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# Christianity and Marriage in Africa

The Perspective of Christian Men in Ghana

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## **Abstract**

*Christianity is growing on the African continent yet, most of the Christians prefer Traditional African marriage practices to Christian marriage practices. The relevance of marriage for church growth and social development requires a good understanding of people especially men's perception on marriage as Christians. 12 male Christians were interviewed to explore their views on marriage in the Ghanaian society. The study goal at outlining the perception of male Christians about marriage to their belief systems. The research is a qualitative study that employed purposive sampling and semi-structured interview to explore African men's perception of marriage as Africans and Christians in the Ghanaian context. It was found that, although most African men identify themselves as Christians, it is very challenging for them to adopt Christian marriage practice. The challenge is exposed to be higher among Catholic Christian men due to a stricter doctrine on marriage.*

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Marriage is a long journey! It goes beyond what is publicly observe at the ceremonies. There are other important actors in a marriage besides the couple. A good relationship with in-laws sustains marriage and make it a success. Woman, be ‘opened’ to your “new husband” and satisfy him with all his pleasure so that he does not go for external affairs. Also, take good care of the home as an ideal woman. If you get fortunes, bring them to your parents but if you get misfortunes, keep them to your husband. Man; take care of your wife and make her beautiful like other women. May God and our ancestors bless you with the fruit of her womb to make your marriage a success.

The above quotation is the famous pieces of advice mostly offered to a man and a woman when getting married in Ghana, especially in the Akan societies. The statements contain gender constructed roles and responsibilities of a man and a woman in marriage, the nature of marriage in the Ghanaian context, and the importance of marriage. Women's status in marriage is portrayed to be conditional on what she offers her husband. Also, the usage of the term "new husband" implies that, in African society and like elsewhere in the world, there could be another form of relationship between a man and a woman that is not accepted as marriage.

The experiences as a Ghanaian and few encounters with people of Western decent has showcased distinct values and belief patterns about marriage across the globe. To Africans/Ghanaians, love which is vital in marriage in the Western societies means the state of meeting material needs of children, parents, spouse and close relatives while success is identified to include marriage, children, social recognition and contribution to society (Annabella et al., 2018). Therefore, what is valued and cherished by people in marriage in most African societies looks different from another social context.

In contrast to the Western side of marriage as a discrete event that focuses on the consent of the individuals seeking to get married, marriage in sub-Sahara Africa starts with complex processes including the transfer of bridewealth from the husband to the wife's family. The payment of the bridewealth is not performed by the man only but requires the involvement of his family and the community as well. The bridewealth serves as a sign of respect or

appreciation to the woman and her family. It however guarantees the right of the husband on social and economic decisions over the wife (Meekers, 1992).

The Ghanaian culture, for instance, ascribes and defines men as initiators of sexual relationship. Therefore, women who initiate a sexual relationship or make marriage proposals are tagged with derogatory names and stigmatized. Thus, men become "owners" of the house and claim the right of controlling the affairs of the family. Women in most Traditional Ghanaian societies remain passive in their marital homes. It translates into the Ghanaian Christian life where the decision on how to finalize the marriage process to make it consumable comes from men. That is, the decision on the type of marriage, family size and structure are usually based on the choices of men. That means that in the Ghanaian traditional culture, men are cultured and charged with economic and social responsibilities while women are obligated in the house (domestic chores).

The overwhelming dominant and leading responsibility of men makes men autonomous in marriage to an extent. The uninterrupted power control and desire seeking motive of men seem to have impacted on the meaning of marriage in Africa. Dominique Meekers informs that, Despite the leading influence of Christianity on the African continent, there is no complete abandonment of traditional family norms and convergence towards Western conjugal family as many reports portray but "evidence of integration of customary and Christian marriage." To him, a decline in "official polygyny is replaced by a new form of polygamous marriage" (1992, p. 61) and probably a new form of sexual relationships. Despite the domination of Christianity and its associated values, many Christian men find it difficult to delete the taste for cultural marriage for Christian marriage practice.

Preliminary observation in some Ghanaian traditional societies and interaction with some women who are not married in their churches indicates that the problem is men. The concerns of these women suggested that women in relationships are ever ready to have their marriage blessed and witnessed in their faith communities. Some of these women raised a concern that is relevant for this study. According to them marrying in the church secures their marriage. Based on a model involving risk preference, Miller and Stark affirmed that women are more religious than men to the extent that being irreligious constitute risk-taking behavior (2002) and that could be one of the reasons they are always ready for church marriage. Also,

marrying in the church serves as an honor to them in society. As mentioned earlier, success in Ghanaian society is associated with celebrated marriage, children, social recognition and contribution to society (Annabella et al., 2018). These factors if not achieved in a marital relationship of many Africans women can undermine the status of their marriage. They are likely to breed polygyny according to African tradition and cultural values. Also, to be married in the church strengthens their faith and allow them to take part in many important religious activities in the church. For instance, in the Roman Catholic church, a married woman in the church is at peace to participate in the Holy Eucharist even if the husband resorts to behaviors that contradict the holy matrimonial teachings of the Catholic church such as infidelity, polygamy, lack of respect for women, subjection of women to abuses and violence.

Christian marriage does not necessarily take away men's authoritative role in a marriage that has been conferred on them by tradition and culture. According to Most Rev. Nicholas D. Okoh, both Christian and traditional marriage in Africa make reservations for male headship. The difference is that, in Christian marriage, the union is backed by a covenant under the witness of God (2014), and it disregards some cultural practices such as absolute superiority, polygamy, and marital dissolubility. That is, unlike the traditional Ghanaian culture and customary marriage which intensifies women's subjection to men and vice versa, Christianity admonishes men to treat women or their wives as partners in their marital homes. Such differences point to a form of the power struggle which is anticipated by most African men in Christian marriages; hence, they become more critical about the choice of marriage process.

## ***1.2 Problem Statement.***

The contribution of Christianity in the lives of African/Ghanaians cannot be understated. However, many scholars with African orientation has raised questions about increasing membership of Christianity in the global south and its relative decline in the global north (Kim & Kim, 2016). Little has been said in the literature about the shift in Christianity's domination and decline in the south and north respectively. Ingrid Storm reported that religiosity could be predicted on the base of economic insecurity. That is, economically insecure society is more likely to resort to religious beliefs and practices than economically secured society (Storm, 2007). If that has been the case in Africa, could Christianity be understood as a means or an end?



Of course, Christianization of Africans is on a rapid move, but African Christianity seems to be integrated with traditional practices. That is, though Christianity keeps spreading over the continent, some of its practices are least embraced, and traditional African practices seem to be dominant practice behavior of African Christians. One common practice is the marriage of African Christians. According to Peter Poreku Dery (Archbishop of Tamale-Ghana), the main problem of the Christian family has been dramatic as about seventy percent (70%) of baptized adult Catholics were not married according to the Catholic law but the Ghanaian society regards them as validly married (1981). By Christian family, it means that people who are in the Christian religion and married but not necessarily married according to the church tradition. There are therefore concerns about whether Christianity is a culture of modernity or faith as some African theologians and scholars have argued. For instance, Kwame Bediako has indicated that Africans received Christianity and its apparatus as "civilization." He has argued for Early Christian missionaries' role in African identity crises and theological misunderstanding which resulted from a lack of recognition of early missionaries to African tradition and culture (Bediako, 1992). Christian practices including Christian marriage are considered Western culture in the minds of most Ghanaians and Christianity is also thought of as an eroding agent of control of African culture, tradition, and beliefs over its people. Christian marriage from the perspective described above may not serve the marital needs of Africans/Ghanaians.

Despite the role Christianity is playing in African life in terms of social and economic development, it has undermined African culture and belief systems. In the wake of globalization, the popularity of Western influence, control and the relative relegation of non-Western cultures to the background, Africans seem to be reconciled with their tradition, identity, and cultural beliefs. That is, the noted incoherence between the Western Christian definition of marriage and the traditional African objectives of marriage is perceived to have triggered a re-visitation to traditional African marriage. Archbishop Okoh specified that the pressure on Christianity in Africa is different from that on Western secular and postmodern revisionism of Christian tenets. It is instead an issue of reconciliation between the competing claims of the African tradition, the Gospel and modernity (2002).

Many Ghanaians often delayed or avoided the sacramental marriage altogether because of its indissolubility. "The indissolubility took on a different connotation in the mind of the

Ghanaian which is quite different from the indissolubility of traditional or customary marriage" (Dery, 1981 p.38). Contrary to most qualitative reports that there is a change in marriage forms in sub-Saharan Africa as noted earlier, marriage in most societies in sub-Saharan Africa has undergone no significant changes. The difference in matrimonial practice could be attributed to the lack of appropriate data because most people hide a variety of marital situations in their homes (Meekers, 1992 p. 63). Traditional marriage norms and practices are being updated to meet the requirements of modernity with little emphasis on ethical requirements. As a result, 'traditional wedding' has come to replace the customary marriage in Ghana under the watch of church priest but with flexible terms on its dissolubility and homogeneity. Many Ghanaian Christians who are entering marriage opt for customary marriage or what is popularly known as traditional wedding. Many of the people who get married in their churches are in their retiring ages, and these marriages occur mostly upon the will of men. That is, they delay sacramental marriage in their lifetime (Dery, 1981 p. 38). To the reasons, it has been assumed that most Churches in Ghana do not sanction members who are religiously not married or divorced. Also, Christians who are not married in the church are encouraged to take part in most church activities. According to Amenga, the base of the unfulfilled objective of the church to Christianize the marriage of its members is laid on the fact that the Ghanaian church accepts both customarily and Christian marriage altogether (Amenga, 2012). Though the Catholic church has strict doctrines on marriage (Tibbs, 2015), the challenge is higher in the Catholic denomination in contemporary Ghana. However, the acceptance of customary marriage practice by the African churches could be the relevance of the value of culture for religion or Christianity.

Little can be said about why most Ghanaian Christians are not marrying in the church for now. With regards to the delay in a sacramental marriage, it is a preposition that men will be at the front to sacralize their marriage following a satisfaction with the conduct and behavior of their partners in the relationship. If this is true about the delay, the specific requirements that can attract the satisfaction of men are not known. Notwithstanding the different understanding, interpretation, and obligation of marriage in Christianity (Robinson, 2008), many researchers have labeled the reason for less Christian marriage as social, economic and cultural challenge (Arasu,1996 p.230) but, the unwillingness of most Christians in Ghana to participate in Christian marriage could be seen beyond these explicit factors which need exploration.

In conclusion, Christian marriage is supposed to be the model and means for the ministry of the church and advancement of the kingdom of God on earth (Okoh, 2014). Besides, it plays a vital role in controlling most social problems that emanate from family type and structure. Despite the unhealed wounds of the Ghanaian traditional marriage culture and norms such as broken homes, single parenting, divorce, high population growth, polygamy, and its related conflicts, inheritance and human rights abuses, poverty among others, the traditional norm and practice of marriage remain in the Ghanaian society. The most worrying aspect of it is that most of the Christians still cherish and practice customary marriage. The existing traditional marital practice does not only affect the people but also define the fall of Christian marriage as a means for the ministry of the church, and advancement of the church and of the kingdom of God on earth. It is, therefore, a problem of interest to explore the issues that are accounting for the continued practice of traditional marital practice by Christians in contemporary Ghanaian society.

### ***1.3 Focus Area and Research Objectives***

This study has been conducted to understand marriage and Christian marriage in the Ghanaian context. It has focused on the research question;

- What is the perception of male Christians about marriage to their religious affiliation and beliefs?

The study has addressed specific questions or objectives of;

- What are the expectations of male Christians in marriage in Ghana?
- How do these expectations influence the marriage choice of male Christians in Ghana?
- Why would the Ghanaian Christian opt for customary marriage and not Christian marriage?

The study has been conducted with an empathetic approach. Due to time and resource constraints, attention was geared toward men who are Christians, precisely Pentecostals, and Catholics with particular emphasis on Catholics. That is not an implication that the study was conducted for comparing reason but to explore specific perception and influences in marriage among Christians. The choice of an emphasis on the Catholic church is because both marital stability and dissatisfaction are identified with Catholic couples than couples of other Christian denominations (Maller, 2008). Moreover, fewer marriages are contracted in the Catholic church in traditional Ghanaian societies. Again, the Catholic church hosts a significant number of Christians in contemporary Ghanaian society who are customary

married or married in a diverse way other than the Catholic tradition of marriage. That is, the Roman Catholic church features multiple patterns of heterosexual relationships. Though the Catholic church seems to be more receptive to Ghanaian tradition and culture, fewer marriages are contracted under the Catholic tradition.

The researcher's focus is informed by the idea that, besides religious value of Christian marriage, there is social relevance in Christian marriage. In the light of Ghanaian society and culture, Christian marriage plays a protective role in the lives of individuals and their families. It could also be looked like a control mechanism for marital dissolubility, balancing gender roles and maintaining the well-being of family members and society at large. Moreover, the limitations of customary marriage to reduce divorce, polygamy, and inequality makes Christian marriage a critical element in the Ghanaian society. More importantly, there are problems of broken homes, domestic violence, birth out of wedlock, and various forms of personal abuses which the popular Ghanaian customarily marriage has failed to address. Vorster reported that recent articles have concluded on how sociologist, psychologist and human service practitioners have attributed the falling standard of individual and children welfare to marital instability (Vorster, 2008), hence, the need for careful study of marriage in society.

A study of this nature is likely to receive objections and criticisms from readers. Contextual differences and misunderstanding of specific issues in the Ghanaian context, especially readers who are not familiar with the Ghanaian society may raise criticisms. Also, little and older information is found in the literature about the subjective interpretation of Ghanaian/Africans' rationale for the type of marriage they choose. Modern scholars often do not pay much attention to contextual explanation and lay much emphasis on modern perspective fueled by forces of globalization where Western ideology supersedes African thinking and experiences. Most of the literature on marriage and Christianity have focused on general issues on the African continent that is easily accessed on the internet without recourse to history and the Africans as a unique people. Modern scholars have also failed to recognize that, the culture of Africans and for that matter Ghanaians has religious elements inculcated. Elements such as belief in spiritual rewards and punishment inform and control many aspects of their lives. The statements made above is not meant to dispute the findings in the literature

that describe Africans as having common perceptions and shared cultural practices but to highlight on underlying issues and realities that are ignored by scholars and researchers.

Furthermore, the difference in society is culture, and culture defines the identity of individuals. Irrespective of one's religious affiliation culture remains an important variable in whatever he or she does. People may overtly prove Christians in the name of modernity but, covertly act according to cultural beliefs and values. All these statements give a reflection of the findings by Lefebvre that the evidence of the popularity of the Christian religion in Japanese society has come out of the widespread Christian wedding ceremonies in Japan. Majority of Japanese are initially Shinto, die Buddhist but live non-religious life and wed Christian. (LeFebvre, 2015). The case of the Japanese society regarding their marriage and life is undoubtedly being replicated in the Ghanaian society. It is so because both the Ghanaian and Japanese seem to be receivers of modernity and Western culture.

#### ***1.4 Research Material***

The theoretical debate on Christian marriage in Africa is not new. However, it has attracted a general look with little or less attention to the person in context. It is therefore essential to look at the contemporary perception of Christians about marriage in the African context. In the process, the study outlines the manifestation of these religious and cultural factors which are partly considered as historical facts in contemporary Christianized African or Ghanaian society.

First, the research question has been answered by going through an existing theory and literature that have been used as a framework for the study. Second, interviews have been used as the primary source of data collection. By analyzing the data from respondents in the light of existing theory, I have successfully come out with the perception of male Christians about marriage to their religious affiliation and beliefs system.

Finally, I have endeavored to offer a necessary explanation to the perception of Ghanaian Christians men about marriage, and that could be generalized to mean African Christian men's perception about marriage.

## ***1.5 Overview of Research Methodology***

The project is qualitative because it made use of words rather than numbers or quantity in collecting and analyzing the data. Alan Bryman states that qualitative research looks at issues inductively (2012). By inductive approach, it means a "bottom-up" approach (Richie et al. 2014). That is, conclusions are drawn from the specific objectives and the data collected. Concerning the research question, responses from participants were gathered and analyzed to understand the general perception of male Christians about marriage on the African continent. As an exploratory study, it also applied an empathetic approach. The information required was fished out by looking at issues from the worldview of respondents. Besides, the importance of subjective interpretation of human experience in guaranteeing best understanding of issues in social research (Ritchie et al. 2014, p.55) was much considered in the choice of research methods throughout the study.

Participants were purposively recruited from among male married Christians for a semi-structured interview. The respondents were selected from male Christians between the ages of 30 and 55 years, comprising people who are married customarily or/and in the church. The participants were purposively selected in a "flow population" approach (Ritchie et al. 2014, p.127).

## ***1.6 Purpose of the Study***

Christianity is growing in the global south. There is an accelerated shift in dominance of Christianity to the global south (Engelsviken 2014, Kim & Kim, 2016). However, there are practical challenges in the South. There are questions about the marriage of Christians which requires attention to maintain core Christian values and practices such as respect for women, equality, faithfulness, and the indissolubility of marriage. Though challenges to Christianity and specifical marriage of Christians on the African continent are not new, it should be recognized that these challenges keep updating and manifest themselves, thereby thwarting spiritual and physical development of Christianity in African (Ghanaian) society.

As indicated earlier, the researcher has desired to come out with the result that will help strengthen Christianity in African/Ghanaian society by unveiling the realities of Ghanaians experiences with regards to marriage. That is, to look at the challenges of Christian marriage in the context of Ghanaian society by exploring the perception of men about marriage in a

Christian dominated society. It was hoped that the study would religiously enhance the development of Christianity and church growth by creating a balance between communitarian and religious aspects of marriage as the two seem to oppose each other in the Ghanaian/African society. Also, the successful study of challenges of Christian marriage in Ghana has led to recommendations for Christian communities to find the solutions that will educate, encourage and entice members to Christianize their marriage to avert the socio-cultural problems in the Ghanaian society. That is, it has made possible mechanisms to deal with most gender-based violence and social problems associated with the various forms of marriage in contemporary Ghanaian society.

### ***1.7 Structure of the Thesis***

The thesis has been documented and presented in six chapters. Chapter one is an introduction to the study. It presents in detail the background of the study project, the focus area, and the research question. It also has an overview of the research methodology, the goal and the general outline for the study. Chapter two has the scope of the study and details of key issues about marriage and Christianity in Africa. It gives an overview of the subject under study. The third chapter contains details of previous studies and ideas in the subject area as well as the theoretical framework upon which the research question, literature and the findings have been related, analyzed and discussed. The Fourth chapter is about the research design and methodology that have been used in the study. Further, it gives a thorough presentation of how and on which criterion the research has been considered valid. Also, ethical issues relating to the research and how they were managed have been discussed in this chapter. Afterward, Chapter five contains the findings or results of the study. That is, field interviews that were conducted and the responses from the respondents have been categorized and presented in themes relevant for the understanding of the views of research participants. In Chapter Six, analyzes and discussions of the research findings in the light of the frameworks and the literature reviewed on the topic have been staged. How the research question was answered in the study is fixed in this chapter as well as the conclusion of the study. Finally, recommendations are outlined for further research for the theological and practical understanding of marriage.

## 2 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

### 2.1 Introduction

The contradicting notions of marriage as communitarian and polygamous in Africa against the Western Christian idea of individualistic and monogamy of marriage has created a series of controversies in modern Africans, churches, and societies. With the Sub-Sahara Africa being the fastest-growing Christian society across the globe (Kim & Kim 2016, Falen 2008), there remains a significant concern as to whether the Africans have fully embraced Christianity's monogamous ideals. According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life report, many Africans who claim to be Christians have their lives incorporated with elements of traditional African values (2010). Christian marriage practice, for example, remains a dilemma among African Christians and has been debated throughout the history of African missions (Falen 2008). African Christian at marriage is confronted with three elements namely; traditional culture, civil or legal system and the dominant westernized culture mostly found in the churches (Ngundu, 2011). Specifically, African traditional culture and western culture has been the fields of attraction as far as the interplay of these elements is a concern.

Andrew A. Kyomo and Sahaya G. Selvan claim that among the things that are undergoing massive changes on the African continent are social structures and institutions. The Authors claim that many Christian families are in crisis about how to face the change. The crisis that families are facing is a challenge and at the same time, an opportunity. It is a challenge because the old models of the family in Africa are not existing or fading out. It is an opportunity because something new might emerge if the church revisits its theological and pastoral thinking with regards to the validity of marriage (2004). Though some Christian denominations have efforted to deal with the marriage of their members in one way or the other especially in Africa, others such as the Roman Catholic church seem to be swallowed by the Western Christian faith on marriage which places greater emphasis on the ideals of a covenant, monogamy, and indissolubility of marriage.



