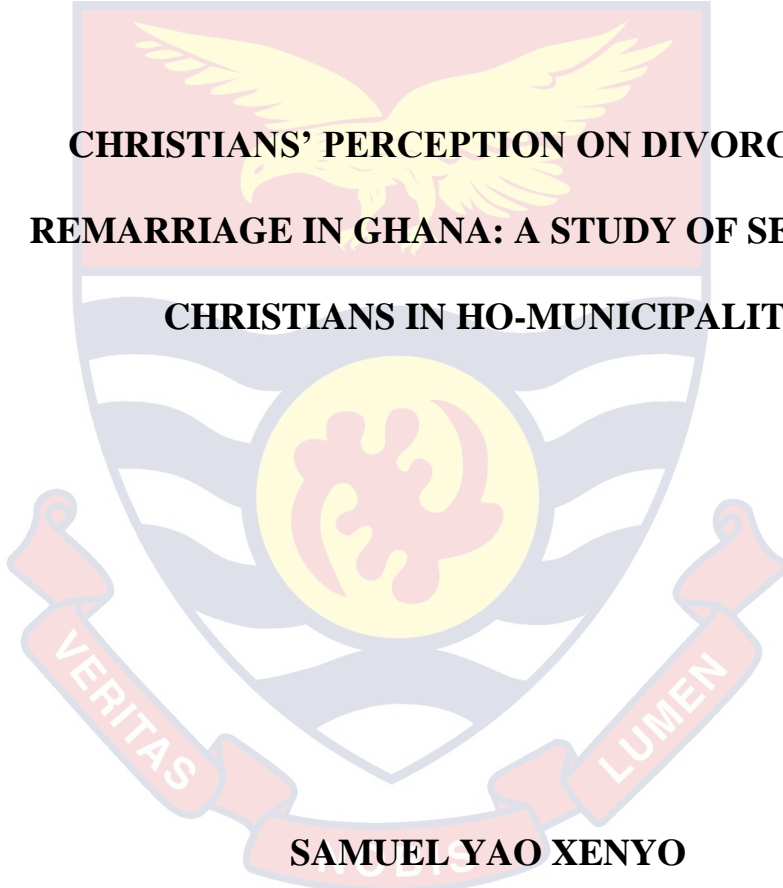


UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST



**CHRISTIANS' PERCEPTION ON DIVORCE AND
REMARRIAGE IN GHANA: A STUDY OF SELECTED
CHRISTIANS IN HO-MUNICIPALITY**

SAMUEL YAO XENYO

2021

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

CHRISTIANS' PERCEPTION ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

IN GHANA: A STUDY OF SELECTED CHRISTIANS IN

HO-MUNICIPALITY

BY

SAMUEL YAO XENYO

Thesis submitted to the Department of Religion and Human Values, Faculty of Arts, College of Humanities and Legal Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in Religious Studies.

FEBRUARY 2021

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: Date:

Name: Samuel Yao Xenyo

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature: Date:

Name: Dr. Kojo Okyere

ABSTRACT

Today, many marriages are failing as divorce and remarriage are becoming very common among Christians in Ghana. A research work done by Akuamoah (2013) on *Determinants of divorce in Ghana, 2008* has shown that through the processes of modernisation and globalisation, Sub-Saharan Africa including Ghana is beginning to experience the same family changes caused by divorce in the developed world (Tak, 2006). This research therefore sought to find out the perception of Ghanaian Christians on divorce and remarriage as to why they are still on the increase despite the fact that God hates and frowns on them respectively (Mal. 2:16; Matt. 19). The study discovered that God Himself designed marriage as a lifelong covenantal relationship (Gen. 2:23-25; Mal. 2:14). Based on the views of Christians in the Ho-Municipality (the study area), it was discovered that biblical messages do not seem to completely or effectively prevent divorce and remarriage from happening though the divorce rate seemed to be lower in this part of the country as compared with other parts. The study used phenomenological design as the population size was achieved through purposive sampling technique. Interviews and focus group discussions were used as tools for data collection from forty (40) respondents. Data analysis was done using thematic analysis as simple descriptive and inference were tools used for analysing the primary data. Based on the research findings, it is recommended that the roles of the individual and the family should not be neglected just as marriage counsellors/religious leaders should counsel couples on changing roles of males and females and how to adjust to them in our modern society.

KEY WORDS

Counselling

Divorce

Interdependence theory

Marriage

Perception

Remarriage



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This research work has been the most interesting but very challenging academic exercise in my life. It came to a stage where giving up became cowardice, standing still was suicidal and moving forward became perilous, the final choice I embraced was perseverance. My greatest appreciation goes to God for His sustenance and providence.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the almighty and all-sufficient God, my lovely wife, Churchlife Agava Agbetum-Xenyo and our children: Jerry-Sam Etriakor Xenyo and Godslife Senyo Xenyo.



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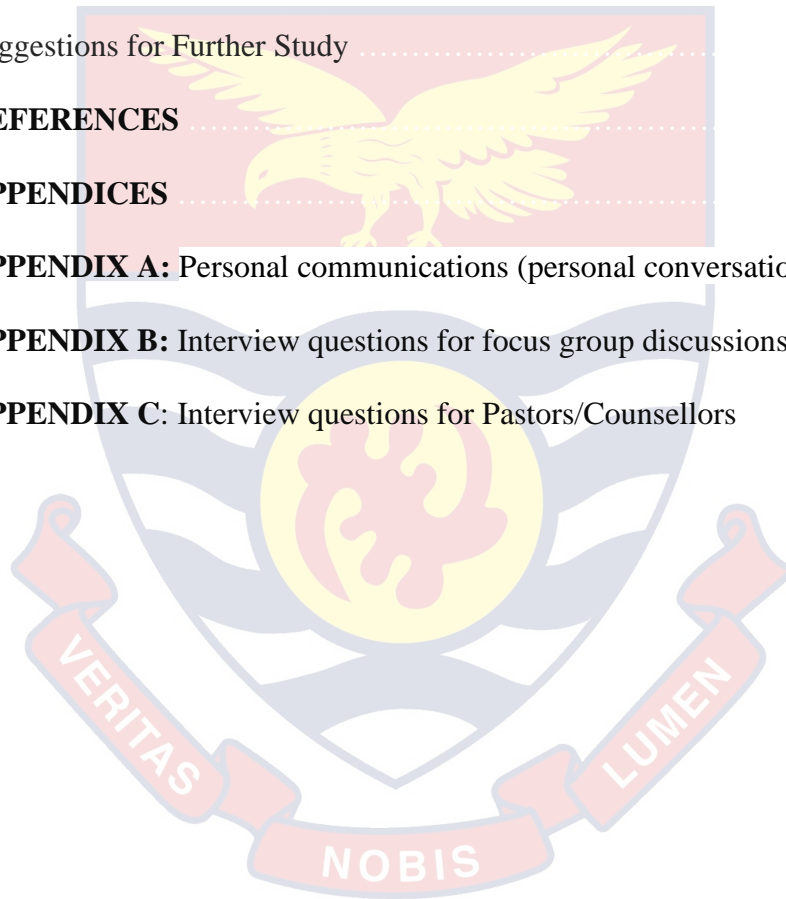
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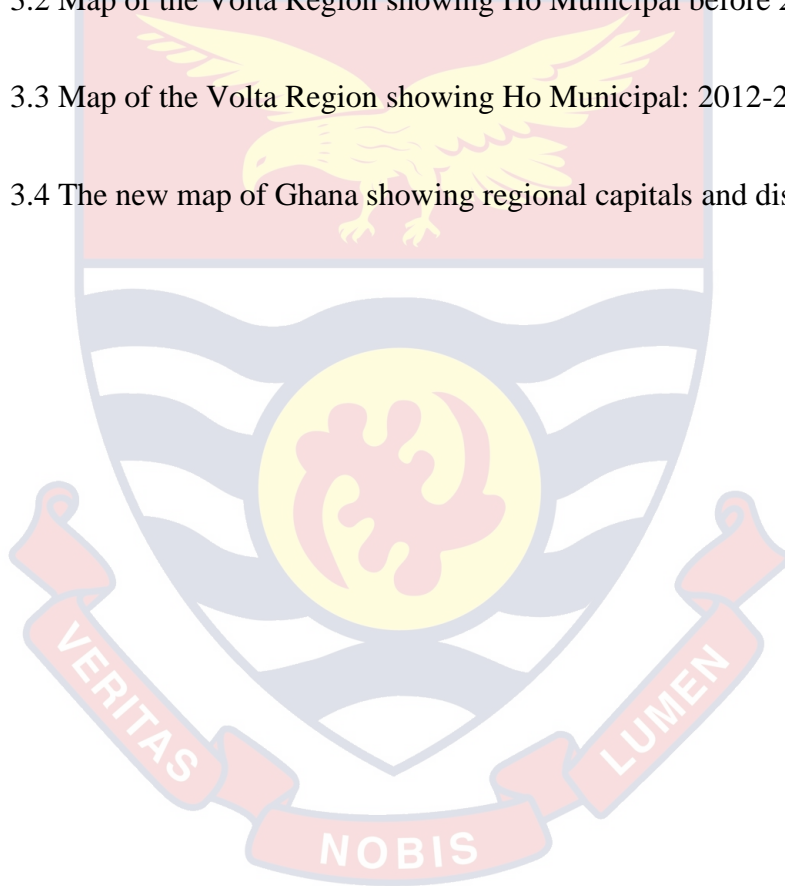
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Marriage in the world today has become complex, if not very complex. We live in an era where marriage as a noble institution is under serious attacks from all angles (Akuamoah, 2013). Our modern day Ghanaian society is confronted with marital ethical dilemma as we witness a situation where many young people delay marriage for many years in pursuit of education or career goals but indulge in gross sexual activities or live a lifestyle of frequently having sexual intercourse without marriage or in a more subtle way cohabit just for the fear of divorce. The rate of divorce is still near an all-time high level (Odoi, 2015). Even so, the idea that marriage is for life in our culture fades off along with the biblical worldview (Malachi 2:14-16).

The church and individuals today should have roles to play towards these ethical problems and provide alternatives and solutions. Tak (2006) says that, among the ethical problems in our modern society, the most serious and closest to us may be divorce and remarriage.

This research work is done to look at: “Christians’ Perception on Divorce and Remarriage in Ghana: A study of selected Christians in Ho-Municipality.” This chapter is, therefore, made up of the following sub-headings: Background to the study, Statement of the problem, Purpose of the study, Objectives of the study, Research questions, Significance of the study, Theoretical framework of the study, Conceptual framework of the study, Literature review, Methodology,

Delimitation/scope of the study, Limitations of the study, Definition of Terms, Organisation of the research and Conclusion.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Perceptions vary from individuals to individuals and from one religious group to another. Whether ideal or reverse, Christians have understood marriage, divorce and remarriage differently based on their life experiences, worldviews, cultures, values and beliefs. Though marital rites differ from one culture to the other, an ideal marriage is between a man and a woman in almost every culture in the world, both secular and religious societies (Adam, 2015). This view of Adam could be considered in the modern sense as a stand against other forms of marriage such as marriage between a man and a man (*gay marriage*), marriage between a woman and a woman (*lesbian marriage*) and an older person and a child (*pedophile marriage*) as not constituting ideal marriages. However, in a typical African culture, marriage goes beyond a man and a woman to families and even to an entire society (Mbiti, 1969; Nukunya, 1992 & Ganusah, 2014).

The very first clear Christian scriptural reference on marriage in Genesis chapter two portrays it as a creation ordinance of God and not man. God was solely the originator of the idea and could be considered as the officiating minister, the witness as well as the in-law of the partners involved in this noble institution.

And the LORD God said, *It is* not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him... And Adam said, this *is* now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And

they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed (Genesis 2:18, 23-25, KJV).

The institution of marriage is, therefore, considered a covenant between a man and a woman on one hand, and God on the other hand (Malachi 2:14). Even so, a man and a woman are expected to enter into marriage as mutual agreement where loyalty to each other is the hallmark (Malachi 2:15). The procedure for it to be valid and for it to remain as long as the couples live must be consistent with divine law. Reference could be made to a divine law in which God stated clearly that he hates divorce (Malachi 2:16).

The beginning of every marriage looks beautiful when a man and a woman fall in love (walk in love, Eph. 5:2) as they prepare to live together as husband and wife. At this point in their lives, the two parties involved are able to put in much effort to make their purposes fulfilled. However, in recent times the experience of divorce looks more devastating with its problems as some Christian marriages which started with tender love and rich expectations now lay in ruins. “It violates God’s will, frustrates His purposes, and brings to husband and wife the pains of rejection, guilt and the children of the marriage if there are any, become vulnerable and victims of circumstances after divorce” (Odoi, 2015, p. 1).

According to Douglas and Tenney (1987, p. 2), “divorce is a means whereby a legal marriage is dissolved publicly and the participants are freed from further obligations of the matrimonial relationship.” Divorce has become an issue in our society as a result of the many consequences it brings on the parties involved, the children and the society at large. More than just affecting the immediate family, divorce can have a profound negative effect on society as a

whole. Despite the sufferings accompanying it, the rate of divorce continues to rise. The wide range of its negative effects is a drain on our society as a whole and the costs attached to them go far beyond just financial expenditure (Odoi, 2015).

According to Authur-Norman (2015: p. 1) “The Wednesday, 18th 2011 [sic] edition of the *Central Press* newspaper carried a headline ‘Cape Coast records high cases of divorce.’” The exact date for this newspaper headline was Wednesday, 18th May, 2011. Again, Authur-Norman cited the writer of the above newspaper article Lisa Bogler (2011) for saying that as the number of marriages per year was approximately constant; the number of divorce cases kept increasing. He listed some years and indicated the number of marriages registered as follows: in 2008, 473 marriages were registered as 423 marriages were also registered in 2009. Bogler (2011) further specified that in 2010, out of 493 registered marriages, there were as many as “113 judicial separations” (Authur-Norman, 2015, p. 2). By May 2011, 139 marriages were registered. The above listed figures are indicative of the fact that the number of registered marriages were within a constant range.

Statistical data available at the Accra Metropolitan Assembly on customary marriage according to Amankwah (2008) indicated that a total of 618 marriages were dissolved in 2006 out of 1,511 marriages registered. In January, 2007, 46 out of 136 registered marriages were dissolved. The month of February saw 49 dissolutions out of 122 registered marriages. Startling statistics from the Head Office of Legal Aid Ghana indicated that at least 40% of marriages registered annually in the Greater Accra region broke-up within a period of

fourteen (14) months (Amankwah, 2008). It is worth noting that the number of females who applied for separation every week far outweighed that of their male counterparts, according to Mr. Ernest Mawuli Adzekey, the Head of Legal Aid. He further indicated that the number of divorce cases brought before his outfit from January to September, 2011 showed that the number of cases was expected to exceed that of the previous years. It was also noted that in the year 2010, they had 125 marital cases referred to lawyers to adjudicate (Amankwah, 2008).

“Records from the Kumasi metropolis as disclosed by Mr. Samuel Oppong Mintah, the registrar at the Circuit Court KMA was that between July 2013 and November 2014, as many as 665 cases of dissolution of marriages from the courts were recorded” (Odoi, 2015: p. 2). This, she found as the situation in Kumasi Metropolis. Similar figures have also been recorded at other parts of the nation.

However, analysed data from Ghana Statistical Service (GSS, 2014) based on the 2010 population and housing census in the Ho-Municipality showed that divorce rate seemed to be relatively low compared to other parts of the country. The report further indicated that about one-third (35.81%) of the population aged 12 years and older were married. Even so, only 3.5 percent of these marriages were separated as 3.4 percent were divorced and 5.9 percent were widowed.

Comparatively, the above data are indicative of the fact that the divorce rate might not be so high in this part of the country. This study would seek to find out reasons for the low divorce rate in the Ho-Municipality in relation to the views of Christians on divorce and remarriage.

Even so, Mordy (2014) indicted in his online article that cases of divorce and remarriage have become so rampant and widespread, even in Christian marriages. In recent times, some men and women of God were not spared. Despite the series of counselling sessions that were held for ‘would be’ couples by their churches, divorce is still on the increase. Reference could be made to the divorce and remarriage story of the Presiding Archbishop and General Overseer of Christian Action Faith Ministries, Nicholas Duncan-Williams and his first wife, ‘Mama’ Francisca, in 2007. The Archbishop walked out of their 26-year-old marriage due to what he said were “irreconcilable differences” but got married again. He got married to another woman by name Rosa Whitaker, the CEO and President of the Whitaker Group, a Washington, D.C.-based consultancy specialising in trade and investment in Africa (Mordy, 2014).

Thornton and Freeman (1983) as cited by Anderson (2005) posited that remarriage after divorce is a very difficult thing in most cases for divorcees to do. It becomes extra difficult if step-children are involved in the second or third marriage. Conflicts between step-parents and step-children are inevitable and can be enough to threaten the stability of any remarriage. White and Booth (1985) and Odoi (2015) supported this view and added that remarriages that involve step-children are more likely to end in divorce. White and Booth (1985) added that about seventeen percent (17%) of remarriages which involved step-children did not go beyond three years.

“Marriage forms the basis of family existence, therefore if many families in Ghana are experiencing divorcee one could easily guess the implications and

consequences they would have on families, ranging from the weakening of the foundation to physical and psychological stress” (Akuamoah, 2013, p. 4). It is evident from the above discussions that, the thoughts and actions of Christians seem to be experiencing some changes in relation to divorce and remarriage with their related problems and ethical implications for reasons they can best explain. In relation to this study, perception refers to how Christians understand and interpret their experiences of divorce and remarriage in Ghana today and in the Ho-Municipality in particular (refer to the conceptual framework of the study). This study, therefore, focuses on the perception of Christians on divorce and remarriage, the rate of divorce particularly in the Ho-Municipality, factors responsible for them, the ethical implications of divorce and remarriage and possible solutions to these problems. Furthermore, the study seeks to contribute to knowledge on divorce and remarriage in Ghana.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Marriage in Christianity is believed to be instituted solely by God (Genesis 2:18, 23-25, KJV) and hence God frowns or hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). Adams (1980), Odoi (2015) and (Arthur-Norman, 2015) asserted that divorce was not instituted by God and therefore it violates His will, frustrates His purpose, and brings to husband and wife the pains of rejection and guilt as children become vulnerable and victims of circumstances after divorce.

Odoi (2015), reiterated that in spite of the many challenges and sufferings divorce brings to the individuals and society at large, divorce continues to soar high among Christians as her view has been affirmed by others such as Ernest M.

Adzekey, Head of Legal Aid Ghana; Samuel O. Mintah, KMA Circuit Court Registrar (in personal communications with them). The soaring nature of divorce, especially among Christians raises concerns regarding God's dislike for it and Christians' perception (point of view) about the canker.

Despite the above facts, less academic work has been carried out as to why the divorce rate seems to be relatively low in Ho-Municipality based on the 2010 census (GSS, 2014). In Ghana today, there seems to be paucity of academic literature on this area of study. For instance, Akuamoah (2013) worked on determinants of divorce in Ghana, 2008. This work gave insight into some factors responsible for divorce in Ghana but her work was too general, yet, limited to the year 2008. Again, Odoi (2015) did a good work on the issue of divorce among Christians with some selected churches in the Kumasi Metropolis but this work could not say much about the ethical implications of divorce and could also not touch on issues of remarriage nor Christians' perception on any of them.

