

## PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

**TITLE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIES TO TACKLE CHURCH DIVORCE RATES: A CASE STUDY OF SEFWI-WIAWSO DISTRICT OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, GHANA**

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Date completed: March 2020

Divorce ranks high among the issues that threaten the church's mission and growth. H. Wayne House observes that this problem is not only faced by the non-Christian community, but Christians are also overwhelmed by the challenges of marriage and are calling for marriage professionals and counselors with the hope of finding solutions to issues of marriage. Most of the time, Pastors, Elders, members, and the Home and Family Ministries of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church have to deal with divorce issues among believers. The problem of divorce presents a threatening situation to the members involved, their families, and the church at large.

Over the years, the rate of divorce has been an issue of interest to society and the church at large. Even though it is an issue with its rippling effect on many and affects almost everyone in the society and the church, the issue appears a topic that is rarely given attention and consequently poses a challenge to all. The church has ignored this reality at the expense of other equally important activities.

The study examined the issue of the divorce rate among the church members of the Sefwi Wiawso District of SDA in Ghana. It looked at why there are cases of divorces in the District, how the issue can be addressed, and finally, in an attempt to deal with the issue (phenomenon), a program was developed, implemented, and evaluated.

This study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative aspect focused on ideas or theological framework on marriage and divorce to help understand these concepts. The qualitative part of the study is more on the quality of ideas and forms the framework of the study. With the quantitative part, there was a survey to investigate the problem at hand to suggest appropriate solutions to the divorce problem.

The study concluded that how people perceive marriage has a relationship with whether there will be failure or success in marriage. Also, the study found that the use of marriage professionals, pastors, counselors, psychologists, and experienced married couples could go a long way to help marriages and also make divorce an option to be least considered. The study discovered that involving church members in the development of programs and implementation is one of the effective ways of reducing divorce.

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DIVORCE RATES: A CASE STUDY OF SEFWI-WIAWSO  
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CHURCH, GHANA

A project

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

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by

Francis Tenakwah Baidoo

May 2020





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Dedicated to my family and the church members of Sefwi-District of SDA.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background of the Study**

H. Wayne House ascertains that “divorce has permeated our society so that the marriage rate and the divorce rate are almost equal.”<sup>1</sup> He further submits that “this is not restricted merely to the non-Christian community; rather, Christians are also flooding psychologists, and marriage counselors, seeking to resolve irreconcilable conflicts.”<sup>2</sup> Over the years, the rate of divorce has been an issue of interest to society and the church at large.

Divorce affects a large number of people with the church not exempted. It is one of the challenges of the church. However, the church seems to be busy with other important activities while ignoring this reality.<sup>3</sup> Aside from marriage being the principal building block of society in general, “it also occupies a key place in human life.”<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Tony Evans affirms that “the effects of marriage today carry it such far-reaching social, emotional, and spiritual implications.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. Carl Laney et al., *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*, ed. H. Wayne House (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1990), 9. See also Thomas G. Papps, *The 8 Reasons for Divorce: Why Marriages Fail and How to Ensure That Yours Doesn't* (Wilkes-Barre, PA: Kallisti, 2012), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Laney et al., *Divorce and Remarriage*, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Tony Evans, *Divorce and Remarriage* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2012), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: A Fresh Look at What Scripture Teaches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), 19.

<sup>5</sup> Evans, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 1.

The rate of divorce demands that much attention begins in the church because it poses a challenge to the unity of the body of Christ. It might also have other implications such as sin, repentance, and restoration. The current situation of the divorce rate in the church calls for research to enable the development of appropriate strategies that will address the scourge. Evidence from the statistical reports of the District suggests that Pastors and members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church possibly have attempted divorce or are in the process in the execution of the plan to divorce. This makes the issue a reality that needs immediate attention.

To establish the rate of divorce, the study analyzed the statistical report of the period 2014-2018. This analysis depicted the importance of this study and the need to address the issue in the Wiawso Districts. Below is the Statistical report from 2014 to 2018 to show the importance and how vital this study is to the address of the issue of divorce rate in the Wiawso District of Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Wiawso District of SDA comprises of twelve (12) local Churches namely; Wiawso Central Church, Wiawso New Life Church, Anhwiam Church, Amafie Church, Aboboyaa Church, Ayisakrom Church, Bopa Church, Wuruwuru Church, Old Adiembra Church, Betenase Church, Kofikrom Church, Kofikrom Prince Emmanuel Church. The District has eight (8) organized churches and four (4) company churches. Between 2014 and 2018 the number of divorce cases totaled to twenty-two (22).<sup>6</sup> These were found in the local churches namely: Wiawso Central, Anhwiam, Amafie, Aboboyaa, Ayisakrom, Betenase, Kofikrom, and New Life.

Gleaning from the facts presented above seems clear that the distribution of divorce cases spans through all the churches of the District. Hence, the development,

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<sup>6</sup> Wiawso District of Seventh-day Adventists, *Home and Family Life Ministries*, Statistical Report (Wiawso, Ghana: Western North Ghana Administrative Unit, 2014 2018), 7–10.

implementation, and evaluation of the program on dealing with divorce rates were necessary to all churches.

In 2014, the District recorded four (4) divorce cases in the churches.<sup>7</sup> In 2015 the number of divorced partners increased to six (6) in the various churches within the District.<sup>8</sup> In 2016, the District recorded four (4) divorce cases.<sup>9</sup> In 2017, the divorce rate declined to three (3).<sup>10</sup> In 2018, the divorced rate increased to five (5).<sup>11</sup>

The statistical report given undoubtedly presents a situation that is alarming and detrimental to the mission of the church. The causes and effects of divorce within this District will be duly dealt with. The need to deal with this issue appears to be at the heart of growth and it is inevitable for it affects church growth through ministry and mission of the church, thus it cannot be overlooked. This study further used the Sefwi Wiawso District as a case study to survey views on marriage and divorce rates. The Program was planned and implement towards the investigation into the issues of divorce rate in the District. The statistical report presented undoubtedly justified the need for this study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the period between 2014 to 2018 Wiawso District has experienced an alarming rate of divorce cases. This has posed a great challenge to the mission of the

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<sup>7</sup> Wiawso District of Seventh-day Adventists, *Home and Family Life Ministries*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Wiawso District of Seventh-day Adventists, *Home and Family Life Ministries*, Statistical Report (Wiawso, Ghana: Western North Ghana Administrative Unit, 2015), 10.

<sup>9</sup> Wiawso District of Seventh-day Adventists, *Home and Family Life Ministries*, Statistical Report (Wiawso, Ghana: Western North Ghana Administrative Unit, 2016), 5.

<sup>10</sup> Wiawso District of Seventh-day Adventists, *Home and Family Life Ministries*, Statistical Report (Wiawso, Ghana: Western North Ghana Administrative Unit, 2017), 7.

<sup>11</sup> Wiawso District of Seventh-day Adventists, *Home and Family Life Ministries*, Statistical Report (Wiawso, Ghana: Western North Ghana Administrative Unit, 2018), 1.

church such that it has affected church growth. Thus the need for developing a strategy that will mitigate the challenge to revitalize church growth in the District.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate and establish the causes and effects of the increasing divorce rates in Wiawso district of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to develop appropriate strategies to curb the situation. The study further targeted unmarried believers to prepare for a successful marriage and also assist the married couples to manage and cope in marriage to help reduce the rate of divorce which poses a threat to the mission of the church in Wiawso District.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study has several significances. Firstly, it has helped deepen my understanding of the issue of divorce in the District. Secondly, the study will be a source to equip the leaders of the District, especially the Family Ministries on what steps to take towards marital issues. Further, the study will serve as a source of knowledge to both couples and singles of the District to identify issues connected to divorce and how it could be avoided. Thirdly, if the implementation of the project will be sustained, this study will be a positive catalyst for the mission and growth of the church. The church exists in a society, thus, the positive growth of the church on marriage relationships might result in societal growth and stability, and hence creating a window of mission opportunities.

### **Delimitation of the Study**

This study is limited to surveying views of church members and pastors on divorce rates in the church within the Sefwi Wiawso District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The study does not promise an exegetical study on biblical

passages on marriage and divorce. It attempts to use the traditional view of the church on the issue of understanding of marriage and divorce. It is purely based on Seventh-day Adventist and Spirit of Prophecy's principles developed from the scripture as accepted by the church. It does not go outside the domain of the church's doctrine on the issue of divorce in the church.

### **Method and Procedure of the Study**

This was quantitative and qualitative research within the confines of program development and implementation for the divorce rate in the Sefwi Wiawso District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The researcher used both the library and online resources in the literature review section. The sources were mainly on marriage and divorce. This helped the researcher to develop the theological foundation of the study.

This study used quantitative and qualitative methods. The researcher used the questionnaire as the primary research instrument to solicit views on marriage and divorce through interviews. The questions were both open and closed-ended. In the open-ended questions, respondents had to express in writing their views on questions asked. In the closed-ended questions, respondents chose from a scale of options to statements stated in the questionnaire.

The sample population of the study was the married, singles and the divorced of the church. Ethical values were taken into consideration as the respondents were assured of confidentiality. The study employed the random sampling method which helped to give a well-balanced result that was used to develop the strategies to help deal with the divorce rate. Questionnaires were administered by the researcher and all responses were organized and analyzed. The acquired data from both quantitative and qualitative methods were collated and analyzed.

The study was organized into five chapters. Chapter one introduced the study that gave the parameters of the study. Chapter two treated the theological foundation of marriage and divorce. In this chapter, views on marriage and divorce were reviewed. Areas like the Biblical view on marriage and divorce, the Spirit of Prophecy's (Ellen G. White writings) stance, and lastly the Seventh-day Adventist position on marriage and divorce were captured. Chapter three was on the field research where views were solicited and analyzed. Chapter four addressed the problem of the divorce rate in the District by the drawing of a program, implementation, and evaluation. Finally, chapter five summarized and concluded the study.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

This chapter surveys and explores the literature on marriage and divorce. It is arranged in the following order. Under this section, marriage through the lens Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White and the Seventh-day Adventist Church were done to help from the theological foundation for the study on strategies for dealing with divorce rate within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, specifically within the Sefwi Wiawso District of the Western North Ghana Conference of the Southern Ghana Union.

#### **Biblical View on Marriage and Divorce**

Even though the study did not promise an exhaustive survey of all the views, nonetheless, it serves the purpose of the study. The following are the views on marriage and divorce per the Bible.

#### **Marriage in the Old Testament**

The Old Testament is replete with Biblical principles on marriage. Genesis 2:23-24 presents some understanding of the origin of marriage. It is clear that having created a perfect world, God deemed it necessary to institute marriage. Roy Gane has the following to say on the institution of marriage:

Thus, in a perfect world, a perfect and immortal couple was joined by God in an indissoluble social and spiritual union represented by the metaphor 'one flesh.' God's plan was eternal heterosexual monogamy between human beings. Note the aspects of this plan: (1) permanent, (2) heterosexual, (3)



monogamous, and (4) between human beings. No law is stated to outline God's plan. He simply created it so, knowing it was good.<sup>1</sup>

Richard Davidson opines that God intended originally that man and woman were to be joined for marriage. This relationship was therefore heterogeneous rather than homogeny. This was to serve as the model for all creation in a permanent marital relationship. Commenting on the Hebrew word, *dabaq*, Davidson posits that marriage is supposed to be a lasting covenant. This covenant bond between husband and wife was to be a lasting one.

This idea of the covenant then calls for both the husband and the wife to be faithful in marriage. The Old Testament also emphasizes the permanence of the marriage relationship as long as both partners alive.<sup>2</sup> A review of Davidson's viewpoints out that marriage did not originate with man but God. It then means a man needs to be obedient to what God says about marriage. The idea of the covenant also makes it more than a simple agreement between two parties that could be terminated anytime.