## *2.2 Cultural Challenge to Faith and Marriage*

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines culture as a set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization ([www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)). It is the total shared and learned behavior of a society or subgroup. Paul O' Callaghan informs that, culture does not refer to man's spiritual interiority alone but a well-organized pattern of life that has been divided into a body of artifacts and a system of customs. "It is a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms through which man communicate, perpetuate, and develop their skills and their knowledge about life and attitudes towards life" (O'Callaghan 2018). That is, culture is known to carry people along, communicate, and it is handed down to other generation through words, gestures, and actions. It expresses and communicates the identity of people (O'Callaghan, 2018).

Faith, on the other hand, means trust or belief in someone, something or ultimately in the divine. To have faith in Christianity means to believe in God. Christians make faith meaningful because "God is God" and culture exists because it is the way of life of a man or a group (O'Callaghan 2018). Humans (men) are seen in modern thought as the agents of their existence and that of others because what humans encounter or is given to them by nature or the divine is transformed by human subjects, and this is what produces culture (O'Callaghan 2018). God and man would mean something different if both were not as they are. The two, God and man (faith and culture) are integral elements. They are all received, assimilated and handed down from generation to generation.

The new and Christian meaning of culture and faith are different from the worldview of the ancient world. The new definition started in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the culture was applied to the mind and human behavior, and that has become the foundation of the contest between culture and faith (O'Callaghan 2018). Culture and religion or faith are intertwined. Since God and man are inseparable, religion and culture are also inseparable. Also, the fact that belief in God is best understood by man, religious practice gains meaning in Culture and therefore religion cannot be practiced in a meaningful way without a contextual understanding of it.

Conflicts are real between faith and culture and for that matter between Christian culture of marriage and traditional African culture of marriage (Olufemi, 2014). In a society, the battle of faith and culture is not in themselves but often emerge out of the interaction between them

on an issue. That is, where either undermines the other or is seen as a threat to the core values of the other in practice, reactions are bound to emerge. The challenge is intensified by their opposing demands and expectations in society. The contradicting values of Christianity and African tradition has been identified as the cause of the challenges in many life situations. In many parts of the world, Christianity is popularly known to be a western religion informed by western culture, and it has been resisted by or to other traditions or societies because of its fundamentals in Western culture (Shakman 2008). However, some African scholars object to such an idea of Westernized Christianity and Christianity as foreign religion to Africans. Christianity is an indigenous African religion (Bediako, 1992). If Christianity has not been limited in orientation, what makes the controversy in the debate between African Religio-cultural claims and Christianity regarding marriage practice? The underlining point is that diversity in marriage perception of people could be a reflection of cultural diversities.

Some Africans have perceived Christianity in contemporary society as the cause of Africa's social and economic under-development; hence, its accelerating opposition by some contemporary advocates for Africans tradition and values (Kodua, 2012). By considering the challenges to faith (Christianity) and its practices in a context, therefore, it would be essential to seek the contribution of Christianity to human culture first. The primary challenge of modern culture to Christian faith and practice is that the Christian faith profoundly influences modern culture. It has made the modern culture a complex one and without faith. That is, culture has been disconnected from the faith that gave life to it. What is observed now is a generalized loss of faith to a pathology of individualism and ingratitude (O'Callaghau,2018).

It would be difficult to doubt the claim that there is a generalized loss of faith to a pathology of individualism just as it is to believe it. However, being a generalized claim creates an opportunity for an individual opinion on such a claim. To be specific, the affirmation or rejection of the claim is highly dependent on the person or group of people in a context. Individualism may not be a challenge in the Western world but maybe for other societies. As talked about earlier, inherently collectivist cultures will have a problem with the modern disconnection of culture from faith. Pathology of individualism has not been a natural occurrence but has emerged from the influences of missionaries, colonialism, modernity, and globalization (Kasongo, 2010). Many indigenous cultures have been hurt by these elements

which have resulted in the loss of identity and self-understanding (Bediako 1992), hence the resurging search and adherence to tradition and identity by contemporary societies.

Talking about African culture without highlight on spirituality makes the discussion on African culture incomplete. As Paul O'Callaghan has indicated, African culture includes a spiritual component of society. Therefore, Africans have a more profound sense of spirituality. As it is, they believe in both evil and good deeds of spirits in their lives. The idea of a spiritual connection to the African people is carried on them and influence their life decisions in a variety of ways. At the various rites of passages to which marriage is no exemption, spirituality and the role of the spirits are referenced and acknowledged through the prayers offered at these ceremonies. That is, African societies believe in spiritual involvement and manipulation in real life events, and such a belief is transmitted as part of the cultural package. Mambo Ama Mazama has been critical about this idea and has explained that Africans have the notion of spirituality and is part of them. It is embedded in their heart and soul. Africans are not separated from the spiritual world but being integrated into the universe that is much larger than any of them, and yet it is centered around them (2002). Mazama has therefore argued in her work that, the crime of Christianity that cannot be underplayed is the desacralization of the African spiritual space because there is paramount relevance of spirituality and its influences in African life.

The modern African culture and Christian faith are seen with a challenge in working. There are different fields of manifestation of the problem. An opened area of the contest is the marriage of Christians in Africa.

It is evident that marriage is contracted between two people; a commonly shared idea by African tradition and Christian tradition. The African marriage goes through a series of processes and endorsement including the significant role of the families of the people seeking to get married in the African society. In the end, the couple does not own obligations to only themselves. They have obligations to their families and the community or society at large.

The loss of faith in the communitarian African traditional marriage to western Christian marriage and its probable incoherence with the demands and expectations of African societies could be the source of controversy in the marriage of African Christians.

### *2.3 African Traditional Marriage*

First Europeans and missionaries on the African continent have generally described African customary practices and tradition as uncivilized and barbaric (Bediako 1992, Falen 2008). African traditional Marriage has been replaced with polygyny by most outsiders. Africa is considered "a home of polygyny" (Karanja 1994, p. 199 cited in Falen 2008). The description of traditional African marriage as polygynous has created a clear distinction between it and the Western Christian notion of marriage (Falen 2008) which according to some modern African scholars, has not been a fair play for the African culture. Recognizing the misinterpretation of traditional African marriage, ideas from contemporary scholars, predominantly Africans have emerged to offer explanations to what is, and what is not about traditional African marriage and the term "polygyny." Also included in their work is an explanation of why the Marriage of some African elites was polygynous.

The term polygyny was coined to describe African marriage because practically and in African tradition and culture, men marry women (Falen 2008). It is uncommon for a woman to seek a man's hand in marriage which could have result in polyandry, a type of polygamy in which women can have multiple sexual partners.

Drawing extensively on the work of Douglas Falen on "polygyny and Christian marriage in Africa, a study conducted in Benin, although polygyny is practiced in Africa, few people are in the practice. Most Africans are monogamously married. Further, those who practice polygyny had or have cultural and traditional explanations for it which many western scholars have failed to recognize.

To understand the phenomenon of marriage in Africa, the African culture must be the focus. As mentioned in the introduction, African societies are naturally communitarian. Africans are not individualistic, and most of their practices are collectively motivated. The general good of all members of the society is at the heart of Africans. That is, in the traditional African society individualism is least encouraged. As a result, many of the traditional practices are socially focused. Therefore, African culture has little recognition for individual values, and that is what could be manifesting in the life of Africans including their marriage.

Many of the people who married multiple wives had or have a passion for reducing the troubles of single women in society by legitimizing their sexual relationships. Among other

reasons is the desire to care for widows who lost their husbands through war or accident. Again, political and strategic reasons for a successful empire building have called on many African elites to have multiple wives. Also, the importance of childbearing as a divine duty for humanity has accounted for polygynous practice in Africa ([www.en.lisapoyakama.org](http://www.en.lisapoyakama.org) ). Among the Akans of Ghana, a second wife due to infertility of the first wife has other implication for the childless wife. It is believed that the fertility of the second wife brings fortune to the childless wife to conceive and give birth. Beside Africans' justification for polygyny, some scholars have argued that the Bible which is the original text of Christians does not provide a firm foundation for limiting marriage to monogamy. Due to this, the converts and African scholars have occasionally pressed the issue to question whether monogamy is a demand of Christianity or is a cultural conversion (Hastings 1973 cited in Falen 2008).

Furthermore, criticisms have come against the inconsistencies found among Christian congregations across the world (Robinson 2002) about marriage. More so, it has occasionally been censured to label the African Traditional marriage as polygynous. It is because many of the polygynous marriage is found in the African Islamic tradition. Islamized Africans started to have multiple wives when Islam was introduced on the African continent. It means that Islam derived polygyny is not culturally African ([www.en.lisapoyakama.org](http://www.en.lisapoyakama.org) ).

The claim of polygyny as a problem-solving process for the trouble of single women in African society seems narrow and lack efficacy. If indeed such women are singles, and society wants them to get married to avoid problems, why married men? Marrying as a second or third wife may introduce other problems in society, for instance, conflicts between wives, children of different mothers with common inheritance rights. Again, it sounds ridiculous to think of polygyny as a problem to infertility. It may be wrong to assume that, childlessness in marriage results from women all the time. In most cases, men could be the cause of the problem, but the African society mostly points wrong fingers at women. Polygyny could be a means of men to take advantage of women to satisfy their selfish and uncontrollable sexual desire.

Further, the fact that there are different views among church denominations does not mean that there is no common ground on marriage. Diversities in the practice of marriage of

Christians is not theologically based. Instead, they are doctrinal. Just as the Bible does not condemn polygyny or give firm ground for Christian marriage (Hastings cited in Folan 2008), it does not endorse polygyny. Similarly, there is no clear evidence of polygyny as a culture or traditional marital requirement for Africans. What seems to be at play is motivation among individuals, denominations, and societies. As Allan Maller indicated, most people and Christian denominations have specific reasons for their specific requirement and interpretation of their respective marital doctrine (2000).

### **2.3.1 The Traditional value of marriage in Africa.**

According to Samuel John Mbiti, if African refuse to marry, he is not only considered abnormal but as under-human, since he has refused to fulfill the spiritual quest for survival of humanity and society (Mbiti, 1999). The obligation to continue the creation order by God in Christianity is also core to traditional African marriage, and that makes traditional African marriage likened to Christian marriage. Marriage in African society is, therefore, a sacred institution and a social union of two individuals who aim at creating a lineage or kinship ([www.career-simini.blogspot.com](http://www.career-simini.blogspot.com)). Besides, the sacredness of African marriage is associated with the importance Africans place on virginity. A girl who loses her virginity before her marriage commits an offense. Such a girl could be forced to marry an old man as a second wife and a servant to the first wife ([www.cormacburke.or.ke](http://www.cormacburke.or.ke)). Among the Krobos and Akans of Ghana, rites of puberty are performed for young girls after the first menstrual cycle in their lives to initiate them into womanhood. Failure to attain this initiation before losing one's virginity attract sanction by the community ([www.studymode.com](http://www.studymode.com)). Though such a value is considered necessary in the African tradition and linked to divine manifestation, it raises the question of corresponding rites for males. Could this be a portrayal of gender bias in the Africa tradition as there are no strict rites of initiation into manhood and male sanction for losing their holiness before marriage?

The African notion of marriage is intrinsically diverse from the modern Christian interpretation of marriage that marriage is just an affair of two individuals and monogamous. In African society, marriage solidifies relationships and keeps the community going by bringing forth new life and hope. Among the Akans in Ghana, marriage is a social event and institution. It is based on the family or their kinship organization (Kyeremanten, 1967). In line with Mbiti's concept and the notion of marriage in Africa that an African who refuses to

marry is considered under-human, an Akan who does not marry when he is of age is denied the traditional funeral rites entitled to him by tradition when he dies. Such a person is treated like a child when he dies and without inheritance rite. A similar condition applies to a person who dies without giving birth. It is because in the Ghanaian- Akan society and tradition such people did not grow as full human beings (Kyeremanten, 1967).

Contrary to the popular notion that traditional African marriage is prone to dissolubility, there no complete breakup in traditional African marriage. Among the Akans, the two families continue to see themselves as in-laws and marriage involving other two people from the two families is not encouraged. People who engage in such a practice are usually accused of committing incest even if the first couple broke up. The bilateral orientations and kinship affiliation are essential in sustaining African marriage (Kyalo 2012). It implies that marriage in Africa is secured with the bilateral agreement of the families involved.

The role of families in African marriage cannot be downplayed. However, it worth noting that, interference of family member has been identified as a major cause of broken homes or challenge of marriage. Therefore, the role of family members is critical in marriage since it has the potentials to stabilize and destabilize marriage in every society. The manifestation becomes more explicit in African societies where marriage is seen as a family and community affair rather than a personal affair.

Marriage is a form of social status in African society. Married people acquire greater respect in society (Kyalo, 2012). To get married is to demonstrate maturity. It is a graduation event from childhood to adulthood and, these explain why Africans put in more significant effort to ensure that members of society get married as expected under flexible conditions and requirements. Paul Kyalo explained this by emphasizing on the importance of some African societies selecting partners for some people even before they are born besides the free selection of partners by people. Also, most African societies organize ceremonies that feature drumming and dancing to get men to choose their partners out of the ladies who participate in the dancing ceremony (2012).

Several processes are involved in marriage in African societies. However, the most significant among these processes is the payment of the bride price-dowry. The payment of the dowry by

the man's family to the woman's side together with its acceptance seal the traditional African marriage ([www.en.lisapoyakama.org](http://www.en.lisapoyakama.org)).

Of course, context is essential in looking at an issue. Therefore, there are relatively good reasons to defend African traditional marriage practice in the face of the western Christian tradition. Among them is that polygyny is not a universal phenomenon in African marriage (Felan 2008). Also, there are situations where a traditionally married spouse refrains from re-marriage following the loss of a spouse. Even where tradition gives a successor the rights to marry a widow, the widow or the successor is at will to accept or reject such an offer. That is, to marry a widow or become a second wife in the event of death to an inheritor is not necessarily a social bond.

It is also important to note that, in the Africa society individuals have rights and responsibilities not only to themselves but to the community or society in which they live. These rights and responsibilities are conferred on them by their tradition and belief system. They are realized through marriage which creates the African family-the basic unit of the society. The implication is that every member of the African society needs to marry to enjoy, and accomplish these rights and responsibilities respectively. Marriage in the traditional African society is not just loved affair of the couple but a mean to an end for the community. The value of marriage is communal, and the consent of the couple has validity only in the communal social context (Magesa, 1998, p.113).

All said and done, there are problems of female subjection, personal and natural right abuses, domestic violence inequality, dissolubility and infidelity that are not adequately checked in traditional African marriages. Above all, there is lacking control of who get married, and at what stage or age. According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund report, every African country is faced with the challenge of child marriage which robs the rights of the female child. That report indicates, however, that though child marriage is common in Africa its practice is not uniform ([www.girlsnotbrides.org](http://www.girlsnotbrides.org)).

That is not to say that problems do not exist in Christian marriages. The cases are just enormous in traditional African marriages. The flaws in traditional African marriage have many negative implications for humanity and society at large.



Notwithstanding the various problems of traditional African marriage, and the increasing conversion to Western faith and ideologies on the African continent most Africans seem to be seduced by the old African traditional marriage practices and its apparatus. That is, the African traditional marriage practice and its associated problems seem to resurge in most African societies. African traditional marriage practice has not only been the choice of non-Christian-Africans but some Christians as well. The issue is quite complicated though, and not directional. Whiles, some African Christians choose to marry only in the traditional way without a church wedding, others delay church wedding in their lives. Moreover, traditional African marriage which is popularly described as polygynous manifests itself in diverse ways among Christians couples (Falen. 2008).

### **2.3.2 The Identity of Marriage and Men in Africa**

Most African men claim to oppose polygyny because it breeds conflict and very expensive. Others consider it an African ideal or heritage as compare to modern monogamy. To some African men, monogamous marriage is the thought of Europeans, and that polygyny is spirited in the blood of Africans. Men, therefore, opposed to state laws that interfere with spousal relationships (Falen 2008). According to Douglas Falen, the code on civil marriage as monogamous that many men in Sub-Sahara Africa have opposed guarantees to equal division of joint property after a divorce. Most African men believe that laws do not necessarily reflect public opinion and that even in the Western world feminist rights may not be universal (2008).

Despite the widely shared perception on polygyny as a tradition in Africa and explicit rejection of the claim, some African men are hopeful that polygyny is a solution to man's desire to cheap labor in the form of a large family and many children. Also, all men desire for prestige, and sexual access leads to polygyny. Though there are diversities, and Christians in Africa may claim otherwise, the appearance of modernity has led to unofficial extramarital wives and girlfriends (Falen 2008) though evidence to this claim is hard to come by. However, practical issues could be interpreted as a sort of indication that there are unofficial extramarital wives and girlfriends in the era of modernization among Christians especially in Ghana and for that matter Africa. In the Ghanaian Roman Catholic church, for instance, religiously married couples fully participate in the Holy Eucharist. The extramarital affair has been popularly identified as the most common reason to deny oneself or to be denied in the

participation of holy communion. A spouse who is spotted in an extramarital game is denied the Holy Communion. One may also withdraw from taking part in the Holy communion out of personal conviction. It is because the congregants are made to believe that breaking a religious commitment such as marital vow is a great sin against God. Failure to withdraw from the Holy communion amount to Gods aversion on the convict. For that reason, withdrawal from the Holy Eucharist is mainly associated with marital infidelity and adultery.

## ***2.4 Christianity and Marriage; Biblical and Historical Foundation of Marriage***

The creational order is the foundation of the biblical idea of marriage and family life. God established marriage as a heterosexual and monogamous with the primary aim of mutual help and guidance (Vorster 2008). The marital relationship ought to be strict relationship both in spirit and reality. A man and woman become one flesh with dedicated and complete sharing responsibilities. Marriage grows out of love between husband and wife, and it is maintained by love and faithfulness. In the Christian thought, the man and the woman were created in the image of God, and this gives the fundamental equality between the man and woman in marriage. However, there is a functional distinction between man and woman in marriage. Man is charged with the headship position to be responsible for the upkeep of the family. Divorce in Christian marriage is against the will of God (Vorster 2008, pp. 466-470). Notwithstanding, there are disparities on marriage practices across denominations.

Raymond Collins reveals that the pluralism of ethics in the New Testament on marriage, sex and divorce mostly reflect a patriarchal culture and androcentric perspective. That is, both Gospel and writings of Paul display a strong bias against women and divorce though exceptions are made for circumstances for divorce. To Collins, Sex and procreation are unfriendly to spiritual perfection. Marriage and virginity are the same and these concepts; sex and procreation, marriage and virginity have given birth to the identification of the tradition of sexual fidelity, offspring and permanent bond of a spouse as relevant for marriage (Collins, 2000).

The writings of early church leaders such as St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas have also contributed to the positive marital theology in contemporary society although each of them and their writings has its interest on a specific issue (Otten, 1998). Christian values of love

and sexual fidelity in marriage are built on Roman ideals as portrayed by Augustine, Aquinas, and others. Clerical marriage remained unclear to Christians up till the 11<sup>th</sup> century. There was no apparent difference between the married and ordained states as well as specifying whether and how marriage can be ended (Olsen, 2001).

In as far as the historical writings and documents are relevant in discussing marriage in the Christian tradition, the problem of marriage ought to be traced from the time of St. Augustine. St. Augustine emphasized consent of the couple through the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the dominant role of the families in marriage was replaced with the renewed focus on the couple. It is only by a gradual process that consent of the couple came to include indissolubility of marriage in real church practice. The implication is that biblical and historical records make a presentation of compassionate marriage as intertwined with historical and social factors. Therefore, modern theology in Christian marriage ought to be looked at realistically in the same way.

According to Adrian Aleksandrov, marriage is a divinely established institution, a legal union and a sacrament that is only comparable with the relationship between Christ and the Church. The ideal Christian marriage is unique, eternal and indissoluble. The matrimony is a mysterious union with the eternal dimension in which the unity of the couple depicts and reveals the mystery of Christ. The institution of marriage has its ontological content besides the problems of ethics, sociology, and law and this makes the description of marriage a difficult task (2011).

Early church members held the Eucharist in high esteem, and a most crucial component of Christian marriage is linked to the Eucharist. The growing challenges of the church and the need to legalize questionable marriage and divorce within the framework of the church law called for the Orthodox restoration of liturgical practice (Aleksandrov 2011). Tibbs Paraskeve has stated that both Catholicism and Orthodoxy regard marriage as a holy institution. Marriage is thus seen as a sacrament of holy matrimony. Meanwhile, there are diversities in marriage rites of Roman Catholics and the Orthodox churches. Tibbs expands that, the Catholic church considers marriage as "contract" and a "covenant" between the couple. Unlike the Roman Catholic denomination, the Orthodoxy does not require the bride and the groom to commit themselves to religious vows since they are considered "King" and "Queen"

of their new household. The Orthodoxy is therefore not strict on divorce and remarriage as compare to the Roman Catholic denomination (Tibbs, 2015).