It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to critically assess Christians' perception as to what regards they have for marriage, their understanding or interpretation of their experiences in relation to divorce and remarriage socially and biblically vis-à-vis God's dislike for them. And to examine why there are increasing number of divorce cases among Christians in Ghana with special focus on Ho-Municipality. Again, the study is intended to find out Christians' perception of a possible remarriage after divorce, their ethical implications on the individual/society and to ascertain the role the individual and the church can play in dealing with the problems of divorce and remarriage.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Based the above stated problem, this study is conducted to examine the perception of Christians on divorce and remarriage. The study also focuses on the rate of divorce particularly in the Ho-Municipality and the factors responsible for them. This leads the researcher to finding out their biblical ethical views on why remarriages do occur after divorce. In the course of the study, efforts would also be made to bring out the ethical implications of divorce and remarriage on individuals and society at large as well some possible solutions to the issues of divorce and remarriage among Christians. Furthermore, the study seeks to contribute to knowledge on divorce and remarriage in Ghana.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study seeks to:

- i. Examine Christians' perception on divorce and remarriage;
- ii. Identify their biblical ethical views on divorce and remarriage;
- iii. Examine Christians understanding of the ethical implications of divorce and remarriage;
- iv. Discuss the effects of divorce among Christians in Ho-Municipality; and
- v. Examine the role the individual and the church can play to reduce the rate of divorce and remarriage in Ghana today.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were formulated to enable the researcher find answers to issues pertinent to the study:

- i. What is the perception of Christians in Ho-Municipal on divorce and remarriage in Ghana today?
- ii. How do Christians understand the biblical ethical views on divorce and remarriage?
- iii. Which ethical implications does divorce/remarriage have on Christians in the Ho-Municipality?
- iv. Which effects do divorce and remarriage have on Christians and society at large?
- v. What steps is the individual or church taking to reduce the divorce rate among Christians in Ho-Municipality?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Ghana has limited purely academic and scholarly literature on divorce and remarriage leaving the country with paucity of information within the Christian community as to what the responsibility of the church (society) is towards curbing this trend. The issue of divorce and remarriage generally in Ghana and specifically among Christians are on the increase. Among other things, this research is to add to the existing body of knowledge about marriage, divorce and remarriage among Christians and could be of help to young people about to enter into marriage, people already in marriage, marriage counsellors as well as pastors. Again, this study would help increase awareness of any shortcomings of the Church and thereby inform the church's future implementation of doctrines and initiatives aimed at curbing the issue of divorce within our Ghanaian society. The study is also aimed at enlightening both the church and public to the current trend

and phenomenon of divorce and remarriage among Christians by reading the findings of this work which would be made available on various media platforms. Finally, it will serve as a credible reference point for future research.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

There are several theories explaining the concept marriage and its related issues such as divorce and remarriage as propounded by different theorists. They include the following: firstly, the *exchange theory* which according to Arthur-Norman (2015, p. 14) is based on the premise that “‘humans avoid costly behaviour and seek rewarding situations, relationships, interactions, and feeling states to the end that their profits are maximized.’” Secondly, the *dynamic goal theory*: this theory argues that the most essential determinant of marital satisfaction is when marital goals are achieved. Thirdly, the *behavioural theory*: it adopts the interpersonal stance and “asserts that marital satisfaction is related to the exchange of overt behaviours between partners.” Fourthly, *crisis theory*: it states that families have different levels of resources based on the ABCX model proposed by Hill (1949) as cited by (Arthur-Norman, 2015, pp. 21-22). Finally, the *social exchange theory* seems applicable to this study than the other theories listed above. Even so, the researcher decided to use the “social exchange theory” also known as “interdependence theory” as the most appropriate theoretical background of this research work. This is because marriage is an interdependent institution as it involves two parties working together as a team. The success or failure of it depends on the two parties as well.

According to Arthur-Norman (2015), social exchange theory evolved from the interdependence theory of Thibaut and Kelley (1959). Even so, it was first applied to marital relationship by Levinger (1965). Interdependence theory emphasises the dependence of each spouse upon the marital relationship, and the ability of that relationship to fulfill individual needs. Kurdek (1993) hypothesised that couples with which one or both partners exhibited low levels of relationship dependence would be at higher risk for divorce. Levinger (1979) initially expanded this idea, and posited that marital success or failure is dependent on the attractions of the relationship, barriers to abandoning it, and the presence of potential alternatives. The attraction of a relationship is seen as positively related to the rewards associated with that bond. Examples include family income, companionship and sex. In addition, there is an inverse relationship between attractiveness and the costs associated with the union, which include things such as time and energy.

Further, Levinger (1979) recognised that individual perception was important by emphasising the notion of subjective probability; thus the higher one's anticipation that a reward or cost will present itself, the greater impact it is thought to have on the attractiveness of the relationship. The outcome of marriage is also assumed to be influenced by the presence of barriers to leaving the relationship (e.g., financial or religious constraints) which encourage individuals to remain in a relationship.

The social exchange theory also known as interdependence theory, again suggests that marital stability is influenced by the presence of alternative

attractions to the current relationship such as independence or alternate romantic partners. These attractions can result in withdrawal from the relationship. Eventually, relationships characterised by low levels of attraction, a small number of barriers, and attractive alternatives are likely to end in dissolution. Lewis and Spanier (1982) as cited by Arthur-Norman (2015) threw more light on the view expressed by Levinger (1979) considering marital satisfaction in addition to stability. In their view, marriages may be satisfied and stable, satisfied yet unstable, unsatisfied and unstable, or unsatisfied yet stable. Marital satisfaction is thought to be influenced by the attractiveness of the relationship, whereas the barriers to leaving and attractive alternatives impact marital stability. For instance, a satisfied unstable relationship consists of a suitable level of attractions yet the barriers are low and there are attractive alternatives. This addition helped in categorising relationships in a more descriptive manner than merely as stable or unstable. Even so, this study would delve into possible reasons for divorce and remarriage among Christians today.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Conceptualisation involves the breaking down or converting research ideas into common meaning to develop an agreement among the users (Sequeira, 2014). In other words, a concept could be a word or ideas referred to by the word or complex set of events. Scholars such as Pender, Murdaugh, & Parsons (2002) and Daddario (2007) as cited by McDonald (2011) indicated that “perception involves the way one sees the world.” Even so, there are wide varieties of subjective instruments to measure perception and this has resulted in a lack of

global consensus on this concept. This section seeks to conceptualise the term “perception.” It should be noted for the purpose of this study that, the term perception as commonly understood is the way by which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted by an individual or a group of individuals based on experiences of life (<https://www.google.com/search?client=opera&q=perception>). In relation to this study, perception refers to how Christians understand and interpret their experiences of divorce and remarriage in Ghana today and in the Ho-Municipality in particular.

According to Lewis (1999, p. 30) who cited Cantril (1968), McBurney and Collings (1984), Matlin and Foley (1992) “the study of human perception is a complex field with definitions and theories of the term being highly interdisciplinary.” However, to Ou (2017), in philosophy, psychology, and cognitive science, perception is considered as the process of attaining awareness or understanding of sensory information. Etymologically, the word “perception” comes from the Latin words “*perceptio*, or *percipio*,” which means “receiving, collecting, action of taking possession, and apprehension with the mind or senses.” Explaining it further in common terminology, perception is defined by Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English as follows: firstly, “the way you think about something and your idea of what it is like,” secondly, “the way that you notice things with your senses of sight, hearing etc.,” thirdly, “the natural ability to understand or notice things quickly” (Bagby, 1957, pp. 331-334).

To McDonald (2011), perception is a personal manifestation of how one views the world which could involve many sociocultural elements as well as one's

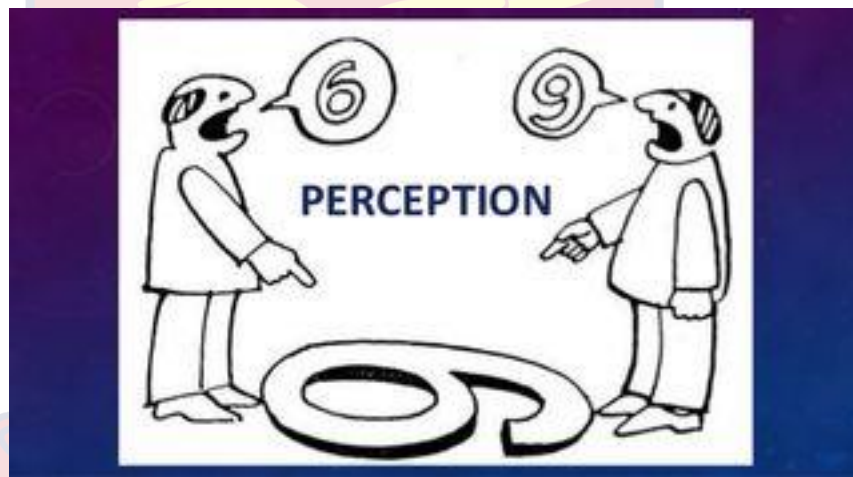
religious orientation and beliefs. McDonald cited Markus and Kitayama (1991) who concluded that people in different cultures have strikingly different perceptions of self and others. To them, these differences could clearly be seen when comparing two distinct cultures or religions. Again, the nature of an individual's experience in life could also be influenced when two cultures meet.

Furthermore, McDonald (2011) made reference to the work of Young (2007) concerning a poem written by John Godfrey Saxe in the 19th century with the title "*The Blind Men and the Elephant.*" This poem is a practical illustration of what one's perception can be when blended with life experiences. This poem tells a short story about six blind men. They had an encounter with an elephant as they tried to identify appropriate nature of this unknown creature. Each of them touched the elephant and had different mental picture of it based on their past experiences. They debated among themselves and described the elephant to be like a wall, snake, spear, tree, fan, and rope depending on the part they touched. However, each of the men was confident in his perception. This is the role perception could play in relation to divorce and remarriage even in Ghana and Ho-Municipality in particular. You can only get the full story from the perspective of the individuals involved by putting their pieces together.

McDonald (2011) again cited Chara and Gillett (2004) who published a study examining possible synesthetic perceptions of God. This study discovered that religious experience was one of high individuality. The majority described God as speaking quietly and in prose and having a pleasant aroma. Most of the respondents also said yellow was God's choicest colour. About 80% of them

reported they tasted God and saw that God was good. It was also found out that the participants' images of God were frequently correlated with biblical revelation of God which may reflect influences that are phenomenological. Apart from religion, socio-cultural influences may affect one's perception, including gender and socioeconomic status. Refer to *Figure 1.1* for a pictorial illustration of perception.

Figure 1.1: A diagram showing individual differences in perception



Source: Adapted and modified from <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/msstate-waymaker-psychology/chapter/reading-what-is-perception/>.

The diagram (fig. 1.1) above shows how perception works sometimes in society and even among Christians especially in relation to divorce and remarriage. What you see to be nine (9) could be seen as six (6) by another person. It may not really make sense to you until you see it from the stand point of the one going through the experience. According to Taylor (2019), almost all the time, we hear it in marriages, politics and from the business world especially when there is a conflict or a disagreement: "Perception is reality." To him, this

situation is “often used to justify a perception that may be objectively unjustifiable or just plain out of touch with reality.”

Ou (2017) exemplified that perception process consists of three stages namely: selection, organization, and interpretation. Below is the breakdown of these three stages.

Selection: Selection is considered to be the very first stage in the process of perception; it involves converting environmental stimuli such as: the ticking of a clock leading to times and seasons, the accidents we witness, the words we hear, among others into meaningful experiences. To explain this further, Ou (2017, p. 19) cited the work Chen and Starosta (2007) for indicating that “The partiality of our perception is the origin of misunderstanding in interactions, especially when people are from different cultural backgrounds with diverse perception systems.”

Organization: This second stage of perception process involves selecting information from the outside world, by way of finding certain meaningful patterns. This stage can only be accomplished by putting things or people into categories, and that is why it is also termed as categorization by some researchers. For example, when one is asked as to what a human being is, some respondents may describe it from the perspective of race or nationality, as others may do so from the skin colour.

Interpretation: It is the third stage in perception which refers to the process of attaching meaning to the selected categories stimuli as different individuals could give different interpretations to the same stimulus. Two practical examples were given by Ou (2017), “a kiss or a big hug in public is a common way of

greeting each other in some western countries, which has the function of saying ‘Hello!’ whereas in many other countries, they are always considered to be ‘lovemaking’ behaviors.” In yet another instance, *a police officer arriving at the scene of crime, can be interpreted differently*: “the victim may regard it as soothing and relief-giving,” the criminal will however be frightened by it. This kind of differences in interpretation arise because “Culture provides us with a perceptual lens that greatly influences how we interpret and evaluate what we receive from the outside world” (Samovar et al., 2000) as cited by (Ou, 2017, p. 19).

This study agrees with the view of McDonald (2011) that perception is usually an individual’s view making it a powerful driving force for action. Even so, perception has been described by numerous disciplines including philosophy, psychology, and cognitive science among others. This conceptual framework is in no way exhaustive of all of them. However, it should once again be noted that in as much as this study is concerned, perception should be considered as the way by which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted by an individual or a group of individuals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This part of the study compares and discusses various views on issues concerning marriage, divorce and remarriage by other researchers. Even so, this literature review was an exploration of an area, which at best provides definition and a background (linkage) for this research. This was vital to keep the researcher informed about current studies that are relevant to the topic under study. This was

done by theoretical review which revealed the theories and views underlying the topic in terms of definitions of some concepts and terminologies. The literature review therefore covers the following thematic areas:

- The origin and definition of the concept marriage;
- The purpose and value of marriage;
- Traditional African concept of marriage and divorce; and
- Modern Christian ethical views on divorce and remarriage.

The origin and definition of the concept Marriage

According to Scott and Warren (2007, p. 31) “the origins of marriage are as obscure as the human race itself.” Christians however have understood God as the author of marriage based on the creation account in Genesis in which the human pair is commanded to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28). Powers (1987) expressed the idea that, in all biblical teachings, marriage is seen as being a relationship between a man and a woman. Anything else which may be true of the nature of marriage flows out of what it is first of all as a relationship.

Etymologically, Horsbroch (2019) in his online article “The Wedding in Scots” indicated that “marriage, or [*sic*] course, is originally a Latin word which came through French and means ‘to join together.’ In Scots, it takes the form *mairrage* (*mair-idge*) with the verb being to *mairry*, and the adjective and past tense either *mairried* or *mairrit* depending on dialect.” He further explained from a Scottish point of view that “the Scots [*sic*] word *wadding* (also spelled as *waddin* to reflect how it is pronounced) comes from the word *wad*, meaning ‘to

pledge” (Horsbroch, 2019). This, to the researcher, explains why vows are exchanged during wedding ceremonies till today.

To Arthur-Norman (2015, pp. 13, 25), “marriage can basically be described as a legal union of a man and a woman as husband and wife, where sexual consummation completes the union.” Arthur-Norman cited the view of Omari (1989) that “marriage involves the coming together of a man and woman to raise a family, and to meet the satisfaction of security and of an enduring affection and companionship.” He continued that it is a relationship in which two adults of the opposite sex make emotional and legal commitment to live together.

Köstenberger (2004), in describing marriage revealed that there are three basic perspectives on the nature of marriage: marriage as a sacrament, marriage as a contract, and marriage as a covenant. The perspective of marriage as a sacrament originates from the church tradition. Sacrament comes from the Latin term “sacramentum,” which means “mystery.” This mystery represents the analogy between the union of Christ and the church. The perspective of marriage as contract is the dominantly representative view of the Western culture. The contract view is that marriage is a bilateral contract which is voluntarily formed, maintained, and dissolved (Köstenberger, 2004). The view of marriage as covenant is that marriage is a sacred union between husband and wife before God. Covenant marriage can be defined as a lifelong commitment between the spouses among evangelical Christians (Cade, 2010). Human desires of pursuing life for themselves are challenging the purposes of marriage by God. Arthur-Norman (2015) cited Worthington, Lerner, and Sharp (2005) and said that a contractual

understanding of marriage, instead of covenantal, is becoming the more dominant cultural norm in our world today.

Similarly, in this modern secular world, the marriage relationship is being progressively viewed in three basic concepts. Firstly, it is viewed merely as a legalised domestic union. To McLuhan (1991), the legal dissolution of the relationship will not be viewed as a problem. Secondly, it is primarily viewed as a sexual arrangement between a man and a woman. The mutual agreement of those same two people to discontinue that relationship will be a matter of their own business and of little consequence to society. Thirdly, marriage is degraded to the level of a mere commercial advantageous arrangement. In this respect, its dissolution will mean no more than the termination of any secular business partnership.

From McLuhan's perspective, the biblical picture of God-ordained marriage is to be taken into consideration. The dignity and sacredness of the marital union in the sight of God is directly related to the creation and procreation of other complete human beings in their triune entity of spirit, soul, and body. Only the full joining of two persons in the totally unified being of marital oneness constitutes scriptural marriage. This implies spirit-to-spirit unity, soul-to-soul inner disclosure and openness, mutually shared God's consciousness and devotion and love-inspired physical caress and sexual experience. This concept expressed by McLuhan above was verified and confirmed by Stott (1999) as he made use of Genesis 2:24 as his yardstick.

The purpose and value of Marriage

Powers (1987) and (Stott, 1999) propounded that marriage has three purposes or, more accurately, a single purpose with three aspects: companionship, mutual help, and the fulfillment of the sexual natures of man and woman. It is upon mutual commitment, and the consent of a man and a woman rests its continuance. It is further revealed that “marriage is an ordinance of creation, and is God’s gift to all mankind: he made marriage for men and women, and he made men and women for marriage” (Powers, 1987, pp. 7-11).

In his book *Issues Facing Christians Today*, Stott (1999) said marriage is in all societies a recognised and regulated human institution but not a human invention. Christian teachings on marriage affirm that marriage is God’s idea not human. He further posited that:

The biblical revelation identifies that God purposefully instituted marriage for the mutual society, help and comfort that one ought to have of the other both in prosperity and adversity, the procreation of children and their upbringing in an environment of love and discipline, and for reciprocal commitment of self-giving love which finds its natural expression in sexual union or becoming ‘one flesh’ (Stott, 1999, p. 319).

Odoi (2015, p. 1), in her dissertation on the issues of divorce among Christians, indicated that “the purposes for which God instituted marriage were all established at creation and must be seen as God’s provision... God designed marriage and the family to ensure that the world He created becomes a place of hope, happiness, love, friendship and peace.” This indeed makes marriage a vital establishment for a person’s happiness and contentment in life. The Christian view of marriage is a lifelong total commitment not partial or temporary.

Benyah (2014) contributes to existing knowledge by indicating that Marriage is an enduring institution which human beings have handled in many different ways since biblical times. On the biblical view of marriage, he asserted that many Bible scholars are of a strong conviction that Bible teaching on biblical marriage is epitomised in the statement “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). From this text he inferred that the very first description of the nature of marriage in the Bible, as consisting of leaving, cleaving and becoming one flesh, reveals the biblical understanding of marriage as a covenant relationship between a man and a woman. Again, Benyah inferred that God intended marriage to be a permanent union. The man was to depart from his parents’ home in order to “be united to his wife and ...become one flesh” with her. Both Jesus (Matthew 19:5) and Paul (Ephesians 5:31) quoted this passage from Genesis as the foundational premise of marriage (Benyah, 2014).

Traditional African concept of Marriage and Divorce

Dzobo (1975, p. 35) defined marriage as “...one of the supreme aims of life in the traditional Ewe [*African*] society and as a union between a man and woman to perpetuate the lineage through procreation.” According to Mbiti (1969, p. 130), “...for African people, marriage is the focus of existence.” He went further to state that, “...marriage is a duty, a requirement from corporate society, a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate. ‘He who does not participate in it is a curse to the community, he is a rebel and a law-breaker, he is not only abnormal but under-human.’” Failure to get married means that the person has

rejected society and society rejects him in return. To him, it is a must for an African to marry for these reasons: contribution of the seed of life (continuity of society), personal immortality, fellowship and remembrance by one's descendants after physical death. Marriage and procreation in African communities are considered "a unity" and it is believed that without procreation, marriage is incomplete. This could be the reason why newly wedded couples in Ghana today usually become worried after some years of marriage without any child or children.

