this could not have been a set standard for the “enduring gospel of marriage” (1973:64).

According to Mwiti in Mwiti and Dueck (2006:179), the interpreters that push the agenda of male headship and female submission find it easy to do so but they ignore Paul’s call for mutual submission which appears prior to the former interpretation. Probably the reason for finding it easy to go with the male headship and female subordination interpretation is that it finds fertile ground in many African patriarchal cultures. For this reason, it is important to take heed of African Women Theologians’ advocacy for biblical and cultural hermeneutics. For instance Kanyoro (2002:65) calls for the gospel to be held in tension with the

culture to avoid crises for African men and women who find themselves trapped between the two.

Surely, the marriage counselor and the couple do know these religious beliefs in the back of their minds as they approach premarital counselling, because they are common and visible through church teachings. It is thus up to the theological teachings in the premarital counselling to affirm or dialogue with these prevailing preconceptions about marriage. It also becomes clear whether the “Christian counselor is committed to the prevention of marital conflict through teaching” Mwiti in (Mwiti and Dueck, 2006:213). Regrettably, there is no dialogue between the PMCP’s theological teachings and culture and religious beliefs. Instead the PMCP affirms women’s submissiveness as a religious belief and all the gender dynamics that it displays which are life-denying to women.

4.4 Gender roles as preconceived ideas about marriage in an African context

Closely related to culture and religious beliefs are gender roles that also play a decisive role in shaping preconceived ideas about men and women in marriage in an African context. As early as in ancient times gender stereotypes existed in which the society was divided according to gender roles. Neyrey in Moore and Anderson (2003:44) demonstrates this in his study in which he looked at the ancient sources on social gender divisions. He discovered that males and females would be placed according to space, errands and functions. In his own words he found that “males are either engaged in agriculture or civic affairs (‘outdoors’ or ‘public’); thus they are farmers, herders, traders or civic leaders. Females, on the other hand, have three tasks associated with the ‘indoors’ or ‘private’ world: child rearing, food preparation, and clothing production”.

Some of these ancient gender stereotypes are very familiar in our context because they are still being buttressed in some cultural and religious contexts. For example, according to Dube (2007:352), “... marriage is another stage where gender roles are fully reiterated and reinforced”. Furthermore, the following matrix (figure (a)) will demonstrate that gender roles are still alive and maintained in some cultural contexts although modernization indicates that they are not static. This figure illustrates the post-colonial traditional Zulu family which is still a contemporary visible set up, especially in some rural areas.

Traditional Zulu cultural context of the roles of a man and a wife in marriage

The role of the father in a Zulu family	The role of the mother in a Zulu family
*To be respected and feared. [patriarchy] *Exercises polygamy in case the initial wife cannot conceive in order to retain a family name. *Protects, provides and sustains the family.	*Has to teach the children, particularly girls to respect their elders, not to answer back when scolded and that they are seen and not heard. [submissiveness]
*To be dignified through his wealth or economic status measured through possessions such as livestock [and polygamy].	*Was never expected to work - has to be provided food by the father who owns property and is economically viable.
*Assigns relevant chores to male children such as milking the cows, tending the livestock and working in the fields.	*To prepare meals with her daughters and lend a hand to the neighbors where necessary.
*Leads and supports the extended family as well and provides a support system for the performance of family rituals.	*To teach girl children house-chores and how to behave as young women e.g. how to sit, to be honest, to avoid inappropriate friendships e.g. with boys.
*Has a responsibility to see to it that his sons get wives and assists them with the <i>Lobola</i> payments. Also help sons to establish their own households.	*Girls would be taught ' <i>ubuhlalu</i> ' beadwork, ' <i>izitsha zobumba</i> ' clay pots as well as to thatch the roof. These would supplement the family income when sold.
*Teaches young boys life skills so that they can protect themselves from enemies.	*To ensure that girls' virginity is regularly tested so as to prevent virginity loss as this is preserved for their husbands.
*Performs a ritual that would enable a boy to declare him an adult.	*Has to train the girls in all household chores in terms of cleanliness and hygiene.
*Has a responsibility of teaching the first-born son all the rituals and family customs so that he could take over when he (father) becomes too old to fulfill such roles or when he dies.	*The education of girl children by their mothers is vital for the preparation of their own marriages when they come of age.

Figure (a) (Adapted and formulated from Sigaba, 2011:61-66)

The above table listing gender roles of a father and a mother in a traditional Zulu family - still reinforced in many parts of Zululand particularly in rural areas is not exhaustive. However it is sufficient to indicate the gender disparity between husbands and wives such as placing the man in a leadership role of the family with power and economic status. On the other hand the woman is confined to a family household with no economic power or status and has to be a cultural custodian to the growing girls including teaching them how to be submissive to men.

There is also a strong parallel between the ancient and the contemporary gender roles in terms of the space occupied by men and women, i.e. 'outdoors' and

‘indoors’ respectively, as well as the tasks allocated to a man and a woman. From a tender young age, boys are instilled and socialized with the idea that they are not equal to girls. As can be seen from figure (a), the boy-child cannot do house-chores because it is the work of the women. As a result in many families, a young man goes out till very late at night either for football matches or just hanging around with friends. When he comes back he expects food that has been prepared either by his sisters or mother. After finishing the food, the dishes will be left for the girls to wash. For some this happens even with the washing of their own clothes; it is girls who have to do it for boys.

