MARRIAGE

Marriage is the coming together of a man and a woman to form a family. It is symbolized in a ceremony called *wedding*. There are several systems of marriage in Nigeria. They are: *court (or ordinance) marriage, church marriage, Islamic marriage,* and *traditional (or customary) marriage*.

Court or Ordinance Marriage

This form of marriage can also be called legal or statutory marriage. It is witnessed in the registry of the court of law. Usually, it is performed by the justice of peace/registrar in the court/local government.

Before this form of marriage takes place, a notice is put up, informing the public about the marriage that is going to take place. The publication would invite the public for an objection if any.

If after three weeks, (21 days), no objection, the court registrar then joins the couple. This has to be witnessed by at least one person.

This type of marriage allows a man to marry only one wife, i.e. it supports monogamy. It cannot allow the persons to marry another spouse without divorcing the first one officially and legally; otherwise, it becomes an offence called *bigamy* in the court of law. The *Marriage Act* of 1949 is the law that protects and guides this form of marriage.

Church Marriage

This is the form of marriage that is performed by priests in Christian churches, and it supports monogamy. The marriage must be witnessed by people.

In most churches, there are rules and regulations that must be obeyed before marriage takes place.

Banners of marriage must be announced up to three times in different sections of church service. If there is no objection to the intending union after the announcement, the marriage takes place.

The church must make sure that none of the two persons is married to a person that is still alive.

The traditional marriage of the bride, and in some churches, court marriage must have been performed.

In some churches, the issues of sickle cell disease, HIV/AIDS, etc. must have been checked and resolved through medical tests.

Islamic Marriage

This form of marriage is performed at the mosque by the imam. Moslem marriage supports polygamy. Also, it may take place in the house of the girl's parents. The ceremony is usually conducted according to the tenets of the Holy Qur'an and Hadith. Some of the things contained in the Qur'an or Hadith as conditions for marriage are:

- The couple must agree to marry each other
- The bride must have a guardian who arranges the marriage for her
- The bridegroom must pay a bride price
- Money and other property received from the man that is getting married should be handed over to the bride by her father or guardian.
- The bride should take those things to her husband and surrender them to him
- The marriage agreement must be witnessed by people
- Both parties (man and woman) must be mature and responsible.

Customary or Traditional Marriage

This type of marriage is carried out according to the laws and customs of the people. The couple (man and woman) are joined together according to the traditions of the people. It usually takes place in the villages and is performed by the elders and relatives of the bride and the groom, depending on the customs or traditions of the people involved. Every community has its own method of traditional marriage. It is performed strictly according to customs. It favours polygamy.

Purposes of Marriage

Some reasons why people get married are:

- To have family and procreate—bear children and ensure continuity
- To have companion, be happy and satisfied
- To have a legitimate sexual relationship
- To provide security and happiness for the whole family

Conditions for Marriage

Some of the necessary conditions to be met by the people planning to get married before marriage should take place are:

- The couple must be compatible health-wise
- They must be psychologically stable
- Social stability
- The man ought to be economically ready