In Kwame Gyekye's view, marriage is a basic institution in African society and a recognised social institution, not only for the establishment and maintaining of the family, but also for creating and sustaining the ties of kinship. He also asserted that, "traditionally in many African societies, a young man who has gainful employment of any kind and earns some income is expected, in fact, urged to marry. Any undue delay on the part of the young man to marry will cause his parents or the elders in the lineage to worry and even to interfere in his private life in order to advise and encourage him to marry" (Gyekye, 1996, pp. 76-78). Again, he comments that "an unmarried is almost an anomaly" implying that everyone is expected to marry.

Ganusah (2008, p. 13) made reference to the works of Mbiti (1969) and Gyekye (1996) as she reiterated their views on African concept of marriage by stating that, "marriage is a duty, a requirement from the corporate society, and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate. Otherwise, he who does not participate in it is a curse to the community, he is a rebel and a law-breaker, he is

not only abnormal but “under-human.” Failure to get married was considered abnormal and the person concerned has rejected society and society rejects him or her in return. Nukunya (1992, p. 42) holds a similar view and added a working definition that marriage is “a union between a man and a woman who have gone through all the laid down procedures in the society and are therefore legally, religiously and customarily recognized as husband and wife.” Traditional African societies generally value marriage as one great route to strong familial and communal relationships. It is one of the most significant rites of passage. Nukunya added that “it is the most celebrated ceremony in all African cultures. African weddings are a spiritual and social family affair and involve the combining of two lives, two families and even two communities!” This view of Nukunya affirms an African proverb which says: “A man without a wife is like a vase without flowers.”

To further make his point clearer, Ganusah has this to say about marriage in Africa:

To say that marriage in Africa is one of the greatest values of the people is not an overstatement. To grow up to a certain age, of say thirty years and above, without getting married, is to draw attention to oneself. Many interpretations would be put on that state. To put it bluntly, the society would think there must be something wrong with the person. In the case of a man, he may be regarded as someone who is antisocial - someone not wanting to share his life with others-or he may be suffering from a physical problem; or, ‘one who is considered to be irresponsible, worthless, good-for-nothing, contemptible’ (Ganusah, 2008, p. 13).

Ganusah (2004, p. 3) stated that “marriage in Africa is also not an institution between two persons only; it is a marriage of four families, of the families of the mother and father of the woman and those of the father and mother of the man.” It could be deduced that an African family is not made up of

husband, wife and children only. Rather, it is a make-up of all those who are related by blood to a person. It includes father, mother, aunties, uncles, grandparents, nephews, nieces, cousins, and so on. In this communal life, what affects a couple affects all members of the families. Commenting on the issue of childbirth in African marriage, Ganusah (2008, p.13) states that “To be married in Africa is one thing, and having or not having children is another thing. Marriage is seen as incomplete unless there are children in the marriage.”

According to Mbiti (1980, p.133) “without procreation marriage is incomplete.” He further stated that “marriage and procreation are ‘a unity.’” It is a great joy, therefore to hear news about the birth of a child to a couple. In Africa, if one is married and for about three to four years there are no signs of childbearing, such a couple would face moments of anxiety as they see themselves as not living up to societal expectation or making the marriage “complete.” Childlessness in early years of marriage could be as a result of the couple’s deciding to stay for some time before starting to make babies. In other cases, the couple may be going through moments of adjustment to each other. But to the African community, however, there must be something going wrong with them and the earlier something is done about it, the better (Ganusah, 2008).

In the view of Gyekye (1996) as cited by Adam (2015, p. 19), in Ghana, when people get married, they try as much as possible to make the marriage stable because, in the Ghanaian society, marriage is seen as a life-long union or commitment which is to be terminated only by the death of one partner. “Divorce is allowed but considered as an unfortunate thing and a tragedy and as much as

possible families try to avoid it.” Asare Opoku (1978) also said that one of the key factors that cause divorce in the Ghanaian society is adultery, especially on the part of the woman, because it implies that the woman is no more interested in the man. Again, if a man commits adultery with another woman, he is expected to pay compensation which is called “*mpata*” to his wife. If his wife refuses to accept the “*mpata*” then she is free to divorce her husband (Adam, 2015, p.19). This compensation, Nukunya (1969) referred to as “*kpata*” in Ewe.

From the above views, it could be deduced that the African society places higher premium on the institution of marriage. From the African’s perspective, a man is said to live a fulfilled life if he gets married and is responsible in taking care of his wife and children. Again, marriage in African society is a union not only between the man and woman but among all facets who share blood ties with them. It could also be deduced from the above that childbearing in marriage is of much importance to the society. These African views are relevant to this research since it is done within the African context in Ghana, specifically in Ho-Municipality of the Volta Region.

Modern Christian ethical views on Divorce and Remarriage

According to Agbodza (2016) divorce was a rare event in any marriage in societies in Ghana. He also defines the concept in a way that gives one a clear idea that after divorce, remarriage is possible. This definition also indicates a modern element of marriage. “Divorce is the separation of the husband and wife by mutual consent, or by religious rites to unbind a bond between the partners, or

by a judicial decree which confers on the parties a right to remarriage” (Agbodza, 2016, p. 1)

In Agbodza’s opinion, divorce occurs in case of incompatibility between two persons, one partner being a habitual drunk or a cheater on the other, childlessness, interference by in-laws particularly mothers-in-law, infidelity, terminal illness, contraction of AIDS, loss of jobs and high financial status, elopement of one partner, religious, political or cultural differences, non-healthy sexual expression by one partner, and finally death due one partner. A consequence of divorce incidence is an attack against the family and attempts at re-defining marriage in a contemporary society (Agbodza, 2016).

Again, Agbodza cited Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, Secretary-General of the Synod of Bishops, who presented the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the 2015 Extra-ordinary Synod of Bishops on *The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization*. Cardinal Lorenzo acknowledged that the responses to a 39 point questionnaire sent to churches in November, 2013 (*as Lineamenta*) showed that “the threats to the family come from everywhere, including social media, with family members spending more time checking their smart phones and maintaining virtual relationships than with one another.” The implication of this is that, with the impact of modernisation on societies of Ghana, traditional institutions are undergoing some changes and marriage has also undergone some changes. The elaborate preparations and rites associated with marriage have been short-changed. Perhaps this explains the popular belief that divorce is more regular now than it was in simple Ghanaian societies. The beautiful wedding

gowns, page boys or flower girls, the golden rings, the well-decorated cars and the sirens, maids of honour and all the gorgeous celebrations and beautiful children born easily fade into oblivion and replaced with hatred between husband and wife, between families and legal tussles take over (Agbodza, 2016).

Agbodza cited a study conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) in 2007. It showed that the average duration of marriages was seven months two weeks, and marriages that lasted ten years were more likely to succeed. A study conducted in 2008 on marital dissolution in Ghana showed that divorce was more likely with women with matrilineal ties than those with non-matrilineal ties. Agbodza further based his argument on the research findings of some scholars on a developed nation like the United States (US), as they indicated how 59 percent of marriages for women under the age of 18 ended in divorce within 15 years. The divorce rate however dropped to 36 percent for those married at age 20 or older (Agbodza, 2016).

Based on his Christian ethical perspective, Anderson (2005) said Christianity frowns strongly on divorce. He went further to suggest that Christians in societies where divorce is rampant must come back to important biblical principles on marriage. Pastors must frequently preach and teach their congregants the importance of marriage. However, he rejected the unfair treatments meted out to divorcees in this way:

Churches have unfortunately erred on one side or another. Most churches have maintained a strong stand on marriage and divorce. While this strong biblical stand is admirable, it should also be balanced with compassion towards those caught in the throes of divorce. Strong convictions without compassionate outreach often seems [*sic*] to communicate that divorce is the unforgivable sin. On the other hand, some churches in their desire to

minister to divorced people have compromised their theological convictions. By starting without biblically-based convictions about marriage and divorce, they have let their congregation's circumstances influence their theology (Anderson, 2005, p. 141).

Marston (2006) similarly indicated that Christians need not only to 'believe the right things' about right and wrong, but to understand the basis on which they hold them to be so. In his view, Jesus brought us the truth on ethical issues including those involved in divorce and remarriage.

Tak (2006) posited that in modern society there are many ethical problems which are getting increased and make people today fall into sufferings and hardships. That is to say, those problems are making the world that God does not please. So church should have the responsibility for this real situation and ethical problems and provide alternatives and solutions. In Tak's view, among ethical problems in modern society, the most serious and closest problem to us may be divorce and remarriage. Therefore, this work is about to look over and study these issues in order to present an example of solution for many ethical problems.

According to McCallum (2013), in his article: "The Ethics of Divorce and Remarriage" indicated a strange modern stand point of some Christians prior to their marriage acknowledging the likelihood of divorce will help rather than hurt our marriage. This kind of people go into what is known as "*pre-nuptial agreement*" an agreement made by couples before they marry concerning the ownership of their respective assets should the marriage fail. This attitude is often fatal to marriage. It allows us to enter into marriage lightly, and it justifies impatience when problems emerge. Christians should enter marriage carefully and

be fully committed to make it work. ‘Divorce’ should not be in our vocabulary as we get married, McCallum said.

Again, McCallum (2013) has this to say: “I married the wrong person; we are incompatible. By getting a divorce, I am simply correcting an earlier problem instead of prolonging it. People are not incompatible by nature.” They choose to be incompatible because of selfishness and hard-heartedness against God’s conviction. This is why those who divorce with this mentality and remarry usually get divorced again. Instead, we should focus on becoming the right person. ‘Getting a divorce is no big deal. I’ll get over it soon and there will be no lasting consequences.’ What a lie! The fact is that divorce always brings great pain to both spouses, and when there are children involved, they will pay a price. It is always preferable to work the marriage out if at all possible, he insisted (McCallum, 2013).

Hyattsville (1981) based on statistical data collected in the United States of America on the duration of marriage before divorce indicated that the average duration of marriage before divorce today is only half as long for the second marriage and one-third as long for third marriages. This is indicative of the fact that first marriages last longer than second marriages even as second marriages also last longer than third marriages. To the researcher, divorce is like a slippery-slope, one attempt leads to another.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the study entails the research design adopted, the target population, data collection instrument used, how the sampling techniques were selected and the approach used in analysing data for the study.

Research Design

The researcher of this work adopted phenomenological research design for this qualitative research. Phenomenological research illuminates the specific situation under study and is also able to identify the phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a particular situation (Lester, 1999, p. 1). Lester says that phenomenological studies “normally translates into gathering ‘deep’ information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions, participant observation, and representing from the perspective of the research participant(s).” Lester (1999) also cited Gorden (1969), Spradley (1979), Oakley (1981), Plummer (1983) and Measor (1985) among others for saying that interview method is one of the most appropriate ways of building rapport and gaining in-depth information from participants. However, Lester was quick to say that the main problem with phenomenological research is that it generates a lot of interview notes, recordings, jottings to be analysed by the researcher. The researcher chose this research design because it would help in gathering deep personal information from respondents in relation to Christians understanding and interpretation of their experiences of divorce and remarriage in Ghana today particularly in the Ho-Municipality by means of focus group discussions and face-to-face interviews.

Target Population

The target population is made up Christians who are married and Christians who are divorced in the Ho-Municipality. However, the sample size of this research is made up of forty (40) respondents who were all Christians living within Ho-Municipality. There were two separate focus group discussions organised by the researcher. They were made up of ten (10) married people (five males and five females) and ten (10) divorcees (five males and five females). On the other hand, the interviews done by the researcher involved two (2) marriage Counsellors/Pastors who were all male Head-Pastors selected from some specific churches (a good blend of Orthodox/Protestant and Pentecostal/Charismatic denominations). In addition, eight (8) members from the churches of these Counsellors/Pastors (four members for each of the Pastors) were also interviewed. This study was greatly able to maintain gender and denominational balance among the respondents except on the part of Counsellors or Pastors who are all males (refer to the detailed background information of the Counsellors/Pastors on pages 155-157).

The study also greatly benefited from the views of ten (10) other personalities/experts (nine males and one female) who had vital information on the phenomena under study. These experts were: a lawyer, two court registrars, four traditional chiefs, one Pastor and one Deaconess. (refer to “Appendix A” for their full names). However, the data on the interviews (personal communications) with them are captured under chapter three of this research. *Table 1:1* below, shows the biographical data of the sample population for the study.

Table: 1.1: Biographical data of the sample population for the study

Characteristics/Category	Number
Gender	
Male	25
Female	15
Age Group	
18-35	15
36-50	15
51-70	10
Level of Education	
Basic Education	18
Secondary Education	12
Tertiary Education	10
Denomination of Church	
Orthodox	13
Protestant	13
Pentecostal/Charismatic	14
Number of Years of Marital Experience	
1-5	10
6-15	25
16-25+	05
Total Population	40

Source: Field survey (May, 2019 and November, 2019)

Table 1:1 above shows that, out of the total number of forty (40) respondents, twenty-five (25) were males as fifteen (15) of them were females. In terms of age group: fifteen (15) out of forty respondents were within the ages of 18-35 years; another fifteen (15) fell within 36-50 years as the third group of ten (10) fell within 51-70 years of age. When it comes to the level of education: eighteen (18) respondents had basic level of education, twelve (12) of them had secondary education as ten (10) of them got to the tertiary. On the part of church denomination: thirteen (13) of them were of orthodox background, another group of thirteen (13) respondents were protestants and the last group of fourteen (14)

Christians fell within the category of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches. Finally, out of the total number of forty respondents: ten (10) of them have either been in marriage or had their marriages lasting for 1-5 years only; another twenty-five (25) of them have been in marriage or had their marriages lasting for 6-15 years; and the last group in this category of five (5) are elderly people who have been in marriage for about 16-25 years or more.

Research Instrument/Data Collection Instrument

Taking a careful look at the nature of this research work, focus group discussions and interviews were used by the researcher as the key data collection instruments for this study (refer to primary sources below for how they were practically used). On the use of focus group discussions for data collection, Kuranchie (2016, pp. 120-121) quoted Kumekpor (2002) for saying that “with focus group discussion, instead of the interviewer asking questions and recording answers, the exercise is led by a moderator or facilitator...” He further explained that the moderator directs the tempo or pace of the discussion for free discussion and expression of views as he/she also provides information about the issue under discussion. “Findings of focus group discussions are reported in complete narrative” indicated by (Kuranchie, 2016, p. 122). He however added that focus group discussions may be inappropriate for studying confidential and personal sensitive issues. Again, the out spoken members of the group could hijack or dominate the discussions.

According to Kuranchie (2016, pp. 107-118), interview on the other hand is a means of generating data from one’s respondent or respondents through

dialogue. This process involves asking questions for responses on face-to-face basis or by the use “advanced computer technology platforms like Skype, facebook [*sic*], tweeter, whatsapp [*sic*] and viber. Interview questions could be structured, semi-structured and unstructured.” He concluded by saying that though it attracts high response rate and good for gathering data from minors and illiterates, it is also costly and time consuming. This study also used semi-structure interview questions for married, divorcees and the marriage counsellors which allowed the researcher to ask further questions at any point in time the need arose.

Primary Sources

As indicated earlier, the researcher used focus group discussions and face-to-face interviews for primary data collection. Semi-structured questions were, therefore, administered. Two separate sets of questions were given to the respondents. The first set which had twelve (12) questions in total for focus group discussions was sub-divided into two: part “A” was made up five (5) questions for the married respondents only as the “B” part was made up of seven (7) questions for divorcees only. The second set had ten (10) questions for face-to-face interviews with Counsellors/Pastors only (refer to appendices ‘B’ and ‘C’ for the details). The focus group discussions and the interviews were made possible at different times by the use of an introductory letter from the Head of Department for Religion and Human Values, University of Cape Coast, as an assurance of confidentiality.

The above tools used allowed interesting responses to be followed up with other question items immediately. This was done because it allowed for flexibility in the participants' responses, detailed information and the ability to report participants 'live experience' from their own perspective. This made it very convenient to access relevant information otherwise difficult to obtain, in a much more relaxed manner. Before the interviews in each case, permission of the respondent was sought and the purpose of the interview explained to him or her. The focus group discussions and interviews were done in the indigenous language, Ewe, as transcription was done later into English language.

The focus group discussions and interviews were recorded by the use of tape recorder to maintain the verbatim transcription and compilation of the interviewee's report. Fetterman (1998) stated that tape recorders allow the researcher to engage in lengthy information and semi-structured interview. The confidentiality of the data collected was assured and made known to the respondents.

Secondary Sources

For this, the researcher collected data from published and unpublished books, theses, reports, journals, newspapers, online articles/books, court records and minutes. These works were reviewed and duly cited by means of in-text citations.

Samples and Sampling Procedure/Technique

Sample size is usually influenced by factors such as the availability of the target population, time and resources. Bourgeault, Dingwall, and Vries (2010)

suggested that a sample size of six to ten participants may be adequate for a study using in-depth semi-structured interviews to examine experiences and perceptions within a defined group. Bourgeault et.al. (2010) seemed to be talking specifically about the appropriate sample size for a focus group in relation to qualitative research. Based on the above views, this study decided to use two focus groups with a total of 20 respondents as 20 other people were also interviewed.

To Babbie (2014, pp. 303-304), “Qualitative research is a scientific method of observation to gather non-numerical data.” Berg and Lune (2012) indicated that this type of research refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and description of things and not to their “counts or measures.” In the view of Given, (2008) and Stringer, (1999), qualitative methods are considered the best for researching into many of the *why* and *how* questions of human experience in making a decision and not just *what*, *where*, *when*, or *who*? To Gerrish and Lacey (2010), determining an adequate sample size in qualitative research is not as straightforward and prescribed as is the case in quantitative research. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative studies do not strive for statistical adequacy, as sample size is not an intrinsic feature of the analysis process. This however does not indicate that numbers are unimportant in qualitative research.

The samples for this research were made up of forty (40) respondents who were carefully selected in the Ho-Municipality. They were selected because of the varied experiences they have had in marriage, divorce and partly from remarriage of their parents. This study also stood to benefit from certain personalities

(experts) among the respondents with vital information on the phenomena under study. They included the following: a lawyer, who sat on a lot of divorce cases at court; two court registrars who had enough vital information on marital issues at the court of law; four traditional chiefs (the custodians of the culture and values of the land); a Pastor and a Deaconess for drawing the relationship between customary and Christian weddings today; and a manager of a financial institution indicating the financial implications of marriage, divorce and remarriage especially among the youth of today. The data of the last ten (10) respondents listed and captured as experts can be found under chapter three of the study.

Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting all the respondents who were or are still Christians including the marriage Counsellors/Pastors. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) as cited by Kuranchie (2016, pp. 89-95), they described purposive sampling technique as “a feature of qualitative research where researchers deliberately choose subjects to be included in a study on the basis of their judgement of the typicality or possession of a particular characteristics needed.” Purposive sampling technique was used for the study in selecting all the respondents because this sampling method allows the researcher to do a deliberate selection of respondents to obtain relevant data.