When marriage time comes, this kind of men will expect the same kind of services from their wives and if they do not receive such services, then the trouble begins. For them marriage will be about getting a servant to meet his needs for the things that he cannot do for himself. Indeed it is a distorted objective for getting married. Moyo also points to another wrong reason as to why men and women get married. She says that “... men marry so as to offer works of charity as economic security providers towards women. Hence women as beneficiaries of these sponsors have to offer themselves unreservedly in their services to these ‘kind-hearted’ men to whom they are indebted for life” (Moyo in Phiri and Nadar, 2005:135). This could be true in the case where women have no economic income or are poverty stricken. It is during premarital counselling that such objectives need to be clarified and addressed because they may be another cause of marital distress if the expected roles are not met on the part of the woman.

4.4.1 Gender roles are neither natural nor God-ordained

In many religio-cultural contexts gender roles are traditionally understood as natural and God-ordained. For instance, in her advocating for women’s submission in marriage, Catherwood in Lees (1984:22) says that “we must not mind being called ‘old fashioned’, ‘domestic cabbages’, or even ‘traitors to the cause’, but we must study our Bibles afresh, discover what our God-given role as women is, and fight for that”. She considers Feminism to merely be the spirit of the age as she further asserts that biblically, God prescribed roles of men and women in the beginning (1984:26).

However, the preceding arguments clarify that these roles were only assigned after humanity had fallen into sin, brokenness had taken over and God's primary intention of equality for humanity had been altered (Dube, 2007:354). Secondly, for African Women Theologians, gender roles go hand in hand with the way in which men and women are socialized and constructed from childhood, as seen in figure (a) and the comments by Oduyoye (2002:40). She contends that "Gender is a human and social construct that should not be applied to God". With similar sentiments, Dube (2007:353) also acknowledges that many people do not yet recognize gender roles as social constructs but rather as natural. Nevertheless, she concedes that every sphere of our lives from birth to death is determined by gender roles:

... gender roles are intricately written into our names, in our clothes, in our facial expressions, in our demure aspect, in our languages, in our myths, stories, literature, history - virtually everything that surrounds us produces gender roles and underlines that this is how things are; this is how they should remain, this is our culture, this is the law and this is how God intended things to be ...we do not know how to relate outside our ascribed gender roles. Gender constructions are a framework within which we have been socialized to make sense of our lives and relationships. Indeed, gender roles are played out in all aspects of our lives even to our graves (2007:353).

The question that arises then is why do African Feminists problematize gender roles? What is it that could be wrong with gender roles, when they resonate so naturally with people's lives? To these questions Dube (2007:353) expatiates that it is because they perpetuate gender disparity and power imbalances between men and women which in turn prepares the ground for the undesirable consequence of DGBV. Bodian (2013:2)⁴⁴ also indicates that early family socialization of boys and girls as equals would decrease chances of developing negative masculinity that would have harmful effects on women at a later stage.

It is therefore an incontestable fact that gender roles play a decisive role in perpetuating gender dynamics and stereotypes which increase chances of DGBV. As it can be seen from the lengthy citation by Dube above, gender roles permeate almost every aspect of our lives, including marriage, which renders it eligible to

⁴⁴ <http://www.paho.org/genderandhealth/> accessed on 8/29/2013

be addressed during premarital counselling. Surely it constitutes some of the preconceived ideas about manhood and womanhood with which both the marriage counselor and the couple approach marriage counselling. While it might be difficult to deconstruct them all at once, it is worth attempting to promote gender equality. It is also important to clarify that gender roles are social constructs, then the couple can work out their own way of deconstructing the gender roles in their marriage. When the father and the mother have successfully deconstructed gender role stereotypes, it might be easier to instill equality in their children from birth, as Bodian has suggested above.

A new generation can thus be born that knows no unhealthy boundaries between men and women. However, if the theological teachings of the premarital counselling do not address gender roles with couples, gender roles stereotypes will continue to thrive. Ironically, the PMCP acknowledges that “roles and responsibilities of men and women have changed over the years but the instructions given to married men and women remain the same...” (Thabede, 2012:35). Notably, while there is acknowledgment that gender roles are shifting, there is no recognition that they are social constructs that need to be deconstructed. This is a glaring omission not the least, because in contemporary life some women are professionals and career women and they cannot stay at home to look after the children. Additionally, the cost of living demands that there should be more income in the family.

Secondly, it can be possible that a wife might work and a husband is unemployed. If the issue of gender roles is not addressed in premarital counselling it could be a serious root cause of marital distress that leads to DGBV. This is because the man might still claim that house chores are to be done by a woman, yet he spends more time at home than a woman. Thirdly, the woman also does not become superior to the man because of being employed; they remain equals in marriage and should treat each other as such. Similarly, the man should not be threatened by the fact that the woman is the source of income and regard himself as a failure. Once he allows the inferiority complex to take over he may try to reinforce his masculinity through DGBV.