Several texts, including Job 31: 1; Hosea 4: 14; and especially Proverbs 2:16-19; 5: 15-23 make clear that there was a moral obligation for exclusive sexual fidelity or faithfulness on the part of a husband and a wife. That was to be observed irrespective of whether there were legal obligations or not. This agrees with the view

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<sup>1</sup> Roy Gane, "Old Testament Principles Relating to Divorce and Remarriage," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Autumn 2001, 35.

<sup>2</sup> Richard M. Davidson, "Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage: Old Testament Foundations and New Testament Implications" (Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.), accessed August 22, 2018, [https://www.academia.edu/32370712/Marriage\\_Divorce\\_and\\_Remarriage\\_Old\\_Testament\\_Foundations\\_and\\_New\\_Testament\\_Implications](https://www.academia.edu/32370712/Marriage_Divorce_and_Remarriage_Old_Testament_Foundations_and_New_Testament_Implications).

that the Old Testament considered marriage as a divinely instituted covenant between husband and wife (Mal 2:10-16).<sup>3</sup>

Charles C. Ryrie adds to the understanding of marriage as a lasting and permanent covenant by stating the following:

Marriage was instituted in the context of creation, making it an ordinance that applies to all regardless of the presence or absence of faith. God's purposes in giving marriage to all mankind were (1) to supply the lack a man or woman has alone; (2) to encourage a faithful, monogamous relationship for the fabric of society; and (3) to establish the one-flesh relationship. The first relates to the word "helper" in Gen 2: 18. It simply means that each alone lacks what the mate can supply so that together they make a complete whole.<sup>4</sup>

While commenting on what makes and constitutes a marriage, Ryrie continues to point out that marriage in the OT involved three elements. The first among the three was the consent of the partners and the parents (Gen 21:21; 34:4-6; Jud 14:2-3). The second was public acknowledgment which includes a marriage contract as well as legal and social customs (Gen 29:25; 34: 12). The last was the physical consummation of the union. This element talks about sexual intercourse between the man and the woman.<sup>5</sup>

Ryrie points out that in the OT, intercourse alone did not constitute a marriage. This is evident from the distinction made in the Old Testament between a person's wife or wives and his concubines (Gen 22:24; Jud 8:30-31; 2 Sam 3:7; 5: 13; I Kgs 2:3). What constitutes the sequence of events involved in Deuteronomy 22:28-29; Exodus 22:16-17) also adds to this fact. The legal or contractual aspect was important in the sense that it made the period of betrothal binding. As marriage was originally planned

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<sup>3</sup> Gordon Paul Hugenberger, "Marriage as a Covenant: A Study of Biblical Law and Ethics Governing Marriage Developed from the Perspective of Malachi" (PhD Thesis, Council for National Academic Awards, 1991), 354.

<sup>4</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, "Biblical Teaching on Divorce and Remarriage," *Grace Theological Journal* 3, no. 2 (1982): 177.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

there was no provision for ending it except by death. Jesus referred to this in His answer to the Pharisees in Matt 19:4-6. Jesus appealed to Gen 2:24 as the basis for His teaching that marriage is indissoluble.<sup>6</sup>

Genesis states that Eve was created by God to become a “helper suitable to him” (2:18). It can be deduced that one woman would be sufficient and become the perfect companion for all of life. It appears also true that God chose to make the woman from the man and for the man so that the two of them could enjoy the closest and most intimate of covenant relationships, as is reflected in the words of Adam. The words of Adam portray this claim “This is the bone of my bones...” (2:23). The divine commentary featured in 2:24-25 reflects the idea that God’s original design for Adam and Even was a permanent, unbreakable bond of loving devotion. Man was created to “cleave” to his wife in a permanent relationship. This is the divine design and normative ideal of all ages, an ideal that finds agreement among all commentators.<sup>7</sup>

Several passages in the Old Testament give a hint that God did not approve of inter-ethnic or inter-religion marriage (Deut. 7:2-4; Ezra 9:2, etc.). A clear case was the Moabite attempt to snare Israel first by hiring Balaam the son of Beor to curse the people (Num. 22:1-24:22) and then by successfully enticing them to become sexually involved with Moabite women and serve Baal (Num. 25:1-16). In first Kings 11:3, God’s commands concerning marriage, ‘You shall not associate with them, nor they with you. They will turn your hearts after other gods.’

Elsewhere in the Old Testament, for example, in the case of Ahab and Jezebel and others betray the faith marrying a non-Israelite did not go yield good results. In

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<sup>6</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, “Biblical Teaching on Divorce and Remarriage,” *Grace Theological Journal* 3, no. 2 (1982). See also Craig L. Blomberg, “Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage, And Celibacy: An Exegesis Of Matthew 19:3–12,” *Trinity Journal* 11, no. 2 (1990): 170–177.

<sup>7</sup> Ryrie, “Biblical Teaching on Divorce and Remarriage,” 23.

most of the cases, many of them were turned from the monotheistic system (belief in only the supreme God of Israel to polytheism system (worship of several smaller gods). In essence, in the Old Testament, God intended marriage to be inter-faith or inter-religion.<sup>8</sup>

Notwithstanding the negative examples of multiethnic or inter-religious marriage, there were positive examples, Salmon and Rahab, Boaz and Ruth, and others (Josh 2:9:1-17; Ruth 1:1-14; 2:1ff). These women find their name in the New Testament (Matt 1:1ff; Heb 11:31). The fact that there were positive results does not mean God condones mixed marriages because the negative results far outweigh the good ones on the pages of the Old Testament. The main problem of mixed marriage was a part of the treat to the covenant between Yahweh and the people of God.

Marrying the heathen had the tendency of marring God's ideal for marriage for His people because of their different belief systems from those of the Israelites. In terms of beliefs per their religion, they were not on the same line. Therefore, for marriage to be according to God's original plan, it should be between two partners whose hearts are joined in following God's commands regarding the sacredness of marriage.

### **Marriage in the New Testament**

Among the principles of interpreting the Old Testament mandates or legal text is to see how Jesus and the Apostles treated it in the New Testament. Also, one has to find out whether Jesus continued the use, modified it, or redefined the understanding on a particular issue in the Old Testament is helpful.<sup>9</sup> On the pages of the New

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<sup>8</sup> Matthew R. Akers, "Multiethnic Marriage in the Old Testament," *Journal of Mid-American Baptist Theological Seminary* (2018): 12, 14, 16–19.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Berchie, "Lecture Notes for NTST 612 Biblical Hermeneutics" (Valley View University extension Campus at Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, September 2014). See

Testament, Jesus and the Apostles have something to say about marriage. This section surveys such an understanding of the purpose of the study.

Jesus affirms the divine design for marriage found in Gen 2:24 in Matthew 19:5-9). According to Jesus' explanation, marriage is a union between a man and a woman. When confronted with the question of divorce, Jesus clearly outlined that in God's original plan, there shouldn't be divorce, and hence making marriage a permanent relationship that lasts till death naturally brings separation. His answer to the Pharisees points out clearly that God only "permitted" divorce in the Mosaic Law (Deut 24:1; Matt 5:31-32). God originally designed married to be a permanent covenant between a man and a woman. Jesus' answer gives a modified version of the laws and regulations regarding divorce in the legal text of the Old Testament.

The Apostle Paul in Hebrews 13:4 admonishes that the marriage bed is to be kept "pure." The implication suggests fidelity or faithfulness of partners in marriage. In the Pastoral Epistles (1Tim 3:2; 12; Titus 1:6) and elsewhere (Eph 5:31, 33), Paul promotes the ideal of God for marriage as against the practice of the Greco-Roman world of his day.

### **Divorce in the Old Testament**

This section looks at the theology of divorce in the Old Testament. Davidson posits that God's original plan of the permanency of marriage was marred by the practice of divorce among his people. The occurrences of divorce appear to be descriptive of the situation. Davidson points out that there exist occurrences of Hebrew terms referring to divorce; it appears the OT never prescribes them. Divorce appears to have been tolerated, conceded, permitted, but never did God command, or

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also Bruce Corley, Steve Lemke, and Grant Lovejoy, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2002), 256, 257.

approved it. This is made clear with Jesus' teaching on marriage in Matthew 19:1-6 and 5:31-32.<sup>10</sup>

Commenting on the divorce on the supposed divorced case between Abraham and Hagar in Gen 21:9-4, Davidson observes:

In the book of Genesis, we find one example of what some have labeled "divorce": Abraham and Hagar. But the narrator's clues makes plain that, while from Abraham's perspective he had divorced—"driven out" [garash] and "sent away" [shalakh]—Hagar, in God's eyes there, had never been a valid marriage, and so there was no divorce, only the dissolving of an illegitimate relationship.<sup>11</sup>

Analyzing the comment above, those who consider the case of Abraham and Hagar was divorce ought to understand the culture prevailing in Abraham's day. It appears there was no legal arrangement between Hagar and Abraham as they went on between Sarah and Abraham. Besides, God never considers Hagar the wife of Abraham. The narrative makes clear in the eyes of God He was a bondwoman to Hagar. The presence of Hagar and Ishmael possibly could have served as a hindrance for the blessing of Isaac, the Promised and legitimate son of Abraham. The reason for saying Isaac being the legitimate son of Abraham is because of God's statement, "Isaac, your only son" in Gen 22:2.

What is found in Deuteronomy 24:1 in relationship to divorce needs to be well understood. Davidson explains that the text is not a document legalizing divorce. The text is descriptive on the grounds for the divorce. The Hebrew rendition *erwat dabar*, which means "the nakedness of a thing," refers to a situation that the wife exposes her nakedness and considered a shameful and indecent act which brings disgrace to herself and her husband. The text appears to mean a sexual activity that may not

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<sup>10</sup> Davidson, "Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage," 1.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

necessarily mean sexual intercourse. This is because such an act would have received the death penalty (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22).<sup>12</sup>

Davidson continues to explain that the term “marriage” used by Ezra the scribe in Ezra 9-10 is not the same as that used elsewhere in the OT. The union between the Jewish men and the pagan women after the exile was considered not a legal marriage but illegitimate. The term meant cohabitation because such marriages were not legal per the laws of the Jews. Ezra, therefore, did not cause divorce by causing them to put away their foreign wives. Ezra was rather dissolving illegal and invalid relationships that were not to be condoned among God’s people.<sup>13</sup>

The case in Malachi 2:10-16 presents a clear case of divorce different from the “putting away” issue in Ezra 9-10. In Malachi, there are cases of Jewish man dealing being unfaithful to his Jewish wife from youth made legal by the covenant by divorcing her (v. 14) and afterward entering into marriage with a pagan woman (v. 11). Ending the marriage relationship with their covenant wives were cases of divorce (v. 16) of legitimate marriage. This act recorded in Malachi as done by the Jewish men is not the dissolution of an illegitimate marriage as recorded in Ezra 9-10.<sup>14</sup>

Taking a survey of divorce from legitimate in the OT, the contexts hint on the most forceful statement of God indicating God’s attitude toward divorce. In Malachi 2:16, the rendering goes, “I [Yahweh] hate divorce!” As with Deut 24:1–4, the legality of divorce is not denied, but such practice was permitted but was morally unacceptable to God. The intertextual linkage with Gen 2:24 by use of the term,

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<sup>12</sup> Davidson, “Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage,” 1.

<sup>13</sup> Joe M Sprinkle, “The Old Testament Perspective on Divorce and Remarriage,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 4 (1997): 535.

<sup>14</sup> Davidson, “Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage,” 3.

*ekhad*, “one” in Malachi 2:10 and 15:18 implies that the Sovereign Lord calls all to return to the calling of the divine ideal in Eden as Jesus made clear in Matthew 19:6 and 8!<sup>15</sup>

### **Divorce in the New Testament**

Mark Geldard explains that to be clear on the use of the exceptive clause, *porneia*, it will be better to look at the meaning and the significance of the usage in the question posed by the Pharisees to him in Matthew 19. The issue of concern is to consider whether the teaching of Jesus is coming from the set of rules laid down that were not to be broken known as the *halakah* or were taken from the ones that were moral exhortations quite flexible known as *haggadah*?<sup>16</sup>

In all the cases, the discourse of Jesus in Matthew 19 appears to suggest Jesus was giving the ideal and a legitimate reason for divorce- *porneia* but was flexible since the teaching belongs to the *haggadah* which allows for flexibility. A couple could decide to forgive their respective partners and continue the marriage relation. The teaching of Jesus suggests divorce is only allowed on such grounds and there could be no other cause.