#### **2.4.1 The Roman Catholic View on Marriage.**

The Roman Catholic church considers marriage as Sacrament. Marriage is both a symbol of and participation in God's free, total, faithful and life-giving love for humanity and his bride, the church. Marriage in the Roman Catholic tradition is, therefore, a covenant, thus a sacred vow that cannot be broken ([www.hobart.org.au](http://www.hobart.org.au)). According to Lisa Sowle Cahill, the Catholic treatment of marriage since Vatican II has adopted a hitting hopefulness towards the marriage relation, its sacramental power, and the Christian family as a domestic church. The interdependent relationship of marriage and parenthood are also based on and require sexual complementarity, including gender roles. Sowle is of the view that the parameters of Catholic teaching about marriage are set by four primary documents namely; "Gaudium et Spes, Humanae Vitae, Familiaris Consortio and the 1983 Code of Canon Law" (Sowle 2003, p.7). Briefly, on these concepts, Gaudium et Spes refers to the marital covenant concerning the love of a man and a woman in a mutual self-giving yet indissoluble. Humanae vitae emphasis on conjugal love which is faithful, exclusive and ordained to the creation of new life. It is upon the Humanae vitae that the subjects of artificial birth control and related issues of marriage and sex are addressed in the Catholic tradition and teachings. The writings of John Paul came with the metaphor of the family as the domestic church with spiritual and social roles. That is the Familiaris Consortio. Lastly, the code of canon law combines the newer covenant language of Vatican II which reflects the emerging emphasis on love. The older view of marriage as a contract between two parties is in this regard is strengthened with love through a matrimonial covenant. That is, marriage according to the revised code of canon law is characterized by unity and indissolubility. Moreover, while the code of canon law uses the personalist approach to marriage, it also retains strict criteria for valid consent and consummation as well as a clear rejection of divorce when these criteria have been met (Sowle 2003).

It is commonly assumed that the strict doctrine and requirements of marriage within the Catholic church is often seen as frustration to a section of church members. This section includes the divorced, the remarried, and the widowed. Also, it is seen as a deterrent to those who are on the verge of marriage. The Code of Canon Law further specifies impediments to

getting married in the Catholic church. For instance, there are age requirements for getting married in the church (16 for males and 14 for females). Also, affinity is much considered in marriage by the Catholic tradition. For example, the marriage of people who are related by marriage is not advised or disallowed in the Catholic tradition. Holy orders also impede Catholic marriage, vows of chastity in a religious institute, a party not baptized into a trinitarian Christian denomination among others.

Catholics in many parts of the world are not able to take part in the holy communion, and are frustrated over their status in the church because of their marriage. Some high-level church officials want the Catholic church to relax its rules on marriage so that divorced Catholics can participate fully in church activities and get relieved from frustration (Paulson 2015). The unanswered question is that, could strict Catholic doctrine and religious impediments be inherently accused of Catholics not marrying in the church?

Reviewing Catholic doctrine on marriage could be considerable and beneficial for the divorced and widowed in the church and not everyone. Similarly, the religious doctrine could be revised to anticipate increased patronage of the Catholic marriage. However, it is good to recognize that the Catholic impediments to marriage are built and enforced in a context. Every religious body has standard rules concerning their practices, but the context influences the enforcement of these rules. For instance, the Catholic church in some Western societies such as Germany is grappling with same-sex marriage following its legalization in the state (Heneghan 2018) while political attempts to legalize same-sex marriage has attracted strong resistance from public officials, opinion leaders, religious bodies and civil society organizations in Ghana (Nussman 2018).

How a person gets married ought to be looked at as a choice between the forces of economic, religion and culture. It is therefore relevant to look at what motivates the choices of individual from possible perspectives than labeling it on general issues such as religion, culture and economic factors.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The challenge of culture to religion or Christianity in discourse is that culture has been disconnected from Christianity (O'Callaghan 2018), therefore, African traditional marriage is considered by some Christian denominations as a practice without faith value. Africans seem

to have figured the challenge to their culture, values, and identity hence, striving for reconciliation with their traditional past. Notwithstanding the apparent reports from African scholars and the attitude of Christians in non-Western cultures, the Roman Catholic church in Africa, falls prey to this new development where members are reluctant in marrying in the church. The strict doctrine of the Catholic church on marriage and its pure element of monogamy which are incongruence with the African tradition of marriage is susceptible to the development of marriage among Catholics.

It is worth noting; however, that marriage choices and family life could more reflect on the power struggles of financial and personal commitments. The claim that conflict in marriage practices is the result of incoherence between Western and African values could be valid but for a few people. It tends to mask individual motivations. Further, the claim that a person prefers monogamy could not be the reason for them to be Christian (Falen, 2008). Similarly, the fact that Africans are being Christianized does not mean that they obviously and completely embrace Western Christian practice in toto. Specific issues that are highly personal need to be unmasked to ensure successful collaboration and negotiation between African traditional marriage practice and Christian values of marriage.

## 3 THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

### *3.1 Theoretical Framework*

The field of religion has long been dominated and influenced by the writings of social sciences. Social theories have been consistently used to explain religious issues which have resulted in a lack of clarity and understanding in the religious field. The underlining debate about the issue of social sciences and religion has always been that religious variables are challenging to evaluate, quantify or qualify (Fox and Sandler, 2005). It further makes the findings of the social sciences challenging to be entirely accepted by the faithful and theologians. However, this could not be the base for outright rejection of social science contributions to religious studies. Christianity is seen as a world religion (Kim & Kim, 2014), influenced by the culture in its context. Culture plays a crucial role in every aspect of human life including marriage. Elements of religion and marriage need to be assessed in the context because culture and religion play an influential role in the life and decision of people. Therefore, social and economic theories though could be deficient in religious issues, they remain useful and potential frameworks for religious and marital studies (Becker, 2015).

This study has used query theory by Eric J. Johnson, Gerald Haubl and Anat, Keinan and value theory as analytical frameworks. The query theory has been employed to explain how men's perceptions about marriage are formed, and offers a meaningful framework to consider men's perception on marriage as a product of choice. It presents how judgments and choices are constructed based on the responses to several queries. Such internal arguments are processed serially. Earlier queries produce a more extensive and richer set of consideration than later ones. The proponents first used the theory to explain endowment effect in economics to empirically understand the difference between the price at which an individual is willing to purchase a product and the price he is willing to sell the same product (Johnson, E. J., Haubl, G., & Keinan, A., 2007). Later, the theory has been used to explain intertemporal choice where decisions are made on what and how to do things at a various point in time where choices and possibilities influence each other (Weber et al., 2007). Milch et al also have included preference selection in groups (2009). That is, they have interpreted how an individual makes decisions through a series of queries before group decisions with the theory. Fredrick & Loewenstein (2008) have expanded the usage of the theory to emphasize the

relationship of preference construction to the evaluation of sequence and consumer decision making. Mercier & Sperber have argued that reasoning is social and argumentative. Inferences are often made when a problem is anticipated. The choice is hence, influenced by context rather than an unvarying set of rules or requirements (Weber & Johnson, 2011). The authors have argued that query theory further provides evidence and process level specification of internal memory and argument integration; process employ to assess options and demonstrate their causal roles in arriving at a decision. Psychologists and behavioral economists have agreed that many personal preferences are constructed rather than being innate and stored (Weber 2013). Weber Elke has later used the theory to emphasize on a psychological process model of preference construction that explains a broad range of issues in a person's choice with significant personal and social consequences including one's reluctance to change.

The notion of value as mostly used in sociological terms examines how, why and to what extent humans value things. It concerns with personal values which are popularly held by a community and how those values might change under situations. Also, it explains how a different group of people may hold or prioritize different kinds of values influencing social behavior. The value theory emerged out of the initial philosophical investigation to understand good and evil. Though it is an older theory with a long trace, the theory has been adopted to explain the significant role of value in the areas of sociology and psychology (Dettmer, 1988). Similarly, marriage as a personal and social phenomenon as well as what and how men perceive marriage has been framed with the theory of value.

With regards to this study, the query theory interpretes how the perception of male Christians on marriage have been constructed on the African continent. The value theory has been used as the yardstick in explaining what, how and what personal priorities are valued. It has been applied to know how an individual's personal and cultural worldviews influence their preferences when it comes to marriage in the Ghanaian society. Query theory has also offered a deeper understanding of male Christians' preference for other marriage types and not marriage in the Catholic tradition. As Elke Weber puts it, individual preferences are constructed and so is Christians' choice of marriage. Christians refusing to engage in Christian marriage has been noted to be the consequence of responses to queries and judgments they construct regarding their marriage. Their preferences are further intensified by



the values which are popularly endorsed by the society in which they find themselves. Both the query and value theories are intertwined in usage particularly in this thesis since they are both applied to explain human behavior by emphasizing personal attributes and diversities in societies that influence the behavior of individuals.

### ***3.2 Marriage, Sex, and Morality in Africa***

Marriage in Africa is a complex institution. It is a product from a series of stages characterized by rite performances by the man to the woman's family (Meekers, 1992). In most African societies, they are the functional responsibilities of the man's family to the woman's family. The rite performance is further endorsed by the entire society that witnesses the marriage as they participate in the rite's performance especially during the final stage where the bride wealth is paid. Marriage in Africa, therefore, has been and continue to be a public event and belongs to the community, not just individuals involved. It is a "social event which involves other people besides the bride and the bridegroom" (Arasu, 1996:229).

The Cardinals, Archbishops, and Bishops of Africa and Madagascar have reported that Marriage in Africa is personal and more communitarian unlike the Christian meaning of marriage as a discrete event which is highly individualistic with focus on the love between two heterosexual partners (1981). The deviating emphasis with regards to marriage in various societies can be looked in the light of the significant role of culture. While the Christian religion has its own culture with values, the African traditional culture has religious imports incorporated.

Sex is an essential theme in marriage definition. There is no clear legal connection between sex and marriage in most societies because of sex's overly association with morality (Grossi, 2014). As a result, the debate about marriage has also been religious and culturally centered with little influence from the legal system in society. The ongoing debate in academia on what determines the morality of a group of people also covers the issue of the right process and conduct of marriage in society. In the Ghanaian society for example, while some scholars maintain that religion determines the morality of the Ghanaians, others emphasize that the society as the determinant of morality. By studying the Ghanaian society, George Anderson has argued that, morality in the Ghanaian society is determined by religion and that what is seen as the determining role of society or culture is because the Ghanaian culture has religious

imports (2013). Kwame Gyeke has also defined morality as a set of rules and norms in society to regulate the behavior of its people (1996). He further explained that these rules and norms come from people's beliefs about right and wrong in life. It means that what is right about or in marriage is about what people believe in life which finds understanding in a context. It is not a functional responsibility of universal claim or belief such as Christianity or Catholic tradition.

It seems that the whole debate about marriage; African customary marriage and Christian marriage are also based on morality. According to Gyeke, morality is a set of rules and norms to govern social behavior including the behavior of people towards marriage. Therefore, it would be incomplete to talk about marriage without recalling the diverse perspective on morality by traditions. Marriage in the African society is considered necessary because in the real sense it is the mother of the basic unit of every society. Its pattern and structure need to be regulated by moral laws. Both religion and culture or the society as indicated by Anderson concern with morality. What makes the difference is ideology and the worldview of individual societies and religion. It can be stated that the imbalanced claims of religion and culture are more the result of Christianity's attitude towards culture in their first encounters. As Anderson puts it, culture has religious imports which is not Christian by nature but very contextual and long existing. Unfortunately, Christianity's presence seems to have disregarded the African traditional culture and its imports; hence the current conflict of claims of Africans (Bediako, 1992). It can be concluded from the explanations of Gyeke, Anderson, and Bediako that, the challenges and debates in marriage practice of African Christians, surrounds the choice of moral standard for marriage.

In the case of Ghanaians, the morality of the Akans is highly dependent on the society (Gyeke, 1995) but Anderson disagreed with Gyeke because he believed that every traditional society in Ghana is naturally religious and that religion and culture in Ghana are fused. Unlike the modernized religions such as Christianity and Islam, that have their codes of conduct documented, the African traditional religion upon which the African culture is validated has its codes written in the hearts and minds of African people (Anderson 2013). It is as old as any other religion that has God as the center of worship. The codes of African Religio-culture are therefore difficult to be obliterated from the heart and minds of the African people, hence, the continuous struggle between Christian and African cultural practices. Moving forward,

even if marriage practice or morality is determined by religion as Anderson has argued, there is still a paramount concern to note that marriage is associated with sex. Sex and sexuality explicitly remain issues of privacy. One's sexual partner or object and behavior is usually personal. Religion nor society has influence over the choice and pattern of the sexual relationship of a person. In situations where religion or society determines the choice of a member's partner or pattern of relationship, it is usually a matter of theory and suggestion. A person is at will to accept or reject such a suggestion. The great influence of religion in the life of Africans cannot be limited to Christianity because Ghanaians or Africans are intrinsically religious. Africans respect any religious claim that is associated with God. It is not about Christianity, Islam or Traditional African religion. It is about belief in God without limitation in their lives.

### ***3.3 The Value of Marriage and the new challenge***

Marriage is recognized as an institution with fundamentally social, sacred and legal importance with exerting forces of religion and culture (Perumal, 2011). African traditional marriage is considered a sacred institution in its context because it proclaims the values of love and faithfulness. Though marriage is engendered, Africans believe in God, and God is at the center of any prayer offered at marriage ceremonies in all African societies, and that explains the religious element of African culture in marriage practice. As an institution with social and legal importance, the married carries responsibilities to society. That is, marriage is not just about pattern and proclamation of love but also a practical tool for the continuous existence of societies in Africa. Africans attach high relevance to marriage besides personal love sharing. These include unity, up moral righteousness, childbirth, social support, social status, the transmission of culture and legitimation of children. The inference is that marriage in the African thought is more of society than faith and love.

Contemporary societies that are dominated by Christianity have been emphasizing on the nuclear family system. The nuclear family system is held as a symbol of economic success and as a sign of spiritual blessing, however, accompanied by the problem of many unmarried women in modern societies (Frahm-Arp, 2012). According to Frahm-Arp, both history and current evidence show a laid-out debate about the most desirable state of marriage for Christians. Though the author talks about diversities in denominational reactions, many of the issues remain unresolved with a new set of social and spiritual dilemma that interrogates the

religious ideal of marriage in many societies (2012). Frahm-Arp referred to the changing nature of “politics of sexuality” and its result of a new place for many people. She outlined why many unmarried women are in the society as higher career status of women, sex-for-goods culture, difficulty in meeting a Christian man and the prioritization of work ahead of family life by most women (2012).

Maria Frahm-Arp could be right in his findings and report especially in the context of Africa. Most of these women are Christians and might be looking forward to men who will marry them in the church to observe Christian codes and modes of marriage. It must be recognized however that men control family life in the African society and therefore, demands and ideas that are likely to inhibit men's cultural privileges are equally likely to be turned down. Noting that modernity and Christian values offer a sense of independence and equality to women in contemporary societies, men are likely to choose decisions that in their internal assessment will guarantee the domination confer on them by the African Religio-cultural practice.

Many scholars have shown interest and concerns about the increasing rate of youth living together without performing religious or civil rites of marriage and the delay of marriage in contemporary societies (Posel, Rudwick & Casale 2011). The practice of living together without religious rites performance and delay in the marriage of African youth seem to appear as an emerging norm in most African societies such as Kenya, Cameron (Chigiti 2012). The emerging situation remains a matter of contemplation ideas suggest that the unmarried cohabitation among the youth is taken to be an intermediary conjugal union and falls within the process of getting married (Attane, 2007). According to Oppenheimer's theory on marriage time; unemployment, unstable and low-status job and cost of living have accounted for the circumstance, and that is happening in societies where men are the breadwinners and gender roles are symmetrical (Calves 2016). Further, individualization hypothesis has been used to explain that the emerging situation of unmarried cohabitation in most African societies is the result of diffusion of cohabitation in Western societies (Calve 2016). That is, the consistent adherence to western culture by Africans has created a shift towards individual autonomy and norms.

The increasing number of unmarried cohabitation popularly called “mpena aware” by the Akans of Ghana is real and very common in most contemporary societies. Though such a

practice is not much welcomed in the Ghanaian society, men in Ghana, for instance, seem to show preference for this practice and most often delay their religious marriage rites performance. The explanations offered by Oppenheimer's theory and the individualization hypothesis fit in explaining the situation in Ghana. However, it is not just about unmarried cohabitation; the result of the new sexual relationship looks not good for the Ghanaian society. The concerns of religious and civil society organizations have been raised towards the situation. There are issues of street children, single mother households, child abuse and neglect, domestic violence that have resulted partly from unmarried sexual relationships.

In most cases, children are usually born out of wedlock with little or no kinship ties. Though there is local control about the sexual relationship in most African societies, the controls are flexible and not comprehensive enough to deal with issues of domestic violence, broken homes, as well as unmarried cohabitation, and its associated problems. A more strict and intense measure need to be in place to ensure a decent pattern of marriage in contemporary societies.

The emergence of Christianity and Christian marriage on the African continent where there is weaker civilian and legal control for a sexual relationship and family life has, unfortunately, meet a consistent struggle and challenge against traditional norms and values that are inconsistently valued and prioritized by the African society. Marriage in Ghana has been in flux. The resultant effect has been that African Christians must make a choice and decision from African customary marriage and Christian marriage for themselves. It has been argued that the choice of the marriage of Christians in contemporary Ghanaian society, as well as Christian men's perception about marriage, is a consequence of personal assessment of multiple values in the Ghanaian society.

## 4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I have given details to the design and the methods used in the study. I have further given explanations for the chosen design and methods. Detailed description of the field experiences has been offered before the presentation of the research findings in the next chapter.

### 4.1 Design and Strategy

The research aimed to explore the perception of male Christians about marriage to their religious affiliations. The research used the case of Christian men (Ghanaians) who are married by customary law or Christian tradition in different Christian denominations. More emphasis is placed on Catholic men. For accurate, feasible, and realistic study, the research goal was synthesized into three main objectives to explore men's perception on marriage;

- *What are the expectations of male Christians in marriage in Ghana?*
- *How do these expectations influence the marriage choice of male Christians in Ghana?*
- *Why would the Ghanaian male Christian opt for customary marriage and not Christian marriage?*

This project is a qualitative study. It made use of data from narrative experiences and not the quantification of data. The analysis of the data findings also emphasizes on words rather than numbers. Relevant to the choice of the qualitative approach is to grab the personal meaning and interpretation of men's experience on marriage in African Christian life. Moreover, human experiences are inherently subjective and are best understood by the participant's interpretation of it (Ritchie et al 2014, p.55). As an exploratory study, it sought to gain highly sensitive information about faith and marriage. It allowed participants to express their opinion through a more open but controlled process to enhance the better articulation of participants' point of view. As part of the strategy, a qualitative approach has been used to understand the goal of the research through the participants' (male Christians in Ghana) point of view on what the perception of male Christians about marriage is all about.

I have specifically employed an inductive approach in the study. By inductive approach, it implies that a "bottom-up" approach (Ritchie et al., 2014). According to Ritchie et al., inductive approach in qualitative research uses a more specific observation or study to arrive

at a general conclusion (2014). Interviews (Unstructured interview) were used as the data collection method in the study. Data collection process and information sought from the people were successfully controlled and protected. That also enhanced access to quality information from the respondents' point of view. Interviewing participants on 'one-on-one' interactions through unstructured interview comprising a list of questions relevant to the study topic enabled the occurring of relevant data for the study. Also, the application of informal conversation has given a brief explanation to some of the issues that were raised by male Christians about marriage although it was not used as part of the primary data collection method.

Finally, conclusions and recommendations for further research have been drawn from the data collected through field interviews. The findings from the study is also discussed in the light of the chosen frameworks and literature that were considered relevant to the fields of religion, culture, and marriage.

## ***4.2 Methodology***

I spent five weeks in Ghana between 1<sup>st</sup> December and 10<sup>th</sup> January 2018 and 2019 respectively in a community located in the Northern part of Ghana. Twelve (12) male Christians who for the sake of confidentiality remain anonymous are married by custom, or Christian traditions were interviewed to explore their views on marriage concerning their identity as Christians. The 12 participants composed of married men who were Christians in the Catholic and the Pentecostal denominations. Out of the 12 participants, nine (9) were from the Catholic denomination and out of the 9, seven (7) were married outside the Catholic law and tradition thus, by custom, while the remaining two (2) were married within the confine of the Catholic tradition. The remaining three (3) respondents out of the 12 were non-Catholic males of which one (1) is married in the tradition of the Church of Pentecost while the other two (2) are customarily married but worship in the Pentecostal church. In addition to the formal interview with the 12 participants, a couple of women were engaged in an informal conversation, although not necessarily aimed at answering the research question but to make complement to some of the responses from participants on specific issues that emerged from the claims of the respondents.