It is thus regrettable that the PMCP maintains that instructions given to men and women remain the same, implying that gender roles should also remain the same. Yet, economically, socially and politically, modernization calls for the deconstruction of gender role stereotypes because, as pointed out above, many women are now placed in public roles through employment and educational qualifications. Automatically this changes the whole traditional thinking about women's place being homebound and subsequently calls for flexibility, understanding and willingness to change in order to cater for dynamic and fluctuating gender roles. The couple may be made aware of all this during the premarital counselling and be allowed to reach consensus as to how they will live out their gender roles. However, such awareness-raising is not done by the PMCP.

4.5 The effects of the PMCP's teachings on the couple and the marriage?

It has been demonstrated that the clergy and the couple may approach premarital counselling with many preconceived ideas about marriage, influenced by culture, religious beliefs and gender roles. The influence of these components inevitably shapes marital relationships because of the African contextual location of the premarital counselling and its teachings. If these teachings do not dialogue, deconstruct and reconstruct these components, as is the case with the PMCP, the chances of building blissful, solid and enduring marriages are bleak. There is a great likelihood that the upshots of a marriage could be frustration, regret, bitterness and worst of all, DGBV and divorce.

In its present role, the PMCP thus affirms most of these three components' consignments about manhood and womanhood in marriage in an African context. The clergy and the couple also carry the luggage of culture and its biases, religious beliefs and its biases as well as gender roles as they shape womanhood and manhood in the marriage. All of them approach premarital counselling with these preconceived ideas about marriage. The point of contact between the clergy and the couple is the PMCP teachings. Tragically, the arrows point down from the traditional consignments of culture, religious beliefs and gender roles towards the preparation of the couple for the prospective marriage. Due to the imposing nature of culture, religious beliefs, gender roles and the PMCP teachings that have all arrows pointing downwards, I call this a "Downward Model" of premarital

counselling which is not redemptive to women. This is illustrated in the following figure (b).

The illustration depicts the influence of culture, religious beliefs and gender roles in shaping marital relationships, and the role of the PMCP's teachings in affirming these three components as well as its consequences.

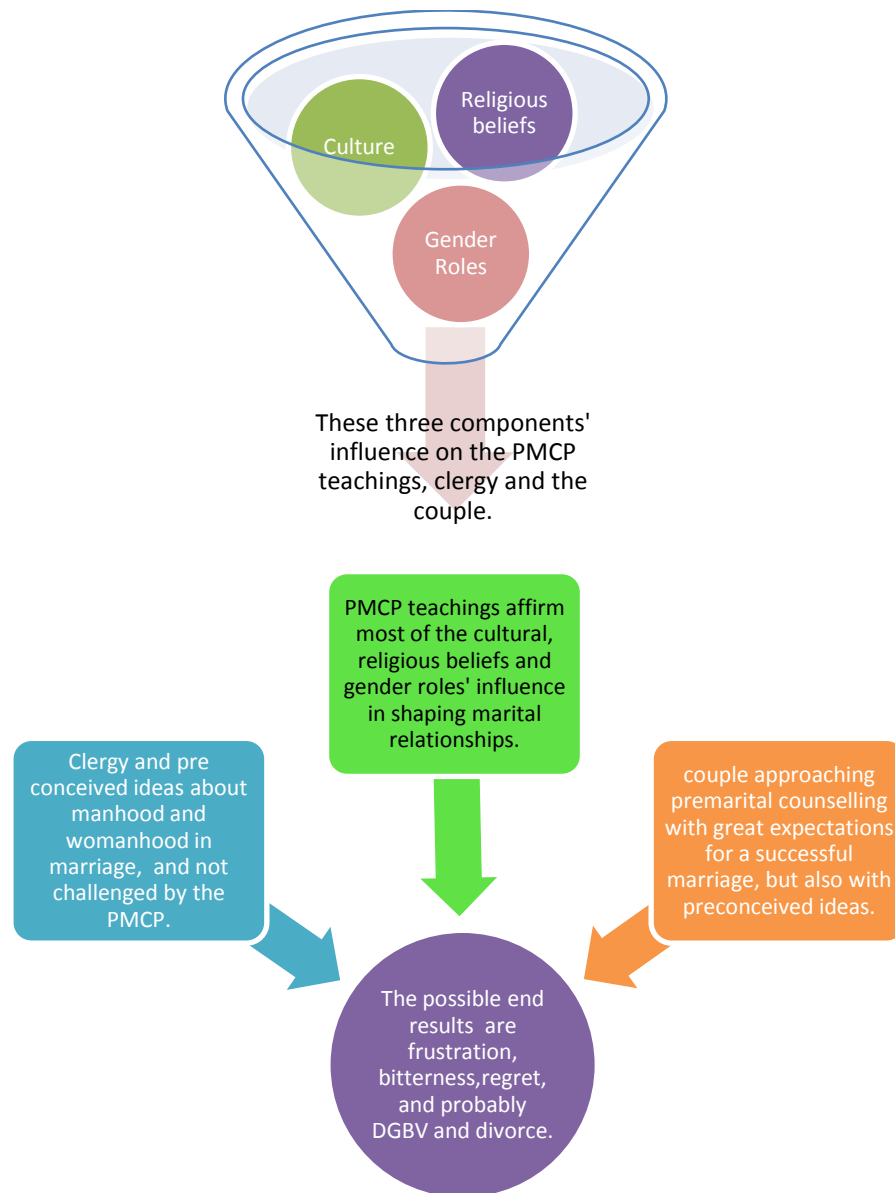


Figure (b) “Downward Model”