Data Analysis Procedure

In this research, data analysis was done by means of thematic analysis. According to Ulin, Robinson, Tolley, & McNeill (2002) thematic analysis makes use of an already existing interview questions to structure the process of analysis. To Braun and Clark (2006), this process involves sorting or coding the data into

themes and categories by identifying and analysing repeating patterns that exist in the data. Themes are important patterns in the data that are related to the research objectives and help answer appropriate research questions. The researcher therefore adopted simple descriptive and inference as tools for analysing data for this study.

DELIMITATION/SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research is about Christians' perception on divorce and remarriage in Ghana but the researcher's focus was on selected Christians in Ho-Municipality and limited to: ten (10) married people (five from each gender) and ten (10) divorcees (five from each gender). This was done to maintain gender balance. In addition to the above, two (2) Counselors/Pastors (who were all males) were also selected even as they had eight (8) members of their churches interviewed. Finally, the study included ten (10) other personalities or experts made up of one female and nine males who were drawn from some selected churches located geographically within Ho-Municipality of the Volta Region. This made it easier for the researcher to have access to court records on marriage and divorce in Ho, the regional capital and biggest town in the municipality where two (2) law courts could be found (High Court and District Magistrate Court), even as data was gathered from its surrounding villages.

There seems to be paucity of information in academic literature on this area of study. The researcher, therefore, worked with data on marriage and divorce rates within the range of 2006 to 2014. However, records from Ho-

Municipal Assembly and the District Magistrate Court made data available from 2017 to part of 2019 in relation to marriage and divorce in the Ho-Municipality.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The work was faced with challenges that may place some limitations on the study. Firstly, there was a difficulty reaching out to the target population since the best day one could easily get them was Sunday. Secondly, the time limit given also made it a bit difficult conducting my last round of focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews. The study, therefore, sampled the views of forty (40) respondents. This means their views sampled may not be a fair representation of the views of the entire Ho-Municipality. Finally, it was also difficult for the court records to give very fair percentages on Christian divorce cases only. It must be noted that about 92% of the entire population in the Ho-Municipality are Christians. On the other hand, some divorcees were married to people belonging to the other religions and not all marriages of Christians were registered.

DEFINITION OF TERMS/CONCEPTS

- **Bloody marriage:** Too much violence in marriage that can lead to the death of one of the two partners.
- **Divorce:** It is a means whereby a legal marriage is dissolved publicly and the participants are freed from further obligations of the matrimonial relationship.
- **Marriage:** It can be described as a legal union of a man and a woman as husband and wife, where sexual consummation completes the union.

- **Perception:** It is the way by which something is regarded, understood or interpreted by an individual or a group of individuals.
- **Pre-nuptial agreement:** It is an agreement made by couples before they marry concerning the ownership of their respective assets should the marriage fail.
- **Qualitative research:** It is a scientific method of observation to gather non-numerical data.
- **Serial monogamy:** It is the custom or practice of having only one marital mate at a time but different individuals in succession.
- **Strict monogamy:** It is a type of monogamy which imply having just one partner over a lifetime.

ORGANISATION OF THE RESEARCH

This thesis is made up of five chapters. Chapter one presents a general introduction to the study. It outlines the following: background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, theoretical framework of the study, conceptual framework of the study, literature review, methodology, delimitation, limitations, definition of terms/concepts and organisation of the research.

Chapter two is divided into two main parts: the first main part is a survey of biblical scriptures to understand what they ethically have to say about marriage, divorce and remarriage based on the teachings of the Mosaic Law, other Prophets such as Ezekiel, Hosea and Malachi in the Old Testament to the teachings of Jesus and Paul in the New Testament. The second main part seeks to

explore marriage within the Ghanaian context and relates it to the relevance of biblical ethical perceptions on marriage, divorce and remarriage. It also includes the types of marriages in Ghana, the concept and types of marriage among the Ewes, causes of divorce and remarriage, and their problems in Ghana today.

Chapter three focuses on the demographic features of the Ho-Municipality and also presents 2010 census reports on divorce in the study area, Municipal Assembly and Court records on marriage and divorce rates as well as personal discussions with legal experts on marriage and divorce in relation to the perceptions of the people on divorce and remarriage in the Ho-Municipality.

Chapter four entails the data presentation, analysis and discussion of results. In this chapter, the focal point is on the perception of Christians on issues of divorce and remarriage as they pertained during the focus group discussions and interviews of some selected Christians in Ho-Municipality.

Chapter five, the very last chapter of this research work, conveys summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations as well as some suggestions for further study.

CONCLUSION

The results from the data available so far depict a gloomy picture of marital instability in Ghana in the 21st Century especially among Christians. It is obvious for anyone to be tempted like the disciples to ask: “Lord, if that is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry” (Matt 19: 10). Serious attention must therefore be given to this issue in order to minimise it. Notwithstanding the high rate and experience of divorce, there are many more out

there that succeed in marriage. They live longer lives and manage their lives together and have children who follow after their examples. Lifelong marital unions are still possible and so marriage counsellors and pastors of souls must endeavour to develop pastoral strategies to help the couples who are marrying. More time should be dedicated to teachings and discussions on marriage with testimonies of people with practical knowledge being shared especially among the youth who are yet to enter into marriage. This would guarantee more lasting relationships and unions.

Additionally, since God has raised marriage to a higher dignity, marriage between two persons is “divinely anointed” and so the couples must trust the one who anointed them and draw inspiration on daily basis from Him as they embark on this life long journey.

This study is on: “Christians’ Perception on Divorce and Remarriage in Ghana: A study of selected Christians in Ho-Municipality” and this chapter covered the following: Background to the study, Statement of the problem, Purpose of the study, Objectives of the study, Research questions, Significance of the study, Theoretical framework of the study, Conceptual framework of the study, Literature review, Methodology, Delimitation, Limitations of the study, Definition of terms/concepts, Organisation of the research and Conclusion.

The next chapter shall be looking at marriage in the Bible and the Ghanaian society (Ewe society). It will also explore issues of divorce and remarriage within the Ghanaian context and the relevance of them to biblical ethical perceptions as well as types of marriages in Ghana and among the Ewes.

CHAPTER TWO

MARRIAGE IN THE BIBLE AND THE GHANAIAN SOCIETY (EWE SOCIETY)

INTRODUCTION

Marriage as an institution comes with a lot of challenges as well as good experiences and blessings. For any marriage to succeed or break down depends greatly on the ethical perception of the two individuals or families involved. Just as marriage among Ghanaians specifically the Ewes is governed by our cultural values, so marriage among Christians is guided by Christian ethics based on the Bible. Even so, it is biblically factual that God is the originator of marriage. In the creation stories of the Bible, the very first couple God made were male and female (Gen. 1:27) as His main purpose for marriage was for companionship according to Genesis 2:18. Similarly, the Traditional Africans (Ghanaians) believe that “God instituted marriage by commanding people to engage in it” (Mbiti, 1991, p. 104). Throughout history, the beauty of marriage has been stained in all cultures by conflicts, misunderstandings, and incidents of break ups. The issue of divorce leading to remarriage seems to be devastating and it is assuming a universal dimension especially in this modern era as this situation is found in all societies including Ghana (the Ewes).

This chapter is, therefore, divided into two main parts: the first part is a survey of biblical scriptures to understand what they ethically have to say about marriage, divorce and remarriage. The second part seeks to explore marriage within the Ghanaian context and relates it to the relevance of biblical ethical

perceptions on marriage, divorce and remarriage. It also exposes how Christianity has influenced the types of marriages we have in Ghana today particularly the traditional (local) types of marriages among the Ewes. Again, it addresses contemporary causes and challenges of divorce in the Ghanaian society.

THE BIBLICAL NATURE OF MARRIAGE

Tak (2006, p. 5) indicated that in the Christian perspective, “marriage is a lifelong commitment between a male and a female that involves mutual sexual rights.” Tak also agreed with Adams (1980) for saying that there are at least three basic elements of the biblical concept as well as God’s purpose for marriage as presented below.

Marriage was between a male and a female

According to Adams (1980, p. 27) with reference to the Bible, marriage was between a biological male (Adam) and a biological female (Eve). It can be inferred from the above that homosexual (gay and lesbian) marriages were not part of the original plan of God. Though some societies and churches seem to allow the latter as varieties of marriage today, God’s stand point was not in favour of them right from Genesis 19. This has been confirmed in Romans 1:26-27. The Bible made it clear from the very beginning: God created them “male and female” (Gen.1:27) and commanded them to “be fruitful and increase in number” (v. 28) signifying the reproductive capacity of a man and a woman. According to the Scriptures, God formed man of the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7). Then “God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man” (v. 22). God adds, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and

they will become one flesh” (v. 24). The use of the terms husband and wife as well as “father” and “mother” made it clearer that reference is being made to a biological male and female (Marston, 2006).

Referring to the creation of Adam and Eve and their marital union, Jesus cited the passage from Genesis, “At the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’” (Matt. 19:4). Then Jesus quoted this very passage about leaving father and mother and cleaving to one’s wife (v. 5), thus confirming that marriage is to be between a male and a female. Considering the facts made available by scholars in the above explanations, it is evident that marriage should be heterosexual and that the so-called homosexual marriages should not be considered biblically accepted marriages as we relate it to our Ghanaian culture. I therefore agree with this scholarly view that the breakup of such unbiblical relationships cannot be considered divorce (Adams, 1980; Geisler, 2003; Marston, 2006). The views of the above scholars on the biblical concept of marriage is in line with the Ghanaian cultural values just that marriage in Ghana goes beyond two individuals (male and female) to their families and society at large.

Marriage involves sexual union

Adams (1980) made it clear based on biblical scriptures that marriage involves sexual union. One of the many reasons for this view is that marriage is also called a union of “one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). That marriage includes sex is evident from its use by Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:16 where Paul used the same phrase to condemn prostitution. “Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, ‘The two will become one

flesh” (1 Cor. 6:16, NIV). This clearly shows that sexual union is a necessary factor reserved for marriage in Christianity. According to Marston (2006, p. 26) God commanded that the “male and female” He created would be fruitful and multiply or to reproduce children (Gen. 1:28) though modern technology and scientific development defy this concept. In the beginning, after God created them (Adam and Eve) and expelled them from Eden, the Bible says in Genesis 4:1 “Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.” When speaking to the matter of sex in marriage from a Christian perspective, the apostle Paul wrote:

Nevertheless, to avoid *fornication*, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife (1 Cor. 7:2-4, KJV).

In short, marriage involves the right to sexual union between a male and a female. Under the Old Testament law, those who engaged in premarital intercourse with especially virgins were obligated to marry them (Deut. 22:28-29). Sex is sanctified by God for marriage only (1 Cor. 7:2). Hence, the writer of Hebrews declared “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral” (Heb. 13:4). Although marriage involves sexual rights, it is not limited to sex. Marriage is a union (Gen. 2:18; Mal. 2:14) that is much more than sexual relations. In other words, marriage involves social, spiritual and sexual union among others. Furthermore, the purpose of sex is more than breeding children. Sexual relations in marriage are threefold: propagation or procreation (Gen. 1:28), unification or

oneness (Gen. 2:24), and recreation or satisfaction as the Bible declared; “Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth. She is a loving deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts satisfy you always. May you always be captivated by her love” (Prov. 5:18-19, NLT).

Marriage involves a marital covenant before God

Adams (1980) and Marston (2006) have presented evidence that marriage is a union born out of a covenant of mutual promises. This commitment is implied from the very beginning in the concept of leaving parents and cleaving to one’s wife. The marital covenant was stated most explicitly by the prophet Malachi and the writer of Proverbs: “You ask, ‘Why?’ It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant” (Mal. 2:14 NIV). Proverbs also speaks of marriage as a “covenant” or mutual commitment. It condemns the adulteress “who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God” (Proverbs 2:17).

From the preceding passages, it is evident that marriage is not only a covenant, but one of which according to our Ewe culture, God (*Mawu*) is considered a witness. It is God who instituted marriage, and it is He who serves as the number one witness to the exchange of vows. These vows are literally made “before God.” Jesus said that it is God who literally joins the two together in marriage, adding, “Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate” (Matt. 19:6). Marriage is a God-ordained institution for all people, not just for Christians. Marriage is the only social institution that God ordained before the

disobedience of Adam and Eve. The book of Hebrews declares that marriage “should be honored by all people” (Heb. 13:4). Thus God has ordained marriage for non-Christians as well as Christians.

Odoi (2015) supported the views of Adams (1980) and went further to cite the works of scholars such as Pfeiffer, Vos and Rea (1999), Stott (1999), Benyah (2014), and Bacchiocchi (2001) using Genesis 2:24 as the basis upon which marriage can be considered as a covenant in three dimensions.

The definition of marriage is embodied in the text; ‘Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.’ This was later quoted by Jesus when He was asked about permissible grounds for divorce (Matthew 19:4-5). Genesis 2:24 was spoken by God right after Eve was brought to Adam, and Adam recognized her as his God-given spouse. It could be deduced that a marriage exists in God’s sight when a man ‘leaves’ his parents, with a view not merely to living apart from them but to ‘cleaving’ to his wife, and ‘become one flesh’ (Odoi, 2015, p. 14).

Odoi in explaining these concepts further indicated that the first step in establishing a marriage covenant is leaving all other relationships, including the closest ones of father and mother: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother” (Gen 2:24). According to Odoi (2015, p. 15), the key word “leave” expressed in Hebrew as *aw-zah* (*azab*) is rendered in English as “release, forsake, leave destitute, or refuse.” It is used of loosening bands, as of a beast from its bonds. Even so, the Arabic equivalent means “single” or “unmarried.” The idea here is that it is the man who forsakes his parents first. He breaks the “union” with them almost in the sense of divorcing himself and becoming “subsequently single.” Again, the idea posited here is as if he has been bound to them in a marriage state but, in an act of the will, departs from them regarding

responsibility and dependence (if such exists) and becomes alone to unite with the chosen woman. The bridegroom (the man) cannot be both a dependent child and an independent husband in the same home (Odoi, 2015).

An ethical problem may arise from this issue if leaving one's parents as this seems to have been directed towards the married man (husband) only and not the woman (wife). The text speaks specifically to the man in this context. It is he who must become his own head of the household. If in family relations he is dependent upon his father, then to whom do his dependents look for authority? It would create for his wife an unworkable hierarchical arrangement: she would have two heads (i.e., her husband and his father or her husband and her father), and that, according to Jesus: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other..." (Matthew 6:24). This is not right. In such an arrangement, the father's authority whichever way would probably supersede her husband's, yet, according to the Scripture, it is the latter who is to be her final authority in family matters (Ephesians 5:22-34).

According to Odoi (2015, p. 18) the second essential component of a marriage covenant is cleaving: "Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife" (Gen. 2:24). To her, leaving must occur before a cleaving can take place. This process reveals divine wisdom. A man and a woman must leave all lesser relationships for the purpose of cleaving, that is, cementing their new relationship and establishing a new home or family. Odoi, further quoted Bacchiocchi (2001) for saying that "cleaving" reflects the central concept of

covenant-fidelity. The Hebrew word for “cleave” *dabaq*, suggests the idea of being permanently glued or joined together until death comes in. It is one of the words frequently used to express the covenant commitment of the people to God: “You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve him and cleave to Him” (Deut. 10:20; cf. 11:22; 13:4; 30:20). The word is also used to describe Ruth’s refusal to leave her mother-in-law Naomi: “Ruth clave unto her” (Ruth 1:14).

Bacchiocchi (2001) supported by Odoi (2015) said that cleaving means wholehearted commitment which spills over to every area of our being. Cleaving involves unswerving loyalty to one’s marital partner. Note that man is to cleave to “his wife.” A married man cannot be glued to his wife and flirt or engage in sexual intercourse with another woman likewise the married woman with another man. The two are mutually exclusive: “Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matt 19:6, KJV). In a marriage covenant, cleaving does not allow the “freedom to leave” when the relationship is no longer satisfying. If the “freedom to leave” is retained as a real option, it will hinder the total effort to develop a marital relationship characterised by covenantal faithfulness.

The third essential ingredient of marriage as a covenant posited by Odoi (2015, p.19) is that “they become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). Note the progression: leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh. As husband and wife leave lesser relationships and learn to cleave to one another, they become a new entity, “one flesh.” The phrase “one flesh” needs some explanation because it is frequently misunderstood to refer primarily to the sexual union. To become “one flesh” (Gen

2:24) means to become one functioning unit. Bacchocchi (2001, p. 19) quoted Leupold and explained that becoming one flesh “involves the complete identification of one personality with the other in a community of interests and pursuits, a union consummated in intercourse.” The phrase “one flesh” does also refer to the physical or sexual aspect of marriage. Apostle Paul explicitly uses the phrase in this way when speaking of sexual intercourse between a man and a harlot (1 Cor. 6:16). Sexual intercourse per se, does not automatically assure that a man and a woman become one in a mystical, emotional, and spiritual unity. Genital intercourse without spiritual communion (spiritual bond) often leaves people divided, alienated, and bitter toward each other. Thus, sexual intercourse itself does not bring about real oneness.

In Bacchocchi’s book, *The Marriage Covenant*, for couples to achieve the biblical “one flesh” union, sexual intercourse in marriage must be the natural fruit of love, the crowning act of marital union (2001, pp. 19-21). If sex is not the expression of genuine love, respect, and commitment, then it offers only a physical contact while keeping the partners mentally and spiritually apart. Sexual desire must become the desire for the total union and oneness of body, soul, and spirit between marital partners. Becoming one flesh is a gradual process, as a man and a woman who come together in marriage do not automatically become “one flesh” when they exchange their marriage vows. As they live together as husband and wife, they realise that they must safeguard their individuality while striving to become one. They must not allow their differences to divide them but must learn

to accept their differences, viewing them not as antagonistic but as complementary.

Bacchiocchi (2001) explained further that the individual differences of couples contribute to their ability to achieve oneness since they are accepted as being complementary and not contradictory. The becoming of “one flesh” is beautifully exemplified in the children of a married couple. In their children, husband and wife are indissolubly united into one person. What happens biologically in children occurs psychologically in a husband/wife relationship as the two gradually become “one flesh,” a new functioning unity. Becoming “one flesh” also implies continuity. Odoi (2015, p. 20), however, cited a statement from urban dictionary, saying that the modern practice of *serial monogamy* must be rejected as immoral: it defeats the biblical purpose of marriage which is to develop a permanent “one flesh” relationship. To her, serial monogamy, is the custom or practice of having only one marital mate at a time but different individuals in succession. Each relationship may be taken seriously and with commitment or not all as each of them lasts for a short period of time. This term is used in contrast with *strict monogamy*, a type of monogamy which imply having just one partner over a lifetime.

In summary, the third principle derived from the divine institution of marriage recorded in Genesis 2:24 is as follows: to become a “one flesh” functioning unit, husband and wife must learn to accept their differences as complementing their oneness and must reserve their sexual expression exclusively for each other. Odoi, therefore cited Stott (1999) for defining marriage as “an

exclusive heterosexual covenant between one man and one woman, ordained and sealed by God, preceded by a public leaving of parents, consummated in sexual union, issuing in a permanent mutually supportive partnership, and normally crowned by the gift of children” (Odoi, 2015, p. 21).

BIBLICAL ORIGIN AND CONDITIONS FOR DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

There seem to be no biblical texts which suggest that God is the originator of divorce despite the fact that He permitted it in some limited situations. Rylie (1982) stated that marriage was originally planned by God with no provision for ending it except by death. It is worth noting according to Adams (1980, p. 27), that divorce should be differentiated in its sense from marriage because it is not instituted by God. He further defined divorce as “the repudiation and breaking of covenant in which both parties promised to provide companionship for one another.” In other words, divorce is the expression of a human emotion that a covenantal companionship no longer exists. According to the book of Genesis, marriage came into existence by God’s will (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:18). In this respect, we are able to possibly perceive that divorce is not from God’s will. It is because of the fall of humankind. So we need to deal with the origin and nature of marriage and make it clearer (Tak, 2006).