Mark Geldard teaches that Jesus modified the exception clause of “porneia” because looking throughout the NT (Mark 10:3-9; Matt. 19:4-8), especially in the Gospels, it is clear that Jesus teaches the absolute indissolubility of marriage, with no exceptions whatsoever. The question of the Pharisees (Mark 10:2; Matt 19:3) points out that they had in mind to trap Jesus per His teachings against the Mosaic Law.

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<sup>15</sup> Sprinkle, “The Old Testament Perspective on Divorce and Remarriage,” 540.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.



Jesus' answer, "from the beginning it was no so... what God has put together let no man put asunder" (Matt 19:4-6), clearly affirms absolute indissolubility of marriage.<sup>17</sup>

According to Jesus' teaching, Moses' permission was not God's ordained or ideal for marriage. According to God's original plan for marriage, it is permanent and nothing whatsoever, except death, could separate partners.

It should be understood that God's rules are for the welfare, wellbeing, and the fulfillment of man. Thus, it is not safe to counsel against the teaching of Jesus.<sup>18</sup> In applying, the principles of Jesus are teaching to contemporary marriage situations, it should be noted that what permits is different from what he condones or morally accepts. It is always safe to know God's ideal in a given situation.

A consideration of the structure of Matthew 19:3-9 will be of help to understand Jesus' teaching on divorce for the sake of preserving the respect for the awe and the preciousness of the marriage institution, with all that it means in terms of the well-being of earthly humanity and society as a whole.<sup>19</sup>

In First Corinthians 7:10-16, Paul's counsel is clear: maintain the marriage. If separation occurs (which Paul does not approve of), then only two options remain: remain unmarried or be reconciled to the original partner. Paul in following Jesus's teaching appears to suggest there is nothing to call for divorce because the "exception clause" maybe for only Jewish audiences per their laws but unknown to the gentiles as something to permit divorce.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Mark Geldard, "Jesus' Teaching on Divorce: Thoughts of the Meaning of Porneia in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9," *Churchman*, no. 19.2 (1978): 135.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Ryrie, "Biblical Teaching on Divorce and Remarriage," 189.

As mentioned earlier, one of the principles in the interpretation of the legal text is to consider the teachings of Jesus; whether he modified the law or what. One also ought to consider the authors of the NT on that subject<sup>21</sup>.

The teachings of Jesus and the Apostles are of higher standards than the Mosaic laws on divorce in the Old Testament. Jesus shared a different view on divorce from the Jews who were strict on the law during his days.

While they condoned the exception clause to allow for divorce, in the NT, Jesus did not condone divorce on whatever grounds. According to him, the stubbornness of the Jews led to permission by Moses. Jesus made it clear that in God's original plan, marriage is indissoluble.<sup>22</sup>

Davidson Razafiarivony affirms that the New Testament appears clearer on the issue of divorce. Paul following Jesus' teaching on this matter teaches in Corinthians 7:10, 11 by admonishing marriage as permanent and indissoluble. Readers of Pauline epistles should not perceive him as permitting divorce for any reason. He rather teaches clearly that divorce is prohibited. But in this fallen world, he faces the reality that divorce may occur.

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<sup>21</sup> Berchie, "Biblical Hermeneutics."

<sup>22</sup> David K. Clark and Robert V. Rakestraw, *Readings in Christian Ethics: Issues and Applications* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 242.

He continues to teach that if a divorce occurs, the only option for the Christians is to remain unmarried or to be reconciled to their spouse. Paul's teaching on marriage and divorce should be studied seriously, understood, and applied as the contemporary church deals with the ethical issues on divorce and remarriage.<sup>23</sup>

### **Ellen G. White's Teachings on Marriage and Divorce**

Ellen G. White, one of the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church who is believed to be the messenger of God<sup>24</sup> has made various statements in connection with marriage and divorce that will be insightful in helping understand the topic under study. This section is exclusive to Ellen G. Whites' writings. It is believed God inspired Ellen G. White to write on topics essential for Christians and particular in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Issues on marriage and divorce are part of the numerous topics treated by the messenger of God.

Marriage was instituted by God the creator of the universe and He was the first celebrated it. Ellen G. White observes that if God's people will follow divine principles and taken serious, recognized, and obeyed, marriage will be a blessing. Marriage helps the couple involved to maintain moral purity and brings happiness.

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<sup>23</sup> Davidson Razafiarivony, "But If She Departs': A Study on Paul's Teaching on Divorce and Remarriage (1 Cor 7:10-11) with Application for the Church Ethical Leadership" (Presented at the AUA International Conference on Ethical Leadership, Nairobi, Kenya: Adventist University of Africa, 2015), 18–19. Razafiarivony cites Francis D. Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald., 1986), 708, commenting on 1 Corinthians 7:11, and admits this statement is virtually an admission that the command given in the preceding verse would not be fully obeyed in the imperfect condition of the church. There would be cases of matrimonial differences that would not be overcome by affection and Christian forbearance and separation would result. See also Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1988), 303.

<sup>24</sup> Ellen G. White, *Manuscripts Releases, Vol 1, No. 19-96, MR No. 69: Materials for T.H. Jemison's Textbook, A Prophet Among You*, Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2012).

Marriage as an institution ensures in providing for man's social needs. It enhances the holistic, the physical, the intellectual, and the moral being.<sup>25</sup>

Under the discussion of God's original design for marriage, White teaches that from Adam God made a woman, to be a companion of Adam and also to help him. The woman was made to be a blessing to man. Adam in turn is to be her strong helper. Anyone who enters marriage must do so with the holy purpose for which God created it.<sup>26</sup>

White has this to say on who to marry to bring the intended purpose for which marriage was created. She writes:

Courtship and marriage is the all-absorbing theme. The most indiscreet marriages are formed. God is not consulted. Human feelings, desires, and passions bear down everything before them until the die is cast. Untold misery is the result of this state of things, and God is dishonored. The marriage bed is not sanctified or holy. Shall there not be a decided change about this important matter? ... The marriage of Christians with the ungodly is forbidden in the Bible. The Lord's direction is, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." 2 Corinthians 6:14, Let not unholy bonds be formed between the children of God and the friends of the world. Let there not be marriages made between believers and unbelievers. Let the people of God take their stand firmly for truth and righteousness. Great care should be taken by Christian youth in the formation of friendships and the choice of companions. Take heed, lest what you now think to be a pure gold tout to be base metal.<sup>27</sup>

On contemplating marriage, all should be done in the name of the Lord. A man who is about to marry a wife should consider the purpose of marriage. Some questions ought to be asked and careful considerations need to be made to receive the blessings in marriage. This consideration will help ensure a happy institution for both

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<sup>25</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery and Divorce*, Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2012).

<sup>26</sup> Ellen G. White, *Adventist Home*, Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

man and the woman. White sees marriage as a lifelong real union experience.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore she cautions and advises a man who contemplates on marriage should ask himself the following questions before the adventure:

Is his wife to be his helper, his companion, his equal, or will he pursue toward her such a course that she cannot have an eye single to the glory of God? Will he venture to give loose rein to his passions and see how much care and taxation he can subject his wife to without extinguishing life, or will he study the meaning of the words, 'Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus?'<sup>29</sup>

On divorce, White describes marriage as permanent while both are alive and therefore to engage in it the couple ought to carefully consider. The two to enter the marriage are to be sure they can stay together amid the challenges of life till death naturally separates them. For White, there is absolutely nothing that can cause divorce except the violation of the marriage bed can either break or annul the marriage vow.<sup>30</sup>

The messenger of God further explains that the only cause of divorce given by God is adultery. There is no legitimate ground for the couple to divorce except for the reason stated earlier. She makes an argument by making a premise that marriage was from the creation, constituted by God, a divine ordinance.<sup>31</sup>

White recognizes the fact that there may be laws of the land that declare a marriage null and void per the legalities involved. However, marriage was not instituted by man and has its principles given by the one who instituted it-God.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> White, *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery and Divorce*.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ellen G. White, *Manuscripts Releases, Vol 1, No. 19-96*, Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

## **Seventh-day Adventist (SDAs) Teachings on Marriage and Divorce**

This section reflects on the teachings as prescribed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is important to note that;

The Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) is a conservative Christian protestant fellowship, which is worldwide in extent, evangelical in doctrine, professes no creed or dogma but the Bible. It strives to sound biblically correct on matters of faith and practice. The church emphasizes the Second Advent, which she believes is near and observes the Sabbath of the Bible, the seventh day of the week.<sup>33</sup>

Because this study is done in the context of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it is therefore to bring to bear the church's teaching on marriage and divorce. The *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* shares a wealth of teachings and instructions on marriage. On this, it has the following to share.

The SDA believe affirms that marriage relationship was instituted by God in Eden. Jesus in the NT affirms that marriage is a permanent union of love which must last till death separates the couple. The church in its teaching espouses that the Christian marriage should be that which bases on a commitment to God as well as to the spouse. The two who enter the marriage must share a common faith and in this case, two SDA members and must be heterogeneous.<sup>34</sup>

The church continues to teach all former relationships that must be given up to build the marriage relationship for example that of the relationship between parent and a child. This process allows for partners to cleave to each other. The Hebrew word from which the church draws its teaching, translated "cleave" in Gen 2:24, denotes an act of sticking to, fastening, joining, or holding onto. This results in a

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<sup>33</sup> Don F. Neufeld, "'Salvation,'" *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia (SDAE)*, n.d., 1325.

<sup>34</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 329.

covenant relationship in which the couple understands that they are to be faithful in all aspects to each other.<sup>35</sup>

The church's understanding is gleaned from the word "leave" as found in Genesis 2:24. These relationships may be distractions to the cleaving process of marriage. God in His infinite wisdom then commands the man to leave behind and then stick to his partner. It should be noted that it is the man that was commanded to leave and be joined to the wife, denoting an act of authority over the new relationship devoid of any distractions that may jeopardize the success of the marriage relationship. If a man leaves under his father's roof, he cannot have any control of himself talk of his wife. God wants the man to take charge of the affairs of the relationship. In the parent's house, they can never be "one flesh."

The Seventh-day Adventist Church teaches that even though there were marriages involving more than one spouse found in the Old Testament, these were an expression of the effects of sin on the institution of marriage. Such marriages, although practiced in Old Testament times, are not in harmony with the divine design of God's plan for marriage. God surely requires His people to move beyond the standards of one's culture which conflicts with the biblical view of marriage.<sup>36</sup>

According to the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* after creating everything God announced they were "very good" including marriage (Gen. 1:31). Genesis 2:24 reads, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined

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<sup>35</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, 30.

<sup>36</sup> Dawn Venn, "Divorce and Remarriage in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage - Church Manual 2005," *Family Ministries*, last modified March 11, 2011, accessed February 15, 2019, <https://family.adventist.org/divorce-and-remarriage-in-the-Seventh-day-adventist-church-marriage-divorce-and-remarriage-church-manual-2005/>.

to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). Marriage as a gift was given by God to man.<sup>37</sup>

The *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* makes clear God intended to meet the needs of humanity by instituting marriage. According to God in his infinite wisdom knew ‘it was not good for man to be alone’ (Gen 2:18). God instituted marriage to ensure the well-being of his people.<sup>38</sup> Laws of some societies allow and promote unions between people of the same sex; however, the Bible is clearly against such unions and does not consider such unions a marriage (Lev 18:22; Rom 1:26; 1 Cor 6:9). God made male and female to constitute marriage. In simple terms, marriage is a union between one man and a woman.<sup>39</sup>

Commenting on the permanence of marriage, the *Church Manual* shares the following:

Marriage is a lifelong commitment of husband and wife to each other and between the couple and God (Mark 10:2-9; Rom. 7:2). Paul indicates that the commitment which Christ has for the church is a model of the relationship between husband and wife (Eph. 5:31, 32). God intended the marriage relationship to be as permanent as Christ's relationship with the church.<sup>40</sup>

The *Church Manual* expressly says that marriages that involve more than one husband and one wife express the effects of sin on the institution of marriage. The Old Testament appears to be silent on such marriage, however; the teachings of Jesus and that of the Apostles betray that those marriages were not in harmony with God’s original design (Matt 19:4-6; 1 Tim 3:2; 12; Titus 1:6). God’s plan for marriage

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<sup>37</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 19th ed. (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2016), 154.