Purposive sampling criteria was employed in the recruitment of participants in a flow population technique. By purposive sampling, Bryman explains that participants are selected with a purpose for the study interest. That is, participants were selected because they had features that were relevant for a better understanding of the issue under study (Bryman 2012). Flow population technique was used to generate the sample frame. Ritchie et al refer to flow population technique as a means of generating sample in other settings without visiting people in their homes. The sample frame is generated at a location other than the natural settings of the respondents (2014, p.127). In the study, the potential participants were selected at their church premises and together with them a convenient time and place were agreed upon for the individual interviews.

All the interviews were conducted in the form of a semi-structured interview with an interview guide. The interview guide consisted of a set of questions that were covered during the interview session with each participant. The interview questions did not follow the interview guide in each interview section. However, the most important is that all questions in the guide were sufficiently covered. Besides, questions that came along and attracted relevance to the study but not covered in the interview guide were also asked for participants' view. All the interviews were conducted in a fair manner, and that allowed for the free expression of participants' view on the issues.

I spent an average of sixty-five (65) minutes on each participant during the interview. In each interview session, the commencement of the interview with the participant is preceded with a consultation of the participant to choose the time and location for the interview that he deemed convenient. Out of the twelve interview sessions, nine were conducted in the Roman Catholic church while the remaining three were conducted in the hall of the church of Pentecost. That is, while all the Catholics agreed to have the interview in their church hall when no activity was taking place, the Pentecostals equally agreed to have their session in their church premise. It must be noted, however, that their chosen venues were based on recommendation when it was realized they needed to express themselves without exposure of their views about marriage. More so, it was observed that participants felt the inconveniences associated with expressing their opinions in their residences since they did not want their wives to know their views and experiences about their marriages.



The informal conversation with two young women took place after church in an open chat with them at the same time. That is, it was in the form of group discussion. Although these women were not informed about how relevant their views were to the study, the young women have known the intention earlier in the Roman Catholic church. However, they were enthused to discuss issues with me when they were briefed about the study.

### ***4.3 Validity of the Research***

The issue of research validity is under debate in academic research (Richie et al., 2014). As debatable as the concept has been among researchers, it is equally complicated in its application in the research study, because the study is qualitative research. The validity in social research has been referred to as the extent to which a research finding is well-founded and accurately reflects the issue under study. Many other researchers have described it to mean the generalization of research findings to other contexts which have also attracted criticisms more frequently. Bryman has explained research validity complication as being the result of the different nature of qualitative and quantitative research (2012, p.3-32). The controversy is that while some scholar's emphasis on the application of research validity as used in the quantitative research, others have opted and crave for a complete rejection of the validity in qualitative research (Richie et al. 2014, pp.356-257). In this study, the validity of the research has been considered through the identified approach of Peter Wood that includes a sustained method and respondents' validation of data (Wood 2006, p.4).

According to Wood, sustained methods entails undisturbed research approach as possible. In the case of the study, the sustained method was employed during the data collection where semi-structured questions were used in an interview for at least one hour per participant. Also, the participation in the decision of the participants regarding time and place of interview gives a reflection of the sustained method as a participant were comfortable with their decision and their responses to interview questions. Respondents validation of the responses in audio recording reveals a significant level of valid information of data collected. Though the participants did not have access to the transcribed version of the recorded interviews due to time constraint, each of them accepted the recorded voice as their opinion at the end of their interview session. However, respondents were assured of a copy of the data transcribed in a convenient time.

#### *4.4 Ethical considerations*

As stated earlier in the study, religion and marriage are susceptible fields. A study about people's experiences particularly about their marriage demanded for higher ethical considerations. Besides anonymity of participants information, informed consent and confidentiality were given significant considerations throughout the study.

As part of the effort to control ethical pitfalls, the consent of the target population was sought earlier on arrival in the respective churches through an announcement. Within that short period, a brief introduction was made before the congregation in the respective church denominations. Further, because I was limited by time, I quickly explain my mission and aim of the research to attract volunteers from the target group. After having access to the respondents, detail information was given to them at each interview session before the start of the formal interview. In each case, a participant is briefed about the study and its intended aim as purely academic and nothing else. The decision to withdraw from the study was made known to them and assured withdrawal any time the participant feels uncomfortable to continue with the interview. Individual participants were made to understand that their participation was neither going to affect their marriage nor religious relationship.

On the issue of confidentiality, respondents were assured of the safety of their views on the issue under study. It was further explained to them the strategy in place to protect their view which included the use of a new recorder which is intended for the recordings of the interviews only. Also, participants gained assurance regarding the security of their views and experiences by emphasizing that their information or views is meant for the study project which is purely academic and not for any other purposes. As a means of gaining the trust of the participants, their background information as well as processes that can lead to a trace of their views were considerably managed. The recording of the interview with a participant begun with the reading of the interview questions excluding the introduction section that contained their names and other biographic information.

In a nutshell, ethical issues to the best of my ability were practically managed and that made a proper development of trust from respondents.

## 5 RESEARCH FINDINGS

As I mentioned earlier in chapter four, for five weeks that I stayed in Ghana, twelve (12) people; male married Christians by customary law or Christian tradition were interviewed on a face-to-face basis to explore their views on marriage to their belief system. Conducting interviews for subjective experiences especially on the marriage of people was very challenging. It was also stressful in handling some practical issues that came up in the field and putting together the raw data from respondents. Moreover, respondents were also cautious about what they were giving out. That is, they were not particular about what they were giving in terms of whether their opinion is the situation across the board or unique to their case that can be understood in the general sense. However, great motivation came upon their recognition that it is their opinion that was being sought and not factual truth of the issues under study. The motivation was deduced from a statement that one respondent said; "I may be wrong, but opinion they say is like noses-every one has its size." The statement kept reflecting in the answers of the respondents. It became so vivid when they start their responses with "for me...".

To gain a uniform understanding of the issues that came out of the data collected, and on the perception of male Christians about marriage in relation to what they believe, three essential themes were generated which are in line with the research objectives. These are; what men expect in Marriage, the role of men's desire in marriage choices and why the preference for customary marriage.

This chapter presents only the findings from the data collected. Afterward, the results will be analyzed and discussed in the light of existing framework(s), and literature that are relevant to the topic. More importantly, because religion and marriage are highly sensitive concepts in society and to individuals, the principle of anonymity is highly observed to ensure that the identities of the respondents are not exposed. Also, much effort has been put in place to ensure that responses are not traced to the respondents by name or what they say. In that case, the names of respondents will not be presented in the findings. For specification of responses, the 12 participants are represented with Roman Numerals starting from **I-XII**. The numerals **I-VII** represent respondents who are Catholics but married only by custom. **VII-IX** represent those who are married according to the Roman Catholic tradition. The married in the

Pentecostal church tradition is represented by **X** whiles **XI-XII** represent participants who are in the Pentecostal church denomination but married by custom only.

## **5.1 What Men Expect in Marriage**

Marriage according to most Ghanaian men is not an end. It is a means to an end, and therefore every man who wishes to go for marriage at a point in his life has a motive for getting married. Marriage is not just about love and companionship in Africa. It is a phenomenon that is defined to cover the families involved and the society. A man must marry to fulfill a need in the community and not just for fashion or upon divine command or distinct pleasure. Goode and Takyi have argued that unions based on love and without the involvement of kin are inherently less stable (2001). Thus, people must be fulfilled with both passion and other social expectations and experiences in their marriages.

### **5.1.1 Childbearing**

Ghana and for that matter, Africa is indeed home of communitarianism. The joy of the people mostly resides in their relationship with others. To live an individual life or in a state of loneliness matters everyone and as such people often try as much as possible to keep your company. Despite the poor economic condition recorded both in literature and what was observed in a small peasant community where the study was conducted, the people are pleased and enjoy every bit of their moments in society. Welfare policies are not strong enough in Ghana and more especially among the rural folks who are predominantly farmers. However, Ghanaians have the hope of getting care in their old age by their children. As respondent **II** indicated,

...my children are my social security...so that is why I am struggling to give them a foundation so that they can take care of me when I cannot work any longer...I did not get the opportunity to go to school, and that is why I am suffering...they are my hope.

The most common statement that came from almost all the respondents concerning why they got married or what they expect from their marriage is to have children. It was clear from the responses given that childbearing is so dear to almost every member of the society. A person who marries without having a child is usually ranked among his fellow men with a child or children as a man without a role in society. In extreme cases, such men are labeled as stingy

and wicked. He is considered a "social saboteur." A statement from a respondent (I) threw light on this when he opened up that;

A married man without a child is considered irresponsible, least respected and sociologically immature...no matter your age or the quality of your marriage, if you do not have a child in your marriage, you are not respected in the community. You derogatorily referred to in the local language as 'adabiridwo' meaning 'non-performant in bed.'

In trying to elicit the value of childbearing to religious affiliation, all the respondents conceived that childbearing in marriage is not only a social obligation but religious obligation as well. They claimed that even the church itself value procreation as an untouchable quest for the married especially men. Some of the respondents explained that the church values childbearing as the society does and that is why at religious weddings couples are blessed to have children in their marriage. The same statement re-echoed in the responses of other respondents who are married in the Catholic and the Pentecostal tradition respectively when they mentioned that, yes, the church preaches love as a principal value in marriage, yet it also prays for couples to have children. For other respondents in a religious wedding, what he sees as the difference is how the society endorses childbearing.

Notwithstanding, children of partners who are not in sacramental marriage are blessed and accepted in the church all times. Adding to the view, a customary married man said that, "childbearing is a blessing in itself. It is a life requirement, and every normal human being must procreate to obey divine order".

Participants have expressed and emphasized on the need for children in their marriage life and have claimed the equivalency of marriage without children to no marriage at all. All the respondents without exclusion asserted that, the society judge men by their responsibility towards their family; wife, and children. The Ghanaian society least judge women by their duty towards their family; husband and children. That is, men, create and initiate life development in the Ghanaian society whiles women remains beneficiaries or victims of men's responsibility or irresponsibility respectively.

According to the respondents, children make the difference between the 'married' and the 'unmarried.' They emphasized that, if marriage is just about love and companionship as the

western and modern ideologies claim, then there would not be any difference between a mere social relationship and marriage. A respondent (VI) jovially cited that,

the Catholic priest who has vowed not marry also have feelings of love and relationships not only with men but women as well. However, they are considered committed to their vows not primarily by medical examination but just without children. It would be difficult to know these priests are in a sexual relationship without being charged with the responsibility of pregnancy or a child.

The words of the respondent threw light on how the Ghanaian society separate the married from the unmarried. It also points to the value of children in marriage and how the Ghanaian people cherish these values. Moreover, from the perspective of the respondent, love and feelings are universal, and everyone has them. To be in a sexual relationship with intense passion and companionship though could be marriage by contract, it is not of much value in the Ghanaian society. A valuable marriage in the Ghanaian context must produce children and social responsibility.

Respondent IX also revealed that to be married without children is equivalent to living on the street. According to him, men without a child in their marriage are not happy at home. They hardly stay home, he added. He gave a brief narration of his experience after two years of his marriage;

...after about two years of our wedding, I was not happy at home when I had no child after my marriage in the church. I was confused and begun to link the misfortune to witchcraft...I felt bored staying at home for a repeated conversation with my wife. I began to seek external pleasures, stay out for long after work... the love for my wife was diminishing. It was after my wife conceived and delivered a baby boy that I reenacted a new joy in the home, at least something new to talk about and discuss.

Finally, on the expectations of men in marriage, all the twelve respondents in one way or the other opened up that, the stability of their respective marriage has been founded on their children. To them, their marriage would not be as it is if there has been no child or children. Love is subjective, but a child remains a product of respect irrespective of the form love takes. A couple of the respondents explained that they might have lost their wives if they had no child with them. That means children are not only expected out of the marriage but are also necessary for marital stability. Respondent V added that to have a child was his priority when he intended to get married and that is why he had his first child before he married his wife customarily. He explained

...you do not necessarily need to work for love, as a man you need to be responsible towards your family because responsible men are loved most in our contemporary society. It is, therefore, reasonable to have a family with at least a child, be responsible and love will follow. Besides, if a woman does not love you, she will not have the desire to have a child with you. She may stay with you for other reason(s) and consequently prove unfaithful in the end regardless of the level of marriage or living standard.

The responses from the respondents concerning what men expect in marriage collectively indicate that, for Ghanaian man to enter into marriage, regardless of his religious background and the role it plays in their lives, childbearing is central to them.

### 5.1.2 Sexual Gratification

In as much as procreation is an expectation of African men in marriage, sexual gratification was also identified as one of the essential motives for men in Ghanaian to get married. That is, men in Ghana expect a socially or religiously sanctioned process to satisfy their sexual pleasure. By sexual gratification, the respondents explained to mean a trouble-free sex partner that her association will bring luck and progress in their lives. Besides the numerous branding of African marriage as polygynous in literature, and that men enter into polygynous marriage to satisfy the unlimited sexual desire, responses from homogamous partners in any type of marriage indicated that, indeed every man has the desire for sex, and the most appropriate way to satisfy their sexual desire is to enter into marriage. For most of the respondents, sex is natural and a person cannot do without its instinctive quest. The response of a participant (**XI**) reflected how men are anxious about satisfying their sexual demands;

...sex is natural and is very difficult to avoid it when you have a desire for it. Though people try in multiple ways to deny themselves of sex, it does not mean they do not have a passion for it. Even the Catholic priest at times have a desire for sex...but what I see in them is that they try harder to control themselves, probably by the 'support of the Holy Spirit.

Another respondent added that a man could have sex with every woman but not every sexual intercourse is right. Adding to his comment, Respondent **IX** also lauded that, the church and the larger society unanimously disprove sex outside marriage and that, it is not good practice. Expanding on the point, some of the respondents explained that, sexual intercourse does not only come with bodily pleasures and satisfaction; it also has spiritual implication for the partners involve. It is therefore vital for people to have sex with the right person and by fair

means and time. That is, healthy sexual intercourse ought to occur between people who are either socially or religiously recognized as husband and wife. Participant **XI** emphasized that

...there is a spiritual implication for the success of men when it comes to sex. You see, not all the beautiful women you see on the street are real humans, there are spirits among them. That is why the Ghanaian marriage process includes quality investigation of people's background before marriage is contracted...many ladies are spiritually married and have spirits of misfortune following them. Once you have sex with them, your fortune is trapped in the spiritual realm because religiously you have committed adultery.

Majority of the respondents especially those who are married by custom only opined that, no matter the beauty of a woman, color or her religiousness every responsible man expects good sexual health and behavior. That is, in their view, it has been accounting for most instabilities in relationships though such issue barely comes into the public. The implication is that men do not only expect to have sex but much more concern with the entire sexuality of the person they wish to marry.

The question of what constitutes a bad sexual behavior generated responses that were identified as being specific to individual taste and preference. However, it was deduced that Ghanaian men prefer women who can stand their sexual demands. Colloquially, one of the respondents said some of the women "fear men" and that they hate sex. A couple of the respondents added that, if you marry a man fearing women, you are doomed and that your pleasure will always be outside your matrimonial home. That, according to the respondent calls for extramarital affairs in most marriages. Meanwhile, one of the respondents who is married in the church tradition joyfully shared his experience that he has no reason to go out for other women because his wife is "above standard." He said that, though he is not the first man in his wife's life, she is an ideal type of woman he wished to have as a wife. A non-religiously married respondent also shared how he is ready to take her wife to the alter following her excellent behavior in their four years customary relationship. He hinted;

...I was not sure about my wife when I first met her because I was not the first man in her life, but she proves me wrong all the time. I was not at ease of taking her to the alter because ...but I think now I hold no doubt about her.

These responses and many other observations gathered indicates that men expect sexual gratification in their marriages. They feel disappointed when their partners are unable to



satisfy them sexually. For most of the men in Ghana according to data collected, sexual satisfaction cannot be eliminated when it comes to marriage though its expression is usually implicit. Whatever form it takes, good sexual behavior seems to be of much consideration, an expectation, and a requirement for success in marriage for men in Ghana. The case is not different from the church context. Of course, the church emphasizes love and companionship; many Christians in Ghana hardly do away with socio-cultural demands. While some strive to combine social and religious requirements, others show complete rejection of ethical obligations and emphasize on custom and tradition. Critically, Ghanaian Christians seem to more Christian by theory in their marriage and more traditional in practice.

### **5.1.3 Support and Companionship**

Marriage as popularly known is meant for companionship and support. In many marriages, notwithstanding the type and how these marriages were made, partners offer a great deal of comfort and sharing. As reported in the introduction of this chapter, support and companionship are original features of the Ghanaian society. People inherently enjoy the support of family and community members in their lives. That could imply that Ghanaian and for that matter, African men do not need to marry to get the kind of support and companionship in their lives. However, responses from the data revealed the prominent need for heterosexual support based on intimacy, love, trust, and commitment. The respondents affirmed the supportive nature of the society. They also talked about the need for support of the opposite sex and even related it to stories in the Bible. They explained that God created Eve for Adam because God recognized the need for a woman in Adam's life. Finally, they concluded that a man needs the assistance of a woman to be complete in life. Almost every respondent referred to this biblical story irrespective of his religious ideology.

“Behind every successful man, there is a woman” is among the most general statements in the Ghanaian society in relation to marriage. That signals how men in the Ghanaian society value and expect the support of women in marriage. However, all the respondents without exception expect a woman of an ideal; a woman with ethics, humility, respect, faith, patience, trust, hospitality and above all wisdom to marry. Differently put, a man is more likely to be proud and enjoy his marriage when his partner possesses the attributes mentioned above. To get their view on how ready they are to commit their marriage to women with all the attributes, one of the respondents (VI) said, “If you have a woman with these attributes as a wife, then

you have the church itself in your home because these are what the churches preach at weddings". He quickly added, "better still, I will not hesitate to marry her in any way that will be befitting...".

Some of the respondents talked about educated and more intelligent women as the best source of support and that those are the expectation of most men. On the contrary, three of the respondents insisted that women are naturally endowed with what they need to help the husbands. However, men have the responsibility to help their wives to identify and utilize their potentials in their marriages. According to respondent **XII**, who reported on the inherent potential of women without qualification,

...though my wife is not educated, she is always perfect on task whenever I guide her to do something...marriage is not a commercial venture nor a ceremonial ground. It is a journey of bringing up a new life, adding to what one does not have. Marriage is more of wisdom than knowledge...though knowledge is essential, it ought to be applied in context through wisdom...what is important is that share with your partner what you know, and she does not. Teach her to be perfect, and you will enjoy a good result.

When asked how ready respondents are to share with their partners in marriage, it turned to be like talking about theory without practice. That is, though respondents were close to the importance of sharing and supporting, the majority of them were not specific about their readiness to share with their wives in marriage. However, there were few definite answers, and these respondents explained that they see no reason to hide anything from their partners.

Four customary married men and two married Christian men in different denomination opened up that, they barely share their views and their plans with their wives. According to a respondent (**I**) for instance,

African women especially talk a lot. I usually do not communicate my intentions especially economic plans to my wife until they are accomplished. I fear...our society is communal and is full of jealousy and envy. Spirituality also is a problem in our society especially when one is succeeding in life. In as much as there are love and care in the Ghanaian culture, one's progress becomes the source of his hatred and envy. Also, some women seem to waste resources especially money...that is why I do not rush to share with her my economies. I need my wife to take care of the home, and that is all.

Finally, interactions with all the twelve respondents revealed that men have the intention to marry for support and companionship. An ideal woman is what every Ghanaian man wish to

have a wife. For most of the men I interviewed, a great deal of support and warmth comes from women with virtues. How Ghanaian men are likely to seek the help of their wives varies from one man to the other, primarily depending on their individual experiences.

#### **5.1.4 Social Status**

The Ghanaian society values marriage so much that, its members barely resist getting married. Marriage, as documented in most literature and from observation, is so relevant in the Ghanaian society. The Ghanaian culture has mechanisms including its flexible terms and processes of getting married. Such a case means that the Ghanaian society has no much restrictive principles governing marriage practice, its operations, and structure. Besides, the Ghanaian culture according to most of the people have mechanisms in place to ensure that every man of the society who is interested in getting married achieves his aim. For instance, one of the respondents has revealed that, even when a man is getting older and is not married, he could be offered a wife from the external family which the Ghanaian culture, especially among the Akan tribes use to get their members married when they seem to be going above age. The respondents have stressed that, even in the Church, two adults are usually linked up by Church elders for marriage to accomplish their life and church mission.

Throughout the interviews with the 12 respondents, it came up that, marriage is a quest and social obligation as far as the African society is the concern. Accordingly, a woman in the African community receives her glory from her marriage, and a man is usually considered responsible when married" says respondent V.

The notion of the positive relationship between marriage and responsibility of men was detailed in the informal conversation with a couple of women but with some degree of contradicting opinions. These women were not part of the respondents in the study as indicated earlier, and their responses do not form part of the leading research findings. The opinions of these women were absorbed for affirmation or explanation of some of the reactions from the research participants. From these women, the Ghanaian society and most women especially have developed a new attitude towards marriage and partner selection. In their opinions, single women usually have a preference for married men because such men are responsible. They would prefer a child with such men even if they do not marry them. One of the women added, "what I want is a child with a responsible man. For me, marriage is nothing

without a child, so if I have a child, I think I am okay...some people are married, but I am sure my life situation is far better than theirs". One of the women also added that men usually are boastful of having a child in their marriage or with women. However, contributing biologically to the conception of a child does not necessarily make a man a responsible father. In her view, there is much difference between a biological father and fatherhood due to responsibility.