Furthermore, this concept was behind the Lord’s answer to the Pharisees in Matthew 19:4-6 where he appealed to Genesis 2:24 as the basis of his teaching that marriage was and is indissoluble. Adams (1980) made a similar reference to Genesis 3, where we can see the story of the disobedience of Adam and Eve. By

disobeying God's command, human hearts came to be hard toward God and toward each other. This has been confirmed in the New Testament by Jesus Christ: "...Moses permitted divorce only as a concession to your hard hearts, but it was not what God had originally intended..." (Matt. 19:8). Sin broke the relationship of man created in the image of God (Gen. 3:1-17). Sin also brought all kinds of immorality such as adultery, rape, and prostitution (Lev. 18:20) that spoilt marriage.

Divorce and Remarriage from Biblical Ethical Perspectives

Ghana is a secular state but has been influenced greatly by Christian doctrines on marriage and divorce. According to the 1992 constitution of Ghana, marriage under the marriage ordinance (CAP 127) is monogamous. This is contrary to the typical Ghanaian (African) Traditional and Islamic (Qur'an 4:3) concepts of marriage which are polygamous. Similarly, Ghanaians today especially the orthodox Christians continue to hold on firmly to the covenantal nature of marriage. The practice of celibacy is therefore held high especially by the Catholic Church in Ghana. However, premarital sex; divorce and remarriage are not encouraged or considered sinful in some regards. The study, therefore, seeks to explore ethical issues on divorce and remarriage from biblical perspectives ranging from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

Divorce in the Old Testament

According to Ryrie (1982), the Mosaic Law nowhere provided room for divorce, though people who lived during that period (the Old Testament era) practiced it. The importance of this point cannot be overstressed, especially in

light of statements by evangelicals who, after discussing Deuteronomy 24: 1-4, note that “God permitted divorce within stringently defined limits” (Adam, 1980, p. 30):

When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give *it* in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man’s *wife*. And *if* the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth *it* in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her *to be* his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that *is* abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance (Deuteronomy 24:1-4, KJV).

Some other scholars such as Ryrie (1982) and Anderson (2005, p. 138) are also of the view that this very passage only recognised that divorce was being practiced, but it never prescribed it and that “these verses were not intended to endorse divorce.” Anderson however admitted that divorce was widespread in the ancient Near East and the certificate of divorce was intended to protect the reputation of the woman for remarriage. “Key to the understanding of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is the definition of ‘something indecent’” (Anderson, 2005, p. 138). To him, this probably does not mean adultery or premarital intercourse; which were all punishable by death penalty (Deut. 22:20-22). Though the rabbinical school of thought of Shammai understood “something indecent” to mean major sexual offence, the liberal Hillel taught that it referred to anything displeasing to the husband as trivial as spoiling his food (Anderson, 2005, p. 139).

Ryrie (1982) went further to a passage in Deuteronomy 22:13-29, which described two circumstances where divorce was prescribed. One was the case

where the husband “turned against” his wife and sought to justify a divorce by accusing her of not being a virgin (premarital un-chastity). Assuming that the charge was false, the verdict was clear:

And they shall amerce him in an hundred *shekels* of silver, and give *them* unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days. But if this thing be true, *and the tokens of virginity* be not found for the damsel: Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father’s house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father’s house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you (Deut. 22:19-21, KJV).

To the researcher, these biblical passages speak volumes against some of the reasons for divorce today, as some people believe that when love dies, the marriage dies and divorce is recommended. The other circumstance involves intercourse with an un-betrothed virgin. In this instance the man was required to marry the girl and never to divorce her (v. 29).

The view of Adams (1980) was supported by Ryrie (1982) and Odoi (2015) as they posited a biblical illustration that divorce was not established by God. It is rather generated by humankind’s total depravity caused by sin. However, Adams further indicated that “God permitted divorce within stringently defined limits.” Deuteronomy 24:1-4 made mention of divorce in the first place. The basis for divorce here is the Hebrew *erwah dabar* which means “something indecent” (v. 1). Intermarriage with foreign women (pagan wives) was considered as unfaithfulness before God in Ezra 10. This demanded nullifying of their marriages (divorce) based on the Law of God and was also followed by Israelites sending away their foreign wives (v. 3). But this does not mean that the Bible

encourages divorce from every type of polygamous marriage or from every foreigner. According to Adams (1980), men like Jacob and David had more than a wife just as foreign but proselyte women such as Zipporah the wife of Moses (Exo. 18:1ff & Num. 12:1), Rahab wife of Salmon and Ruth wife of Boaz (Matt. 1:5) remained married among the people of Israel even as the last two were mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus according to the book of Matthew. Based on the story of Ahab's marriage to Jezebel (the Sidonian), as recorded in 1 Kings 16:31-34, it is interesting to note that "the prohibition included other non-Israelitish [*sic*] nations, to prevent idolatry" (Ryrie, 1982, p. 182).

On the contrary, Ryrie (1982) made reference to the story of Hosea in the book of Hosea and passages like Jeremiah 3:1-8 which are used by some scholars to conclude that God Himself was a divorcee (having divorced Israel just as Hosea did to Gomer) and, therefore, divorce is sometimes justified (Adams, 1980). However, it is not clear ethically and exegetically that Hosea divorced Gomer, so at best this would be a very weak foundation on which one could build a case for legitimate divorce. Furthermore, it is even less tenable and logical to conclude from the story of Hosea that God divorced Israel. The question of Isaiah 50:1-3 is either a rhetorical one presupposing a negative reply or it should be understood as an allegory like the one in Jeremiah 3:8. Again, Ryrie (1982) in buttressing the views of Crater (1980) said the following:

If these illustrations are pressed to make God a divorcee, then perhaps he was also a polygamist, since he married both Israel and Judah. Nor should such poetical and metaphorical language be pressed into the service of determining the exact meaning of... legal passages in Matthew's gospel (Ryrie, 1982, p. 180)

Ryrie further posited that the story of Hosea and its illustrations of the Lord's relation to Israel furnish no secure basis for concluding that there are sometimes legitimate reasons for divorce in the Bible. Even so, in Malachi 2:14-16, God's view on divorce is obviously seen. God himself clearly speaks that He hates divorce (v. 16). In God's eyes, divorce means the broken faith and the broken marriage covenant (v. 14). He hates it because He is "acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth" (Mal. 2:14f). To (Adams, 1980, p. 30), based on the Old Testament, "God does not approve divorce but divorce itself is sometimes permitted and remarriage is shown as a result of sin."

Divorce in the New Testament

Heth & Wenham (1984) and Corners (1993) are among the modern day New Testament advocates concerning the bond of marriage being made by God to be "indissoluble." Another strong advocate for this is Marston (2006, p. 13) who pointed out that he does not "believe in sex before marriage, or adultery, or divorce..." but "regard marriage as faithful and for keeps." Adams (1980) earlier shared the same view with them as he posited that Jesus in the New Testament with his teaching on divorce quoted the Mosaic Law in the Old Testament but expanded it in the Jewish context. Various passages dealt with his teaching; popular among them are Matthew 5:31-32; 19:1-12 and Luke 16:18 to be reflected on in the first place. "But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery" (Matt 5:32, NIV). Luke 16:18 also said: "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman

commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” These two passages are similar in their sense and paralleled. Concerning the man who divorced his wife, Jesus declared that he commits adultery if he marries another and whoever marries a divorced woman also commits adultery (Adams, 1980).

According to Anderson (2005) by making Jesus’ teaching clearer that raises the standard, he suggests here an important factor on divorce, *porneia*: this term is translated as ‘fornication’ or ‘adultery’ or better still, “marital unfaithfulness.” In trying to understand these passages, some commentators believe *porneia* refers to every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse during betrothal period. However, some scholars hold the view that it applies to relentless, persistent and unrepentant adultery. Those holding to this “exception clause” for adultery believe remarriage is possible, while others do not. To Anderson, this issue of fornication as Jesus said is the sole reason for justified divorce. “In these passages Jesus challenged the views of the two schools of Jewish thought (Shammai and Hillel)” (Anderson, 2005, p. 139).

Again, Matthew 19:3-9 is also paralleled with Mark 10:2-12. In both passages, Jesus answered Pharisees that a man is to be one flesh by being united to his wife (Mt. 19:5; Mk. 10:7-9). Here he declares as well that whatever God has put together, no man should put it asunder. This confirms Jesus’ earlier statement in (v. 5) that it is by the hardness of the human heart that one could engage in extra marital affair on one hand and failure of the other partner to forgive the adulterer on the other hand that leads to divorce. Humanity is

therefore, forewarned in (v. 9) not to do any of the above, creating any ungodly room for divorce. Based on the above, the researcher is of the view that if human beings can just go according to God's specifications there would be no need at all for divorce and remarriage talk less of them being ethical or un-ethical (right or wrong).

Paul in his teachings on divorce introduces Jesus' saying (I Cor. 7:10), but he made it clear which command follows: "But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife" (v. 11). Even so, Paul seems to give another ground for divorce, that is, desertion. The situation is that husband and wife have been separated from each other and then they should remain unmarried or be reconciled. And if unbelieving spouse desires to separate, it could be possible because the believer is not 'bound'. So it is likely that Paul himself realised that the believer is not capable of doing anything if the other unbelieving partner wants a divorce. In other words, if the believer is deserted by an unbelieving partner, the believer is not bound (1 Cor. 7:15). According to Anderson:

Paul was obviously aware of the prevalence of divorce in the Greek world and of the legal right that a wife had to initiate divorce. He gave the command for believers to stay married....Some divorces may have been initiated because of the command of Ezra to the Israelites in Jerusalem after the exile to divorce themselves from pagan spouses (Ezra 10:11). Paul affirmed the same biblical principle: do not seek divorce. However, if the unbelieving spouse insists on divorce, the believer may have to concede to those proceedings and not bound in such circumstances (Anderson, 2005, p. 140).

Furthermore, Paul also agreed with Jesus by saying that no divorce is permitted except for fornication. Moreover, he added something in Romans 7:1-3. It is about remarriage. He states that when a husband dies, his wife is not bound to

remarry (7:3). On the other hand, remarriage is possible in the case of the desertion by his or her unbelieving spouse (Adams, 1980).

Anderson again made reference to one final question that was posed to Paul in his teachings as to whether a divorced person was eligible for a leadership position in the church. This was a very dicey issue because of the desertion of pagan spouse factor. In 1 Timothy 3:12, Paul was very careful just to call on church leaders to be above reproach and be “the husband of one wife.” This statement he repeated in Titus 1:6 concerning one who qualifies to be a church leader. Here, instead of Paul prohibiting a divorce person from serving in leadership, the language of this verse actually focuses on practicing polygamists because polygamy at that time was a challenge to the church. Paul spoke in this manner because “polygamy was practiced in the first century and was found among Jewish and Christian groups” (Anderson, 2005, p. 140).

To the researcher, whether you are married or single is not a problem to Paul and he was not speaking against polygamy in its entirety. He only insisted that if you want to be a church leader or you are already a church leader, you should not marry more than a wife probably to avoid all the challenges attached to polygamous marriages which may affect the ministry and family life of a church leader.

Remarriage in the Old Testament

Adams (1980) made reference to Deuteronomy 24: 1-4 by saying that God prohibited remarriage of a man to his divorced wife after she has been defiled. Yet, because a woman could hardly live alone at that time, the passage therefore

shows the remarriage of the wife to another man. Ryrie (1982 p. 180) however posited that Deuteronomy 24:1-4 has been used by Evangelical Protestants to demonstrate that “the divorce permitted or tolerated under the Mosaic Law had the effect of dissolving the marriage bond,” therefore, with reference to our Lord’s teaching in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 “we should not expect that remarriage would be regarded as adultery.” To him, in reality this is a misuse of the passage. Ryrie further quoted Tim Crater (1980) for saying: “...the legislation relates only to particular cases of remarriage; the protasis contains incidental information about marriage and divorce, but does not legislate on those matters. The verses do not institute divorce, but treat it as a practice already known...” (Ryrie, 1982 p. 181). By inference, remarriage was allowed in the Old Testament with the motive of protecting the divorced woman and her status in society and not as a way of endorsing divorce. Remarriage, therefore, becomes a remedy to a problem since the Mosaic Law does not prevent a man from giving a divorce certificate to his wife and a man who does this must also think through it well because he could not be allowed to remarry his own divorced wife.

Again, the passage acknowledges the existence of the practice of divorce; it regards the second marriage of the divorced wife as legal; and it forbids the reinstitution of the first marriage even after the death or divorce of the second husband. In particular, it forbids the remarriage of the first husband on the ground that the one flesh bond with that first husband still exists, even though divorce has taken place. In the view of Ryrie, scholars are not agreed on the basis for the prohibition of remarrying the first wife. The suggestion that the entire law was to

deter hasty divorces is unlikely but financial considerations would probably be the reason (Ryrie, 1982).

Furthermore, there are some other scholars who have also suggested that to reconstitute the first marriage would be a type of incest, on the basis of Genesis 2:24 and Leviticus 18:6-18, due to the one flesh relationship which was never dissolved. This implies that a woman cannot return to her first husband even if the second husband dies. According to Marston (2006) this biblical principle in the Mosaic Law seemed to have been violated by King David as stated below:

And David sent messengers to Ishbosheth Saul's son, saying, Deliver *me* my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for an hundred foreskins of the Philistines. And Ishbosheth sent, and took her from *her* husband, *even* from Phaltiel the son of Laish. And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim. Then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned (2 Samuel 3:14-16, KJV).

Marston (2006, p. 45) cited the view of Ben-Barak (1991) that "David reclaimed her as his 'wife' (this latter act apparently according to *Mesopotamian* custom rather than biblical guidelines)." In the researcher's view, what David did was not a gross violation of Deuteronomy 24. He was indeed the first husband of Michal the daughter of King Saul (1 Sam. 18:25-27), even so, David did not give any certificate of divorce to Michal (i.e., there was no divorce) it was rather his father-in-law who usurped his authority to give his daughter to another man in marriage (1 Sam. 25:44). The second marriage was rather illegal and had to be annulled as though it never existed. Again, what is worth noting here is that the Mosaic Law does not forbid remarriage in its entirety but strongly prohibits getting remarriage from a former husband (first husband) after divorce and after the woman has gone to marry another man (second husband) the legitimate way.

Odoi (2015) was of the view that the teachings of other biblical Prophets were to buttress the Mosaic concepts on divorce and remarriage. In the Old Testament, God often used the metaphor of the husband-wife relationship. The obvious and main reason was that the marriage as a covenant, characterised by love, compassion, and faithfulness, fittingly exemplified God's covenant relationship with humankind. A clear example of this is Hosea's marriage to Gomer. Hosea was told by God to marry a prostitute, Gomer, and raise a family by her (Hosea 1:1-2). Gomer went after her lovers and Hosea was sent to take her back and love her again. Through Hosea's marital experiences, God revealed Himself to Israel as a compassionate, forgiving husband: "In that day, says the Lord, you will call me; 'my husband,' . . . And I will betroth you to come to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord" (Hos. 2:16, 19-20 ESV). By revealing Himself as a faithful, compassionate and unrelenting husband, God sets a pattern for the husband-wife relationship. What God does on a larger scale as Israel's husband, is what a human husband is called to do on a smaller scale in his relationship with his wife.

It is with this story of Hosea that the issue of getting remarried to one's former husband seems to emerge. There is however no clear indication that Gomer officially got married to any man she played harlotry with in the book of Hosea. Even so, Hosea 10:8-9 suggests that Hosea never separated permanently or officially as there was "...Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife..." Hosea 1:2, but there was no "go and divorce" statement from God to Hosea. This kind of

divorce in its worse form can, therefore, be considered unofficial and non-legitimate one.

According to Marston (2006), just as Moses did in Deuteronomy 24, Jeremiah also reminded the people that God had entered into a covenant with them and had become their husband (Jer. 31:32). Even though they had broken the covenant, God remained a faithful husband who would make a new covenant with His people, working to transform their hearts (Jer. 33:33). The implication is clear. Marriage is a sacred covenant in which the husband and wife must be faithful to their commitment as God is faithful to his promise but Jeremiah's message was ignored (Odoi, 2015).

Odoi further indicated that Judah was later captured by the Babylonians and all her leading citizens were taken into exile. There in exile, Ezekiel graphically portrays God's unending love as that of a husband wooing and winning back an unfaithful wife (Ezek. 16:8, 15, 38, 59). In a similar vein Isaiah describes the final restoration of Israel in terms of a loving husband forgiving and restoring his unfaithful wife (Is. 54:5-8). The above examples suffice to show how the Old Testament prophets often describe God's covenant relationship with His people in terms of an ever-loving, faithful husband who never gets tired of wooing back an unfaithful wife. This has nothing to do with remarriage as in a woman going back to marry her former husband.

Malachi, one of the last Old Testament prophets, fittingly summed up the Old Testament view regarding the sacred and inviolable nature of marriage as covenant. "For I hate divorce, says the Lord God of Israel, and covering one's

garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts' (Mal 2:15-16). God states that He hates divorce, not the divorcée." This implies that Christians today should reflect Christ's attitude of love toward those who have suffered marital disaster (John 4:6-26) while at the same time upholding the biblical standards of the sacred and inviolable nature of the marital covenant (Odoi, 2015, p. 25).

The researcher believes that the issues raised above are to serve as advice to today's Church leaders and members from being too critical and judgmental on other leaders and members whose marriages breakdown. If the one (God) who instituted marriage does not hate the divorcee though He hates divorce, why should a mere mortal hate his fellow human being for going into divorce. It should also be noted that the success of marriage does not depend on an individual but all the parties involved. Anyone can become the next victim of divorce for some unforeseen reasons.

Remarriage in the New Testament

Tak (2006) in agreement with Odoi (2015) said: the full force of Jesus' teachings on divorce and remarriage were explained by Him privately to His disciples in these terms: "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery" (Mark 10:11-12). By this statement, Jesus declares unambiguously that the marriage covenant must not be violated by divorce and remarriage because it is a sacred inviolable bond. To do otherwise is to "commit adultery," a sin clearly condemned by God's moral law (Ex 20:14;

Deut. 5:18). Jesus thus refutes the view that divorce and remarriage are viable option for married couples.

Furthermore, the covenant structure of marriage makes divorce an act of covenant breaking; a failure to keep a moral obligation. One significant Matthean contribution is the exception clause of Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 which teaches that to divorce and to remarry, “except for unchastity [*porneia*]” is adultery: “But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (Matt 5:32 NAS). “And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery” (Matt 19:9).

Pearl (2017) with reference to John 4:16-18 spotted a sharp contradiction in the exception clause found in the teachings of Jesus in Matthew to give a very limited room for divorce and no room for remarriage. According to Pearl in his book *Divorce and Remarriage* as cited in an online article “Divorcing second husband to marry first husband” said: if second marriages are not recognised as marriages at all, then, a person remains married to the first spouse until death puts them apart. This will also mean that their relationship with their second spouse is an ongoing state of adultery, this is indicative of the fact that Jesus missed the point. To Pearl, Jesus acknowledged that the Samaritan woman at the well had ‘five husbands,’ and the man she was presently with was not her husband.

Pearl seemed to have gotten Jesus out of context. This was the discussion Jesus had with the Samaritan Woman: “I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you

have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband...” (John 4:17-18, NIV). The woman found in the story never got married legitimately to be given any certificate of divorce. She was involved in a pure cohabitation with all the five men successively in addition to the one she was living with at that material moment.