There is no dialogue between the PMCP teachings and the three components that challenge the norm of inequality in the marriage. The possible outcomes are frustration, regret, bitterness and DGBV, if not divorce. The couple may end up with a hopeless marriage in the place of the happy and enduring marriage that the

premarital counselling intends to achieve through its teachings. The reason for this is that preconceived ideas about marriage based on culture, religious beliefs and gender roles are mainly life-denying to women. It thus worsens the situation for them if these are not challenged in the premarital counselling, and it subsequently renders inequality and all its consequences a status quo and the norm for the marriage.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the African contextual location has significant implications for how gender dynamics are at play in the PMCP document in terms of gender imbalance displayed in culture, religious beliefs and gender roles. This has been indicated through the preconceived ideas about marriage based on culture, religious beliefs and gender roles with which the clergy and the couple approach premarital counselling. The PMCP's teachings seem to have affirmed almost all marital preconceived ideas, which render the PMCP an instrument of the status quo instead of something that is liberative to women in marriage. This observation is shown in the "Downward Model" which illustrates the collusion of culture, religious beliefs and gender roles and how they are reinforced by the teachings of the PMCP in shaping unequal marital relationship. Gender disparity in turn prepares the potential for the perpetuation of DGBV.

This chapter has also clearly demonstrated the concept of the "unholy trinity" explained by Maluleke and Nadar. This concept helped to construct the theoretical framework of this study which is African feminist theory of triangulation. It has been proven that indeed culture, religious beliefs and gender roles have a strong bearing on African Christian women, which subsequently requires that any document developed in the African context should not fail to notice this fact. Through the use of the critical discourse analysis method, this chapter has unearthed the underlying messages of the PMCP's teachings.

Chapter 5

The feasibility of the PMCP document in addressing DGBV experienced in Christian marriages

5.1 Introduction

This chapter recaptures what has been dealt with in the previous chapters with the intention of establishing the feasibility of the PMCP document to address the pervasive DGBV in Christian marriages. The chapter also demonstrates that even though marriages are intended for the best for the couple, the possibilities of DGBV can destroy the good intentions of the marriage and result in tragedy.

5.2 The PMCP and the risk factors for the perpetuation of DGBV

Having looked at the DGBV and how it pervades societies and Christian families in chapter two, it is important to reconsider the position of ACSA and the PMCP in premarital counselling and its understanding of marriage. The definitions of marriage by ACSA and the PMCP could result in some negative implications, particularly for women if done without appropriate scriptural interpretations. This could be clearly seen in chapter three when the theological underpinnings of the PMCP were examined. The gender dynamics that were identified in culture, religious beliefs and gender roles, and their preconceived ideas about marriage were seen to be affirmed by the PMCP's teachings in chapter four. This is mainly caused by uncritical application of cultural, religious and gender roles since the PMCP has not encouraged the use of hermeneutics of suspicion in its dealings with these three components in marriage preparation. Consequently, the uncritical application of these three components perpetuates the inequality between a husband and a wife. As inequality is a main root-cause of DGBV as manifested in marriage, these three components can be identified as risk factors.

5.2.1 Culture as a risk factor

It has been noted in chapter four of this study that cultural biases that enable gender inequality and power dynamics to exist in marriage are risk factors that increase chances of DGBV if not addressed during premarital counselling. Sigaba (2011:188-189) asserts that when the new South African Constitution promoting equality of rights of men and women came into being, many African men were

baffled, particularly in Zulu communities. The reason he gives for this is that “most of men in African traditional culture grew up knowing that a woman is expected to submit to a man”. Affirming the discussion in chapter four, this is evidence of strong cultural and patriarchal tendencies that exist in some of the African cultures.

In most cases the cultural influence creeps into marriage and finds fertile ground to breed more evil of the gender inequality that manifests itself in many different forms of oppression of women in marriage, such as DGBV. In reference to culture, Kanyoro (2002:13) argues: “Culture is a double-edged sword. In some instances, culture is like the creed for the community identity. In other instances, culture is the main justification for difference, oppression and injustice...” It is for this reason that African Women Theologians such as Siwila, Rakoczy as mentioned in chapter three and Kanyoro (2002:18) have called for a cultural hermeneutics of suspicion for the liberation of women from oppressive cultural biases. In addition, Phiri (2002:74) states that “unfortunately, all African cultures have viewed women as less important than men...” As discussed in chapter four, the way patriarchy is upheld in African cultures needs to be addressed during the premarital counselling. Mwit in Mwit and Dueck (2006: 211) echoes this as she articulates the need for cultural reeducation of the couple during premarital counselling so as to eliminate those cultural traits that exert negative impact on marital relationship. However, it has been noted that the PMCP makes no attempt to address such cultural biases and therefore it affirms their normality.