Similarly, data collected from respondents portrays the status attached to marriage and men's desire to acquire such a condition in marriage in the Ghanaian society. All the respondents accepted that married men are respected in their families and the Ghanaian society than unmarried men. Respondent **XII** opined; "after my marriage, my father said you are now not just a man but a responsible man. The life of others lies in your hands, and you need to work hard to justify all the respect that society offers you". Respondent **III** added playfully;

...before I got married, younger men were offered seats at meetings and in other public places such as funeral grounds before me. ...the society values marriage and gives preferences to married people.

Notwithstanding, another respondent who is married in the Christian tradition affirmed that, even in the church, certain positions are reserved for married people by church tradition. He moved that, it is not only the Ghanaian culture that attaches status to marriage but the religious traditions as well. The respondent claimed, "everywhere status is attached to marriage and men need to marry to attain these statuses." The response of another religiously married man indicated that even in some church denominations a man must marry to be ordained an elder of the church. According to him, the church considers married men as mature, responsible and less prone to fall hence offers them respect.

### **5.1.5 Conclusion**

The data collected from the respondents together with informal conversation and field observation depict higher expectation of men in marriage. Christian men and for that matter men in Ghana though consider marriage in their church as spiritual fulfillment, they have primary reasons for getting married and expects that their marriages earn them these expectations. Most talked about among what men expect from their marriage in the data collected were identified as children, support from their wives, and the acquisition of social status and respect. Also, core to men's desire in marriage is to have an ideal woman. That is

every man expects his partner to have virtues and good practical behavior to accomplish their motives in marriage. It was observed from the responses even though that was not much talked about that, men in Ghana usually focus on what they expect in their marriage, but the type and structure of their union are highly dependent on the virtues of their partners.

## ***5.2 Men's Desire and Marriage Choices***

Many scholars have documented explanations on the generic retreat of men from marriage in contemporary societies. According to the Institute for Family Studies in a report on the role of declining family rates, progressive scholars have emphasized economic explanation, and on the shortfall of public policy although there is an opposing take among the scholars ([www.ifstudies.org](http://www.ifstudies.org)). That means an economic report to the declining rate of marriage and family life is incomplete, and therefore, other factors need to be considered for a comprehensive understanding of decline in marriage in our societies.

The findings according to the Institute of Family Studies might not be directly linked to how men's desires influence the choice of their marriage process in the Ghanaian society. However, data collected from the Twelve (12) respondents generally indicates that economic as well as socio-cultural and religious elements are the broader perspectives that fuels men's desire in marriage and consequently how they get married. Economic, cultural and spiritual factors came up as mechanisms through which men's expectations and influences are best explained in the Ghanaian society. Simply put, how men's desire for childbearing, sexual gratification and companionship is profoundly embedded in economic, cultural and religious factors.

### **5.2.1 Cultural Influences**

Unlike Western societies, the Ghanaian culture and for that matter African society depicts a unique feature as far as marriage, and other social practices are the concern. Among the Ghanaians that were interviewed, social obligation trump personal or individual desire. The society and the Ghanaian culture orchestrate special wishes. That is, people act by the aesthetic principles of the organization. As factual as it might be, almost all the respondents conceived that faith in any practice or religion is a matter of privacy. In response to how themselves value their religious and cultural traditions, it was deduced from their reactions that in the Ghanaian society cultural values and norms are core to their lives. The Ghanaian

culture is also considered as a belief system. Expanding on their answers some of the respondents added that, whatever they desire for in life is founded on values of their culture which is challenging to change. About their marriage, all the respondents explained how important it is to follow the customary marriage process before receiving church blessing if one desires for it. That is, men in Ghana prioritize marriage by custom and Ghanaian tradition ahead of Christian marriage practice.

According to respondent **VII**, to get married is to accomplish a task in life.

...we marry to add to create new lives, satisfy our sexual pleasure in a socially recognized manner and to offer n upbringing...the customary marriage or marrying by customs allow for the transition of cultural values and inculcation of these values of communism and brotherhood, unlike the western Christian tradition that emphasizes more on special love in marriage.

According to the respondents, self-fulfillment in the Ghanaian society involves higher respect for values such as caring for the older generation, acknowledging their effort and respecting their opinions. The aged are accorded the necessary respect because they have sustained the society and know better in community. Traditions that give second thought position to these values creates confusion and cultural distortion.

The responses from respondents who are married in the Christian tradition by either denomination; Pentecostal or Catholic exhibited no difference to those that came from customary married respondents. For instance, respondent **X** shared his state of mind during his marriage and afterward. According to him...

...during my traditional marriage that preceded my church wedding, I was made to understand that, the success of my marriage and the life of my family depends significantly on how I will treat and respect my in-laws and my own family... individualism has no useful place in the society, and anyone who practices it stands to fall...if you enter into marriage in our community you are not just married to an individual but to the family of your wife. Your respect and care must go beyond your matrimonial home. Those around you are the very people you resort for support in challenging moments. Marriage in our society is naturally a social institution and communitarian affair. The notion of family role and responsibility is not entirely recognized in the church marriage practice...also, you see, that is currently my problem. At times I wish to discuss certain things with my family or my wife's family, but my faith almost forbids to some extent.

As evident in the first section of the findings, the expectations of the male for children in the marriage is culturally instilled. Its interpretation and understanding are best done in the Ghanaian cultural perspective which is virtually different from the western Christian faith. It is therefore considered a shortfall when a man marries for a specific period without a child. A couple who do not reproduce years after marriage is being gossiped about and stigmatized. Such a union is considered doomed, and in-laws begin to disrespect the spouse. Responses from some of the participants revealed how pressure from their parents led to their marriage. For them, their parents needed grandchildren to bear their names since child naming is crucial to the Ghanaian people. Society and the in-laws often love a wife because she has children. Respondent **II** emphasized;

...my mother pressured me to give her grandchildren since I was her only child. I did not have any plan of marrying in that period though I was dating my wife. I could not take my wife to the alter since I did not know whether she would be able to help ease the pressure from my family...I was afraid it could be a bad situation that will call for a second marriage or divorce if she could not produce as expected...and that would be best for Christian marriage practice.

What seems to have become an issue of contemplation is that most men in Ghana are struggling with multiple demands. For instance, In the Ghanaian society, there is a demand for the culture and the imparting demand of the Christian religion. While the church requires the members to accept marriage as discrete union with emphasis on love of partners, the society is much concerned with what comes out of marriage. As the respondent revealed, marriage is regarded as the value in the Ghanaian society without a child or children. Therefore, considering the principle that religious marriage is indissoluble even during infertility on a partner's side, many people think of customary marriage as the best option. It becomes more relevant to most Ghanaians also because religious marital obligations could be done later in the marriage when their common desires are met. That is, men usually prefer to avert the challenge of marital indissolubility due to childlessness by marrying in a socially acceptable way that allows them to explore possibilities in their marriage life.

The further implication is that cultural and social pressures partly determine the choice of a process of marriage. Adding, some of the respondents have indicated that, the customary marriage is not restrictive as the Christian marriage. It allows for desire accomplishment. As respondent **VI** stated;

...in the customary marriage practice, you can marry a second wife if the child is not coming or at worst, divorce and marry again for the sake of bearing a child. I know many people often blame men for multiple wives, but there are situations where wives who are not able to conceive or give birth ask their husbands to take a second chance by marrying another woman.

Curiosity prompted me to ask, what if the problem is with the man? In response, he added that "men are culturally allowed to marry many more than one wife to accomplish their motives and responsibilities in the society...it is not biologically healthy for a woman to have multiple partners". Respondents have raised a common concern that it is easier for a man to claim the natural rights of two or more pregnancy at a time than a woman. That is, a man can father multiple children with different women at the same time, but a woman cannot be a mother of more than one children with different men at the same time. Most Ghanaian men believe that women's sexuality is not naturally appropriate for multiple relationships like men. Though women are not denied by law or custom to have more than one sexual connections with men at a time in the Ghanaian society, those who have two or more sexual relationships are stigmatized and considered unfaithful. There is no doubt that the practice depicts inequality and discrimination in the Ghanaian society; the practical issue and highly accepted form of multiple marriages is polygyny.

In anticipation that Christian spouses and for that matter, respondents would make a contradicting opinion to the customary married men with regards to their experiences on cultural influence in marriage choice, there was no significant variation. Both Pentecostals and Catholics conceived the challenge of mixed blessings in getting married as a Ghanaian Christian. They further affirmed that to marry in the Christian tradition does not set you free from socio-cultural demands which place great emphasis on childbearing, support, as well as acceptable and result oriented sexual gratification. To these married men, after their Christian church marriage, they often find themselves between "pull and pull" of cultural and Christian demands. Respondent **XII** lamented;

...even within the church, you are talked about though that is not what the church preaches about marriage. It happened to me when I had no child two years after marriage in the church. That is the African society for you. Christianity is explicitly dominant but social and cultural practices are inherent and influences everyone and every institution...explicitly is Christianity and modernity but cultural values control our lives.



Opinions of the respondents gave no differential reflection of how cultural elements influence the life and marriage choice of men irrespective of their religious background. Cultural values therefore play an active role in the life decision of most Ghanaian men, especially how they get married even though the society is best described as Christian dominated society. Ghanaian men enter marriage with motives. These motives according to the respondents are founded on the cultural values of the Ghanaian culture and influence how they get married.

### **5.2.2 Religious Influences**

The data collected on how men's desire influence their marital choices through religious elements were found to be amazing and highly implicit. It depicts the religiosity of Ghanaian people. Such a feature as illuminated by the respondents is more evident in the private life of Ghanaian which is not explicitly talked about in discourse. Codes from the data collected in a broader sense give reasons for the restraint from marrying according to religious laws and how they internalize the meaning of sacred marriage. As important as these findings are to the study, it can be explained that men in the Ghanaian society naturally desist from religious marriage rights due to more of religious reasons than the generic economic and cultural factors. That is, the Ghanaian religious or belief system offered a better and specific explanation of how men's expectations in marriage influence their choices of marriage even though Ghanaian men mostly identify themselves as Christians.

Based on the responses from the reserach participants, the following sub-themes were generated to offer a good understanding of the data findings regarding religious influences on men at marriage; faith in God as the pivot of marriage, fear of spiritual beliefs and witchcraft, homogamy of marital goals and anti-divorce ideas.

#### **5.2.2.1 Faith in God as the pivot of marriage**

Many scholars within the field of African culture and religion such as John S. Mbiti, Kwame Gyeke, Kwame Bediako among others have documented extensively on the intrinsic religiosity of the African society and how religion pervades in all life situations of Africans. Religious elements according to some of these scholars particularly, Mbiti have emphasized that Africans are incredibly religious. Ghanaian men could not be exempted from such description but demonstrate and carry on them religious features in every aspect of their lives. From observation and the data collected from the respondents, the religiosity of Africans goes

beyond the belief in God or Jesus Christ as claimed by Christians across the globe. The salient point here is that irrespective of the religious background, one's belief system or pattern of life, references are made to God in any situation. That is, Africans unanimously believe in God. Respondent **III** lamented...

...many people have been deceived by the Westerners as if Africans did not know God. God is and is everywhere. Just that our methods of communication differ and that is the difference. Whether libation or prayers through other means, the center of any prayer is God. Out of his honesty, people occasionally question culture and belief systems, why not ask color differences? I think God in his wisdom gave to every society what is right for it and we must respect, protect and develop it to suit emerging situations in life. It ought not to be thrown away because of modernity. That is why Africa is struggling because I believe it is adopting what does not fit the African context.

Though most Ghanaians desist from marrying in their church, Christian prayers are offered during customary marriage ceremonies in addition to the traditional prayers (libation) that are offered. In all the forms of the prayers that are offered, blessings are sought from God who is the center of both the Christian and customary or cultural traditions. In a lighter vein, the responses and some literature on the Ghanaian cultural belief system which has been inculcated into the African Christian practice, the fear of God, his reward and punishment shape and influence life decisions of many Ghanaians. It is believed among Ghanaian Christians that when God is invoked in any situation, one either receive his blessings or punishment for acting according to or against his command respectively. Many Ghanaians believe that God is everywhere and in every case. He interferes guides, protects and control the life everyone no matter one's religious affiliation. To some of the Ghanaian men, the essential requirement according to the will of God is how one treats his marriage and family and not how one gets married. Respondent **VI** cited that marriage naturally carries its blessings. It is a divine institution and needs to be respected by name and not how it is contracted since every marriage ought to come out with fulfillments in life.

Marriage command divine respect. Its blessings are not gained from how to get married how best you can manage your marital home. The form or pattern of marriage is a mere social construction which I believe is purely contextual. You lose your marriage and God's blessings once you lose your focus in marriage. Either Christian or customary marriage, your reason for getting marriage and commitment should be your motivation. Either form of marriage has its strengths and weaknesses. That is why it is more convenient to marry in a way that can help you to achieve your marital goals. God made marriage for humankind, and it is okay when it is between man and woman in mutual consent.

Both Christian and customary married Ghanaian men asserted that the difference in marriage is a matter of means by which a person get married since marriage is generally ordained by God and has its fundamental principles. It is meant to ensure that humanity receives support, pleasure and procreate once marriage principles are observed to accomplish God's and social mission. A married man more becomes despaired if his expectations are not met.

Summarizing their opinions, the Ghanaian man is more likely to marry in a way that offers him the opportunity to accomplish his marital motives as instilled in him by the Ghanaian or African culture. One of the respondents (X) stated that,

for me, I do not have problems with the kind of marriage or how one gets married. Though I am a believer and I married according to the Catholic tradition, I had the worst part of my life experience both within and outside the church. I could barely stand the challenge, pressure and all forms of derogations four years after my church marriage without a child. Honestly, I felt depressed and begun to seek support outside my faith. I virtually enjoyed no pleasure in my marriage until God made way for my first child...I would get all the respect, and status when I was planning to marry in the church, but things turn around. I experienced the real nature of the Ghanaian society where the demands of society hugely control many of our life situations.

There seem to be a common understanding of marriage in the Ghanaian societies regardless of one's faith of worship. What Ghanaian men value in marriage is no different from what the Ghanaian Religio-culture emphasis. Of course, the church does not condone acts of irreligiosity in the Ghanaian society; most of the traditional cultural values are often the yardstick for life evaluation. It is more apparent in the practice of the church members and not in the teachings of the church. It means that there is an element of diversity between what the church preaches in the Ghanaian society and what is practiced. In a clearer picture, the responses of the participants suggest that people who are active adherents to Christian tradition and principles often fall short in their marriage to the Ghanaian social beliefs and values and are evaluated as such.

On the other hand, more socially focused individuals in principle are judged by the religious shortfalls. It can be added, therefore that though both Christianity and the Ghanaian culture accept marriage and place importance on it, their point of value deviates. In the life of most Christians in African society, it seems almost complicated for them to meet the diverse marriage requirement at a time. Every Ghanaian male Christian getting married may consider

and focuses on one tradition and process at a time which is dependent on the personal value and beliefs.

#### 5.2.2.2 Anti-Divorce Beliefs

It was found from the interview and the responses of the participants that Ghanaians believe in the effects of divorce. Most of the respondents have stated clearly their understanding of separation and how the society and their faith communities react to divorce issues. The Ghanaian people according to the respondents, accept the adverse effects of divorce on children, partners and the society in general. As respondent I indicated;

Divorce is a condition for the married, and it becomes worse when there is a child or children. Many people see separation as having adverse effects for the immediate members in the home, but the society suffers from divorce. I think that is why our community has a mechanism to control it, but recognizing that specific circumstance could better be handled by accepting divorce, the tradition of Ghanaian marriage allows it. No matter how the situation could be, the fact is that innocent children suffer most when there is a divorce.

While the Ghanaian culture has the mechanism of controlling divorce in recognized ways such as arbitration and mediation by the elderly in the society, family heads, religious leaders, etc., divorce is allowed under certain circumstances that are considered a threat to one's life and living ambitions. Although the Christian values do not encourage or allow for marriage separation, the Catholic tradition has more strict control measures against divorce (Robinson, 2002). These principles according to the Catholic respondents though are useful for ensuring marital stability and family life, they deter members from marrying according to the Catholic tradition.

With regards to how these anti-divorce beliefs and practices influence men's choice of marriage, almost all the respondents agreed that divorce after marriage brings misfortune to partners and society. From their responses, many young men especially are facing many challenges in life because of how they ended their relationship with their wives or partners. Some of the respondents added that, whether a marriage is solemnized or not, God is a witness. God through observation rewards and punish faulty partners following a divorce. More of these anti-divorce beliefs were reflected in the responses of the Catholics that were interviewed. Both customary and Christian married men emphasized on it by adding that Gods' wrath visits those who break marital vows proclaimed in the church. They claimed to

include that, engagement in practices that call for divorce such as infidelity, and adultery attract God's punishment besides the sanctions that the church tradition imposes on culprits.

Respondent **XI** for instance stated;

I am convinced that a person who marries under religious vows must be committed to their marriage covenant to avert the wrath of God. The success of every man especially in a sacred marriage is highly dependent on his commitment to the matrimonial laws and of God. He who contradicts is likely to face the punishment of God, hence, the belief that it would be of relevance to have a thorough faith-based assessment of a man before proclaiming the Christian marital vows especially the Catholic vows.

Respondent **IV** also added that,

the misfortune of many young men their lives have been a result of breaking the marital vows of their religious traditions. I know a young man in this community who started very well and got married in the church. Though he did not divorce the wife, he followed the pleasures of the world...hmmm!...it is not necessary to play with vows that you cannot keep. The most worrying thing is that when you talk about these things many people take it for granted...I do not want to talk about my experience when I had an extramarital affair after marrying in the church... I had the worst of bad luck in my business within that period. I prayed and fasted. Finally, I had to confess to my wife.

Ghanaian Christians do not only believe in the misfortunes of breaking marital vows in their lives. They also expressed a stronger faith in a generational curse and complete loss of social status and respect due to divorce and breaking of marital vows. It is a found fear among Ghanaian men that, one stands a possibility of losing everything that comes out their subsequent marital affairs once the first matrimony is broken. In the churches, the unmarried and customary married are relatively considered hopefuls and more respected than those who break their marital vows. A respondent (**II**) had mentioned that "there is a saying in our society that he who is on the ground does not fear falling again." The meaning is that those who are not married in the church are already condemned by church tradition and principle and are facing the sanctions. Such people are previously known, and the church continuously admonishes them to seek perfection in the church which is a common trend in church history. The problem resides in the married who are respected for their adherent to the tradition and principles of the church. Such people are supposed to be an example for others and break in their religious life becomes a breach of culture as well as presupposing a suspicion in the church tradition and practice.

Majority of the respondents expressed their opinion that it is usually not advisable to commit yourself into promises and vows that you could hardly predict the outcome. To them, the beginning of everything is smooth and so is marriage. They insisted that one may not know the real character of his partner, her creative abilities or strengths and therefore, it is usually not necessary to invoke or give in to a covenant that can end a person in an unpardonable result.

### 5.2.2.3 Spiritual Beliefs and Witchcraft

Another theme that emerged from the data collected from the twelve respondents about their marriage process is the belief in spirituality and witchcraft. In that sense, it means that many men in Ghana are less likely to marry for fear of attracting the downplayed role of evil spirits and witchcraft. From the responses gathered, all the respondents conceived that spirituality and witchcrafts play an active role in the Ghanaian society. The life of many people has been turned to the dark side because of the evil manipulations of spirits and witchcraft. The responses further revealed that the Ghanaian society attached success and wellbeing to one's marriage. It is considered among the Ghanaian people that; economically vibrant men marry in the more modern and fashionable way including the almighty Christian marriage ceremonies. Once a man moves to undertake a Christian marriage, people of his family and a close friend begin to be critical about his life. Most often, the family members accuse him of being insensitive to the welfare of others within the family and envy show its head in his relationship by his family members. Out of jealousy, people are likely to resort to spiritual forces to give the newly married a real more robust life circumstance in marriage including sickness, childlessness, economic misfortunes and in some cases death of a spouse. Respondent **IX** gave his version by saying that,

not everybody in the society will be happy with your marriage ceremony. The worst of them are from your own family because we cherish and understand Christian marriage, popularly referred to as "Ayefro" meaning the "newly married" as a sign of success and pride. Of course, the Ghanaian society is more about caring and support for others, behind the smiles and well wishes of significant others are a lot. Communism is what we describe our society, but individualism and envies control most of our lives. Many people have a fear of spiritual and witchcraft attack due to envies, jealousy and what people feel like insensitivity to the woes of family problems. People around you always expect you invest in your family rather than in your private life...