<sup>38</sup> Calvin B. Rock, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, vol. 12, Commentary Reference Series (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 735.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 12:736.

<sup>40</sup> General Conference of Seventh- day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 19th ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 2015), 156.



requires His people to transcend the mores of popular culture that conflict with the biblical view.<sup>41</sup>

The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* makes clear that marriage with people of different faith can cause one to fall. Solomon's sins could be traced to the mistake of self-sufficiency and depending on his wisdom in his choice of wives. In this, he did not walk in obedience and humility before God. There is therefore a lesson for all to learn from the history of this perverted life. There is a need for continual dependence upon the counsels of God; to carefully watch the tendency of our actions and to reform every habit designed and planned to draw the Christian from God. The lesson from Solomon's choice of wives and course of actions teach us that great caution, watchfulness, and prayer are needed to keep undefiled the simplicity and purity of one's faith. We ought to rise to the highest moral excellence and attain to the perfection of a religious character. Total reliance on God should be used in the formation of friendships, and the choice of a companion for life.<sup>42</sup>

Jesus' statement sums up the biblical teaching on divorce, "What God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matt 19:6; Mark 10:7-9). God intended marriage to be indissoluble. Jesus' response to the Pharisees (Matt 19:8; Matt 5:32; 19:6) betrays the fact that he had a better understanding of the fidelity of marriage than they did. He made it clear that no one can divorce their wives on any grounds except based on sexual infidelity. Even sexual infidelity does not compel the individual to divorce the partner, rather, Christ's teaching makes clear that in God's

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<sup>41</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 156.

<sup>42</sup> Francis D. Nichol, ed., "*Unsanctified Marriages Cause Downfall*" [1 Kings 11:1], Revised., vol. 2, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (SDABC) (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976), 1031.

plan nothing should cause divorce, except death that naturally separates partner and this justifies the fact that marriage is a lifelong relationship.<sup>43</sup>

The Church Manual stipulates that divorce is against and contrary to God's original purpose in creating marriage (Matt. 19:3-8; Mark 10:2-9), but the Bible is not silent about it<sup>44</sup>. It continues to expound,

Because divorce occurred as part of the fallen human experience, biblical legislation was given to limit the damage it caused (Deut. 24:1-4). The Bible consistently seeks to elevate marriage and to discourage divorce by describing the joys of married love and faithfulness (Prov. 5:18-20; Song of Sol. 2:16; 4:9-5:1), by referring to the marriage-like relationship of God with His people (Isa. 54:5; Jer. 3:1), by focusing on the possibilities of forgiveness and marital renewal (Hosea 3:1-3), and by indicating God's abhorrence of divorce and the misery it causes (Mal. 2:15, 16). Jesus restored the creation view of marriage as a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman and between the couple and God (Matt. 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9). Much biblical instruction affirms marriage and seeks to correct problems that tend to weaken or destroy the foundation of marriage (Eph. 5:21-33; Heb. 13:4; 1 Peter 3:7).<sup>45</sup>

Jesus' teaching on divorce points out that Moses' permission did not constitute God's original plan but due to the stubbornness of Israelites. The permissibility of divorce on the grounds of *porneia* (Matt 5:32; 19:8, 9) does not mean any *porneia* must cause divorce. *Porneia* means sexual immorality or illicit relations such as adultery, homosexuality, pedophilic relationships, or bestiality. The foregoing explanation makes clear that divorce is not part of God's original and ideal for marriage (Mal 2:16; Matt 19:8). This can be summed up with this sentence, "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matt 19:6).<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, 336.

<sup>44</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 156.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>46</sup> Rock, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 12:737.

To explain further, the Seventh-day Adventist Church teaches that while the divine ideal for marriage is that of a loving and permanent union that ought to continue until death brings separation, it is advised that at times a legal separation becomes necessary when there are offenses like physical abuse to spouse or child. The Church continues to teach that in civil jurisdictions such a separation may be solved once by divorce. Under these circumstances, the church should not condemn such a divorce. However, such separation or divorce that does not have ‘unfaithfulness to marriage vows’ as a basis does not give either one the scriptural right to remarry, unless the other party has remarried, has committed adultery or fornication, has died. The Church believes divorce comes with wounds and should be healed as soon as possible.<sup>47</sup>

From the theological foundation done on marriage and divorce, much literature has been gathered and more has been learned. The theological foundation started with general or secular views on marriage and divorce. The study shows views differ on the concept of marriage. To some, marriage is not necessarily a union between a man and a woman. However, what one pleases and pleasures could be taken as a life partner. It could be a man and a man or a woman and a woman, or an animal and a man. Marriage as a relationship could be terminated at any time. On divorce, views expressed betray that anything could be the basis for divorce and if it serves to favor the wellbeing of the parties involved. For example, if a couple could not give birth, the marriage could be aborted and each can move on their separate ways to marry another partner.

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<sup>47</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, 338.

However, the Bible in both the Old and the New Testaments teach clearly that marriage was instituted by God. Hence, some rules guiding this institution given by God. Among some of the rules are that marriage should be a union between a man and a woman. Marriage should be based on the principles of the Bible outlined by God. Marriage is a lifelong relationship that could only be terminated by death. Concerning divorce, the Bible teaches that only sexual immorality or adultery is the basis for divorce. That is even given as permission as grounds for divorce but not a compulsion. The writings of Ellen G. White and the Seventh-day Adventist Church share a similar view of the Bible on marriage and divorce.

## CHAPTER 3

### DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL SETTING AND FIELD RESEARCH

#### **Background of the Local Setting of the Study**

The background to the Sefwi Wiawso Municipal Assembly will be of help to the study. The Assembly was established under the Legislative Instrument, L.I 1386 on November, 23rd 1988 under PNDC Law 207 with the District Capital at Sefwi Wiawso. It was promoted to municipal status in March 2012 under Legislative Instrument, L.I 2015. There is one constituency in the Municipality at Sefwi Wiawso, one Town Council, and five Area Councils.<sup>1</sup>

The General Assembly is made up of forty-five (45) members with thirty-one (31) elected and fourteen (14) Government Appointees. The government appointees are made up of four (4) females and ten (10) males. The Municipality covers an area of 1,280sq.km representing 7% of land area and the seventh-largest in the Western Region. According to the final results of Ghana's 2010 Population and Housing Census, the Municipality's population currently stands at 139,200 which are made up of 69,753 males and 69,447 females.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ghana Statistical Service, *2010 Population and Housing Census*, National Analytical Report, Census 2010 Summary Results of Final Report (Accra, Ghana: Ghana Statistical Service, May 2013). See also Ghana Statistical Service, "2010 Population and Housing Census: Demographic, Social, Economic and Housing Characteristics Report" (Ghana Statistical Service, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Ghana Statistical Service, "2010 Population and Housing Census: Demographic, Social, Economic and Housing Characteristics Report." The population census of Ghana is done every ten years. Currently, the information available at the Ghana Statistical Service is what has been presented. The exponential formula for population statistical projections could be done to get and update of the population around the figures

Generally speaking, in the Municipality, marriage is considered a union between a man and a woman with the knowledge of both families. Among the purposes of marriage are to provide companionship for the couple, offer support for each other, to serve as a legitimate avenue for sexual satisfaction and reproduction. Marriage is a formal union that is legal, traditional, or religiously sanctioned. Other informal cohabitating unions are not considered marriage but to some degree recognized by the families of the parties involved devoid of legal or religious sanctions.<sup>3</sup>

### **Description of the Targeted Population for the Study**

The targeted population for the study is the Sefwi Wiawso District of Seventh-day Adventist Church as it is located in the Western North Ghana Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Southern Ghana Union Conference – Accra. It is one of the Districts in the capital of the Sefwi-Wiawso Municipal. The District has a population of is Nine Hundred and Sixty-two (962).<sup>4</sup>

The people within the District are predominantly Akans and therefore the cultural practice among the people of the Sefwi Wiawso District of SDA is not different from the rest of the people of the Akan group. The inheritance system is matrilineal. Sefwi is the dialect of the people.

There are three (3) prominent types of farming activities in the District. These are livestock farming, food, and, cash crop farming. The most predominant amongst

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<sup>3</sup> Republic of Ghana, “The Composite Budget of the Sefwi Wiawso District Assembly for the 2015 Fiscal Year” (Republic of Ghana, 2015), accessed February 23, 2019, <https://www.mofep.gov.gh/sites/default/files/composite-budget/2015/WR/Sefwi-Wiawso.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Wiawso District of Seventh-day Adventists, *Home and Family Life Ministries*, 7–10.

these cash crop productions is cocoa which constitutes a greater percentage of the farmers in the District.<sup>5</sup>

Agriculture is the major economic activity in the Municipality in terms of employment and income generation, with about 66 percent of the working population engaged in this sector which constitutes the main source of household income in the District. Some of the crops grown within the region include cocoa, palm tree, plantains, cocoyam, cassava, and maize.<sup>6</sup>

The Wiawso District of SDA comprises of Twelve (12) Local Churches namely; Wiawso Central Church, Wiawso New Life Church, Anhwiam Church, Amafie Church, Aboboyaa Church, Ayisakrom Church, Bopa Church, Wuruwuru Church, Old Adiembra Church, Betenase Church, Kofikrom Church, Kofikrom Prince Emmanuel Church. The District has eight (8) organized churches and four (4) company churches.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis of the Field Research**

This section employs a quantitative type of research. Here, individuals are sampled for the study. It is hoped the sampled population will reflect the views of the church members of the Sefwi Wiawso District on marriage and divorce concerning the strategies to help deal with the divorce rate in the District. The data collection method is by questionnaires and interviews.

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<sup>5</sup> Republic of Ghana, "The Composite Budget of the Sefwi Wiawso District Assembly for the 2015 Fiscal Year."

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

### **Sample Size for the Study**

The data was collected from 100 respondents, mainly married couples. In the section of the personal information of the respondents, a disclosure question on the marital status was asked on whether they were married or divorced. The questionnaire further captured the age, qualification, gender, and occupation of each respondent. Some questions in the questionnaire were specialized for the divorce only for the sake of the study. Both open and closed-ended questions were used for the effective results of the study.

### **Data Collection**

An introductory letter to conduct the study was submitted to the church board of Sefwi-Wiawso District for approval. The church board voted that the researcher proceeds with the study. The researcher used a questionnaire to collect data collection. The actual task of data collection was done solely by the researcher. The questionnaires were self-administered and the data were gathered after the responses were given by the respondents. The researcher traveled to all places where interviews were conducted. Some personal interviews were done during the monthly board meetings which are done at the beginning of every month.

Upon administering and having some informal interviews with church members, facts were found. Among the church members, it was found that majority of the church members were interested in the study and were readily available to give their contributions to help share their views to address the issue of divorce they all seem to dread per the statistic given earlier under the background of the study in chapter one of the study



## **Data Presentation and Analysis**

This section presents the questions asked and the responses provided by the respondents of the study followed by the analysis of the issue under study. The study was based on questions that were to be answered by only the married and others for divorcees, and some questions were for both groups. A hundred (100) respondents were the targeted population by the study, the researcher made sure that the survey included the divorced to share their candid views. The study employed a purposive or stratified sampling method to include the groups of people for the focus of the study.