5.2.2 Religious beliefs as risk factors

It has become clear in this study that an uncritical approach to biblical interpretation is one of the most threatening things to women’s self-esteem, personhood, worth, safety and security. If premarital counseling is done from a male perspective - one that prevails in the Bible - it could pose a serious challenge for the women who are getting married. It is noted drawing on the work of African Women Theologians - that both uncritical biblical interpretation and uncritical Christianity contribute substantially to the denigration of women. For instance Oduyoye (1995:480) is very critical of biblical absolutism when it comes to African women’s subjugation. It would thus have been helpful to the marriage

officers if the PMCP document had warned them about the pitfalls of uncritical biblical interpretation when conducting premarital counselling, especially concerning the marriage relationship. For instance, Sigaba (2011:185) expresses his strong belief that scripture is the wealth reserve for the therapy of marital and family predicaments. However, the danger in his belief is when the scripture would be uncritically applied to women. This is the belief of many other clergy, men and women, which needed to be addressed by the PMCP in order to avoid its menace.

This is particularly seen regarding male headship and female submission. The PMCP quoted Ephesians 5:22, a scripture that keeps women denigrated and which might consequently lead to DGBV. The use of the Bible in this way by the PMCP was discussed in chapter three. The gender dynamics behind this scripture were discussed in chapter four, as well as demonstration that it is often used uncritically or interpreted in a life-denying way to women in favor of men. It was also indicated that there are life-giving and redemptive interpretations of this scripture, such as mutual submission as proposed by Mwiti in Mwiti & Dueck (2006:179). Concurring Hastings (1973:64) recognizes and affirms equality, reciprocity and mutuality in rights, and duty and service of the couple within the Christian marriage relationship based on Eph.5:21. It is very rare to hear this scripture being quoted to support the couple's mutual acceptance of one another in marriage. In many Christian circles this scripture is normally used for the promotion of male headship, as demonstrated in chapters three and four.

Therefore Oduyoye (1995:485) rightly asserts that "whatever is keeping subordination of women alive in the church cannot be the Spirit of God". The PMCP could have been a resource to do differently if it had encouraged and promoted a life-giving interpretation of Ephesians 5:22-33 instead of leaving it to the discretion of the clergy. It was also indicated that clergy normally maintain the status quo about womanhood and manhood in marriage relationships, which consequently keeps women subordinated. It is for this reason that premarital sessions could be vital in preparing couples for partnership, equity and justice in marriage instead of perpetuating women's subjugation through its teachings. Carmody (1994:11) rightly argues: "The crux of the feminist perception of women's actual, natural equality with men boils down to women's equal share in

humanity...” Therefore every faith-based structure and program needs to be consciously aware and careful that they do not become responsible for prejudice that not only pours scorn on women, but also perpetuates DGBV. Regrettably, as seen in the examination of its theological underpinnings, the PMCP does not seem to put any effort into promoting gender justice in terms of equality of the couple.

Thus it is of utmost importance that premarital counseling or coaching addresses the problem of the way in which certain scriptures are used and abused. This would help to lay an enduring foundation (Barlow 1999:8; Mwiti 2006:163) for marriages in which prejudice against women could be completely discouraged. As much as it could be debatable whether married couples who have gone through premarital counseling really have enduring foundations for their marriages, creating a solid marital basis is one of the main intentions of the premarital counseling. In the PMCP, Thabethe (2012:11) encourages Grahamstown Diocesan clergy along the same lines as she asserts that they have to help couples to “lay rock-solid foundations on which they can build happy and fulfilling marriages”. Considering the fact that the PMCP uses some biblical references without any hermeneutics of suspicion, as indicated in chapter three, there is no hope of laying the foundations for solid, thriving and gratifying marriages. With uncritical biblical interpretations that keep women subjugated it would be impossible if not impractical to ensure the couple’s quality, lasting and rewarding relationship in the prospective marriage.

5.2.3. Gender roles as risk factors

It was noted in chapter four that gender roles are social constructs. Phiri (2002:74) argues that cultures are communal constructs that formulate gender roles according to what womanhood and manhood is understood in that construct. In chapter four it also became clear that gender roles are not only pervasive constructs in the African context, but also display gender disparity that favors men as superordinates and women as subordinates. This was illustrated with a traditional Zulu family understanding of gender roles in chapter four. It was discovered that a man enjoys power, social and economic status with specific responsibilities that place him in the public realm whereas a woman is the opposite of a man, powerless and with no social or economic status. Gender roles

place a woman in the private sphere i.e. home, where she has to socialize girl children to be respectful, reverent and submissive to men in order to prepare them for their later married lives.