Some of the respondents made a common comment like “not all eyes are good eyes” meaning, not every eye that witnesses your marriage ceremony in a Christian and modernized form have good wishes for you. Though they may pretend and take an active role in the process, within their hearts are evil wishes for the newly married. According to the respondents, it is always necessary to have a strong faith and seek spiritual support before thinking of solemnizing your marriage. Respondent **X**, for instance, concluded his take on this by giving his experience...

as a young guy, I never thought of any possibility of evil manipulation in my marriage until I consulted my “Osofo” (Pastor) who admonished me to be prayerful about my decision because many eyes were on me. He told me that since I am the backbone of my family, there are fears in most of the people around me that once I get married in the Christian way, my life will be more of individuality. That is the fear of losing my contribution to my family is a threat to a successful marriage and outcomes. Evil spirits are therefore setting up plans to seek the ruin of your marital pleasures.

The idea of spirituality is not only a feature of African traditional culture. Contemporary Christian culture in most African societies have incorporated spiritual beliefs and works into practice. From the words of the respondent, the church through the clerics or pastors often raise the spiritual sense of the members. Notwithstanding, most prayers in the African seem to be more of "protective prayers." That is, such prayers that are offered usually contain contents of seeking protection against enemies and evil spirits that the average Ghanaian considers manipulating his or her life. It is no much different from the traditional African prayers (libation) which have the components of thanksgiving, blessings, and curses of evil people and spirits from God (Adjaye, 2001). As indicated earlier, such a part seems not fundamentally Christian but an infusion of traditional African religious value.

Respondent **XII** also quizzed and added;

do you think all the smiling faces about your life are indeed good smiles? Even within your family, the old man who is with you in the church and has not perform the religious marriage obligation would not be at peace with you. He may pretend...that is why people commonly say, Christian weddings are not for very young men and me, and according to my experience, it would be best when certain life expectations are met. For instance, when you have some kids in your marriage, good economic foundation and have attained an outstanding maturity level...because if I should give you the full story of my life experiences when I married my wife in the Church at age 28, your ears will tickle...I do not

mean to discourage young guys from marrying in the church, but the truth about real life in our society must be told at times. Christianity in Africa I believe is different from that of the West.

Despite the African culture's emphasis on social support, care and the general good of the society, there are elements of individualism. From a specific point of view and in the light of the responses gathered, such individual practice has a different version from the individualistic Western culture. In the Ghanaian society, the claims from respondents support that, elements of individualism are pregnant with jealousy, envy, and hatred. A person who focuses on discrete marriage process and pattern is considered auspicious, labeled as wicked and selfish. Therefore, to marry in the church which emphasis on special love and success comes with envy an anticipated work of evil-hearted against the partners.

It appeared with surprise that none of the respondents gave a contradicting version of marriage and spirituality. Regardless of a church denomination, both Catholic and Pentecostal respondents conceived and talked about the idea of spirituality and its role in their marital lives.

Concluding on how men's expectation in marriage influences their choice of marriage through religious elements, participants expressed their concerns about how anti-divorce beliefs, God and spiritual manipulations can impact their life due to how they enter marriage. Whiles customary married respondents expressed their fears in these elements, and Christianly married respondents gave their experiences on it. The extreme of the concerns and fears that were raised indeed emerged from Catholic respondents who according to their tradition proclaim religious vows in their church marriage practice. It was also found from their responses that, despite the diverse traditions of church denominations amidst the Ghanaian cultural practices, there is a common understanding of life and marriage. Whether Christian or non-Christian, there is a common notion that the nature of marriage that a man wishes to contract is most often dependent on belief in God, spirituality and anti-divorce ideas. Ghanaian men who claim to be Christians are therefore influenced by these religious factors in their choice of marriage process and type.

### ***5.3 Why the Preference for Customary Marriage***

Religious and traditional diversities in the Ghanaian society has resulted in many rules and forms of marriage. Despite the common understanding of marriage found among Ghanaian



men, the distinctions found across marriages in the Ghanaian context seem to be a matter of process. That is, the difference in Ghanaian men's perception about marriage seems to be basically about the choice of how best one can get married in the Ghanaian society especially among the Christians.

Besides the different traditions with regards to marriage among Christian denominations in Ghana such as the church of Pentecost and the Roman Catholic church, it was found that there is cultural or customary marriage tradition that is most common in the Ghanaian society. More importantly, traditional marriage does not only exist as a force or competing process of marriage but as universal rites that precede all other marriages in the Ghanaian society. A Christian marriage ceremony or ritual is only performed after a successful customary marriage requirement has been met. That is, without customary marriage, church wedding as popularly called in the Ghanaian society cannot be done in a functional Ghanaian culture.

While some Ghanaian men simultaneously perform customary marriage and church wedding before consummation of their marriage, others delay church wedding after their general marriage obligations have been completed. In other situations, the traditional marriage becomes the final process of their marriage while their faith communities usually require the performance of at least, church blessing of their union. However, the preference for customary marriage among Ghanaian men who proclaim the Christian faith outweighs Christian marriage. Responses from the twelve respondents is an evidence to the male christians' preference for customary marriage notwithstanding their religious affiliation or as Christians. Their responses have been coded or categorized into the sub-themes; flexibility of customary marriage, social experiences, as well as modernity and cost of marriage.

### **5.3.1 Flexibility of Customary Marriage**

To explore participants opinion about their motivation for the preference of customary marriage, all the respondents unanimously explained that the customary marriage is a unique African form of marriage that allows for the multiple and communitarian obligation performance of the Ghanaian people. According to them, the traditional Ghanaian marriage enables desire accomplishment more than the Christian marriage which is much more of fantastic love and family. Some of the respondents added that the Ghanaian society is built on the values of sharing, caring and interpersonal relationships. Marriage in the Ghanaian society

brings unity of families and not just individual in marriage. The welfare of the respective families are the concerns of the married. The conventional marriage system gives room for the participation, interference, and sharing among people and families. Though Christian marriage also allows for the families' involvement and interference, it looks very minimal. Further, such a practice is obvious during the contracting stage of the marriage since the couple is considered a new home in the Christian tradition. After the marriage has been contracted and all necessary rights performed in the Christian way, the role of the families and the society is limited.

families involved in a marriage make a significant impact on marriage. They become the watchdog, advisory body, and a source of support for the marriage. There is a saying in our language that 'even God respects his in-laws' and this gives a reflection of the role of the in-laws in marriage disputes and resolutions. Once you neglect your in-laws in your marriage, then the marriage is more likely to fall. The problem with the Christian marriage which in my understanding a copy of the "Whiteman's" culture is that it teaches individualism and a virtual rejection of in-laws and family members of the partners in the marriage. Though there are negative sides of family interference in marriage, the role of families cannot be undermined as far as the African society and culture are in the scene. Many people will opt for the African cultural marriage once they understand the vital role of society and family in marriage in the Ghanaian society. One thing people are not getting right is that our community is not self-sufficient...not to talk about an individual life.

Those are the words of respondent **VI**. In reaction to how his marriage has helped him to accomplish his marital dreams, he explained that he is currently married to two women and that has given him what he desired most in his marriage.

I am a husband of two women. Not that I did not love my wife. I love her very much. My first wife had severe complication while she was in labor ten years ago. It resulted in the termination of giving birth for the sake of her life. Hmmm...it is a bad experience I usually do not want to talk about...I love to be in a Christian marriage but to be celebrated in a marriage without a child...what would the society say about me. I stood the chance of losing every respect and joy I was working for in life. Though I am limited in the church, I pray and go to church without any feeling of despair.

Most of the respondents including the Christianly married men made similar statements. Respondent **X** expressed his opinion on this by voicing that,

it is the right side of our social practice, but it does not work well in our Christian faith, and that is the difference. That is what I think many of the youth in the church are not marrying according to the

church tradition. It is a painful experience to marry in our Ghanaian society without a child. It is painful and complicated as well.

In a different dimension, many of the respondents gave their concerns about the attitudinal change of some women after marriage. Almost all of respondents in one way or the other claimed that women change their behavior when their relationships come to the known in society. The situation gets worse when they are taken to the altar. They concluded that, when women, especially in the Ghanaian society, get their relationship sealed by church process or by ordinance, they exhibit levels of independence, control and in extreme cases, show some disrespect to their husband because they seem to be empowered by religious teachings and law. Respondent **XII** revealed how women behave before and after marriage.

Women in the Ghanaian society outnumber the men in our, and for that matter, many women are not in any relationship not to talk about marriage. Unfortunately, they demonstrate "holier than thou" attitude when they are looking for a marital relationship. Once their marriage relationships are sealed in a community, they begin to know their rights and privileges. A sense of independence and excessive control come to play. Such situations are easily managed under customary marriages but in Christian marriage especially Catholic...my brother, you will have to take a risk.

Respondent **III** added;

women of today cannot be compared to the older women who demonstrated respect for their husbands even in polygynous marriage practices, poverty and lower standards of living. Contemporary women are more fashion and outgoing. Their behavior is unpredictable and that why men are critical not to find themselves in the bondage of the faith vows. Vows that you cannot reverse. For me, I prefer to be sure of the real nature of any woman before I commit myself to any sacred promise. Once the society and the church do not sanction marriage by custom, I need to be patient. After all, I am a youth with energy and very active.

The respondents in similar responses gave a degree of lucidity of their acceptance of customary marriage as a most flexible form of intimacy that can help men to accomplish their marital dreams, hence, their choice of customary marriage ahead of Christian marriage which breeds female attitudinal change, restrictive and limit male marital desire accomplishment.

### 5.3.2 Social Experiences

The responses of the 12 Christian men interviewed further gave another implicit but very influential factor for why men in Ghana and for that matter, Christians prefer to marry by custom and not according to their religious tradition. All the twelve respondents expressed the importance to seek advice from the elderly and the already married in the society before finalizing a marriage decision. As indicated earlier in the chapter, the Ghanaian society is characterized with respect and acknowledgment of the elderly. It is generally therefore indispensable for any man seeking marriage to go for elderly consultations. In respect of that, responses of the respondents have converged to mean that, their decisions concerning their marriage processes have been under the spell of the already married and the elderly in the society. While some of the respondents confirmed how people from their experiences had advised them to be faithful to their ethical requirements in marriage, they practically admonish them to be careful about how to fall into marriage because, even though faith is good in anything, the society dictates how faith is appreciated. That is, religious practices are promoted and condemned by the society in which it is practiced. Respondents have also indicated that their decisions are also affected by their observations in the community.

The responses of the participants further revealed that many men are not ready for Christian marriage because situation changes, and women find it challenging to adapt to change considering the African society where men are the bread winners in the family. Respondent **I** indicated that;

the beginning of everything is so, but it is not always permanent. You experience the worst part of life when things especially finances begin to go down. If you are unlucky...that is the end of life for you. So, what if you are in a Christian marriage where you cannot divorce or exit the relationship...you see all these things must be factored when getting married...our society seems small, but there are many expectations that you must plan well to meet them.

Respondent **II** also added that;

now you see these women around, and you can give them the best description ever but my brother, get close to them...get married into them or even present a bottle of drink to their parents and you begin to experience the reality about them. The fact is that most of our women do not know how to manage a difficult life situation. So... we need to open our eyes well before putting our hand under the rock of faith because, in the end, everything comes back to you. For instance, there is the traditional knowledge

that no woman is infertile. Therefore, in the situation of childlessness, men are usually pointed, and any man ought to prove his manliness.

One of the respondents had said, upon consultation with his father about his decision to marry, the father queried him a lot about how he intends to go by his marriage. His father reactions gave him the impression that there is more to experience in marriage than how we anticipate it. He said;

...my father was excited when I told him about my plans to get married. However, there is something that I noticed unusual about the words of my father when is happy and that reflected in the questions that he asked me...do you know this lady well and are you sure she will be a good wife? My father continued, ...it is right to get married, and it will be best to know whom you are going with because marriage is a long journey. Always remember that no matter how fashionable you have planned the marriage, it must yield result because it is upon the outcome that your marriage will be evaluated. Beauty and fashion have no place in marriage. They fade out a few months after the marriage consummation. Think about the future when you will be weak...

moreover, that is why you need a cultured and committed woman to be with... it is not everything in the marriage that you can let out especially if you are wedded in the Christian tradition...

The respondent gave more confidential information that he received from an elderly who is very close to him about one of the difficulties in marriage, particularly church marriage. According to the respondent, sexual inactiveness is the headache of the most Christian couple, but these are not openly talked about in society with people. Usually, the problem goes against men since they naturally become sexually inactive due to natural and environmental factors such as the work of men in African society. Also, men become sexually inactive earlier than their wives because men choose to marry women who are younger than their age. Men usually have a fear of their wives cheating on them mainly when they could not perform their sexual obligation. That means in the marriage decision of most Ghanaian men, two forces operate to exert influence. One, the unforeseen conditions in marriage encourages men to adopt flexible marriage process such as the customary marriage. On the other hand, the fear of losing the wife in the old age due to sexual dysfunction push men to commit their marriage to religious vow to deter their partners from seeking extramarital affairs.

### 5.3.3 Modernity and Cost of Marriage

Among the most popular reasons that most Ghanaian men have cited for opting for customary marriage is the cost involved in a modern Christian wedding. According to the men who were interviewed, the traditional Christian marriage has taken a new dimension to include elements of fashion and modernity. Christian marriage ceremonies seem to be more of merrymaking; hence, relegating the real commitment of marriage to God to the background. That is Christian marriage has become much expensive in the Ghanaian society. Besides the financial cost involved in Christian marriage, men have also expressed the challenge and the intricate processes that are required to get your marriage sacralized especially in the Roman Catholic church tradition. Challenging processes make Christian marriage unattractive to men. Put merely, customary marriage in the opinions of the respondents is less challenging, costly and easy to contract.

Respondent (I) expressed his concerns that...

Christian marriage has become a sort of competition to gain popularity which should not be the case. Marriage in the church should have been the most comfortable type. Unfortunately, modernity has taken over Christianity in general, and Christianity is losing its values. Everything in the church today is about money and nothing else. Without huge cash, you cannot do anything in the church.

Another respondent also lamented;

what baffles me most is the catholic process that you must go through before you marry...also, if you are going to marry someone from another church and make him a Catholic. It takes very committed people to go through that lengthy catechism or whatever... it is tedious and time-consuming. Many people do not have time for that. You see, that is it easy for men in other denominations to marry in the church than the Catholic men. At least there should be allowances...

the customary marriage will continue to be the preference of men in our society because the Christian marriage brings the extra cost to men's pocket. One thing we must note is that you cannot marry somebody in the church alone because you are a Christian. You must in the first place marry her by custom, and that involves cost. So, Christian marriage becomes optional for men...what has worsened the situation is the introduction of modernity in our society. The customary marriage has been modernized where ministers or pastors are called to offer prayers at customary marriage ceremonies. In the end, the man becomes satisfied with his relationship and sees no need in going for another cost.

However, some of the respondents though accepted the excessive cost involved in Christian marriage amidst modernity, and they also insisted that the church does not give price tags to marriage rituals in the church. Whatever cost involved in any marriage in the church is the decision of the people getting married and not that of the church. Some of them furthered that, there is a great deal of miscommunication and misunderstanding on the issue of Christian marriage. Respondent **X** for instance retorted;

people in the society and the church are misled. They have misconceptions about what the church requires for marriage. The church consistently admonishes members to celebrate their marriages moderately. In many cases, marriages have collapsed due to irresponsibility especially on the part of the men because they invested all their capital in the marriage. The painful aspect of it is that no one will tell you because they in one way or the other misunderstand the notion of Christian marriage.

Respondent **VIII** also claimed that the Catholic church has a tradition that is very difficult to change because it is believed that those traditions have emerged from the order of God. Marriage tradition in the Catholic is not just about faith but built on the strong values of universal cultures and humanitarian principles. They are mechanism for social and behavioral control.

If you look at the Catholic doctrine on marriage, it restricts, control and ensures that marriage takes its right form and structure to generally reduce the multiple problems of divorce, extramarital affairs, and multiple wives. Though many people will reject the fact that polygamy and divorce are not bad, and probably have a role in the Ghanaian society, it breeds a majority of social problems in our community. Think about poverty, rival battles, street children due to divorce and other social practices that are uncalled for...it is not just about faith but also the society...

With regards to the strict procedure for Catholic marriage, it is not binding most us know. Of course, those requirements are there for Catholic believers; they are for those who have the strong faith of Catholicism and wish to follow. Besides, the Catholic church does not sanction members entirely from not marrying according to Catholic tradition.

It was deduced from the responses given by the participants that, though there are slightly insistence on the validity of Christian marriage, almost all the respondents in their way did accept that, marriage and for that matter, Christian marriage is costly in the Ghanaian society. However, some of the respondents reacted to the claim by explaining that marriage and how to contract it is a matter of option irrespective of one's religious affiliation.

## 6 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter analyze and discuss the research findings presented in chapter five about the perception of Christian men in Ghana. First, the general perception of male Christians in Ghana is analyzed and discussed in the light of the theories proposed in the third chapter of the study and some of the literature that is related to Christianity and marriage. The questions of what, how and why Christian men have this perception about marriage is presented in the succeeding sub-sections. The last sections present the conclusion and the opinion of the researcher on the perception of male Christians in Africa. It also put forward recommendations for theological and practical understanding and management of the issue of marriage of Africa Christians.

### *6.1 The Perception of Men on Marriage*

In African societies where Christianity is emerging as the dominant religion, the institution of marriage has become a very complex phenomenon. Many people in Africa claim to be Christians, but they have not been able to meet their church requirement for their marriage. Despite the diversities in the interpretation of marriage by the various Christian sects, the essential requirement of marriage for Christians is to have their marriage sacralized in the church. That, according to the Christianity makes the union comparable to God's love for the church. Unfortunately, it has proven difficult for most African Christians to meet this requirement. Most people have been sanctioned including ex-communication, denial of some church positions among others due to their marriage. In the Catholic church, many married Christians are not allowed to take part in the Holy Communion because they have married outside the Church tradition, divorced or remarried after the divorce from church marriage. Unlike the Catholic church, other Christian traditions sometimes permit divorce and remarriage under certain circumstances. Under such conditions, culprits or victims of divorce are allowed in the full participation of church activities. The positions of the church denominations on divorce and remarriage points to a form of controversy in marriage practice of African Christians.

Of course, people and societies have motives for marriage and expect that they are realized when married. These motives are the same across societies and groups but are differently valued. The desire for a child or children, sex, status, and support are famous motives of



marriage. It is also worth noting that, the wishes of people in a marriage do not emerge from a vacuum. They have emerged and continue to be shaped by a set of rules and values. That is, whatever is expected by men in marriage is fundamentally linked to the context within which a man finds himself. The issue of marriage of Christians and what they expect gains a more sophisticated look when it is considered in the African context because of its Religio-cultural tradition.

The Ghanaian society and for that matter, African societies are composed of multiple values and practices from different cultures and religion. These multiple values have a role in the marriage decision of men in African society. In the case of the Ghanaian society, there are mixed beliefs and practices from Christianity and Traditional culture which offer challenges to Christian lifestyles and choices. Among the most outstanding areas of complication is the marriage of Christians. Most people in Africa consider Christianity as a foreign religion with different values (Bediako 1992, Falen 2008). As noted in chapter five, the desires of Christian men which are more of social construction is an indication of Christianity being considered as foreign culture. The implication is that, between Christian tradition and the African customary tradition, there are alternative marriage process and values. Kwame Bediako has argued extensively that, early missionaries' work in Africa is a civilization work. He stressed that these missionaries perceived the African culture as uncivilized and barbaric. That he explained has been the result of the earlier description of the first Europeans who had an encounter with the Africans on trade mission. In his argument, therefore, Christian mission has been a civilization mission and that made their interest search feasible. The civilization mission instead of Christianization of Africa has created theological misunderstanding and African identity problem (Bediako 1992). The issue of Africans perception of Christianity is perceived to have translated into the marriage of Africans.

Men who are the initiators and heads in marriage; a view shared by Dominique Meekers (1992) are confronted with the problem of choice of marriage. It is because the perceived new tradition and the diverse views of marriage by Christianity and African culture have resulted in the difficulty of adhering and selecting specific values and marriage process. Men being rational consider the practice that best serve their interest and motive in the Ghanaian/African society.

From the respondents' point of view, what men expect in marriage dictates the pattern of the marriage, and the influence of women's desires are limited. Also, African society is known to be a patriarchal society, and men control most decisions about life. Further, the struggle for gender equality in modern African societies and the strong resistance to it reveals the inherent leading and dominant initiative of men in life.