This a quantitative study with the descriptive method which seeks to study the current trend of divorce rate based on the statistical study of the divorce rate of the year 2014 through 2018. The data was collected and analyzed to understand the phenomenon. This study claims any divorce rate whether low or high cannot be taken for granted because of the far-reaching consequences on the individuals involved, other members of the families, and the church at large.

**Question 1: sex.** The questionnaire was distributed evenly as 55 women were forming 55% and 45 men forming 45% of the study. This representation is a good one to prevent a biased view on the topic under discussion.

**Question 2: age.** Fifteen (15) of the respondents making 15% were below the age of 25. Forty people constituting 40% were between the ages of 26 and 35. Twenty (20) constituting 20% out of the respondents were between the ages of 36 and 45. Twenty-five people making 25% of the respondents were above 45 years. It can be deduced from the age distribution that there was a representation of each group. This was intended to help the research establish how marriage and divorce are understood by age difference to help have an inclusive response from those who are young and old.

**Question 3: marital status.** The study found out that 10 people were divorced out of the 100 respondents. There were 6 women and 4 men. The number of divorced made up 10% of the number. The rest 90 respondents, constituting 90% were married.

**Question 4: how long have you been in the church?** This question sought to establish respondents' period of affiliation with the Adventist faith. These were the options: Zero (0) to 2 years, 3-4 years, 5-10 years, 11-20 years, and 21 years and above were the options for the question asked above. Among the respondents, 12 respondents forming 12% ranged between 0 and 2 years. Twenty-five (25) constituting 25% revealed they have been in the church for more than two years. Thirty (30) of the respondents making 30% have a duration in the church ranging between 2 and 4 years. For those who have been in the church for more than 5 years were 15 and that formed 15%.

The rest were 33, constituting 33% were those who have been in the church for more than 10 years. This component of the demography was captured because to have a balanced representation of the old and the new in the church.

**Question 5: if married, for how long have you been married?** This question gave a range of zero to 30 and above years as options to this question. Those who have been married from 0 to 5 years were 25. Twenty (20) of the respondents have been married for the years ranging from 6 to 10 years. Those whose marriage years ranged between 11 and 20 were 20 in number. Those whose marriage has lasted for more than twenty but not above 30 years were 10. Those whose marriage was above 30 years were 15 in number.

The study captured this under the questionnaire because it helps to know the number of years the respondents in marriage. The number of years imparts how one understands the realities of marriage and divorce, one's understanding and experience

with regards to marriage and divorce. For example, someone who is very young in marriage may perceive marriage to be all sweet with less or no challenges, however, those who have advanced in age in marriage will share different views of their experience.

**Question 6: if divorced, for how long have you stayed divorced?** The data gathered shows that only 10 out of the 100 respondents were divorced. When asked how long they have stayed divorced, the following was observed. Three (3) of the respondents have stayed divorced for the years ranging from 0 and 5 while five of them ranged from 6 and 10 years. The remaining 2 have been divorced for more than 10 years but not above twenty years.

**Question 7: could you please share what caused your divorce?** A follow-up question for the divorce was asked. The following were the response:

1. I was not Christian by then, so I was a second wife, so I divorced when I became a Christian.
2. I caught my husband with a good friend of mine who used to come to visit us.
3. My former wife and I struggled for years to get a child coupled with pressure from both of our families, finally, there was a divorce.
4. My husband left me for another wife so when I found out I quit.

In question 8, the divorced were asked if they regretted deciding to divorce. In answering, 7 of them said yes while the 3 others said no. They were then asked; could you please give a reason for your answer? These were their responses:

1. I see it to be a sin, even though I had no choice, I prayed for forgiveness.
2. I regret it because I see marriage to be so important part of life.
3. I do not regret the action because my partner was never faithful and it would not have been cool to spend the rest of my life with.

**Question 9: Could you please list what you think to be the possible causes of divorce in your marriage?** The line of questioning shifted from the divorced from the married to continue the agenda of the study. These were the answers they gave:

1. Failure on the part of the partners to pray and follow the principles of marriage in the first place.
2. Lack of understanding and communication problems in general.
3. The intrusion of the extended families in the affairs of the marriage
4. Unfaithfulness on the part of partners, in the areas of intimacy, money, etc.
5. Sexual and intimacy-related issues.
6. Financial challenges
7. Disrespectfulness on the part of both partners
8. Children and their upbringing challenges
9. Partners' refusal to appreciate the efforts of each other.
10. Failure of partners in performing their roles in marriage.

**Question 10: how would you rate pre-marital counseling before marriage?** Both the married and the divorced rated the importance of pre-marital counseling is. In answering this question, all 100 respondents reported that pre-marital counseling was very important. The answers of the respondents speak volumes on the need for the advice and counsels of experts on marriage and its issues.

**Question 11: per your experience in marriage, how would you rate post-marital counseling?** In answering this question, 78 of the respondents said it was badly needed. The rest of the respondents, 22 in number said it is needed. It appears that for the married and the divorced, post-marital counseling plays a key role in marriage. To them, it will help to avoid some possible causes of ineffective marriage, divorce, and also help the couple manage their marriage even in critical challenges.

**Question 12: do you see it needful to obey God's command in the Bible for a successful marriage?** All the respondents answered unanimously with a yes to this question. This registers a strong sense of the respondents' belief in God as the one to be involved in matters of marriage.

**Question 13: What is your perception of marriage?** With this straightforward question, the study sought to solicit for the perception of SDA Church members by the representation of the respondents. Their answers revealed the following facts.

1. Marriage is a good thing as it brings honor to both partners as they are perceived to be responsible.
2. Marriage is an avenue to help the spiritual growth of the couple. The respondents revealed it has helped him to achieve this.
3. One said marriage is sweet and understandable.
4. Marriage is good when God is present.
5. Marriage help expand the family size as God created it.
6. Marriage is a tool for a successful life.
7. Marriage is ordained by God himself.
8. Somebody revealed he cannot say anything about marriage.
9. Marriage is the last enjoyment in life, but sometimes bitter.
10. Marriage is a miniature and foretaste of heaven.
11. Marriage is a union between a man and a woman and the two families at large.
12. Marriage is bitter, one of the respondents said.

The above views shared to express the perception of both the married and the divorced based on their experience. Some of the answers revealed the individual understands of the Biblical and the Church's teaching on marriage. The years in marriage also inform one's view of marriage.

**Question 14: could you please suggest possible ways to reduce divorce among church members?** In answering this question, the respondents suggested the following:

1. Prayers, intensive Bible studies by the couples.
2. Couples should show mutual respect and understanding of matters of marriage.
3. Effective pre-marital and post-marital counseling.
4. Bible teachings and seminars on marriage and family life.
5. Those about to marry and the newly married should take advice from the experienced in marriage.
6. One must consider getting employed before marriage to avoid financial constraints that lead to divorce.
7. Sex and other intimate challenges should be addressed since they are potential divorce causers.
8. Humility should be shown by the women while men love their wives the Bible way.
9. Church Pastors and elders should be available to assist the couple in ensuring effective marriage to avoid divorce.
10. Couples should see the others as their other halves.

The above suggestions reveal that the respondents are aware that in helping to reduce the divorce rate in the church, the responsibilities rest with the couples, the church, experts on marriage, the experienced in marriage and church leaders. All of them playing their role will surely help solve this alarming situation of divorce that comes with rippling effects on the partners, their families, the church, the society, and the nation at large.

**Question 15: is it against God's word to divorce?** The survey reveals that all the 100 respondents answered with a "yes". They were then asked to support their answers with a reason. The following were their responses.

1. The Bible speaks against divorce and says God hates divorce (Mal 2:10-16; Matt 19:6).

2. God says unless adultery.
3. Some suggest divorce leads to fornication
4. God creating Eve for Adam because it was not good for him to be alone means God knows divorce is not the best for his people.
5. In the Bible, God instructs no man should separate the union He had created.
6. The divorced feel guilty and this affects their relationship to God and His word.

**Question 16: have you remained married until now because society frowns on divorce?** Ninety (90) of the respondents who are still married responded in two ways. Sixty-six (66) of the respondents said no to the question. Meaning they were not still married because society frowns on divorce. The remaining 24 said yes, meaning the reason for those remaining married is because society frowns on divorce. Those who responded “no” to the questions could mean there are other possible reasons married. For example, the answer to question 15, “Is it against God’s word to divorce? The study reveals 100% of the respondents said “yes.” Possibly, those who said “no” are remaining married not because society frowns on it but because of God’s word.

**Question 17: have you remained married until now for fear of losing your salvation?** All the 90 respondents who are married responded “yes” to this question. In essence, the married see a link between their relationships with God when it comes to marriage. They feel divorce may stand in their way to salvation as it is something against God’s word, except for sexual immorality.

**Question 18: if you had your way, would you have divorced?** This was a very sensitive question when it comes to SDA members, notwithstanding, as the respondents were advised to give their candid opinion for the success of the study, interesting revelations were made. Out of the 90 respondents who are married, 25 of them responded with a “yes”, while 65 of them responded with a “no”. There was a

follow-up question to let the respondents tell the reasons for their answers. Those who said yes had the following as their answers:

1. There are so much pain and bitterness in the marriage.
2. There are unpleasant things associated with marriage.
3. Marriage comes with hardships
4. My partner's behavior is unbearable.
5. My husband is not appreciative and supportive.
6. I am not in the same church with my husband and it makes marital life very difficult for me.

Those who said yes had the following as their answers:

1. I love my spouse so much that I cannot live without him.
2. I want to go to heaven.
3. God's words are against divorce caused by anything except fornication.
4. My spouse helps me to walk with God.
5. I do not want any problem.
6. Marriage is very important to me.
7. I am very happy in marriage
8. I have never regretted marrying my partner.
9. I don't have a broken home that will harm me, my spouse, my children, our families, the church, and society.

The above two sets of responses reveal that challenges in marriage are real and divorce could occur if measures are not taken. The church must be supportive of couples in dealing with their challenges. Even those who said they will not divorce even if they had their way may stand the temptation of divorce since they may be tired in dealing with the challenges marriage brings.

**Question 19: does your district have anything to do with helping church members enjoy good marriage and also reduce the divorce rate? In answering this**



question all the members responded with a “yes.” The question is not about the availability of programs but the effectiveness of the programs in effecting changes. The dynamic rate of divorce in the district from 2014 to 2018 reveals that there is more to be done.

**Question 20: does your church have programs that are geared towards helping your marriage work and also reduce divorce rate?** In responding to this, 75 of the respondents answered there were such programs in their churches. The remaining 25 said there are no such programs. Per interviews with the respondents and other informal conversations with other members of the district, it was revealed that there were some programs. Those saying no, may not necessarily see these programs as mere marriage programs but not an attempt to address divorce issues since their churches may not be facing this phenomenon as the others. This conclusion is drawn because it is quite impossible to have an SDA Church with programs in marriage and family life geared towards effective marriage and to decrease the divorce rate. There are twelve churches in the District and the 100 respondents were the representatives of all the twelve churches.

**What programs would you suggest for a successful marriage of church members and in turn help reduce the divorce rate?** Finally, in the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to suggest some programs for a successful marriage and also for reducing the divorce rate in the church. The respondents gave very insightful programs and they are written below:

1. Women’s ministries and Adventist Men should organize practical lessons to teach the church on marriage.
2. Marriage seminars with experts like pastors, counselors, psychologists, as instructors.
3. The church should intensify pre-marital and post-marital counseling.

4. The singles should be counched to make good and informed decisions towards marriage.
5. There should be a program to help the divorced and the married to discuss and share ideas to impart one another.
6. There should be prayer programs for the singles, the married, and they divorced.
7. There should be a District-wide program for the married and the divorced to help people to be exposed to more experience in marriage.
8. There should be Bible teachings presented to help members grab the Biblical concept of marriage.
9. The writings of Ellen G. White should be made clear on marriage to help church members.

The data presented and the analyses made have served as an eye-opener on the members of the District's perception of marriage about how it can impact their marriages. The data also have given much information on what the population for the study perceives to be the causes of divorce. It has also been made clear on the ways to improve marriage and in turn reduce the divorce rate in the District. Since this research assisted members to discover whether the District or the church caters to their marital needs and were also made to suggest ways to improve those strategies, they will feel involved and also part of the solutions.