Dube (2007:352) identifies marriage as one of the platforms in which gender roles are entrenched. Gender roles go hand in hand with cultural prescriptions. Where there are cultural biases, there is a need to clarify what the gender roles will be for the couples because if not, they may be another source of conflict that might lead to DGBV and hence become a risk factor. It has also become very clear that the PMCP ignored the importance of addressing gender roles by stating that teachings about gender roles in marriage remain the same. It also makes no attempt to question the static nature of the teachings while gender roles are changing. In the narratives where life experiences of abused women are related, Maluleke and Nadar (2002:6) draw attention to the fact that the inequality of women and men that emanates from culture, religion and gender roles is the primary cause of the DGBV. Inequalities from gender role constructs permeate most African cultures. One example is indicated by Sigaba (2011:65) as he portrays a typical Zulu/Xhosa cultural gender role in his context:

As does the father, the mother has specific responsibilities...she provides food for the family, stays at home to take care of the children, trains the girls in household chores as well as general cleanliness and hygiene, protects the children and teaches them handwork that can contribute to the economy of the household. The mother's education of the growing girls is of utmost importance. This includes preparation for marriage when the girl comes of suitable age. This task is important in growth and enrichment.

While Sigaba sees this as a significant task for a woman, through a feminist lens, this is the epitome of traditional stereotyped gender roles that keep a woman homebound. It also fulfils the Zulu saying that "*Indawo yomfazi isexhibeni*" which means a woman's place is in the kitchen. This certainly can never bring any growth and enrichment in women's lives. They are supposed to be of service to men, and when they are mothers their role is to properly train men's future wives (girls). As demonstrated in chapter four, instead of bringing growth, gender role constructs can hinder women's progress and become a source of bitterness in a marriage. It is in the promotion and advocating for equality in a marriage that the

PMCP could have proved to be different as a Christian premarital and marriage coaching program. It is a serious omission and regrettable that issues that are repressive to women, such as some aspects of culture, religious beliefs and gender roles, have been ignored or affirmed by silence in the PMCP. This does not only prepare women for inferior status in a marriage but also encourages DGBV as inequality is its primary cause.

5.3 The importance of addressing gender inequality issues in the Christian premarital counselling

The PMCP is a valuable document in the life of the Anglican Communion, particularly in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa. It is one of the documents that have attempted to assist clergy in their endeavors to prepare couples for marriage as per the requirement of the church. Therefore the findings of this paper are not meant to declare it null and void; however, they will be pointing out an area that was not properly addressed in the document. Yet, it could be the same area that might have a negative effect on marriages rather than fulfilling PMCP's intention to uphold all that is gratifying, blissful and thriving in the marriage context. It has also helped this study to locate premarital counselling as one of the platforms or instruments that could be used to address a significant area that the PMCP might have overlooked. Subsequently, the PMCP remains an important document in the church despite the findings that will be identified from the chapters of this study.

In chapter one, many voices were heard even from the highest leadership of the Anglican Communion and ACSA that disparage gender based violence. It was also indicated that the PMCP was developed in the midst of that outcry against DGBV. However, through the examination and analysis of the PMCP's theological underpinnings, it is apparent that it has been voiceless about gender issues that might lead to DGBV, such as inequality in marriage. In chapter two it was demonstrated that the prevalence of DGBV in Christian families cannot be ignored anymore. Therefore, it is imperative that it becomes one of the priorities to be addressed during the premarital counselling as a precautionary and a preventive measure in the prospective marriages. In chapter three it was verified that even if the theological underpinnings of the PMCP's marriage theology might

be well presented, it is serious omission of the document that it does not address gender disparity. The omission of these issues demonstrates that the PMCP is to a very large extent not a feasible document in addressing the prevalence of DGBV in marriage. If these issues are not addressed during the premarital sessions, Christian marriages are likely to be predetermined to reinforce vilification of women, and subsequently DGBV, which might have undesirable consequences for the marriage. The implication is that the PMCP could be complicit in perpetuating DGBV in marriage since, as many scholars concur, the lack of gender equality in marriage is the key contributing factor in the causes of DGBV.

Chapter four also heightened the fact that gender dynamics behind the inequality displayed by culture, religious beliefs, and gender roles affirmed by the PMCP teachings - exacerbate the vulnerability of the couple to DGBV in marriages. This may not have been explicitly spelled out in the PMCP. However, the findings are that the PMCP is:

- Silent about the promotion of equality in marriage,
- Silent about cultural hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics of suspicion, yet uses many of Biblical references,
- Uses highly contested biblical passages such as Ephesians 5:21-33 without life-giving interpretation of such scriptures to women,
- Has never attempted to address any gender issue in its theological underpinnings.

All these findings render the PMCP complicit in perpetuating DGBV in marriage. Consequently, these omissions render it irrelevant and not feasible in addressing the pervasive DGBV in Christian marriages. The PMCP may not be able to address DGBV while ignoring the need to promote equality in marriage.

Importantly, ignoring gender issues in premarital counselling is indirectly admitting that it is natural for the marriages to be corrupted by DGBV. Lamentably, DGBV does not only cause distress for women in marriages, but also results in horrendous fatal incidents, such as the one illustrated in the following figure (c) which is based on a true story. While I am aware of the ethical implications of this figure, it has been accessed from the internet which makes it a source accessible to anyone. The internet source is captured in the footnote.

This is a picture of a Ramagoshi family on their wedding day.⁴⁵

Figure (c) - Ramagoshi family.