Eric Johnson, Gerald Haubl and Anat Keinan (2007) have proposed that decisions of people in their lives and for that matter their marriage are taken based on the responses to different queries on traditional marital values and Christian values of marriage respectively. The queries to the marriage values of culture and Christianity are internal arguments that people process serially at marriage. During the argumentation period, responses to queries operate on a first come, first serve principle. Therefore, an earlier query has a more significant consideration than subsequent ones. Similarly, a variety of view, interpretation, and practice of marriage offer men the task of choosing between Cultural and Christian marriage options. In the event of the marriage of a Christian man in the Ghanaian society, there is a critical point where a man considers value preferences of culture and Christianity to opt for the one that is most consistent with his personal values of marriage. In line with the view of Weber and his associates (2007), the choice of a marriage of a Christian man is based on the possibilities of Christian and customary marriage in attaining the desired expectations of the person. Fredrick & Loewenstein (2008) have also included and linked preference construction to the sequence of the event like Johnson, Haubl and Keinan (2007) have done. That is, the most fundamental value about marriage that has been inculcated in men is first given consideration. It also implies that, since culture is inherent, defines the identity of people, and subsume religion (Anderson 2013), cultural elements precedes religious elements when considering value preferences in marriage. Cultural values are inevitably given priority in the marriage process and decision making.

Moreover, religion is part of the culture (Mbiti 1995, Anderson 2013) and religious practice is best understood in a context. It would be challenging to create a divisible line between religion and culture since they are socially constructed (Raday 2003). The issue of what, how and why men take a particular decision concerning their marriage notwithstanding their religious background is grounded on values which the society holds as ideals. It supports the views of Fredrick and Loewenstein (2008), Mercier and Sperber quoted in Johnson and

Weber (2011) that, the reasoning to arrive at a decision in marriage is social and argumentative. Mercier and Sperber have argued in Weber and Johnson that choices are influenced by context rather than an unvarying set of rules (2011). Meaning, what men do concerning their marriage is influenced by the values of culture and not a diverse set of rules as found in the Christian religion.

Beside psychological argumentation process in decision making, personal values which conform to the social values, accepted by society and how those values might change under situations is very relevant to men when it comes to their marriage. These values are culturally oriented because the culture is like already existing text and humans only receive it. The rules of culture are explicit and very influential in every aspect of life (D'Andrade 1995). Culture is an "information that is capable of affecting an individual's behavior" (Richerson 2005, p. 5). Sperber has also described culture as a "widely distributed, lasting mental public representation" that resides in a given social group (1996). Therefore, it is valuable to agree with Anderson's view that culture has religious import because, in a real sense, culture is as old as human society itself. All said and done, it is also clear that culture is a broader concept that contains religion and that religious practice could be well understood in the context of a culture. Christian practices in African society could be understood very well in the context of African society as well. Critical issues of Christians in the African society such as the marriage of African Christian also need to be understood in the African socio-cultural context. In the struggle of value preferences, therefore, all things being equal as Anderson, D'Andrade, Richerson, and Sperber have described, in a given situation of conflict of the marriage of Christians in the African society, Christians are likely to compromise their religious values for cultural values. It is because culture is an already text that is lasting and capable of influencing the behavior of a group. It also emphasizes that the emergence and dominance of Christianity and its Western civilization elements (Bediako 1992) on the African continent can be well embraced in the definition of African culture.

As reported in chapter five, the expectations of men who were known or identified as Christians in the Ghanaian society are more socially founded. What men want in their marriage is of higher social importance than the proclamation or adherent to faith or religion. Arasu and the Cardinals and Bishops in African have stated that marriage in Africa is a social event and very communitarian respectively (1996,1981). It means that Africans perception of

marriage is different from the Christian interpretation of marriage as a discrete event with an emphasis on special love. According to Ankra Maxine, the major challenge that Christians in Africa are facing, and which is also a challenge to the church is the marriage of church members (1973). Precisely, the marital challenge of Christian men is the contradicting emphasis on the relevance of marriage between the African culture and Christianity. Although research participants were Christians, it became a surprise when they talked about childbearing as the most relevant motive they have in marriage. In anticipation that the respondents would talk about the discrete love in marriage as Christians first, their opinion gave a different priority as noted in Chapter five (child bearing as the most highly valued expectation in marriage). However, if Christianity considers marriage as a discrete event with an emphasis on love, and the African or Ghanaian culture accept marriage as an institution with more social relevance than the marriage perception of Ghanaian Christians and for that matter Africans and their affiliated religious doctrine is tangential. However, Perumal has given a more comprehensive definition of marriage as a recognized institution with fundamentally social, sacred and legal importance with exerting forces of religion and culture. It means that traditional African marriage is considered a sacred institution in its context because it proclaims the values of love and faithfulness. Perumal's perspective looks different from the views of Arasu and the Cardinals. It looks contradictory to what informants have opined as their values and priorities, but significantly, Perumal's view makes space for the understanding of marriage as a having both social and religious importance.

First, male Christians in the Ghanaian society have prioritized childbearing, sexual gratification, support and social status as what push them into marriage. In the real sense, these factors are composed in the fundamental reason for their choice of customary marriage instead of marrying in their respective churches. In their views, the customary marriage process offers the best possibilities of realizing their marital dreams that are highly valued in the Ghanaian society. Contrary to the Christian version of marriage, especially marriage under the Roman Catholic tradition, there are possibilities for divorce and remarriage to meet challenges of childlessness, sexual displeasure, lack of support and social status. That means, if a Christian marriage ceremony is performed in the church for partners, men have no choice to divorce or marry another wife to meet the challenges in the marriage but to stay in the marriage under any circumstance. However, despite their desires and preference for Customary marriage the respondents were not silent on the sacred importance of the

customary marriage. They have explained that marriage is a divine institution no matter how it is contracted.

The views of Arasu and the Cardinals of Africa seem to be a specific definition of marriage in the context of culture and Christianity, yet they offer an excellent explanation to marriage in Christian and social thought. Meanwhile, their definitions could be criticized for creating a line between religion and culture which might be improper because culture and religion are social constructs where religion find meaning in culture (Raday 2003). In another dimension, their views cannot be neglected because the culture is known to be the most influential factor in the life and decision of people and for that matter man in marriage. Also, the Cardinals and the Bishops are directly in touch with the Christians in the various communities of practice, therefore, their views cannot be taken for granted and ought to be considered with relevance. However, what Perumal describes as traditional African marriage accepting values of love and faithfulness raises some amount of debate. It sounds unusual especially in Christianity and needs a careful interpretation of it. It is because the primary challenge of religion in modern society against culture has been the gradual withdrawal and interpretation of culture as faithless (O'Callaghan 2011). Therefore, what Perumal and others say about traditional acceptance of love and faithfulness in marriage seems to affirm what respondents have highlighted about marriage as a divine institution that does not need to be only accepted in the church.

I believe that the inherent meaning of marriage cannot be mistaken or redefined to mean something else. Neither culture nor religion has set goals of tendering the very basic of marriage in every society. Both culture and religion value marriage as a first institution in the society because out of it comes the survival of the society (new life). What seems unique is a matter of priority of values and ideological interpretations of it. The prioritization of values which results in how one wants to get married is a product of argumentation which is psychological and social (Johnson & Weber 2011). Also, focus need to be on the values that a man at the verge of marriage attach to available options of what, how and why to get married. African Christians undeniably attach values which are more personal to whatever they decide concerning their marriage. To marry in the church or by custom is practically founded on their values that are coherent with the values of the society. Although an African Christian may act diversely in many circumstances, such could be influences of modernity or portrayal of

fashion because the traditional cultural values remain inherent and exert more considerable influence in their marital decision than Christian values. What African men perceive about marriage is the result of internalized ideals of marriage through the lasting, influential capabilities of culture. On the other hand, the contradicting behavior of African men in marriage to the African culture could be an outward display of modernity or fashion and the dominating influence of Western culture in contemporary African societies.

### **6.1.1 Preferential Expectations of African Christian Men in Marriage**

Under this subsection, a detailed discussion on what men expect in marriage is done. It examines and discusses what research participants have offered as their expectations in marriage and prioritize in their life.

During the interviews, all the respondents have indicated that they attach great value to marriage and consider marriage as a mechanism for continued existence and survival of humanity; a general perception of marriage in Africa. The responses of the respondents revealed that men, irrespective of their religious background expect children, sexual pleasure, support, and social status. Most of the respondents prioritized childbearing ahead of all their expectation in marriage. Although some of the respondents have explained that they got married in the church without considering childbirth as the priority, they later indicated how they had faced challenges of childbirth which made their marriage unpleasant. So, despite the diverse view, all men concluded on the much importance of childbearing in marriage.

Moreover, male Christians in the Ghanaian society have also expressed their desire for sexual gratification and their expectation for the right sexual partner in a socially recognized manner. Male Christians in the Ghanaian society have indicated that among the underlying reason for getting married is to satisfy their sexual instincts. To the men that were interviewed, marriage is the right way to achieve this desire for sex and therefore sex outside marriage is considered inappropriate for the African society. Also, supporting each other is a prominent feature of African society, and many people marry to intensify their support from others such as spouse, families and the community. Christian men and for that matter, men have expressed their view that marriage is meant for the continuous support of their partners. Respondents have stated and stressed on the importance of women in the success of every man. Most of them have maintained that the success of men most resides in the support of women. It is true that some

of the respondents have shown their reluctance to seeking and sharing the support and opinion of their partners in the Ghanaian society, they all agreed to the critical role of women in the life of men and the society in general. The payment of the bridewealth from the man to the woman's family as revealed by Meekers (1992) is a manifestation of the relevance of women in African society.

Even though men dominate life in the African society, women are respected and therefore practices that dehumanize women are considered immoral acts to which most of them are sanctioned by society. Besides, men by culture are made to get married to women by paying the price to show appreciation and respect for women. Finally, respondents expressed the need to marry to gain social status in society. Their explanation implied that to get married is a sign of maturity and men who get married are respected and involved in most social functions and decisions making processes in society. Even in the churches, respondents have indicated how certain positions are reserved for the married. In their view, to remain unmarried puts on men lower status compared to those who are married.

What male Christians in the Ghanaian society expect in marriage is in line with the African cultural values. Much emphasis on childbearing is necessary because the African society is more communal and socially focused. In that case, the prioritization of childbearing in marriage is fundamentally reasonable since other expectation from the respondents' point of view could be linked to childbearing. For example, men in the Ghanaian society have a strong preference and seek for children because childbearing have further social importance which includes other motives that men seek in marriage. The need for support in the Ghanaian and most African societies is best realized in children. Also, the process of childbirth comes with sexual gratification. It means that, although the expectations of men in marriage are ranked in other of preference as shown by the research participants, they are mostly linked and could be considered together.

Firstly, in most African societies, children are considered an asset. Most people have married multiple wives to have many children to support them in their work (Falen 2008). The Christian men have indicated in the interviews that children are their social security and therefore it is their inherent responsibility to have children, take care of them and get the maximum returns in their old age. It is crucial to accept the view of the respondents because

the African continent is known to be impoverished and life is highly dependable on families and relatives. It is different from that of the Western societies where Christianity is known to have emerged onto the African continent. Second, most African societies are known to have weak social policies that take care of the children and the aged (periods in life where most social problems are situated, and people are vulnerable). The welfare of African people, therefore, resides in the mercy of people in the society, especially one's children and parents. It would be enough to conceive that prioritization of childbearing by men in marriage is very rational in a contextual sense. Marriage is a recognized institution that gives legitimacy of children in African society. As important as children are to Africans in marriage and their life, it requires that the institution of marriage be accepted more flexible to ensure that men and the people enjoy the great fruit of marriage which is known in the African culture as offspring.

Moreover, the importance of children to African men cannot be underemphasized because, once children are produced in marriage, all other desires of a man in marriage are likely to follow. These include the desire for support, love, and social status. It has been evident from the statements of the respondents that, children serve as a source of pleasure and stability in marriage. Without a child, most marriage according to some of the research participants might have ended in divorce despite how it was contracted. I am further convinced that Christian men and for that matter men in African societies' value for children is a rational decision that conforms diligently to the contextual values of the African people.

Secondly, the desire for sexual gratification finds fulfillment in the search for children in marriage. Though many people find sexual pleasure without given birth or outside marriage, it is considered inappropriate not only in a religious sense but also in an aesthetic sense. For instance, it breaches the morality of marriage as Grossi has noted, and it receives sanctions in diverse forms from both the social and religious groups. Back to Calves' unmarried cohabitation of youth in contemporary societies, such practice in most African societies is considered inappropriate and violates the principle of sexual morality as indicated earlier. Let us not forget that both Christian and traditional marriage are sacred (Perumal 2012) to understand the inappropriateness of sex outside marriage.

Irrespective of the reasons that are cited for the emerging practice of unmarried cohabitation and proposed view interpretation of it as an intermediary conjugal union (Attane 2007), most



of the reasons cited are known to be influences of Western culture and fear of uncertainty which I will discuss later in this section. Instead, in the African marriage understanding, unmarried cohabitation breaches the sacredness of marriage and the legitimate importance of children and the status of persons involved. However, very critical consideration of unmarried cohabitation found in most African societies as Chigiti has shown in chapter three could be attributed to the support seeking motive of people as priority. That is, a preference which is different from the value sequence of culture and religion. That is, men are not marrying or are delaying their marriage possibly because of their prioritized motive for support other than childbearing or love. However, the quest for sexual gratification which is very natural and ranked by research participants as second to childbirth is what becomes the issue of contemplation in unmarried cohabitations. Just as childbirth produce sexual gratification, sexual gratification results in childbirth. The two are intertwined and raises the argument of morality between culture and religion or Christianity.

Back to Grossi, sex and marriage are inseparable but sex and unmarried cohabitation ought to be separated since it could result in children born out of wedlock, forms of abuses and social irresponsibility among others. Most often, unmarried cohabitation that is considered a form or a process in marriage produces most social problems and does not make lasting relationships. Unfortunately, the meaning of marriage in Africa and the general perception of it seem to have been fused with unmarried cohabitation. Many people consider unmarried cohabitation as an accepted form of marriage in and for Africa. The unmarried cohabitation is not marriage in any social context including Africa, but its problems are usually considered marriage problems and linked usually with customary marriage in Africa. Even if it is an intermediary conjugal union and fall within the process of getting married as Attane has indicated, such unions are not recognized as marriage with social legitimacy in most African societies.

Looking at the importance or the expectations of men in marriage, and how they choose to marry in the Ghanaian society, I am in the first place with the view that, Christian men in Africa are inclined to their cultural values than Christian values. Also, both Christianity and African tradition have a similar view of marriage and that what is seen as a negative aspect of traditional African marriage is just an infusion of misconception. Furthermore, the choice of men and even Christians in Africa in their marriage find understanding in the African culture. The integral role and capabilities of culture could be accounted for their preference despite

their affiliation with Christianity. As Milch et al have explained, preferences are construed, and individuals make decisions through a series of judgments before conforming to the demands of a group. In the case of Christian men, as shown in chapter five, their preferences for a marriage pattern is constructed under the significant influence of their values that they hold as ideals and conforms to what the social group or the society jointly accept and hold in high esteem.

### **6.1.2 The Manifestation of Men's Desire in Marriage choices**

Here, I present the discussion on how men's expectations in marriage which are grounded in cultural values influence their choice of marriage. It has been done by considering how African men's expectations influence their choice of marriage through cultural and religious elements.

There are essential components of the African culture that it would be wrong to underestimate. It is upon these values that African society is seen unique from the rest of the world. For instance, the Western values of individualism, freedom, and independence against the social and collectivist values of African society shows a deal of incoherence. Such difference manifests in marriage and makes way for the controversies in the marriage life of African Christians. Though there are similarities between the Western Christian and African Religio-cultural worldviews concerning marriage as Perumal rightly explained, the pattern of emphasis and preferences in marriage vary. The importance of marriage as explained by interview respondents depicts the enormous influence of culture in the life of African Christians. That is, men's expectations in marriage and how they are prioritized influence their choice of marriage through the African Religio-cultural elements.

Respondents have explained that their perception of marriage is most influenced by their desires or what they expect in marriage. These influences are expressed in cultural and religious elements. In the cultural sense, the need to contribute to society through childbearing and to attain some worldly pleasures and status as demanded by the Ghanaian culture informs their choice of marriage. Also, pressures from family and society play a vital role in choosing one pattern of marriage. For instance, some of the respondents have indicated that the pressure from their parents to give them grandchildren pushed them to marry in a way that gives importance to childbearing and earns them what they want to evade further social

pressures. Religiously, respondents have explained that the inherent divine importance of marriage in every context or the sacred importance is counted in their marriage plan. That is, such a notion removes the idea of marriage as having divine relevance only in the religious context. Also, the belief in the consequences of a divorce as having negative spiritual implication especially when marriage is contracted through a religious ceremony under religious vows like what is found in the Catholic tradition of marriage is given much consideration. More so, the Africans believe in Christian marriage as implying economic success, and the associated belief of possible spiritual manipulation in marriage affect the view and choice of the marriage of most African men who are Christians.

The views of the respondents that marriage irrespective of how it is contracted has inherent religious importance correspond to George Anderson's view and makes it credible for the fact that, where there is culture, obviously there is religion. George Anderson is of the argument that, although religion determines the morality in the Ghanaian society, religious elements are found and interpreted in culture (2013). African Christians hold on to their cultural values in marriage because it contains religious importance. Also, what Grossi explains as the relevance of marriage to be considered as a moral issue is clearly emphasized in the views of respondents. It indicates that since marriage and sex are inseparable and sex outside marriage is considered inappropriate by respondents, marriage indeed has religious importance in any context.

Regarding Grossi's case of marriage and sex, and that marriage is to be placed in moral arguments because it is associated with sex, religion and culture need to be the focus of debates in marriage issue as well. Religion and culture stand out when it comes to wrong and right conduct of people. However, since culture has religious elements and not the other way around, culture could be considered as the source and determinant of marriage choice of men in the African/Ghanaian society. That is a reverse view of Anderson's argument but with popular content of the connectedness of religion and culture. Akiwumi Fenda and Ambe Njoh have also argued that sex-typing conventions which are associated with marriage but tend to vary by society are typically in religious and philosophical traditions (2011). If so, then religion and culture are intertwined and need to be blamed and praised together in marriage.

The views of African male Christians on marriage and the interpretation of it support what Eric Johnson, Gerald Haubl and Anat Keinan have proposed that choices are constructed according to responses to different queries. That means, what African men who are Christian prefer in marriage are constructed through the assessment of Christian and African Religio-cultural values. It is well explained in a similar view of Weber and Associates (2007) that choices and possibilities influence each other. Elke Weber's view also explains the opinion of African men in that, to him, preference construction involves a broad range of issues with significant personal and social consequences including reluctant to change. Therefore, in as much as men's expectations which are founded on social values (culture) influence their choice of marriage, culture which contains religious imports must be recognized as the main character in men's decision about their marriage.

Mariam Frahm-Arp has talked about the issue of many unmarried women by explaining in chapter three that, there are many unmarried women due to what she termed as "politics of sexuality." By that, she outlined some of the reasons for many unmarried women in modern societies to include the career status of women due to empowerment (2012). It is worth noting that what Frahm-Arp says about increasing unmarried women is not the result of the willingness of women not to marry. Instead, it is an implication of men's reluctance to get married to women due to their career status and their preference for Christian marriage. It seems that men consider the status and motive of women as a means of eroding their control and domination through Christian marriage. The incongruence of choice of women for Christian marriage to men's desires for marriage has accounted for the increasing unmarried women in various societies.

In most African societies, development trends that tackle gender issues attract resistance from society and are defended by culture. Such cases are more at play on the African continent where the cultural constructs favor men. The addicted power control of men in many circumstances and male supremacy has become a value that men in most African societies find challenging to give away for equality, respect and socioeconomic control of life to prevail. Gender role has been attached with so much value that women who stand out to be socially and economically empowered face significant life challenges in society, precisely in African societies. Such women are stigmatized and given derogatory names. Among the Akans for instance, they often referred to as "man-woman." Such women are usually avoided

by most men who do not want to share power with women. Similarly, practices that have elements of bridging the gap between male domination or supremacy and female subordination in most societies attract avoidance. Although it looks terrible for women to experience lack of participation regarding marriage, it has attracted the least attention in most of the societies. Back to Dominique Meeker's concept of marriage in Africa, the payment of bridewealth to the woman family by the man endorse the critical right of men in marriage. Even though the bride wealth is a sign of respect for women and sanctifies the sexual relationship in a socially recognized manner, it sets the challenge of gender inequality and male control in marriage. Simply put, the influence of culture in Africa does not only result in how men should marry but also explain why men should marry as they want.

### **6.1.3 The implicit Importance of the Customary Marriage.**

In this sub-section, I look at the importance that pushes African male Christians to the customary marriage practice instead of Christian marriage but is seldom talk about because they identify themselves as Christians.

The importance of marriage is not different from the importance of customary marriage, but every man has motives in marriage and attaches importance to these desires. As indicated earlier, the motives of African men in marriage is founded on the cultural values which are lasting and inherent in them. Similarly, Christianity has not offered any different meaning to the importance of marriage but has emphasized specific values that reflect Western Christian culture. The name- Christian marriage does not change the meaning of marriage; neither does the customary marriage. From the respondents' point of view Christian or customary has the same meaning and importance once the basic which is the social recognition of the union has been realized. Both Christian and custom understand marriage and accept the sacred and social importance of it according to Perumal (2011).