Bacchiocchi (2001, p. 130) was of the view that the exception clause found in the two texts in Matthew has been the object of countless studies. A major reason is that many people find in this clause the only legitimate grounds for divorce and remarriage. Scholarly opinion on the meaning of the exception clause is however divided, reflecting the lack of unanimity among scholars about the precise meaning of the key word of the clause, namely *porneia*. The word is generally translated as: “fornication” (KJV), “unchastity” (RSV), “sexual immorality” (ESV), “immorality” (NASB) and “marital unfaithfulness” (NIV). The Greek word *porneia*, from which the word “pornography,” is derived, comes from the root word *pernemi* meaning “to sell.”

Bacchiocchi in buttressing this point indicated that the original idea for *pernemi* was to offer one’s body for a price (2001). The word was used especially of slaves and meant “a harlot for hire.” Historically, *porneia* has been used with wider and narrower meanings. The wider meaning includes unlawful extra-marital intercourse such as prostitution, fornication, and adultery. The narrower meaning can refer to sexual aberrations such as homosexuality (Rom 1:29), incest (1 Cor 5:1), and unlawful marriages within the forbidden degrees of relationship (Acts 15:20, 29). The question then is what is the exact meaning of *porneia* in the

exception clause (Matt 5:32; 19:9)? Is Jesus using the term in its wider or narrower meaning? It is important to do an overview of the different views which cause the debate over the meaning of the Matthean exception clauses (Tak, 2006).

According to Jones (2008) as cited by Odoi (2015, pp. 29-30), the popular view held by most contemporary evangelical scholars which is described quite often as “the majority view (also known as the Erasmian or Protestant view) interprets porneia as a reference to adultery.” Basically, this view sees the word applying to any sexual immorality with anyone outside of a person’s spouse. Some other scholars also assumed that the word is synonymous with “infidelity to the marriage vow,” which is mainly adultery. Jones stated that one “who commits adultery does, by that act and deed in effect sunder the marriage bond, and it ought then to be formally recognised by the state as being sundered. One can deduce from these explanations that adultery introduces another flesh into the “one flesh” concept of the Bible and has far reaching consequences of separating the bond of flesh, spirit and soul of the married couples making the legal and divinely established covenant to be of non-effect.

Proponents of this view take a holistic view of the use of porneia throughout the Gospel of Matthew. Jones (2008) supported this view by saying: “it is not just the proximate context of the exception clause that gives the word porneia its meaning, but rather the milieu of the entire Book of Matthew.” This is the critical aspect of the betrothal view which must be understood. Those who hold this view are simply trying to understand the meaning of the word based upon its usage in the book of Matthew. They believe, as Guenther (2002) points

out as cited by Odoi (2015), that “in both our Matthean texts, the scope of porneia must be narrower than that of *moicheia* (adultery)” (Odoi, 2015, p. 30).

Jones (2008) sums up the betrothal view: betrothal view advocates point out that nearly every Christian view of divorce and remarriage limits the meaning of porneia in some sense...the question is not whether to limit the meaning of porneia but rather how to limit its meaning. But does the betrothal view limit the meaning of porneia to an unnecessary strict sense? Mahoney says that such views of the exception clauses “are so construed as to remove the grounds for a real divorce in Christ’s teaching” (Mahoney, 1968). The majority view seems to suggest that, as Ryrie (1982) points out, “the weakness [of the betrothal view] lies in the technical meaning given to porneia” as cited by (Odoi, 2015, p. 31).

Tak (2006) together with Odoi (2015, p. 32) with reference to Paul’s teaching following the teaching of Jesus, said “Paul affirms in different words that marriage is a lifelong and indissoluble covenant. In Romans 7:1-3, Paul sets forth the principle that death ends the dominion of the law as he went on to illustrate this principle through marriage as a relationship.” His point of the illustration was that death and death alone releases a person from the bond of marriage: To him, a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies she is released from the law concerning the husband. “So then, if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man” (Rom 7:2-3 NASB).

Paul's illustration sheds light on his view of marriage as a lifelong covenant which can be terminated only by death. The same teaching is presented by Paul again in 1 Corinthians 7:39 where he declares: "a wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives." Paul writes, "To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife" (1 Cor. 7:10–11 ESV). In giving this command, Paul refers to Jesus' own instructions regarding divorce and remarriage (see Matthew 5:32; 19:3-12). While Paul rarely appeals directly to the teaching of Jesus, this qualification notes that Paul's command in verses 10-11 is equivalent to what Jesus himself taught unlike verses 12–16, which did not originate from Jesus' own words (Fee, 1987).

Odoi cited Bauer (2000) and Garland (2003) for saying that because Paul did not attempt to quote Jesus verbatim, there appears to be an assumed familiarity among the Corinthians with the content of the Lord's original teaching. Citing the command of Jesus, Paul charges the wife not to separate from her husband and commands the husband not to divorce his wife. The verb "to separate" ($\chi\omega\rho\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$) is defined as "to separate by departing from someone" while the verb "to divorce" ($\acute{\alpha}\phi\acute{\iota}\eta\mu\iota$) means, "to dismiss or release someone or something from a place or one's presence; in a legal sense, divorce" (Odoi, 2015, p. 33).

Heth and Wenham (2006) who concluded that Scripture permits no remarriage after any divorce, interpret that Paul "permitted only two courses of

action after any divorce: remain single (unmarried) or be reconciled.” However, their view fails to recognise that Paul is speaking here only to Christians who initiate a divorce; he offers no command in 1 Corinthians 7 verses 10-11 to Christians receiving a divorce.

According to Tak (2006); Odoi (2015, p. 35) and others such as Murray (1961) and Luck (1987) they prefer to read Paul’s exception-less command as one with implied exceptions in Matthew 19:9. However, this view demotes the perspicuity of Mark 10:11-12, which states that a Christian should not divorce his or her spouse (without exception). Indeed, Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 7:10–11 accords more directly with Jesus’ address in Mark 10:11-12 than Matthew’s rendition in 19:9. Thus, Paul charges Christians, without any stated exception, to stay married and not to divorce their spouses. If they fail to do that, Paul exhorts them to remain unmarried or else be reconciled.

Furthermore, the covenantal nature of the marriage relationship is expressed by Paul again in Ephesians 5:31-32 where he uses the marriage union to illustrate the covenant relationship between Christ and His bride, the church: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one.’ This is a great mystery, and I take it to mean Christ and the church.” Just as the prophets in the Old Testament used the marriage covenant to portray the relationship between God and Israel, so Paul in the New Testament uses the marriage union to represent Christ’s covenant of sacrificial love and oneness with the church. Since the marriage covenant represents the permanent relationship between Christ and His church, it must be

permanent; otherwise it would be an inaccurate representation of the indissoluble relationship between Christ and His church.

TYPES OF MARRIAGE IN GHANA TODAY

According to Mbiti (1991), Africans believe that God instituted marriage by commanding people to engage in it and to bear children. Shem (2018) described marriage as a union between two beloved of the opposite sex for companionship, procreation among other reasons. This is marked as the third rite of passage after birth and circumcision and it is taken by the society with a lot of significance. Even so, there are various types of marriages in Ghana recognised by the marriage laws of Ghana. They are either based on religion, traditions and legality. Odoi (2015, p. 39-42) confirmed that “there are three forms of marriage which may be contracted by a couple in Ghana. These are Marriage under customary law, statutory marriage under the Marriage Ordinance (Cap 127), and Marriage according to Islamic rites.” Below are the types of marriages along with their demands and legality in Ghana as listed by (Odoi, 2015; Shem, 2018).

Customary Marriage

Customary marriage in Ghana refers to traditional marriage (indigenous marriage), common in practice involving performance of societal tradition and customs before a man and woman are united and blessed to live together. These formalities may vary from one part of the country to the other or from one ethnic group to another. There are certain essential features however, which are fairly common. The intended husband must ask for the hand of the intended wife from her parents or family. According to Odoi (2015, p. 39) “this is done usually by

sending emissaries from the man's family to the woman's family with various tokens which vary from place to place; the family of the woman accepts the tokens; before the couple live as man and wife." It must be noted that they need not necessarily live under the same roof. However, they will generally hold themselves out as husband and wife and be seen as such by their respective families. The traditional marriage in Ghana demands the following practical and fundamental steps: consent from the couple to be; consent from the two families; a celebration to mark this covenant, and payment of bride price (Shem, 2018).

Shem continued by saying that customary marriages in Ghana are typically polygamous in nature implying no limit to the number of life partners a man may have (2018). However, these marriages can be registered under the PNDC Law 112: customary marriage and divorce registration laws. If a customary marriage is not registered then it does not have the legality and, therefore, not recognised.

Ancient Features of Customary Marriage among the Ewes

According to Lodonu (2009, pp. 46-47), marriage is a very important event in the life cycle among the Ewe just as it has been in other human communities since time immemorial. "Bachelors or spinsters' life, therefore stigmatizes ones social standing." It is therefore the responsibilities of a young man's parents to marry for him and it is the same responsibilities for the girl's parents to marry appropriately for their girl. During the olden days, nobody on his own or her own should marry without the prior concern of his or her parents (i.e. the nuclear and extended families were involved). If Ewe parents however

consider a girl or a boy as disobedient, in some instance, parents may disown their child due to his or her unruly behaviour.

Lodonu (2009) further indicated that wedlock between cousins excluding first cousins, are all types of marriage allowed among the Ewe particularly in Gbi traditional area. Levirate marriage (that is a brother marrying the widow of his deceased brother) or sororate, (that is a widower marrying the younger sister of his deceased wife) were all practiced among the Ewe in the past. Polygynous marriages, though unfair as regards gender equality, was justified by the Ewe in terms of: uneasiness of a husband about bodily intellectual and spiritual defects of his first wife; superstitious ideas about menstruation; the desire of a man to have many children; a status-enhancing phenomenon; the need for adequate farm labour; barrenness of the first wife; strict observances of post-partum chastely (normally three years) and the associated libido; and poor sexual performance of the first-wife. The Ewes today can easily connect this to the Old Testament practice of polygamy.

Lodonu (2009) again cited the work of Asamoah (1971) by indicating that among the Ewe (Gbi), a woman from outside married to a man in another community enjoys all the privileges of the clan or lineage of her husband. The only exception is that when deceased, her body must be collected for burial by her own clan after wake at her husband's home. While parents of both sides take it upon themselves to choose good wives and good husbands for their children, they follow certain criteria but not just to choose anybody that comes their way. A member of a good and noble family must not and could not be allowed to marry a

partner to-be with dreadful diseases like tuberculosis (TB), leprosy, epilepsy and other stigmatic traits like witchcraft, lunacy, immorality, quarrelsomeness, divorce and criminality.

Modern Features of Customary Marriage among the Ewe

According to Kumekpor and Twum-Baah (1972) in their book *Marriage and Divorce* indicated that firstly, most modern day marriages are preceded by some form of “custom” irrespective of the education, age, cultural diversity and income of the spouses (the would-be couples). To Kumekpor and Twum-Baah, the most basic step one should take to announce his intention to marry a woman is to perform the necessary “custom” demanded by the women’s kin, in asking for the hand of their daughter. “This custom may involve a relatively inexpensive ceremony of local drinks and gifts to the more expensive ceremony of imported drinks and gifts, depending in most cases upon the circumstances of the man and his kinsfolk” Kumekpor and Twum-Baah (1972, p. 130). Once this basic custom has been performed, several alternatives are open to the couple, and these seem to be more conditioned by means and status rather than any fundamental change in attitude or beliefs on the part of Ghanaian in marriage. The couple in the majority of cases will try first and foremost to fulfill the customary procedures prescribed by their kinsfolk.

Secondly, Kumekpor and Twum-Baah (1972) said in a number of cases, customary ceremonies may have the additional feature of the Christian church ceremony where the Bible is presented as a gift to the bride by bridegroom if the couples are Christians. However, the additional feature of the Church ceremony in

marriage has not fundamentally changed or altered the form of marriage; the marriage is still a customary marriage governed first and foremost by customary law and not Church law. This can be considered as a clear case of the influence of Christianity and the Bible on our Ghanaian culture as reference could be made to Genesis 24, when Abraham assisted his son Isaac to marry Rebecca.

Another alternative is that after the performance of “custom” the couples register their marriage under the ordinance and celebrate it with an elaborate church wedding. The incidence of this type of wedding is far rare than the preceding two ceremonies. First, because of the sheer cost many cannot possibly afford such a display. Secondly, and even more important, is the fact that marriage as a mere civil contact between two persons has not gained wide acceptance in Ghana and is not likely to do so for some time. The attitude that one’s choice of partner is an individual concern has little meaning for the average Ghanaian. Marriage encompasses the much wider network of friends, relatives and kinsfolk. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand the slowness in embracing this custom. A most appropriate description in this instance is the following by Nukunya (1969) as cited by Kumekpor and Twum-Baah (1972) in which the author vividly describes the social atmosphere that surrounds a customary Anlo Ewe marriage ceremony.

The elaboration of the marriage ceremony and the large number of kinsfolk taking part in the proceedings bring home to the couple and the relatives the seriousness of their undertaking; and at every stage the ancestors are invoked adding supernatural authority. This together with the high moral code of the past; the punitive measures of the traditional authorities and the strong parental authority, provide a suitable environment for marital stability (Kumekpor & Twum-Baah, 1972, p. 131).

According to Kumekpor and Twum-Baah, the third and equally important factor is that most couples today, subscribe to the rights and obligations prescribed by customary law and not civil law irrespective of the procedures of marriage. They may rarely wish to build their marriages on the English precepts (except where it seems socially expedient). Thus the impetus to contract a purely English type of marriage is still relatively small in Ghana today.

According to Odoi (2015), it is socially expedient and necessary to register customary marriage because according to PNDC Law 113, registration is compulsory. Also, registration provides proof of the marriage and will prevent people in future from denying its existence. Again, if one of the parties dies intestate, the surviving spouse will be able to enjoy a share in the estate of the other under the provisions of the Intestate Succession Law, PNDC Law 111.

She concluded that, a customary marriage may be dissolved at the instance of either spouse, on a number of grounds such as: adultery by the wife, infertility of the wife, impotence of the husband and general incompatibility of the couple. Before dissolution, it is almost invariable practice that the complaints of the spouse seeking divorce will be considered by the families of the parties and attempts made to reconcile the couple, if possible. If reconciliation is impossible for any reason, the marriage will be declared dissolved by the families on presentation of drinks by the party who wanted the divorce to the family of the other party and the couples are then free to leave. Either the wife or the husband can take steps to have a marriage dissolved by informing the family of the partner that he or she is no longer interested in the marriage and would want it dissolved.

Types of Marriages among the Ewe

According to Lodonu (2009, p. 48), marriage among the Ewe in terms of traditional rites may be preceded by either courting or betrothal. However, there are different types of marriages among the Ewe. Below are ten (10) different types of marriage listed by Lodonu:

1. “Asivisroe” or “Tababiasrordede:” Normal marriages by the youth.
2. “Asikesroe” or “Kpekpla” or “Ahiasrordede:” Cohabitation (Concubinage marriage). It is yet to be recognised as marriage in Ghana until the Cohabitation Bill becomes a law (Ghana Web, February 2, 2012).
3. “Fiasrordede:” Marriage by a chief, slaughtering a sheep onto the foot of the new bride.
4. “Ahosrordede” or “Ahosisrordede:” Marriage by a widow or widower.
5. “Dekudedetsimena-ame” or “Ngbetorsrordede:” Betrothal; replacement of the married woman back to her clan or family.
6. “Afesidede” or “Fomesidede:” Endogamy (marriage from within the clan or lineage).
7. “Dumesidede” or “Dumesrordede:” Exogamy (marriage from a different town or lineage).
8. “Alorlélésrordede:” Holy matrimony in a Christian church. This is another clear cut issue of the influence of Christianity on marriage in Ghana today.
9. “Amekukusrordede:” a man who does not marry a woman customarily and the woman dies in the cause of being a wife to the man is forced to marry the dead body customarily.

10. “Tanuxexesrordede” or “Amesrorxorxor:” A woman who has been already married customarily to a known husband but has been snatched by another man. The new man has to pay for all the cost of the bride’s wealth that the first husband paid in addition to all other expenses incurred on the wife.

Islamic/Mohammedan marriage

According to Shem (2018), this is a legally recognised form of marriage for the Islamic believers and followers and this is a marriage contracted by Muslims in accordance with Islamic rules of marriage. It is potentially polygamous but the man can marry not more than four wives (Qur’an 4:3). An Islamic marriage is valid under the following conditions: there must be mutual agreement to marry; there must be a *wali* (a matrimonial guardian who is the legal representative of the bride); and there should be the payment of dower (dowry). The dowry is either presented in cash or in the form of property; two irreproachable witnesses must be present to witness the marriage ceremony; in our modern times the marriage must be registered in a District Office by Mohammedan marriages registrar for any official marriage registration in Ghana. The marriage must however be performed by a licensed Islamic priest (Odoi, 2015).

Shem also said that a man is united to a woman according to the Islamic marriage procedures (2018). Marriage should be done within a week lest it gets nullified. There are different types of marriages in Islam subject to beliefs, practices and so on. These marriages are legally recognised under the Marriage

Act which has the Islamic rules and regulations. After all these are performed, a marriage certificate in Ghana may be issued.

Ordinance Marriage (CAP 127)

According to Odoi (2015), this type of marriage in Ghana is strictly a monogamous one. A man or woman who has chosen to marry under the ordinance cannot after the marriage, go through any other form of marriage under any law with someone else other than his wife or husband. Until his wife or husband dies or the marriage is validly dissolved according to law, he or she cannot validly marry anyone else. Therefore, a purported customary marriage by a man already married under the ordinance to another woman other than his wife is invalid. This second woman is not a wife recognised by law and is not entitled to any of the rights and privileges of a legitimate wife.

Odoi (2015) added that the ordinance has some laid down procedures for contracting a statutory marriage and these must be strictly complied with before a marriage is sealed by the issue of a marriage certificate and it is this certificate which finally validates the marriage. A wedding in a church for example, does not create a valid monogamous marriage unless the requirements of the ordinance have been complied with. It is therefore very important to bear this in mind because some couples who have had their marriages “blessed” in some churches without complying with the provisions of the ordinance mistakenly believe that they have contracted a valid monogamous marriage especially if the woman assumes the name of the man thereafter. Such a “blessing” does not create valid marriage unless that particular church has been licensed to perform marriages.

According to Shem (2018), ordinance marriage is administered by a marriage officer or through special license. A marriage officer is a religious leader licensed to perform marriages by the government. Here are the conditions and the procedure that should be followed before an ordinance marriage is performed. There must be written notice to the Registrar of Marriages explaining the intention of marriage. Details regarding the parties involved should be clearly penned down; names, marital status, age, place of residence and venue of marriage celebrations. Consent from family is required if there is a party below the age of twenty one. The registrar then published a notice of intended marriage for 21 days at a small fee. If there are no objections in regards to the intended marriage the marriage ceremony may then proceed. This should be within three (3) months from the time the notice is receipted or made public. Finally, Ghana marriage certificate may then be issued to cement the relationship. Marriage under the Ordinance is purely monogamous and this means one man for one wife (Shem, 2018).

Types of Marriages under Ordinance in Ghana

There are basically three types of Marriage under Ordinance in Ghana namely: *marriage by a Registrar of marriages*, it is carried out by an officer at the Registrar General's, Municipal or District Assembly's office, who has the responsibility of performing marriages. *Marriage by a Marriage Officer/Minister*; this is usually an individual in a leadership position of a recognised religious body. This person needs to be licensed and gazetted to perform Ordinance marriages, and will have a certificate from the government proving this. *Marriage*

by *Special License*, this “is where the Registrar General’s Office, MMDA waives certain conditions for an Ordinance such as the length of time for notices, or permits a venue (other than the Registrar General’s Office, MMDA or church) to be used for the performance of the marriage” (<https://thewvg.com/three-main-types-of-marriage-in-ghana>).