The smile of the bridegroom and the beauty of the wife promise a pleasant future together. Certainly, at this time of the wedding, none of them could have possibly thought of anything else other than a 'happily ever after'. If in the premarital counselling they were not prepared and cautioned about gender equity which would help them realize their dream of a gratifying marriage, their marriage was at stake.

However, it is unlikely that this couple was warned and prepared for a DGBV encounter in their marriage because the same man who looks so charming in the picture burned his lovely wife to death. The most heartrending part of this story is that the burning of the wife was a culmination of the long suffering she had gone through at the hands of her abusive husband. On the day when she was set alight she had just been discharged from three weeks in hospital due to stress. The cause of the stress was apparently due to the death of her only son allegedly abused and injured to death by her husband. It appears that she had become an activist of women abuse but sadly she was horribly deprived of her life through the same abuse that she was fighting. Her relative testified to the fact that she had persevered for quite some time in this abusive relationship because she was not even allowed to visit her own family in the same neighborhood.⁴⁶ There is a great possibility that her tolerance in that kind of abusive relationship could have been

⁴⁵ <http://www.sowetannlive.co.za/news/2012/08/14/wife-burnt-to-death> accessed on 9/15/2013

⁴⁶ <http://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2012/08/14/wife-burnt-to-death> accessed on 9/15/2013

because of culture, religious beliefs and gender roles. This could be so because there is no other apparent reason why she could have stayed in an abusive relationship because she was an employee of South African Revenue Services.⁴⁷

This indicates that she had a sufficient level of education to be able to look after herself even if she left her abusive husband. The perpetrator, who was a deputy principal of a primary school, was arrested even though it is not clear whether he was eventually convicted for this crime. His beastly heart is evident in his leaving his wife to die in flames while he rushed himself to hospital with her car, after having sustained injuries in his hands because he had poured petrol on her before setting her alight. If it were not for the neighbors who came to her rescue, she could have been consumed by flames till death. However, she died after some days in hospital because she had been severely burnt.⁴⁸ This story is an epitome of many other family tragedies that have become common in Southern Africa. Almost every week there is a report from the media of similar incidents. Regrettably, most of the victims are women and children, as in the case of this story. Premarital counselling can play a vital role as a preventive measure of such scenarios and as a platform or instrument to address and promote gender equality and gender justice issues in marriage.

5.4 Recommendations

Through examination of the theological underpinnings and findings of this study about the PMCP document, it is apparent that marriage counselling can be an effective platform or instrument that can influence the relationship of the married couple. It has also been demonstrated that most of DGBV incidents result from the patriarchal ideologies, tendencies and biases found in some cultures, religious beliefs and gender roles constructs. These social constructs maintain the structural and systematic subordination of women and male supremacy which legitimize DGBV. For instance Carmody (1994:94) asserts that “If men believe that they have a right, indeed the obligation, to control women, it makes a perverted sense for men to beat women into submission”. She further highlights that biblical interpretations that put emphasis on wives submitting to their husbands, do not

⁴⁷ <http://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2012/08/14/wife-burnt-to-death> accessed on 9/15/2013

⁴⁸ <http://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2012/08/14/wife-burnt-to-death> accessed on 9/15/2013

only encourage wife battering but also legitimize it as the Bible teaching. If these are not addressed during the premarital counselling - as is the case with the PMCP - marriage counselling maintains the status quo. This results in a Hierarchists approach, which considers the disparity order between men and women that endorses male superiority as natural and God ordained in marriage (McGrath, 2012) as pointed out in chapter two. However it has a detrimental effect on women's welfare, health, security, wholeness and affirmation of their human dignity.

It is therefore recommended that premarital and marriage counselling that is gender sensitive be imperative, if things are to change in the way couples' relationships are shaped by premarital teachings. More research needs to be done in the field of premarital and marriage counselling with the intention of producing a premarital and marriage counselling document that would challenge the status quo and be Egalitarian in its approach and promote equality in marriage (McGrath, 2012). The new document needs to be in dialogue with culture, religious beliefs and gender roles. It needs to challenge the 'Downward Model' by using the hermeneutics of suspicion so as to promote life-giving and redemptive aspects to women. Undoubtedly if women in marriage are treated as co-equals deserving of love, respect and full acceptance as persons, many marriages would be spared from DGBV and divorce and the "happily ever after" will be realized.

5.5 Conclusion

Having looked at the PMCP's theological underpinnings and the gender dynamics behind its teachings, it has become very clear that there are a number of omissions that leave women vulnerable in the case where they encounter DGBV in marriage. One of those omissions is its lack of teaching on equality of the couple in marriage, which seems to be a major source that perpetuates DGBV in marriage. This is being buttressed by social constructs of culture, religious beliefs and gender roles which normally uphold men's superiority and women's inferiority. These constructs can be deconstructed to enable married people to enjoy equality in their marriage life free of prejudice, enslaving attitudes towards each other and even hurting each other in terms of DGBV. The incident of Ramagoshi family and many others that are frequently reported in the South African media provide

compelling evidence that DGBV is a reality in marriage and can have serious ramifications for women. It can thus be concluded that the PMCP document has overlooked the issue of DGBV during the premarital counselling, yet the document was developed in the midst of the prevalence of the DGBV even in Christian marriages. There is no attempt in the PMCP document to make the couples aware that while marriage may be a bed of roses, there are also thorns in the bed of roses.