Meanwhile, evidence from the previous sections indicates that the phenomenon of the marriage of African Christians is about value preferences and priorities of the African traditional practice against the Christian tradition of marriage. It also concerns how marriage ought to be for Africans who are Christians. Simply put, the whole debate about marriage is a subject of ideology between Christianity and African culture. In this regard, a good

understanding of the marriage of a person in a specific context could be grabbed through the frameworks of personal internal judgments and values.

As to why most men prefer to marry commonly, the responses of Ghanaian men revealed that there is latent importance found in customary marriage practice. These include the flexible nature of custom marriage in handling challenges in marriage and the low cost of customary marriage. Also, the overwhelming role of fear and the natural feature of customary marriage to reduce substances or perceptions of envy and fear makes it attractive to African Christian men. The fear of uncertainties in marriage, belief in spiritual manipulation and spiritual sanctions for breaking marital vows are essential factors in marriage decision but are not explicitly expressed. For instance, participants have explained that they felt uneasy about marrying in the church because society sees church marriage as a symbol of success in life. Differently put, the customary marriage in the Ghanaian society according to the married men, is regarded as a moderate form of marriage that meets the requirement of marriage. It does not create a further impression of economic success that might cause jealousy. To marry in the church in the opinion of the research participants is an exposure of one's life progress which could attract hateful actions from family members. It is believed that the working force of others as an envious decision by any means, including the use of evil spirits by the evil-hearted can deny the partners of their wishes in the marriage, especially children. As strange as what the respondents have said might be, it is very relevant to consider their views in context. Also, their opinion could mean an expression of some of the inconsistencies found in the life of African Christians and the popular notion of unpredictable human behavior. Again, it is believed to be a manifestation of the vast difference between theory and practice or in the religious sense, doctrine and practice. In another dimension, it also explains the Africans' aversion for an individualized culture which has been described as the foundation of Christian tradition (Arasu 1996, Shakman 2008).

Respondents have included in their opinion and stressed that human behavior is unpredictable. It is usually tricky to know the behavior and potentials of their partners from the beginning of their marital relationship. What the behavior of the chosen partner will be in the later part of the marital life especially when their potentials as men start to decline is of great concern. As a result, they are usually cautious about how to contract their marriages. At worst, they usually prefer a process that would allow for flexible terms and conditions to meet unforeseen

challenges that are likely to cause regret or inhibit the realization of their marital dreams. It supports the view of Mercier and Sperber that reasoning is social and argumentative (Johnson & Weber 2011). Mercier and Sperber have maintained in their explanation of query theory that reasoning is social and argumentative. Inferences are usually drawn when problems are anticipated. In that case, African Christian men have a reasonable choice for their marriage because their decision is based on what Mercier and Sperber referred to as inference construction.

In addition to the above, the belief and the subsequent fear of social and spiritual sanctions or punishment for breaking religious vows in marriage is another factor for Christians' reluctance to marry under "strict" marital vows. The usage of "strict" has many implications and ought to be taken as an important qualifier relevant in this study. First, the word has been employed in support of the assertion by Perumal that both Christian and cultural marriage have sacredness in them. It is again used to support the argument by Anderson that culture has religious components and the populous religiosity of the African culture (Mbiti 1995). Moreover, strict has been used to stress on the thought that, although the customary marriage could be flexible, it has elements of control to avoid most of the negative consequences of divorce; especially its effect on children as well as unacceptable forms of sexual acts; a view highlighted by Calves. It could be recalled that Calves has argued extensively on the emerging state of unmarried cohabitation in most contemporary societies. His concerns were supported by Chigiti and a group of scholars as an existing and practicing form of sexual relationship in some African societies. However, more importantly, the word-strict has been coined to emphasize on the differential interpretation of marriage in Christianity (Robinson 2002), that is process and control of marriage by various Christian sects as well as its implication for marriage in various church denominations.

Notwithstanding that the Christian marriage has deterring role, what is found in the Catholic denomination is more intensive than other church denominations. From the respondents' point of view, a stricter tradition on marriage such as the Catholic tradition has the most deterrent role in the marriage of men. Although marriages under Catholic tradition are considered exceptionally stable, most marital dissatisfactions have been identified with Catholic marriage (Maller 2008).

Regarding the relevance of marriage and customary marriage, I have previously talked about the common elements in Christian and customary marriage. I have endeavored to support the notion that both traditions accept marriage as having sacred and social importance. Also, a more precise view has been expressed on the difference between Christian and customary traditions of marriage. To expand the understanding, the prioritization of the primary importance or motives of marriage puts forward the diversities in marriage between Christianity and the African traditional culture. In simple terms, both Christian and customary marriage attach significant values to childbearing, social status, support and sexual gratification, but, the motives are differently preferred and practiced.

A more critical study of the difference and African Christians' preference for customary marriage instead of Christian marriage is found in the hidden importance of the customary marriage; having allowances for substitution marriage, divorce, remarriage and multiple marriages unlike the Catholic Christian version of marriage. These allowances as shown by the interview respondents facilitate solutions to the challenges of childbearing, partner's behavior and potentials in marriage. It must be remembered that men in most African societies define themselves as Christians but the cultural elements of African society practically subsume them.

Fear has been known to influence men's choice of marriage by the interview respondents and fear of spirituality often influence the choice of men considering the religiosity of Africans. Respondents have revealed their fear of breaking religious vows in challenging moments in their marriage. Mariah Frahm-Arp has argued for many unmarried women in contemporary societies and situated it under the influence of men's fear of women with a high-status job, loss of control of men over their wives and family. Mercier and Sperber have insisted on how inferences are drawn when problems are anticipated, and this is also reflected in the views of Weber and Johnson (2011), Fredrick and Loewenstein (2008), and Weber (2013). To Fredrick and Loewenstein, consumer decision making, here in referred as marriage is done by the evaluation of sequence of alternatives whiles Johnson and Weber have emphasized on how people employ process level specification to assess options and demonstrate their causal roles before arriving at a decision. Weber pinpoints the importance of personal and social consequences of alternative in decision making. In the light of the study and for that matter respondents view about fear and choice of marriage, African male Christians consider the



inherent importance and potentials of Religio-cultural values on marriage and ascribe priority to it. That is, between Christian and African Religio-cultural values of marriage male Christians subject the alternative values to queries to make preferences towards how they want to marry as Christians.

First, fear of uncertainty about the conduct and behavior of their partners according to some respondents has caused delays to marry in the church, and it has kept some marriages on its feet. For instance, the stability of most Catholic marriages despite associated dissatisfactions could be attributed to the fear of breaking Catholic marital vows. The removal of fear within people can produce social disaster while fear in people can result in unreliable and unpredictable conduct. Fear has been implicated in many behaviors in and across society (Nussbaum 2008, pp. 20-21). That means fear ought to be looked at as a factor in the marriage decision of men. In African societies where Female Genital Mutilation is practiced, it has been accounted that such practice is done to females because of fear of the growing clitoris of a female to equalize male penis (Amadiume 2006). It means that most of the practices that discriminate against and dehumanizes females by denying them equal rights and respect in some societies are done on the drive of fear.

Christian marriage with values preferences of love and respect as well as equality undoubtedly calls for fear of control and unchanging religious vows. That is, what is valued and practiced within society is perceived to have consequences and affect the individual decision. Even in Western societies where human rights and the notion of human equality are highly respected, the fear of excess control and independence of people are popularly known to keep many young people from marriage. In marriage practice of Africans, the fear of matching the possible challenges in a marriage that might require tendering of marital vows and the limited possibilities to do so under Christian marriage tradition has been accounted for as part of the reasons for men's preference for customary marriage to Christian marriage in most developing societies.

It is evident that discussion about marriage and fear has not been focused in academia or there is almost no explicit account on fear as an essential factor that influences people or men's perception about marriage and how they get married. However, respondents have exposed the concept of fear in marriage. The informants clearly emphasized on the fear of breaking

religious marital vows and the possible divine consequences. Meanwhile, the views of the respondents that expressed fear of their partners to expose them to the evil hearts in the society and the possible spiritual manipulation in their life were not absolute. Some of the respondents had the view that marriage is not meant to work on economic success or marriage is not contracted in the period of economic fortune. A good marriage is a result of wisdom under existing circumstances. If such is the case, it would be unnecessary to accept that marriage is view as a symbol of success in society. The two views seem to contradict but in a way rest on a common denominator. The perspective of the respondents is value-based and must be looked at in their context. Also, the views need not to be compared but instead, be placed in the framework of what is known of people and what is practiced by them. It does not mean that, respondents were not sincere in their answers in the interviews but to accept the fact that, marriage is a very personal, valuable and sensitive phenomenon with so many secrets and privacies. It could be meaningful in the light of marriage and sex as associates that raises moral concerns (Grossi 2011). In a broader sense, both religion and culture influence the view and perception of people and this is well understood in the statements from respondents concerning their marital status in chapter five. In as much as culture and religion are intertwined, religion exerts difference in the thinking of men, and that might be on the surface. Men regardless of their religion or belief have general expectations in marriage in the Ghanaian/African society. Moreover, respondents unanimously conceived that indeed the struggle of most young men in life is the result of forfeiting the fundamental requirements in marriage. In that case, it is perceived that mistreatment of the fundamental divine rules of marriage calls for divine punishment.

According to some customary married respondents, fear of the conduct and behavior of partners has caused delays to marry in the church. The further implication is that men are often cautious not to face moments of regret in their marriage life. I therefore share similar notion with Nussbaum that, fear in people can produce dishonest and unpredictable behavior that may be considered inconsistent with what is expected to be the acceptable norm of a group or society. Most men are very critical about how to contract their marriage or involve in certain practices especially within religion.

As quoted earlier in the introductory chapter, "marriage is a long journey...". The idea of marriage as shared among Africans naturally sheds elements of fear since, in the usual sense,

a long journey is much associated with so many challenges. Therefore, it requires excellent and strategic planning to achieve such a goal. Just as the circumstances of the long journey may call for continuation, rest or a stoppage, so could be of marriage. However, the decision that one takes depends highly on how he plans to cover the journey and enforced by what he wants to achieve in the end.

Choice of means with regards to a journey determines or predicts how a person embarking on a journey will be able to handle challenges that may come along. In marriage, just as in every human situation where behavior is often difficult to predict, the chosen process usually has a solution component to deal with unforeseen challenges and issues. Some processes in marriage allow for reconsideration of marriage decision while others may offer little or no chance of tendering marriage decision. I make this claim regarding the different motives, values, and interpretations in and across religious traditions (Robinson 2002) and cultures of marriage (Arasu 1996).

The need for children and other expectations in marriage have been accounted for as the reason for customary marriage among African Christian men. In their views, the customary marriage practice in the African context is the appropriate form or route to manage challenges to achieve pertinent goals in marriage. The query theory's interpretation makes the respondents' opinions credible in the African context. On a fairly ground, they did not mean that Christian marriage does not offer these expectations in marriage. However, among the problems that seem to be crippling Christian men in Ghana to participate in religious marriage is the fear of not being satisfied with the value preferences in Christian marriage. Also, at play are the challenges that they anticipate or associate with Christian marriage in African society. That is the fear of how to manage these challenges in marriage especially where there would be no child due to bareness, misbehavior of a wife among others creates controversy within men. Since the Christian marriage practice does not value childbearing and other desires of men in marriage as prioritized by respondents, men find it challenging to marry by it. Moreover, the disbaring the practice of divorce or substitutional marriage unlike the African cultural marriage, usually cause most men who claim to be Christians to consider Christian marriage later in life when their expectations are met.

Of course, such a notion cannot be free from the gender construction of culture since there are an unequal claim and consideration for females under a similar situation in marriage. However, the other dimension of men's desire and the associated fear is usually under-looked. The high expectation and value that men attach to marriage also have a fearing element, and it keeps most marriages stable and portrays elements of a real Christian home. It, therefore, raises the question of whether Christian marriage ought to be considered in a practical or theoretical sense which can be a thesis of its own.

Children, as revealed by the respondents, are vital to men in Ghanaian society. They are considered as a point of unity. As one of the respondents similarly indicated, children hold marriage relationships together. They become the focus of every man in the Ghanaian context since a man's life is usually judged in African society by his responsibility towards his children. Therefore, the common perception that divorce could have a negative consequence for their children challenges men to love their partners and keep their marriage. Some men endeavor to keep their marriage working even in times of other challenges other than infertility to maintain the pride associated with responsibility and childbirth. Without children, minor issues such as little misunderstanding between marriage partners could have ended in divorce. That is, there would have nothing to serve as a shared object for commitment in marriage.

Moreover, children are considered a form of social security in most societies, particularly in Ghana. The Akans in Ghana, for instance, has an adage that translates that; the parents ensure that the child becomes successful so that he or she will take care of them in the old age. Many of the troubles in contemporary societies are associated with childhood and aging, and that is why most states put in place measures to ensure that children and the elderly and taken care of in society. Fortunately, the Western world has strong social policies and institutions that take care of these problems, and that might be the foundation of their preference for Christian type of marriage that values love ahead of childbirth. In the third world nations such as in Ghana, the welfare of people rests significantly in the hands of family members and children. That is, children are the responsibilities of adults and the adults become the responsibility of their children in old age. It is of no surprise that, at marriage ceremonies, couples are blessed to have a 'fruit of the womb'.

Marriage without a child is considered as life without social security in the Ghanaian thought. Also, since childbearing has the potentials of fulfilling other expectations of men such as sexual gratification, support, and social status, the choice of African male Christian need not to be considered unimportant. Complete rejection of what males Christians value in Africa can have a negative implication for the people and the African Christian community.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

Life from the perspective of Ghanaians or Africans is religious. Religion forms part and parcel of people's everyday life in Africa (Ambe & Akiwumi 2012). It trumps the popular Western notion and perception of Africans as barbaric that needs to be rescued (Bediako 1992). Notwithstanding the established unacceptable patterns of practices such as multiple marriages, gender inequality, domestic violence, and Female Genital Mutilation in the African society which is more criticized in the light of modern and western ideologies, Christian marriage remains quite controversial in the mind of African Christians (Amenga 2012).

In the light of African enlightenment, scholars have explained that, neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament has rules for marriage and that, the variety of Christian marriage practice has been carefully drafted and tailored to replicate God's loving covenant with human beings (Amenga 2012). The marriage practice as revealed in the study by respondents and critical evaluation of their responses are definitions of their values. In the marriage of Africans, the derogated forms of marriage and the various description of African marriage as a mechanism for the breach of human rights and social inequality by western scholars could be attributed to lack of respect for the African cultural practices (Falen 2008). The meaning of marriage in African society resides in the people that requires an empathetic approach to understand. It is worth noting that, culture and marriage are universal concepts that are uniquely lived by people in a context. In the African society, the complete acceptance of Christian values which are fundamentally products of the western way of life (Shakman, 2008), has not worked out (Ankra 1973) due to the inconsistencies between Western Christian culture and African Religio-culture. That is, the influential role of culture on the religious practice of the Christianized population in Africa, is undoubtedly at play.

The Christian religious practices are the combined outcome of African Religio-cultural tradition, Western Christian and other religious traditions. The debate of triple facet heritage

of women; Traditional African Religion, Islam and Christianity (Akiwumi & Ambe 2012) also covers men. Though culture is known to be the mother rock of life formation of every individual and society, religion is indispensable. As Anderson discussed the source of morality in some Ghanaian societies (2013), every aspect of culture in the Ghanaian society has religious significance. It may sound right to mention that, the perception and choice of marriage among Ghanaian Christian men is not just about culture and religion. It is a choice from multiple values; African Religio-cultural values, Western Christian values and other religious traditions on the African continent.

The option for customary marriage is the enormous influence of the Traditional Religio-cultural values that the Ghanaian man finds difficult to do without in his life. Whether customary marriage is accepted or not in Christianity, Christians who practice divorce are not sanctioned entirely from the church. Some church denominations do not practice strict measures on divorce and remarriage, but the Roman Catholic church insists on its tradition of strict doctrine on marriage, divorce, and remarriage (Robinson 2002, Lehmkuhl 1909). The Catholic tradition of marriage ensures stable marriage and families but also, most spouses are identified with marital dissatisfaction (Maller 2008). The later deter many young men from marrying in the church.

From the interviews conducted and the data analyzed and discussed, it can be concluded that marriage is regarded as a divine institution and peoples' interpretation and practice of marriage are grounded on the values that have been constructed by society. Christian men are confronted with plural values in Ghanaian society. Since culture and religion are intertwined, and religion finds meaning in culture, the marriage perception of the Christian world over is much found in cultural values. Diversity in value preferences of Christianity and Ghanaian or African culture offer Christian men more than one view and process of marriage. What men think about marriage and how they get married is a matter of choice which is dependent on the personal value (s) that men attach to marriage. Men who are under the influence of great African Religion-cultural tradition Christianity, therefore, conduct an internal analysis of multiple values to arrive at a choice of marriage. The dominant preference for customary marriage by African male Christians instead of Christian marriage is due to the role of culture and the values that they hold consistent with the African socio-cultural values.

### *6.3 Recommendations for Further Studies*

The nature of the research has made it difficult to offer a more general conclusion on men's perception of marriage. Consequently, the conclusions drawn are contextual. It implies that the views of Christian men and understanding of marriage in another social context could be different from what has been expressed and interpreted in the study. However, marriage problems are concerns of the church in Africa because they touch every corner of human and church development (Arasu 1996). Therefore, a significant contribution of this study is to offer recommendations for further studies to come out with a comprehensive solution to the marriage of Christians, especially in Africa.

First and foremost, it is recommended that further studies be conducted in other social contexts to compare results that will be used as the yardstick to confirm or reject the cultural or contextual influence of marriage perception of Christian men. Since the study is an exploratory study, the opinion of Christian men in Ghana cannot be used as a base for conclusion except inferences as shown in the opinion of the researcher in the conclusion above. Besides, minority views cannot be wholly neglected. It would be of high relevance for a further and more objective study of men's perception of marriage in and across societies. Also, the pluralistic nature of Christian practices on the African continent concerning marriage requires further studies to come out with the specific marriage of Christians that might be universally accepted by the African people. Christianity needs to consider diverse interpretations of marriage across Christian denominations. In that case, it calls for the Roman Catholic tradition, Orthodox tradition and other Christian traditions to be consistent with the meaning and interpretation of marriage and its associated elements such as divorce and remarriage, if possible. That is, Christian theologians and scholars are recommended to make a focused study to conclude on specific marriage for Christians to remove elements of skepticism within Christian marriage especially in Africa.

Moreover, a balance is necessary between the African cultural or traditional marriage values and the Christian values to reduce the resultant challenge of value construction of Africans. In the case of the Roman Catholic church, the church ought to study the marriage problems of Christians that are considered frustrations and or blocking them from marrying and receiving the Holy Communion and other Sacraments. The church must look at and examine the positive and valuable aspect of the traditional or customary marriage and adequately fix them

in the church tradition. Also, the church needs to expand on the understanding of Christian marriage world over. The Christian community must make it clear whether Christian marriage should be taken or understood in practical terms or as a formality. Most marriages are contracted following specific church tradition and requirements, but it does not exhibit Christian life and family. It does not represent the kingdom of God on earth or serves as a means for Christian mission or the domestic church as the Christian home is supposed to offer. On the contrary, some customary married homes practically exhibit real Christian home but are not recognized by some church denominations as Holy family.

Finally, since childbearing is known to be at the heart of Christians in Africa and influence most of the marriage decisions of men regular and consistent education must be in place by religious groups to help people to understand the meaning and value of other social responsibilities. More precisely, the meaning of adoption should be well informed to reduce the anxiety and fear of childlessness which is associated with African men's preference for customary marriage and, a source of divorce and second marriage.



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# Attachment

## Interview Guide

How did you become a Christian?

How long have you married as a Christian?

How do you understand marriage and marriage in the Catholic tradition?

What are some of the difference between Christian and customary marriage?

Can you tell me about how you got married?

What influenced your marriage and how you got married?

Did you have any objectives for getting married?

- What are some of these objectives?

How are you satisfied or not satisfied with your marriage?

Can you explain the reasons for how you got married and your experiences?

What other benefits are you expecting apart from what you are experiencing now in your marriage?

Are you facing some problems in your marriage?

- What problems are you facing in your marriage?

Do you know about another form of marriage other than your marriage type?

How do you understand Christian marriage and traditional marriage?

What specific difference do you see between Christian and traditional marriage?

Why would do you prefer customary practice as a Christian?

Do you think your marriage has impacted on your marital dreams?

- How has your marriage helped or not helped you?

What do you prefer about Christian marriage?

What recommendation would you give to those who are about to marry concerning the choice of marriage?