

CARRIE A. MILES

**"The Challenge for Christianity in Africa: Transforming
Marriage from Economic to Companionate"**

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Handout

Economic Marriage

Carrie A. Miles

Pre-Christian, pre-Industrial ←-----→ Post-Christian, post-Industrial

Self-interest

Children

- Needed as source of labor, security
- Needed by both men and women. Are considered to belong to father.
- Purpose of marriage
- High birth rate, couples may have more children than they can care for
- Very expensive, “luxury goods”
- Neither sex “needs” children. Are considered to belong to mother.
- Fulfills ego, emotional needs rather than economic
- Many non-marital births
- Birth rates drop dramatically

Marriage

- Contract to protect women in child-bearing capacity
- Contract between two men
- Arranged, not “love matches”
- Women as property: Brideprice, widow inheritance, polygamy
- Based on love, sexual attraction
- Marriage contract becomes unenforceable with unilateral divorce laws. Divorce rates rise
- Age at marriage rises. Increasing proportion of population never married
- Cohabitation common
- Sexual complementary no longer required for economic survival. Same-sex marriage becomes possible

Sexuality

- Sex is a duty
- Sexual complementarity critical
- Homosexuality is seen as simply lustful behavior, not an identity
- Strong sexual double standard
- Machismo
- Transactional sex
- No double standard – women have same sexual prerogatives as men
- Sexual attraction more important than gender of partner
- “Sexual honesty” requires one to act on all sexual impulses
- Sexual orientation seen as a critical aspect of personal identity

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Gender norms

- Constant need to “produce” children →sexual division of labor
 - Women:** work compatible with childbearing. Too busy for extra-household activities
 - Men:** concerned with hierarchy, status, power
- Patriarchy: Not just the subordination of women to men, but the dominance of a few men over everyone else (Bartchy)
 - Slavery, autocracy, feudalism, despotism, client-patron relationships (the *Godfather*)
- Sexual division of labor no longer needed
- Movement of production out of the household → women’s movement mid 20th century
- Gender equality becomes the norm but it may be achieved by bringing men down rather than raising women up
- Democracy and political equality become the norm but they are easily subverted by consumerism

Love

- Nice, but a luxury, irrelevant
- Consider to be an inadequate or irrelevant basis for marriage
- “Uxorious” is a pejorative in ancient Rome. An African man who is too nice to his wife is suspected of being “bewitched.”
- Essential ingredient for marriage. Lack of erotic attraction sufficient grounds for ending a marriage.
- Great confusion between *agape* love (concern about welfare of other person) and “love” as a desire to employ another person to meet personal needs

Christian marriage does not fall on this continuum but must transcend it.