## CHAPTER 4

### DEVELOPING A STRATEGY TO TACKLE DIVORCE RATES IN THE SEFFWI-WIAWSO DISTRICT

Having described the local setting in chapter three, this chapter focuses on developing strategies to help reduce the divorce rate in the Sefwi-Wiawso District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of the Western North Ghana Conference within the Southern Ghana Union of Ghana.

Divorce appears to be a threatening situation facing the church and giving a bad picture of the marriage relationship created by God. The intents of God towards marriage for humanity seem to be marred by the divorce of which Seventh-day Adventists are no exception. The rippling effects of divorce appear to justify the study. The effects affect the individuals involved, the family, and the church at large.

The Bible makes it clear that God intended marriage to be a life-long relationship to bring joy and peace to humanity (Matt 19:1-9). Being an omniscient God and knowing what the effects of divorce are, He explicitly says that He hates divorce (Mal 2:16). The study is therefore a needed one as it intends to bring a solution to the canker of divorce in the church with study group focus of Sefwi-Wiawso District.

#### **Program Formation**

This section centers on the formation of programs and strategies to help deal with the divorce rate within the Sefwi-Wiawso District. This program is developed or formed based on the collected and analyzed data on the issue of divorce. This appears

much more action research which seeks to put measures into place based on the responses from the population on the study. This study is also heavily based on the values of marriage and divorce through the lens of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. The main program aimed at guiding the singles to prepare for a successful marriage and also assist the married couples to manage and cope in marriage to help reduce the rate of divorce that serves as a threat to the partners in marriage, their families, the Church and the society at large. This serves as the basis for the formation of the program.

### **Step One: Understanding Marriage**

It is undoubtedly true that one's perception of something determines how they react to it. Experience has shown that what people perceive marriage to be has a great deal of impact on their married lives. It is therefore in order as the program development takes first into consideration what people make of marriage. Professional marriage counselors, pastors, and people who have something to do concerning marriage attest to the fact that there are relations between the perception of marriage and marriage outcomes-whether it will be successful or hits on the rocks. Understanding marriage, therefore, is of great importance for the one who enters this institution. This can affect marriage positively or the other way round.<sup>1</sup>

Cecil G. Osborne on adding to understanding marriage writes that marriage is the most rewarding at the same time the most difficult of all the relationships known

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<sup>1</sup> Jerry D. Lehman, *Understanding Marriage, Family, and Intimate Relationships* (Springfield, MA: Charles C Thomas, 2005), 7. See also Rob Bell and Kristen Bell, *The Zimzum of Love: A New Way of Understanding Marriage* (Broadway, NY: HarperCollins, 2016), 2; Richard Taylor, *Understanding Marriage: Making It Work, or Knowing When to Leave* (Interlaken, NY: Prometheus, 2004). Taylor argues that marriage should not be thought of as a status created by the one-time event of a wedding, but rather as a long-term process. The idea that a legal ceremony can create a marriage is a legal fiction, he says. In reality, couples become married through years of mutual regard and caring, based upon the mutual fulfillment of needs.

to man. He expresses it is the toughest institution. However, the author shares that when God said it is not good for man to be alone, God instituted it and it simply means he made all provisions possible for a man to know and believe “it was not good to be alone”. When He said that He meant the marriage relationship was the best for mankind instead of singleness. Due to the perception that marriage remains difficult of all human relations, those who enter into institution do so with apprehension and thinks there can never be a perfect or successful marriage. However, a successful marriage is possible. He shares that sometimes, one’s expectation may be misguided; a professional Christian Marriage Counselor could be consulted for direction for a better understanding of issues.<sup>2</sup>

In expressing what marriage is, Miroslav M. Kiš also writes:

“It is not good for man to be alone.” Human needs for love, intimacy, and stable, constant companionship are legitimate needs. The crucial factor is summed up in Genesis 2: 18-”1 will make him a helper fit for him.” When God does it, it is very good. Then marriage becomes an answer for human needs and an object lesson of His understanding, care, and saving love. Marriage realizes the divine blessing when it follows the original pattern of monogamy, exclusivity, permanency, and sacredness.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that one’s perception of marriage serves a recipe for a successful or a failed marriage has been well articulated by White. On this, the author says counsel should be given on how marriage should be perceived. White writes:

Marriage is something that will influence and affect your life both in this world and in the world to come. A sincere Christian will not advance his plans in this direction without the knowledge that God approves his course. He will not want to choose for himself but will feel that God must choose for him. We are not to please ourselves, for Christ pleased not Himself. It would not be understood to mean that anyone is to marry one whom he does not love. This

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<sup>2</sup> Cecil G. Osborn, *The Art of Understanding Your Mate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), 9–10.

<sup>3</sup> Miroslav M. Kis, “Ordinance of Marriage,” n.d., accessed February 18, 2019, [https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Kis-Ordinance\\_of\\_marriage.pdf](https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Kis-Ordinance_of_marriage.pdf).

would be sin. But fancy and the emotional nature must not be allowed to lead on to ruin. God requires the whole heart, the supreme affections.<sup>4</sup>

## **Step Two: The Journey toward Marriage**

Many a time, the journey to marriage is embarked with little or no preparation. The success of a journey is dependent on the preparation done by the one who journeys. Mihalec asserts that the success of a marriage is connected to the importance one gives to good preparation. The author adds that there should be conscious efforts to making sure that the relationship works. Couples must do their part and also engage professionals who matter in the preparation process to make sure the necessary is done.<sup>5</sup>

In 2008, Ron Flowers, the Co-Director of Family Ministries of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, developed a program for an effective marriage. In the programs, he outlined clearly the objectives that were all geared towards helping couples prepare adequately before they say “I do” in the marital vows. The objectives were:

1. To help the couple to establish a Christian foundation for marriage.
2. To prepare the couple for the transition to married life.
3. To assist the couple in the development of relationship skills.
4. To confirm the couple's decision to marry each other or encourage them to postpone their wedding until further relational growth occurs.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> White, *Adventist Home*.

<sup>5</sup> Gábor Mihalec, “Special Issues in Premarital Counseling,” *Religija Tolerancija* IX, no. 15 (June 2011): 173–182.

<sup>6</sup> See Ron Flowers, “A Program for Premarital Counseling” (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, July 2008), accessed February 19, 2019, <https://family.adventist.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/A-Program-for-Premarital-Guidance-internet-version-2-July-2008.pdf>. As a Co-Director of Department of Family Ministries in 2008, Flowers gives practical steps and easy-to-do assignment to help couples be very confident and sure they are prepared for marriage. The program appears a one-stop and timeless guideline for all couples of all times

According to the Akan Proverb, rendered in Asante Twi, “*Aware kwan wa,*” which is translated to mean “the journey towards marriage is long and demanding.” This saying calls for people who envisage or adventure marriage to go into that union fully prepared for whatsoever to make it a successful one they desire.

Under the pen of inspiration, White admonishes passionately with the following expression. Many young people make the greatest error of the subject of marriage. Many times they are disturbed and some interferences influence their decisions. She cautions that if any subject needed to be considered critically, then it is marriage. Those who are contemplating marriage could seek the aid of the experience of others. However, these counsels must be carefully weighed to know if they are positively essential. The author dreads that marriage is taken so lightly by the great majority of people.<sup>7</sup>

She continues to advise, those entering marriage must God into your counsel, and pray fervently over the matter. The character and the worldview of the one whom one would wish to take as a partner must be carefully taken into consideration. One must consider if they are entering into happiness, harmony, or wretchedness. It should be considered by those entering marriage whether it will lead them to heaven by increasing their love for God or not.<sup>8</sup>

### **Step Three: The Transition from Premarital to Married Life**

There are major issues in the transition from the premarital period to marriage. These include but not limited to, leaving one’s family of origin and changing the

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<sup>7</sup> Ellen G. White, *Manuscripts Releases, Vol 1, No. 1347: Guidelines for Choosing a Life Companion; How to Have a Happy Marriage*, Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

relationships with opposite-sex friends and with parents to reflect the fact that they now have a special relationship with each other.

Those entering into marriage should consider carefully and be ready to accept and manage the change of life with the help of pastors and professional marriage counselors. This step aims at sensitizing partners and in the larger scope all church members that how they react to the differences might bring about failure or success of their marriage. What happens next after the marriage ceremony is determined by how the partner was made to understand the difference between those two stages of life and how to cope based on individual differences or experiences.

#### **Step Four: The Motivation Factors to Keep the Marriage**

There are several major motivation factors exist that keep married partners going into marriage. Exploring them will be of help. Guiding church members on understanding their motivations and the needed motivations both intrinsically and extrinsically will be a tool for a successful marriage and in turn, bring down the rate of divorce. The following should be considered:

1. God, the all-knowing instituted marriage and He knows and wants the best for them.
2. Marriage was created by God to bring fulfillment to both man and woman. Marriage is to bring joy, pleasure, companionship, security, and everything good one can think of.
3. The Devil knows marriage is good for humanity and has attacked it with many challenges, yet God is capable of providing everything for its success.
4. Many who have divorced regret their decision.
5. The rippling effects of divorce are insurmountable and therefore the best place to be is in marriage.
6. He who finds a wife finds a good thing and it can also be said for the reverse.
7. God hates divorce because in His infinite wisdom knows that it is not the best for His people. It can ruin their lives (Mal 2:10-16; Matt 19:6).



8. Partners are to share the love for each other until death separates them. Partners appear to be worried about what will be the picture they may be painting to their children for their decision to divorce.
9. People cannot experience quality lives by spending the rest of their lives without marriage partners.

### **Step Five: Knowing the Possible Causes of Divorce**

Several factors are responsible for the divorce. Some are easily identifiable while others are quite difficult to know. It is essential married couples are exposed some of these possible causes are made known.<sup>9</sup>

The first among the causes of divorce is the reason for marriage. Sometimes, some people just divorce just after a few days after the marriage. Observations show that such of the divorces are caused by disappointment on the side of partners. Some marry with some motives that are not met. When people get married without realizing and being convinced that they are entering into a life-long union created by God then, anything could cause a divorce.

For example, some get married to their partners because of their beauty or handsomeness, and all others that attract them: money, fame, profession et cetera. When life uncertainties happen, they turn to lose interest in the marriage and consequently lead to divorce.

### **Step Six: Knowing the Consequences of Divorce**

I heard one say, “I wish my parents never divorced because sometimes, I sense I need parental love, advice, and warmth but I have been deprived of all such.” One

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<sup>9</sup> See the work of Matthews Mangaliso Tembe, “An Investigation into the Causes of Divorce amongst the Evangelical Church Members in Namakgale Township” (MTh thesis, South African Theological Seminary, 2010).

may take this statement lightly if they had never heard such feelings expressed by the fellow.

Sometimes, looking at things the pragmatic way instead of the ideal approach helps. What guides human thought, decision, and action appears to be the word of God. This can be applied to marriage. The ideal is to go about doing anything in marriage per “thus saith the Lord,” however, letting people know of the practical tangible effects of marriage turn to convince some couples no to adventure divorce at all.

This section of the program formation aims at augmenting the clear instructions of God’s commands on marriage as expressed before in this study with practical glaring effects of divorce to convince church members that God meant what He says. Information will be gathered from Marriage Counselors, Psychologists, Pastors, divorced, children of divorced parents, and all who have experienced the effects of divorce one way or the other will shared to educate Church members of the Sefwi-Wiawso District on the dangers of divorce.

When God says, “it is not good for man to be alone,” the married need to carefully consider their actions or move towards marriage. This section does not promise to offer an exhaustive outline of the consequences of divorce. It attempts to try to offer enough examples to help with sensitizing the yet to marry, the married, and the divorce as they plan to make decisions in and outside their marriage.