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Appendix

Session 4.

4.1 What is marriage?

Marriage is the union of a man and a woman as husband and wife according to the standard set out by God. It is an exclusive and indissoluble union- *...no human being then must separate what God has joined together* (Mark 10: 9 TEV). Likewise, the Anglican Church of Southern Africa who is part of the Anglican Communion affirms that **marriage by divine institution is a lifelong and exclusive union and partnership between one man and one woman** (Canon on Holy Matrimony). St Paul hit the nail on the head when he advised the Christians that if married people ever separated, they had to remain single and possibly at later time get re-united (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

Furthermore, the Church affirms that marriage is a sign of union between Christ and his Church (Ephesians 5: 1-33). Marriage therefore, gives birth to the holistic stability of husband, wife, children and ultimately the community. It is the nucleus of both spiritual and psychological security of the individual and the community. Marriage can be likened to the coming together of two tributaries that become one river flowing in the same direction and carrying the same responsibility that it finds on the way. The coming together of two tributaries into one energizes the river flow. What one tributary wouldn't move could easily be moved by the unity of two. Marriage therefore, energizes the couple's well being and in turn brings stability to each and ultimately to the community.

The Anglican Prayer Book states the sequence of creating a lasting relationship; *the union of husband and wife in heart, mind and body is given for their mutual comfort and help in prosperity and adversity* (pg 461). Since marriage involves two different individuals, it thus requires the unity of *heart, mind and body* for its well being and survival. Genesis 2: 24 rightly states that *...a man leaves his father and mother and hold fast (cleave) to his wife, and they shall become one flesh*

(ESV). We need to take note of three things; leaving, cleaving and one flesh. Lasting relationships do not just happen. The couple must work on the ways of dealing with each other in ways that build and strengthen their relationship. Let us look at a few of them;

Openness: This ingredient should start before marriage. During the pre-marital counselling, the prospective couple should be encouraged to reveal themselves to each other. One needs to know ones interest and things that put him/her off. No need of telling each other about fat bank accounts that do not exist. Openness and truthfulness strengthen relationships.

Forgiveness: It is very hard to be offended by someone who is not close to you. Therefore, as a couple, it is very easy to step on each other toes. Sometimes the offender may not even be aware of the offence. It is advisable that the offender be informed and in turn should apologize. Apology should prompt pardon. Seeking forgiveness demonstrates humility and so is accepting ones apology. The prayer which Jesus taught the disciples has a lot to teach to the couple about forgiveness. *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...* (Matthew 5: 12). Jesus continued his lesson and verses 14 and 15 rounded of the point; *For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* Failure to forgive one another locks the doors of forgiveness from God and no one needs to be guarding the doors of God's forgiveness.

Forgiveness is not only puzzling us today, it puzzled Jesus' disciples too. Peter basing his argument on Jewish traditions asked Jesus how many times he had to forgive his brother and Jesus' answer was **I do not say seven times, but seventy times seven** (Matthew 18: 21). Jesus' view was that one has to keep forgiving until forgiving becomes ones second nature. Jesus further, narrated the parable of the **unforgiving servant** which nailed the point home (Matthew 18: 23-35)

Leaving involves a radical change from parent-child relationship. Whereas parent-child relationship remains intact, it however becomes number two to husband-wife relationship. When this fails to take place, then the newly formed

union is under threat. Leaving your home does not mean you permanently withdraw and no longer have a good relationship with your parents. That's isolating yourself from your parent, not leaving. The commandment in Exodus 20:12 to honour your parents means that when you leave them, you need to go with respect, love, admiration and affirmation for the sacrifices and efforts in raising you. *But you must make a break from them and sever your dependence on them. As time passes, you must be diligent to prevent any reestablishment of dependence at critical points in your marriage* (Dennis and Barbara Rainey).

Cleaving: The Hebrew translation has two meanings;

- (i) the pursuing hard after someone else.
- (ii) being glued or stuck to something / someone.

Therefore, when a man has pursued hard after his wife and marriage has occurred, he is to be stuck to her like glue. Cleaving indicates closeness that all other relationship except God is secondary; parents and former friends.

Become one flesh. Marriage creates a new single entity which is oneness in every aspect (physical, emotional, intellectual, financial and social). Becoming **one flesh** does not just happen; it needs a concerted effort especially in the area of **communication**.

The couple is strongly advised to communicate to each other truthfully in all areas of the family life, and each needs to learn to listen and possibly verify whether what was heard, was the true message. Hearing abilities are always compromised by what is on the listener's mind and in the environment where communication happens. It is advisable therefore, that you repeat what you have heard if possible. It helps to avoid misunderstandings. Problems occur because of failure to understand someone else's view correctly. When I was a high school student, we were always advised to keep re-reading the question so that you do not miss the point. Do not think for him or her. For example when she or he says such, it means... Please verify because it could be your personal auditory hallucination.