The SDA Church believes divorce comes with wounds and has the tendency of posing challenges to those involved and should be healed as soon as possible.<sup>10</sup> It is believed that apart from death, divorce poses difficulty to the family. Those going

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<sup>10</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, 338.

through terrible experience emotional pain. Among the commonest is grief, which is dependent on the individual, may last for a long period with different intensity. Some of them go through the fear of the unknown in the future in terms of financial independence or stability, anxieties. Some dread whether than stand the time of being alone and lonely.<sup>11</sup>

Alison Clarke-Stewart and Cornelia Brentano in their book, *Divorce: Causes Consequences*, give a personal story of a lady lamenting on the deadly effect of divorce of her mother. According to the s lady, the mother relieved for a year for being separated from her husband. However, beyond the relief for the year, the new life of the divorce was a burden afterward. According to the lady, the mother could hardly pay her bills, so she had to work in a series of jobs. She was tired of moving from apartment to apartment since she couldn't afford it. She was fired from work as she refused her boss' advances. According to the story, she faced trying and tough as she struggled to provide for the family being a single parent because the divorced husband stopped caring for them after divorce.<sup>12</sup>

Evidence-based research shows the following general effects of divorce. The divorced are likely to attempt suicide due to depression, anxiety, fear, and loneliness. Some were found to be engaged in violence, traffic injuries, other accidents, drink more alcohol, and become addicted.<sup>13</sup>

Children in divorced families are likely to experience phase-specific and relationship roles. In explaining this, divorce necessarily affects the freedom of the

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<sup>11</sup> Claudio Consuegra and Pamela Consuegra, *Family Seasons*, Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide 2nd Quarter (Accra, Ghana: Advent Press, 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Clarke-Stewart and Brentano, 69.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

child and decreases the number and quality of outside relationships and distracting the attention for academic development. While children are not particularly responsible for their parents' divorce, they usually experience anger, fear, rejection, loyalty conflicts with a shaken sense of identity. All these experiences go a long way influencing the development of the child negatively.<sup>14</sup>

From the Biblical point of view, the divorced experience feelings of guilt over the decision taken since the conscience may be judging them for going against the divine command. It goes a long way to affect a person's relationship with God, and relationship with the people of God. This guilt can be so detrimental to the Christian life and spiritual growth and hence give way for temptation and fall.

Children from broken homes that are raised by single parents may not have a balanced view of life since a father or a mother is the only one in the parenting role. It goes along to affect the children when it comes to personal relationships. Some appear to be hostile toward women or women. This goes a long way in affecting how they relate to people.

The effects of divorce marriage pose challenges to the divorced, the children, and even extended families. Sometimes, there are wounded relationships. When human relationships are ruined due to divorce the relationship between God and the one involved is also affected somehow. The church at large also suffers the impact. Sometimes, church members, pastors, and other members have to sacrifice one and help one way or the other to help rescue the situation.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Michael Duffy, "Impact of Divorce on the Extended Family," *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage* 5, no. 1/2 (1982): 14–15.

<sup>15</sup> Laney et al., *Divorce and Remarriage*, 2.

## **Step Seven: Toward a Successful Marriage**

This section of the program formation intends to present bringing the theories and foundational facts that have led to the success for the success of the marriage relations of some of the members of the Sefwi-Wiawso District. Again, the information will be gathered from Marriage Counselors, Psychologists, Pastors, Divorced, children of divorced parents, and all who have experienced the effects of divorce one way or the other. The information will be used to educate Church members of the Sefwi-Wiawso District.

To begin with, marriage was not instituted by man according to the account of Genesis 2:4-7. God in His wisdom knew at the beginning of the world that man needed not to be alone. The fact remains simple that if God created it then he knows the best way to sustain it like He sustains life in the universe. The couple needs to seek Him for understanding into this subject, the decisions towards, and in it. When God is fully sought on matters concerning marriage then obviously as Jesus's answer to the disciples' question on who can be saved was, "with man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matt 19:26) will be the case. Marriage will be successful beyond human's imagination.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church shares tips on successful marriage to help reduce the divorce rate among church members:

The Church as a redemptive agency of Christ is to minister to its members in all of their needs and to nurture everyone so that all may grow into a mature Christian experience. This is particularly true when members face lifelong decisions such as marriage and distressful experiences divorce. When a couple's marriage is in danger of breaking down, every effort should be made by the partners and those in the church family who ministers to them to bring about their reconciliation in harmony with divine principles for restoring wounded relationships (Hosea 3:1-3; 1 Cor 7:10,11; 13:4-7; Gal 6:1).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Consuegra and Consuegra, *Family Seasons*, 47.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church continues to expound continues to share this:

Resources that can be of assistance to members in the development of a strong Christian home are available through the church or other church organizations. These resources include (1) programs of orientation for couples engaged to be married, (2) programs of instruction for married couples with their families, and (3) programs of support for broken families and divorced individuals.<sup>17</sup>

It is believed that there is nothing like a perfect husband or wife. When the two come together, then it means there are imperfections. There are imperfections; however, it takes two to make the marriage work. The mindset of a successful marriage needs to be imbibed by the couple as the two firmly decide to go all out to make sure the marriage works.

There is undoubtedly enough evidence to prove to human beings that God created the universe and everything in it. Studies, observation, and reflection help one to understand a phenomenon better than those who do nothing of these about the phenomenon. This applies to studies about human beings, their relationships with one another including marriage. There are those who upon observation, reflection, and several tests have known much about marriage. Such people like psychologists, marriage counselors should be consulted before contemplating marriage and after marriage. There should be pre and post-marital counseling to help the couple prepare adequately for marriage and also able to cope well in marriage for a successful marriage.

In the same vein, experienced married couples should be consulted as they could give objective and goal-oriented counseling on marriage. One may not copy verbatim, the way of other couple's marriage; however, others' examples can help

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<sup>17</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 161.

manage marriages. It shouldn't be taken for granted that it is not necessary. Those with more years and experience may know more than the couple does about marriage and they can be role models for a successful marriage.

### **Program Implementation: Measures Taken to Address Divorce Rate**

Having gone through the theoretical framework for the formation of the program it is now the turn for how to make things work in practical terms. Several strategies were used in the implementation of the program on helping reduce the divorce rate in the Sefwi-Wiawso District. The program implementation lasted for three (3) months. In all, there were three sessions.

The first session was on the sensitization of the single and the married through pre-marital Teachings and Counseling. Those married were involved because it was found out that some married couples did not go through the pre-marital that is still needed in their marriage. One month was used for this exercise.

The second session was dedicated to the training of Elder and other church leaders to be equipped to handle issues of marriage and divorce and also coach church members for a successful marriage. Since the pastor is not always with the church members to address their specific needs, training of elders is very key. This exercise also took one month

The third and last session brought the divorced, the experienced married couples to share their experiences with church members every Sabbath during the month. The divorce was taken through a series of talks and counseling to help bring them together. After the implementation, three couples reunited.

Because the problem of divorce is what affects the lives of members and that Seventh-day Adventist Church at large, the following were the measures taken.

### **Strategy One: Premarital Teachings and Counseling**

The singles and the married in the church were given fair treatment as they were seminars for them for the month. There were two seminars. Those in attendance for the first seminar were 200 (120 singles and 80 married people). Those who attended the second seminar were 225 (140 singles and 85 married people). The topics were present were presented in such a way that they found the teachings helpful as the married remain in the marriage and the singles plan towards marriage. Members were encouraged to consult professional counselors on pre-marital and post-marital counseling. The following topics were treated:

1. Marriage is a Covenant
2. How to Live as you Wait to Tie the Knot
3. Making the Right Choice
4. Knowing the Dos and Don'ts of Marriage
5. Dealing with Challenges in Marriage
6. Why Divorce should not be the Option?
7. Towards a Successful Marriage

### **Strategy Two: Training of Elders on Marriage Teachings**

There was a Seminar on marriage for all the District Elders of the various churches who were charged to teach church members on marriage. In the entire District, 50 elders representing all the churches were present. There were two seminars during the month. In these seminars, Psychologists and marriage counselors were the facilitators with me as the District Pastor. The following topics were treated:

1. Know Yourself and the Your Would be Partner
2. Two Souls: One Flesh
3. The Need for Pre-Marital and Post-Marital Counseling.



4. The Role of the Home and Family in Marriage
5. The Elder as a Role Model.
6. The Elder as a Lay Counselor
7. When All Hope is Lost: The Elder as a Beacon of Hope.

### **Strategy Three: Coaching by the Experienced Couples**

During the Sabbath afternoon programs, the days were allotted to the married as they partook in an open forum. Sensitive questions were asked by participants and were addressed by facilitators candidly and objectively. The experienced married partners were told to give candid answers by trying to avoid all sorts of subjectivity. This exercise happened in all churches of the District. Some of the areas included, how they chose their spouses, what have been the challenges, how they have been dealing with them, how to spice up marriage relationships, et cetera. During the month, visits were made to the churches to see the participation of members in the exercise. It was observed that members were interested in the discussions and participated well.

### **Strategy Four: Time with the Divorced**

The divorced were counseled by the District Pastor and professional marriage counselors. They were prayed with and for. They were encouraged and were assured of the Church's support and prayers. By this strategy, three of the divorced within the Sefwi- Wiawso District re-united and gave testimonies for what has happened in their lives. The couples were from the churches of Sefwi Wiawso, Kofikrom, and New Life.

Some of the divorced within the District were also encouraged to lead discussions as to what they perceived to be causes of the failure of their marriage and

the consequences. This was done for two purposes: to help reunite divorced and also help church members to be informed on the cause and the consequences of divorce on practical terms and not only theoretically.

Through a series of counseling, personal visitations, and prayers, three couples reunited. The divorced who reunited were used as facilitators later part of the month to share their experiences. Others are still considering the decision to unite. Some expressed they needed time for themselves.

#### **Strategy Five: “Brother’s Keeper”**

With this strategy, all members of the District were encouraged to pray specifically for seven married couples daily. Both the married and the singles were to take part in this. Also, members were encouraged to visit those couples and share quality time with them.

#### **Strategy Six: “All Hands on Deck”**

There were Prayer Conferences for the Singles, Married, Divorced, and Families. During these prayer Conferences, the presentations were all on the theology of marriage. The researcher, being the District Pastor, helped with assigning and training elders on the presentations towards a result-oriented program. The programs were geared toward making the divorced sense the spirit of belongingness and that they are cared for by the Church. It was also to sensitize the singles on the dos and don’ts of marriage in guiding them in the District. The married also went home with a refreshed view on how to spice up their marriage. They were taught to do their part in marriage in areas like behavior, communication, intimacy, and other important spheres of marriage.

### **Strategy Seven: “Let God in Approach”**

The foundational truth that members were taught was that God wishes the best for all His people. Marriage was one of the ways to make His people live a meaningful life. God has the keys to the success of every marriage. God is therefore to be sought in decisions concerning marriage. Members were taught how to pray for their future in terms of marriage, members were taught to rely on God for guidance as they anything humanly possible for the success of their marriages. Finally, the divorced were encouraged, counseled to open their hearts and let God take away the pain and other hurtful feelings to see clearly on matters concerning marriage.

### **Program Evaluation**

Research should end with a solution to a problem well understood through investigation. The divorce rate in the Sefwi-Wiawso District was a threatening situation in the churches. The study sought to investigate the problem and suggest possible ways in solving them. The program was formed after understanding the problem and through soliciting for the views of the members of the church. The data gathered through the administering of questionnaires were analyzed to inform what to do the problem. The effectiveness of the program could be measured by how best the problem the nature of the problem and the results of the programs after the investigation.

Firstly, the questions asked in the questionnaire proved to justify the need for the program. In answering the questions on the perception of members and divorce, it revealed their understanding was not enough in this matter. The program was formed and implemented on how to make the realities of marriage be understood by the church members achieved its goal. After the program implementation, there was an interest in the study on marriage and family life and there was no case of divorce.

Those who got married went through pre-marital counseling and other married couples are seeking post-marital counseling to help avoid some avoidable mistakes in marriage. There were 15 marriages in the District.

Secondly, on creating the awareness of God's word on divorce, the divorced were made to feel free to share their problems with the pastor, and other church leaders. Through prayers and counseling by the pastor and assigned experts, three couples reunited within the District, Two from Wiawso, and one from New Life. As it has been indicated, a few others are still considering the decision to be reunited. Those who have reunited with their spouses are still in the church. Their fellow church members continue to show love to them.

Thirdly, the study sought to find out why the married remains so. The revelations made were used as the basis in developing the program on motivating others to remain in the marriage. The program was successful as it widened the horizon of understanding among the married. Furthermore, they were motivated to remain in their marriage relations. The program was made practical and related to the issues of marital lives. The absence of divorce for the second quarter of 2019 during the study is a clear indication that speaks to the fact the program is effective and will continue to be. The decision of the divorced to reunite also testifies to that.

Fourthly, the survey sought to solicit for possible causes of divorce to inform the program formation. The practical answers are given by the couples with what the study suggested made it clear for the married to avoid mistakes and if possible help deals with some challenges they are facing in marriage. During the program implementation, throughout the District, church members had a better approach to marriage and family life. This in turn resulted in successful marriages as members testified of their new experience in marriage.

Finally, the members were asked to suggest possible programs that would help establish effective marriages and also reduce the divorce rate. Their response made the study more applicable to solving their problems. This is because these suggestions were problem-based. The participation and involvement of the members were massive and so encouraging because their suggested programs were run with what the researcher also suggested.

In all, it can be said that the program was formed based on the problem in the District regarding divorce rate and marital challenges that could lead to divorce. Members were involved in program formation and implementation. The results point out that the program was successful in dealing with the problem of the divorce rate within the Sefwi-Wiawso District. The program was effective since they were fully involved and it was tailored to address their marital problems. Marital problems are general but when they addressed specifically being based on information from those involved, it appears effective than devising a wholesale strategy in addressing the divorce problem.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Summary**

The study sought to use a systematic and practical approach to investigate the issue of the divorce rate of divorce among the church members of the Sefwi-Wiawso District. It was found out that the divorce rate poses problems to the divorced, the families involved, and the church as well. The church could not overlook this problem. The study was justified as it sought to understand the problem and offer practical solutions. The study sought to address three key issues regarding the problem.

1. Why are there divorces in the Wiawso District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?
2. How can this issue of divorce rate be addressed in the church?
3. How can the program development and implementation suggested by the study be used to deal with the problem of divorce in the District?

The study first looked at the theological foundation of marriage and divorce. This section considered many areas. It looked at the Biblical view of marriage and divorce. The study also captured the view of Ellen G. White and finally ended with that of the Seventh-day Adventist view on marriage and divorce. The theological foundation revealed interesting facts as given in chapter two.

The Bible presents marriage to be God's plan. God intended it to be a union between a man and a woman and must be guided by God's word. In the OT, there appears to be a law that allowed for divorce on the grounds of immorality and others. However, Jesus' modification of those legal texts in the OT presents a high view of

marriage. Jesus in the NT makes clear that marriage can only be dissolved on immoral grounds. Even that is not compulsory to bring divorce. One may choose to accept the spouse and forgive them and let marriage continue and work.

Ellen G. White advises marriage should be entered after careful consideration of God's principles on marriage. Marriage between people of different faith must be discouraged since they may lead to the fall of God's people. She brings the parallel between kings and people of the OT times whose marriage with the heathen who were not Jews led to serious religious implication. There were idolatry, mass disobedience, and other behaviors that were against the standards of Yahweh. White also makes it clear God frowns on divorce since they tend to destroy the relationships among humans and that also between God and His people.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church sees marriage as an institution of God to bring joy, peace, and help address the needs of humanity. The theological foundation presented the SDA Church's position on marriage and divorce. There are practical and pragmatic approaches given by the church to help members manage marriage and also avoid divorce. The church advises the single, the married and the divorced should be treated with care by the church in order to uphold the Biblical principles of marriage and divorce.

### **Conclusion**

In answering the key questions in the study, the following are the conclusions made. Concerning why there are many divorces cases in the Sefwi-Wiawso District, it was found out that people's perception of marriage have an impact on the success of their marriage. Some just perceive marriage as one way of being respected in society, because society upholds it and perceive marriage couples as responsible. It was found out that the Biblical concept of marriage and divorce has not been imbibed by many.

In essence, what led to marriage was not wholly on God's word and therefore could break.

In finding out how the problem could be addressed, the study made use of data gathering through questionnaires and the views of members of those who have divorced, and those contemplating divorces were made to give their views on the possible causes and solutions to the problem. The study found out that most are divorced because they could not manage the challenges that faced their marriages. Some were not in charge of making sure their marriages work. It appears the churches were also not supportive enough in assisting in terms of helping to sustain the marriages and eventually preventing divorce.

The program was developed to address the divorce problem. Practical solutions were given. There was intensified counseling by the Pastor and professional counselors. Psychologists were employed to help members understand the "minds" of their partners to relate with them well. With directions, members were advised to seek the help of professional marriage counselors. Directions were given because there are some counselors today on the television programs in Ghana that appear to be marriage experts but they go against the Biblical principles of marriage and divorce. Their utterances are misleading and secular. There was a need for direction as to who gives pre-marital and post-marital counseling.

The divorced were given special attention through regular visitations; they were prayed for, specially brought close and taught on divorce and its consequences. Members made to make the divorced feel belonged and cared for. There were special counseling sessions for them. The program made use of marriage seminars and prayer conferences on marriage. Church members were encouraged to be concerned about



the other church members' marriages. The married was made aware that the option is not divorce but how to make sure the marriage works.

### **Recommendations**

Upon the study, the formation, the implementation, and the evaluation of the program on the reduction of divorce rate in the Sefwi-Wiawso District, the following recommendations are made.

1. Church members should be made aware of the needed information on marriage before they decide to get married.
2. The experienced married should coach the newly married couples for direction and avoid some bad practices that may lead to ineffective marriage.
3. Couples should know that to make marriage work is a shared responsibility.
4. The Church should intensify the use of professional counselors before and after marriage.
5. Programs on marriage should be problem-based to address problems peculiar to a given place.
6. Members should see God as one to be sought first before contemplating marriage and after the marriage ceremony.
7. Members should be made to understand that divorce is not an option for a failing marriage.
8. Members should be sensitized on the deadly consequences of divorce.
9. The divorced should be used as living testimonies in the church to sensitize members on the dangers of divorce.
10. There should be periodic "revival" on marriage issues to effect changes in marriages and turn to reduce the divorce rate and if possible put an end to it in the Sefwi-Wiawso District of the SDA Church.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
CORRESPONDENCE

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

*AUA*  
*Adventist University of Africa*



Private Bag Mbagathi 00503 Nairobi, Kenya

Tel (254) 733 333 451/452

Email: [info@aua.ac.ke](mailto:info@aua.ac.ke) WEB: [www.aua.ac.ke](http://www.aua.ac.ke)  
Location: Advent Hill, Off Magadi Road, Ongata  
Rongai  
28<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN  
Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION FOR MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE  
RESEARCH**

We hereby introduce to you FRANCIS TENAKWAH BAIDOO (AUA Student ID Number S2014145) who is pursuing a Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology at the Adventist University of Africa, Babcock University extension campus. The student (from Ghana) is working on a research topic title: “Development of Strategies in Dealing with Divorce Rate in the Church: A Case Study of Sefwi-Wiawso District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” towards the completion of his degree requirements. We would be pleased if you grant him the privilege of using your Library and other organizational services for his research.

Thanks for your cooperation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sampson M. Nwaomah".

Sampson M. Nwaomah, Ph.D. Dean, Theological Seminary Cell +254 786 333 311  
+254 739 139 159  
Email: [nwaomahs@aua.ac.ke](mailto:nwaomahs@aua.ac.ke)

SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST  
CHURCH



Western North Ghana Conference

Post Office Box 182

Wiawso

March 1, 2019

Dear Sir,

PEMISSION FOR PASTOR FRANCIS TENAKWAH BAIDOO TO DO HIS RESEACH  
PROJECT

On behalf of the Wiawso SDA church, I write to notify you that the church board voted and took an action on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019 that you can proceed with your research project entitled development of strategy for marriage and divorce among SDA people in Wiawso District.

The decision was made on the introductory letter which you submitted from Adventist University of Africa. The church therefore has given you permission and privilege of using our local district and its membership for the purpose of your research.

We wish you God's blessing as you work on your research project

Sincerely,

Michael Amankwah

(District Pastor)

APPENDIX B  
QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

I am Pastor Francis Tenakwah Baidoo researching on the topic, **DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIES IN DEALING WITH DIVORCE RATE IN THE CHURCH: A CASE STUDY OF SEFWI-WIAWSO DISTRICT OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH**. I am very appreciative you have made time out of your busy schedules to share your views to help my study to be a success.

You are humbly requested to express your candid opinion on the subject and you are promised your identity will be held confidential and all your responses will be used only for the study.

Thank you.

**QUESTIONNAIRE:**

**SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHY. Please tick what applies to you.**

1. Sex: Male  Female
2. Age: 18-25  26-35  36-45  45 and above
3. Marital status: Married  Divorced  Remarried

**SECTION B: QUESTIONS FOR BOTH THE MARRIED AND THE DIVORCED**

4. For how long have you been in the Church? 0- 2 years  3-4 years  5-10 years  11-20 years  21 years and above

5. If married, for how long have been married: 0-5 years  6-10 years  11-20years

21-30 years  30 years and above

6. If divorced, for how long have you stayed divorced? 0-5 years  6-10 years  11-20years  21-30 years  30 years and above

7. Answer this question if divorced: Could you please share what caused your divorce.

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8. Do you regret ever deciding to divorce? Yes  No   
Could you please give me a reason for your answer?

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9. For the married: Could you please list what you think to be the possible causes of divorce in your marriage?

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10. How would you rate pre-marital counseling before marriage?  
Not at all important  Not important  Important  Very important

11. Per your experience in marriage, how would you recommend post-marital counseling? Not at all needed  Not Needed  Needed  Badly needed

12. Do you see it needful to obey God's command in the Bible for a successful marriage? Yes  No

13. What is your perception of marriage?

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14. Could you please suggest possible ways to reduce divorce among church members?

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15. Is it against God's word to divorce? Yes  No  Give a reason for your answer

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16. Have you remained married until now because society frowns on divorce? Yes  No

17. Have you remained married till now for fear of losing your salvation? Yes  No

18. If you had your way, would you have divorced? Yes  No   
Could you give reason (s) for your answer?

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19. Does your District have anything to do with helping church members enjoy good marriage and also reduce the divorce rate? Yes  No

20. Does your Church have programs that are geared towards helping your marriage work and also reduce divorce rates? Yes  No

21. What programs would you suggest for a successful marriage of church members and in turn help reduce the divorce rate?

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APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

I volunteer to participate in research done by Pr. Francis Tenakwah Baidoo.  
My participation is voluntary and understands that I would not be paid for it. I may have the right to redraw and discontinue participation at any time.  
I understand that participation involves being interviewed by researchers and during the interview, the required data will be recorded.  
I have been assured that my identity and information obtained from this interview will not be disclosed and that my confidentiality in this study will remain secure.  
I understand that this research study has been revealed and approved by the institutional ethical committee and for further queries, I am allowed to contact the committee.  
I have read and understood the explanation provided to me. I have answers to all my questions to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.  
I have been given a copy of this consent form.

..... Participant's signature  
and date Signature of Researcher

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Wiawso Training College

1974 - 1979 GCE “O Level”

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1970 - 1973 Middle School Leaving Certificate

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June – Sept 2002 Ministerial Intern Bibiani

2002 - 2007 District Pastor Atetebu

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2011 - 2013 District Pastor Asawinso

2013 - 2015 District Pastor Sefwi Wiawso

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2015 -2016 District Pastor/Coordinator/Under Secretary Western North Ghana

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