Dissolution of such marriage requires the appropriate legal procedure, whether or not customary divorce has been performed. Understanding these factors may help one take certain precautions against divorce.

CAUSES OF DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE IN GHANA TODAY

According to Odoi (2015), in the early 1950s, the word divorce or remarriage were not commonly mentioned among couples in almost all parts of Africa, especially in Ghana. The sanctity of marriage as an institution was very much intact and respected. However, in recent times, there seems to be a serious siege against marriages. Marital institutions today are facing major setbacks. Anderson (2005) with the same view posited that until the 1960s, divorce has been a relatively rare phenomenon. Certainly, there have always been some couples who have considered divorce an option as well as remarriage. However, the fundamental changes in our society in the last few decades have changed divorce from being rare to routine. Christians in Ghana are of no exception.

Anderson (2005) went further to make it clear that “...during the 1970s, the divorce rate doubled (and the number of divorces tripled from 400,000 in 1962 to 1.2 million in 1981).” This increase in the divorce rate all over the world came not from older couples but from what he described as “the baby boom

generation” According to him, a sociologist calculated that while men and women in their twenties comprised only about 20 percent of the population, they contributed 60 percent of the growth in the divorce rate in the 1960s and early 1970s (Anderson, 2005, p. 131; Jones, 1980).

Asante, Osafo and Nyamekye (2014, p. 17) cited Sasse (1997) saying that divorce usually does not happen in a day but goes through the following three general stages. The first stage is *isolation*; the couples become separated from each other as intimacy behaviour breaks down, although they might still converse and be polite to each other. The second stage is *invalidation*, it is a period within which the couples begin to negatively assess each other’s worth and belittle one another, which give rise to accusations. The third stage is *betrayal*, where trust is broken down and there is no support from each other.

In Anderson’s opinion, this increase in the divorce rate leading to remarriage was due to at least two major factors: attitude and opportunity (2005). The baby boom generation’s attitude toward issues such as fidelity, chastity, and commitment were strikingly different from that of their parents. The clear cut difference was this; their parents would stay in a marriage in order to make it work (the mentality of it must work if it depends on me). But the “*baby boomers*” however, were less committed to the ideal of marriage and quite willing to end what they felt was a bad marriage and move on with their lives (Jones, 1980). While their parents would do everything to keep their marriages working “for the sake of the kids,” the baby boom generation as a whole was much less concerned about such issues. This situation is prevalent in our Ghanaian society today.

Anderson (2005) with reference to economic reasons said: economic opportunities also seem to be a significant factor in divorce and perhaps remarriage. It has become a reality that the rise in divorce closely parallels the increase in the number of women working. Women with pay-cheques were less likely to stay in a marriage that was not fulfilling to them. Many women, who are armed with a measure of economic power, had less incentive to stay in a marriage and work out their differences with their husbands. “A study of mature women done...found that the higher a woman’s income in relation to the total income of her family, the more likely she was to seek a divorce” (Anderson, 2005, p. 132). The researcher considers this to be a reality in Ghana especially among women in politics. They so much talk about equality and human rights at the expense of their marriages.

According to Akuamoah (2013), another issue related to the foregone discussion is the educational level or attainment, especially of women in marriage. Akuamoah cited Bumpass (1991) and Castro-Martin et al. (1991) who posited that the higher the educational attainment of a woman the higher the risk of marital dissolution. On the other hand, Akuamoah also cited White (1990) and Orbuch (2002) who argued that women who are educated have some form of skills and are likely to be employed into higher income jobs for the provision of the needs of the family. In their view, “as the level of education increases the risk of divorce decreases” (Akuamoah, 2013, pp. 16, 37).

Odoi (2015, p. 3) quoted L.F. Lowenstein’s article entitled “Causes and associated features of divorce as seen by recent research” in the *Journal of*

Divorce and Remarriage. The following were identified as factors that account for divorce around the world including: women's desire for independence; too early and arranged marriages; economic factors; poor intellectual, educational, and social skills; liberal divorce laws; sexual factors leading to incompatibility; role conflicts; alcoholism and substance abuse or risk-taking behaviour; differences between the partners leading to acrimony; religious factors; attitudes toward divorce; and many more.

Other factors Odoi listed in her personal research findings are: misunderstanding of the concept of marriage, wrong perception about marriage, "Borger" marriages, bad sex, immaturity, infidelity or extra marital affair, maltreatment or physical abuse, ex-boy-girl friend's re-union, distant marriage, in-laws interference, misunderstanding of the wife's submission and husband's love, childlessness in marriage, among others (Odoi, 2015, pp. 44-53).

According to Glenn and Supancic (1984, p. 566) "age, religious faith, and family background also affect the divorce rate." To them, divorce is higher among those who marry young and three times greater among people who never attend religious services. Mattox (1995, p. 51) with reference to another factor posited that "marital failure often breeds marital failure." Based on research, adult children of divorced parents are four times more likely to end up their marriages in divorce than those of intact couples.

THE PROBLEMS OF DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Anderson (2005) and Odoi (2015) share similar views on how some families are experiencing many problems today, but the role of divorce in this

picture has been frequently overlooked because of its destructive effects. It has been subtle, yet insidious. When the divorce rate increased in the 1960s and 1970s, few would have predicted its dire and devastating consequences four or five decades later. Yet, divorce and remarriage have changed both the structure and the impact of the individual, family and society.

Problems of Divorce and Remarriage on the individual and society

Anderson (2005, pp. 133-134) divorce is having a devastating impact on both adults and children. This situation of divorce effectively in the negative dimension cut one generation off from another. Children are reared without the presence of their father or mother. Children are often forced to take sides in the conflict. And, parents and children often carry the scars of the conflict and frequently blame themselves for the divorce.

A female respondent in an interview conducted by Odoi (2015) noted that in Ghana, “society will really compress you more than the issue itself. Divorce becomes freedom for the one who so much want it, but there is no freedom in divorce. You feel labeled and stigmatized.” She went on to say that people will ask about your rings and your husband among other things when they meet you and you always have to be explaining to them. She however, wished it never happened. Another female respondent said: she was judged especially at church. According to her, “it got to a time I was not affected by the divorce but the environment, gosh! It was so piecing.” She again added that “for about 9 months I could only go to church in the evenings and I always had to rent a taxi cab as soon

as church was over and as soon as I got out of the house, I never walked” (Odoi, 2015, p. 57).

According to Anderson (2005), children growing up in broken homes do not do well in school as compared to children from stable families. Again, divorce and remarriage adds another additional twist to modern families. The changing family structures complicate marital relationships. Divorce and remarriage shuffle family members together in foreign and awkward ways. Clear lines of authority and communication get blurred and confused in the newly revised families.

Biblical and Ethical Problems of Divorce and Remarriage

Tak (2006), some group of Christians are of the view that remarriage could be permissible in cases of fornication and desertion on the basis of Matthew 5:31-32, 19:3-9, and I Corinthians 7:10-15. One can say that these are the grounds for legitimate divorce among Christians. Tak (2006, p. 27) was of the view that “adultery or fornication committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, gives just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract.” In case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party (the faithful partner), to act as if the offending party was dead. This leads also to unduly putting asunder those whom God hath joined together in marriage: because of the issue of adultery, willful desertion can no way be remedied by the Church, or civil magistrate and this shall be a sufficient cause of dissolving the bond of marriage.

As discussed earlier, marriage is a covenant companionship which has both legal and relational aspects. According to Tak (2006), the Scriptures speak that remarriage is allowed in the case of death or legitimate divorce. The point of

ethical debate here is that God hates divorce and any divorce is evil before Him, and so is remarriage. Jesus thus enlightens us that they are always illegal except for legal situations as fornication which Jesus teaches and as desertion which Paul stresses what Jesus says. What about remarriage after illegitimate divorce, then? **What** does the Bible say about this? Again, in II Samuel 3:14-16 we see one example of remarriage of David and Michal. Moreover, at times, the Scripture indicates remarriage is encouraged (I Tim. 5:14).

Adams (1980) argues that Paul justified the reason for remarriage through I Cor. 7:8, 9 and 39. So he sees that “the concept of remarriage not only was entertained by the New Testament church, but very favorably entertained.” Tak (2006, p. 29) says “what the Bible prohibited is remarriage after illegal divorce. Christ teaches that it is adultery (Matthew 5:31-32). He sees that the remarriage of the divorced woman is adultery not only on her part but also on the part of the man who is united with her in matrimony. This remarriage is illegitimate considered as adultery because “the first marriage is still in God’s sight regarded as violate” (Adams, 1980, p. 80). In other words, according to Tak (2006), in case of unlawful divorce, the marriage bond cannot be dissolved. In this situation, there would be no room for remarriage. In addition to this, divorce does not dismiss both parties from the obligations regarding marriage.

Furthermore, Matthew 19:9 is proclaimed again about this: if a man makes an agreement with another woman in matrimony after illegal divorce, he commits the sin of adultery before the Lord. And the man is convicted as a sinner who committed adultery, for putting away his wife. The exception clause which makes

divorce legitimate (the narrow path for legitimate divorce) also applies to the case of desertion (I Cor. 7:15). That means, without the case of desertion, it is also illicit for a man to put away his spouse.

Lastly, Paul teaches that unless a marriage is dissolved, it is also seen as adultery before the Lord. It is quite obvious though complicated to note that the Bible never acknowledged remarriage after illegal divorce. Tak cited Jones (1994) and claimed that both instances are considered as sin, which can dissolve the bond of marriage, since they are “a radical breach of marital fidelity, violating the commitment of exclusive conjugal love” (Tak, 2006, p. 30). In a nut shell, the principle of remarriage after illegal divorce is very clear. The Bible and the church today seem to tactfully prohibit any remarriage after unlawful divorce.

CONCLUSION

This chapter looked at the biblical ethical dimensions to the issues of marriage, divorce and remarriage. As we know from the Scripture, the meanings of marriage are based on God’s will. God thought that He would make a helper for man, for the man’s being alone was not good in His eyes (Gen. 2:18). In this respect, we are able to possibly perceive that divorce is not from God’s will. It is caused by the fall of humankind (or hardness of the heart). Other teachings of Genesis and Deuteronomy (covering the Mosaic law on marriage, divorce and remarriage), other prophets of the Old testament, Jesus and Paul regarding marriage and divorce as well as remarriage in the New Testament, have shown how the Scripture consistently upholds marriage as a sacred and permanent covenant, witnessed and protected by God. It has been observed that marriage as a

sacred covenant was effectively used in the Old Testament to portray God's relationship with Israel and in the New Testament to represent Christ's relationship with His church. God must surely have thought of marriage as a sacred and a permanent covenant.

The recovery of the biblical view of marriage as a sacred and permanent covenant, witnessed and guaranteed by God Himself, is indispensable in counteracting with the secular and legal views of marriage today. This trend has influenced many Christians to view marriage as a temporary social contract governed by civil laws, rather than as a permanent covenant, witnessed and guaranteed by God. To properly counteract this trend, it is very important for Christians to recover and accept the biblical view of marriage as a sacred covenant that God established.

This chapter also helped us to discover the influence of biblical ethical principles on marriages in Ghana today and also aided us to know the different types of marriages in Ghana as the study dealt with the traditional (local) concept of marriage among the Ewe even as the study looked at the types of marriages that exist among the Ewe today. Some factors contributing to divorce in Ghana today especially among Christians have been discussed. Notable factors that cause divorce are: poor sex life, misunderstanding of the concept of marriage, and indigenous views and practices that militate against the healthy growth of the family life of couples; for example the communal nature of the African society does not give room for a solid relationship building. Childlessness in marriage in most cases is a panacea to divorce in Africa (Ghana).

In the next chapter, the study will delve into the demographic features of the Ho-Municipality and also present court records on marriage and the divorce rate in the municipality, causes of divorce and the perception of Christians on divorce and remarriage based on court records.



CHAPTER THREE

DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES OF HO MUNICIPAL

INTRODUCTION

Demography takes into cognisance the quantitative and qualitative aspects of human population. The quantitative aspects include some of the following: composition, density, growth, size and structure of the population whereas qualitative aspects will focus on sociological factors such as: quality of education, development, social class (social stratification) and well-being among others (<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/demography.html>).

This chapter, therefore, documents the migration and settlement history of the Ewes in the Ho Municipality and discusses socio-cultural features of the land, structure of religious identity and cultural values, the geographical/political features of the study area, population of the study area, 2010 census data on marriage and divorce, Ho Municipal Assembly/court data on marriage and divorce, and the perception of Christians' on divorce and remarriage based on court records.

PRE-COLONIAL MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT HISTORY

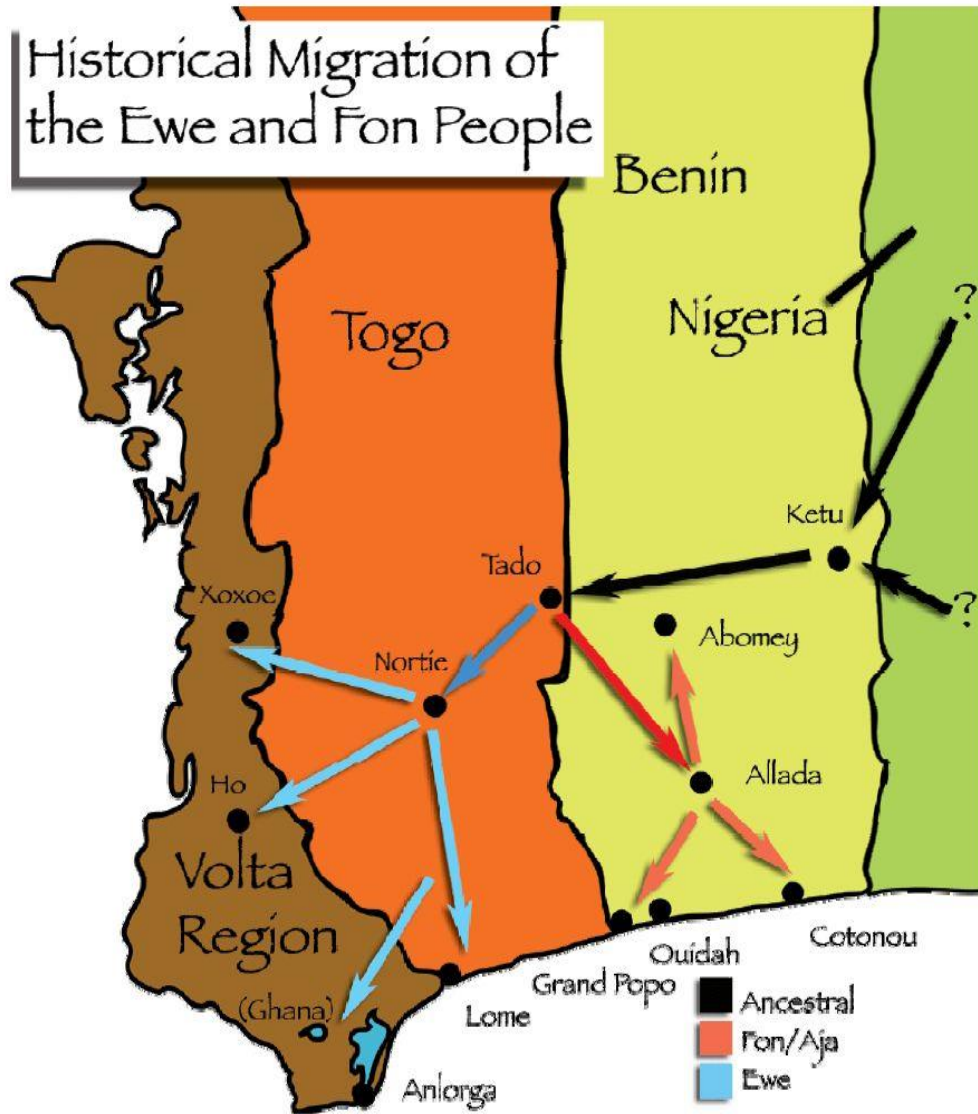
According to Amenumey (1986) as cited by Dogbey (2015, pp. 41-46), the *Notsie* narrative gathered from historical sources and oral accounts indicated that the land of "...Notsie, located in the present day Togo, has been the last major home of the Ewes before they dispersed to their present settlements by mid seventeenth century." Nukunya, (1969) indicated that the ancestors of Ho

Municipality as well as the entire Ewe tribe in Ghana are traced back to their original settlement in the *Oyo* State of Nigeria. They settled particularly at *Ife* in the present day Nigeria from where they migrated to *Ketu*, a walled city in the modern republic of Benin (Dahome) by expanding Yuruba and Fon kingdoms to settle between the *Mono* and *Haho* rivers at Notsie, probably between 1600 and 1700 AD (Dogbey, 2015).

In the course of the migration, they were pushed to *Tado* in modern day Togo and later to Notsie. The Ewes were presented as living together in a centralised state at Notsie before their dispersion. Dogbey, however, cited Darkoh (1970), Gayibor (1984), Laumann (2005) and Speith (1906) to indicate that some factors such as hunger, overpopulation and the alleged tyrannical rule of King Agorkorli I, (one of the kings of Notsie), triggered the migration of the Ewe from Notsie (in the early 17th century) as they moved in three migratory groups (Dogbey, 2015).

Nukunya, (1969) and Dogbey (2015) further indicated that these three groups populated the Northern, Central and Southern areas of their new home in the Volta of Ghana today. Oral tradition says the Central and Northern Dogbo groups were led out of Tsevie by leaders who included Akoto, Kodzo De, Amega Lee, Asor and Bisiaku and they led the various branches to settle at places such as Hohoe, Matse, Peki, Asorgli (e.g. Ho), Awudome (e.g. Tsito), Ve, Gbi, Kpando, Logba, Alavanyo, Kpalime, Agu, Kpedze, Wodze, among other towns. The map of Ewe migration settlements can be found in *Figure 3.1* below.

Figure 3.1: Map of Ewe migration settlements



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Figure 4-1: Historical Migration Routes and Settlements of Ewe and Fon

Source: <https://tracingafricanroots.com/2018/03/04/benin-togo-also-describes-dna-from-ghana-nigeria>.

Dogbey (2015) further cited Gayibor and Aquigah (2005), and Apoh (2008) for saying that by archaeological examination of the walled city of Notsie, the walls were about 6-8m in width and 25m in height and covered a perimeter of about 15km. There was also an evidence of subsistence economic activities such as hunting, farming, iron working and potting which were recovered from the enclosures. Dogbey again cited Amenumey (1989, 2008), Asamoah (1986) and Gavua (2000) for saying that by the time of the European partition in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Ewes had settled in their present day locations between Mono River to the East and Volta River to the West, and from the Atlantic Ocean in the South to about latitude 8° in the North. This is roughly within southeastern parts of Ghana and southern part of Togo and Benin.

According to Dogbey (2015) the ancestors of the Ewe land of present day Ho Municipal in particular were part of the second migratory group that were believed to have moved together. They included: Ziavi, Akoviwofe, Takla, Kpenoe, Hodzo, Klefe, Sokode, Abutia, Ho and Adaklu. According to Amenumey (1986) as quoted by Dogbey (2015, p. 42), “these people settled at the central zone between the northern zone (characterized by valleys and uplands) of the new home and the southern zone in the coastal region of the new homeland.” This significantly explains why this area of the Volta Region is referred to as *Wedome* (Central Ewe-land) and perhaps one of the factors that made it possible for Ho to be chosen above Hohoe and made the regional capital.

SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA

According to Ghana Statistical Service's 2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC, 2010) report, on the issue of traditional administration, chiefs are the main custodians of stool lands, beliefs and customs in the Ho Municipality. They are also the symbol of authority in the Municipality. Even so, the Municipality is made up of two major traditional councils namely: the Asogli Traditional Council and Hokpeta Traditional Council. Both are headed by paramount chiefs, as they are supported by divisional and sub chiefs who play various roles in the traditional or the local society (PHC, 2010).

The culture of the people living within Ho Municipality can be considered as a cultural ecotone between the Ewe and the Akan cultures, but the language spoken is mainly Ewe. According to Dogbey (2015) who cited Reindorf (1966), Debrunner (1965) and Apoh (2008) that there is a cultural ecotone because this area of the Ewe land was part of the Ewe groups that served as a refuge and solace for the Akans in the past, during the 1869 to 1874 war between the Asante and the people of Akwamu. Again, most of the Akan people had to escape across the Volta Lake to settle with different Ewe groups, including Kpando, Ziavi, Ho and Peki at the time of the fray. The above issues explain why some chiefs within the Ho Municipality could have the stool names as follows: Afari or Afram or Adzimah (i.e., Agyemang in Akan) as a linguist is referred to as *Tsiami* in Ewe (i.e., *Okyeame* in Akan). We equally have some families with Akan oriented surnames such as Addo, Anku, Owusu, and Prempeh, among others (Togbe Adza Kodzo, personal communication, March 2, 2019).

Furthermore, the social organisation of the Ewes in Ho Municipality is mainly patrilineal. Polygyny which allows a man to marry more than a wife is an acceptable practice and a well-accepted form of polygamy but not common in this part of the Volta Region as it is among the Anlo people. The post-marital residence among the Ewes in Ho Municipality is patrilocal. The involvement of parents and families in the marital process of their children is deeply rooted in this area. One cannot go through customary rites without the consent of his family and traditional leaders of the community in which he/she lives. Virginitly was demanded of brides in prestigious marriages as child-bearing makes a marriage complete (Ahortor, 2015 & Nukunya, 1969). Traditional or local political leadership is therefore a preserve of the chiefs who hold juridical control over the settlement as well as the office of the priest. The chieftaincy structure consists of the overlord chief under whom other clan chiefs serve (Dogbey, 2015).

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND INDIGENOUS CULTURAL VALUES

There is great tolerance for religious identities in most communities of Ho Municipality. There are three main religious identities in this area as can be found in most parts of Ghana: the African Traditional Religion, Christian Religion and Islamic Religion. According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census of the Ghana Statistical Service's demographic report, the most predominant religion in the Municipality is Christianity which constitutes 91.9 percent of the population followed by Islam (3.2%). African Traditional Religion forms 2.2 percent, other religions and people with no known form of religion constitute the remaining percentage of the population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012).

In a personal conversation with some chiefs in the area such as Togbe Adza Kodzo, Togbe Gbeku, and Tsiami Afram all of Ziavi as well as Togbe Adintsri of Sokode revealed that religion among the Ewe is centered on a supreme God (*Mawu*) and several intermediate divinities. The deities and shrines in the municipality are either family or clan owned. Members of each clan occasionally petition these deities through the pouring of libation for some sort of spiritual intervention; contingent on the problem one is confronted with (personal communication, March 2, 2019). It is worth noting that, the situation where people convert to Christianity but still partake of family and clan rituals through the libation especially during traditional festivals and marriage ceremonies is prevalent and a common practice in these communities (Dogbey, 2015).

The situation where some Christians occasionally partake in practices of African Indigenous Religion (syncretism) is common while those who seem to be highly committed to doctrine often shy away with the perception that such practices are probably 'unrighteous' before their 'righteous' God. This is a common situation in almost all churches in the municipality, ranging from Pentecostal, Charismatic to Orthodox churches, said by Rose Bansah, a Deaconess (Presbyter) from Evangelical Presbyterian background (personal communication, November 10, 2019).

Again, in the researcher's interactions with the head pastor of the Assemblies of God Church in Sokode, Rev. E. K. Kpogo, it was revealed that most Christians give mental assent to biblical principles of marriage but do not forget to include alcoholic drinks in their marital lists for customary marriages

and give no or little resistance to libation during their customary marital ceremonies if any family is bent on doing so. To him, we still have traces of polygamy which was a custom in the Old Testament times as it is evident in the lives of Lamech (Gen 4:19), Abraham, Esau (Gen 26:34), David and Solomon, even though monogamy was the creational order. The historical accounts about polygamy must be seen as descriptive material (permissive will of God) but the creational order of monogamy should be seen as prescriptive (the perfect will of God). Furthermore, this creational order as a principle also forms the foundation of marital relations in the New Testament (1 Chr 7:2; Eph 5:28-33; Col 3:19 & Tit 2:4). Again, polygamy is introduced in a descriptive way as a result of the fall of humankind while monogamy is introduced as prescriptive, in other words, as the perfect will of God. This creational order also excludes any notion of same-sex marriages (Rev. Kpogo, personal communication, April 14, 2019).

According to Dogbey (2015) and corroborated in my personal communication with a chief of Ziavi Lume, Togbe Adza Kodzo III, the Ho Municipality is believed to be like any other society in Ghana, as it has numerous taboos, rituals, beliefs, standards, values, customs and traditions that the people conform and adhere to. Some of such practices have been marginalised in present times, due to the impact of modernisation and the advent of Christianity. Some of these taboos that were strongly forbidden include:

1. Homosexuality and same sex marriages;
2. No sexual intercourse in the forest, in the open or on the bare floor even in the secrecy of enclosed places;

3. No sexual intercourse with a woman in her menses; and
4. One is also not allowed to marry a very close relative to avoid incest.

In buttressing this point, reference could be made to Nukunya (1969, p. 67) and Ahoror (2015) who listed eight (8) sexual relationships considered evil among the Ewe. The categories for which sex and marriage are forbidden are as follow:

1. Father and daughter; including adopted daughters and daughters of one's wife fathered by other men.
2. Mother and son; including adopted sons and sons of one's husband born to him by other women.
3. Children of the same parents, including adopted siblings, step brothers and sisters.
4. Grandparents and grandchildren.
5. Uncle/aunt and niece/nephew.
6. Marriage among in-laws.
7. Even in polygamous marriage, marriage to two sisters is prohibited except twin sisters.
8. One cannot marry the brother's wife when the brother is alive, even when they are separated or divorced. It can only happen after the death of an elder brother.

In Dogbey's (2015) view, the adherents of the African indigenous culture in Ho Municipality are determined to ensure continuity in the practice of core African values, particularly African Indigenous Religion in spite of the impact of

modernisation and globalisation (2015). The dedicated adherents continue to perform and practice core values such as libation, observing taboos, and engaging in animal sacrifices to maintain affinity with their deities and ancestors. Dogbey further indicated that it has become almost a difficult responsibility for most families to sustain affiliation with their family traditions and customs due to Christianity and perhaps in the face of criticisms mainly from Christian religious leaders. Some adherents of African Indigenous Religion are still holding fast to their faith because it was a legacy passed on to them by their ancestors. For fear of being haunted, tormented or even be killed by such family members (ancestors), the adherents would not and do not intend to abandon the family/clan deities by which they had been possessed. In effect, the legitimisation of their faith and religious identities are derived from their family background and histories. Taking a very critical look at this for instance, is the possession of some family members to serve the clan or family deities.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND POLITICAL FEATURES OF THE STUDY AREA

Ghana Statistical Service (GSS, 2012) in their demographic report based on 2010 census, indicates that Ho Municipality is located between latitudes $6^{\circ} 20''\text{N}$ and $6^{\circ} 55''\text{N}$ and longitudes $0^{\circ} 12'\text{E}$ and $0^{\circ} 53'\text{E}$. It used to share boundaries with Hohoe, South Dayi, Adaklu Anyigbe and North Tongu Districts, but from the year 2012 it shares boundaries with Adaklu and Agotime-Ziope Districts to the South, Ho West District to the North and West and the Republic of Togo to the East. The Ho Municipal has a total land area of 2,361 square kilometers thus representing 11.5 percent of the region's total land area (Ghana Statistical

Service, 2012). *Figure 3.2* below, is the map of the Volta Region showing Ho Municipal before the year 2012.

Figure 3.2: Map of the Volta Region showing Ho Municipal before 2012



Source: <https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Ho-Municipality-and-other-Districts-in-the-Volta-Region>.

Governance in Ho Municipality

Based on 2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC, 2010) as indicated by Ghana Statistical Service, the Municipality was originally defined by the Ho Municipal Assembly (establishment or legislative instrument, 1989, L.I. 1461). It has one (1) Urban Council, eleven (11) electoral areas and thirty six (36) Unit Committee areas. The Ho Municipal Assembly is headed by the Municipal Chief Executive as the direct representative of the President of the Republic. It is worth noting that the legislative and deliberative organ of the Assembly is made up of

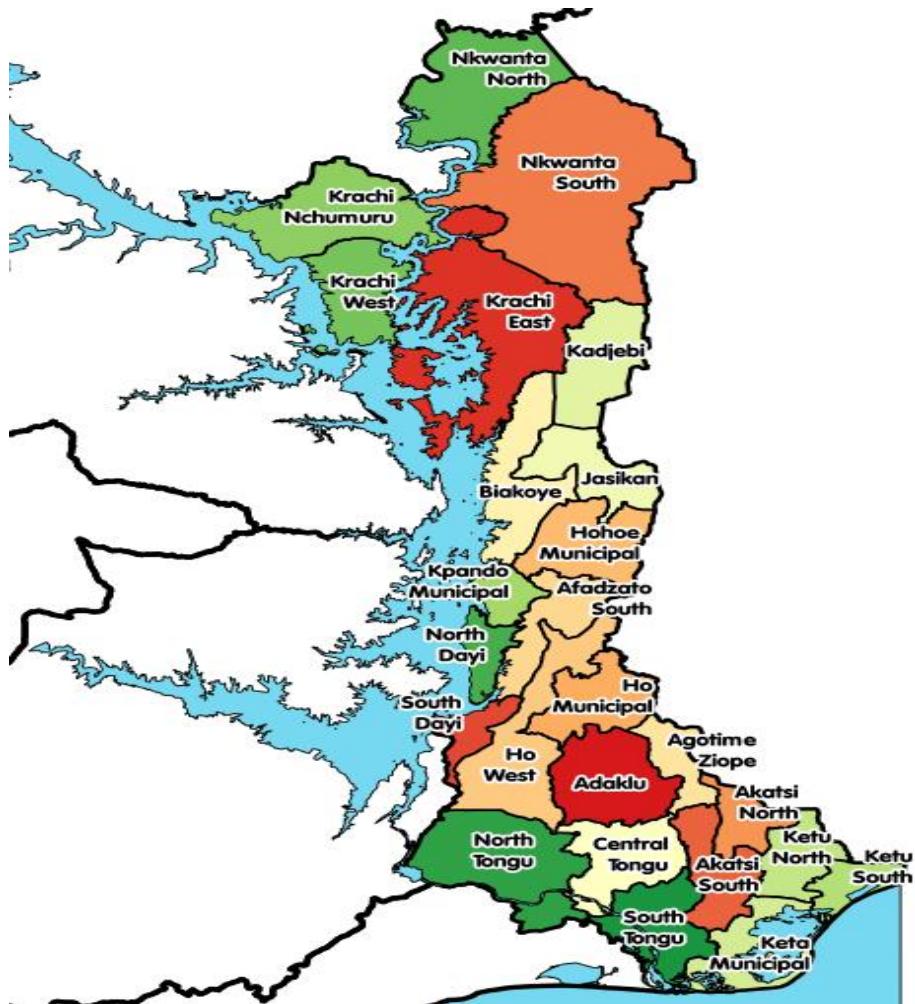
fifty-four (54) elected members and 21 Government appointees. The Presiding Member presides over the General Assembly meetings (PHC, 2010).

Even so, the Ho Municipal is currently one of the five (5) Municipalities in the Volta Region which was established by a Legislative Instrument (L.I) 2074 of 2012. It should be noted that originally, Agotime-Ziope and Ho West were all part of the then Ho District until 2012 when these Districts were carved from it. However, the Municipality still has Ho as its capital town which also serves as the regional capital town and the economic hub of the entire Volta Region (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014; PHC, 2010). Below is the list of the twenty-five (25) Municipals/Districts and their Capitals of the Volta Region of Ghana:

- **Municipals:** Ho Municipal (Capital: Ho), Hohoe Municipal (Capital: Hohoe), Keta Municipal (Capital: Keta), Ketu-South Municipal (Capital: Denu), and Kpando Municipal (Capital: Kpando).
- **Districts:** Adaklu (Capital: Adaklu Waya), Afadzato-South (Capital: Ve Golokuati), Agotime Ziope (Capital: Kpetoe), Akatsi-North (Capital: Ave Dakpa), Akatsi-South (Capital: Akatsi), Central-Tongu (Capital: Adidome), Ho-West (Capital: Dzolokpuita), Ketu-North (Capital: Dzodze), North-Dayi (Capital: Anfoega), North-Tongu (Capital: Battor-Dugame), South-Dayi (Capital: Kpeve), and South-Tongu (Capital: Sogakope); others are Biakoye (Capital: Nkonya Ahenkro), Jasikan (Capital: Jasikan), Kadjebi (Capital: Kadjebi), Krachi-East (Capital: Dambai), Krachi Nchumuru (Capital: Chindiri), Krachi-West (Capital:

Kete-Krachi); Nkwanta-North (Capital: Kpassa), and Nkwanta-South (Capital: Nkwanta). It must be noted that the last eight (8) districts starting from Biakoye to Nkwanta-South are now in Oti Region of Ghana (which was formerly part of Volta-Region). See *Figure 3.3* below.

Figure 3.3: Map of the Volta Region showing Ho Municipal: 2012-2018

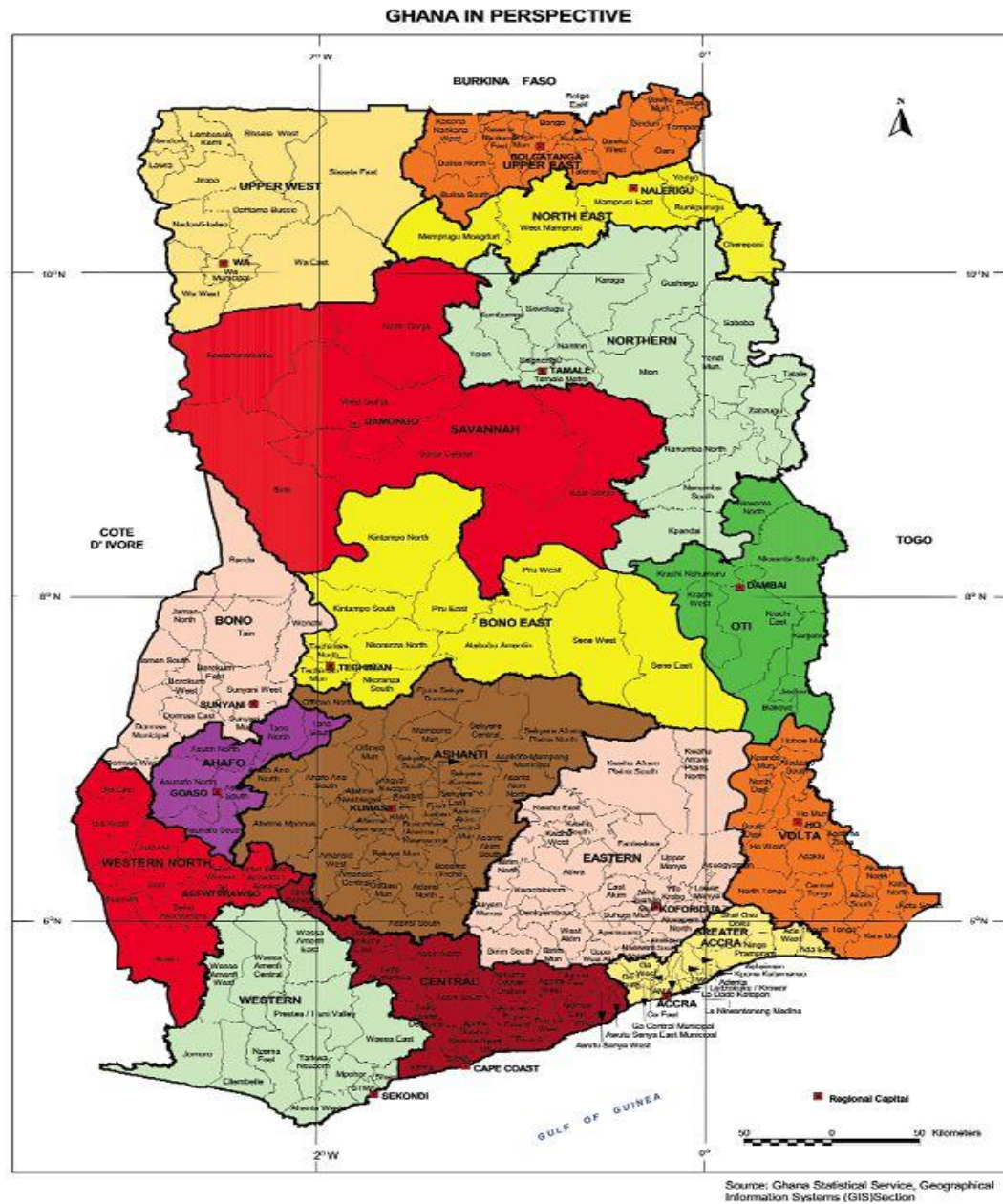


Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=Map+of+present+Ho+Municipality>.

In Ghana today, Ho municipality is one of the seventeen (17) districts of the Volta Region due to a referendum held on 27th December, 2018 after which six new regions were approved as the country was further divided into sixteen

new regions and 216 local districts for administrative purposes. Below is *Figure 3.4* with the most current map of Ghana showing regional capitals and districts.

Figure 3.4: The new map of Ghana showing regional capitals and districts



Source: <http://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/new-ghana-map-with-16-regional-capitals.html>.

Political and Administrative Structure

According to 2010 census report, the governance structure of the Municipality is made up of 43 Assembly Members. These include twenty-nine (29) elected members and fourteen (14) government appointees. There is also a Member of Parliament and the Municipal Chief Executive otherwise known as MCE. The Municipal Chief Executive (MCE) is the head of the Municipality and the highest political authority. The General Assembly which is the deliberative organ of the Assembly is chaired by a Presiding Member. Administratively, the Municipality has five Zonal Councils which operate below the Assembly structure. These include the following: Ho Zonal Council - Ho; Sokode Zonal Council - Sokode; Dutasor Zonal Council - Matse; Hokpeta Zonal Council - Kpenoe and; Norvisi Zonal Council - Nyive (GSS, 2012).

Social and Cultural Structure of the Municipality

Administration traditionally, is done by chiefs who are the main custodians of stool lands, beliefs and customs in the Municipality. They also serve as the symbol of authority in the Municipality. The Municipality is made up of two major traditional councils. These are: the Asogli Traditional Council and Hokpeta Traditional Council. Both are headed by paramount chiefs, and they are supported by divisional and sub chiefs who play various roles in the traditional society. One must also note that the two traditional councils represent traditional leadership in the municipality and not political or administrative governance structure (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014; PHC, 2010).

The Capital Town of Ho Municipality

According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC, 2010), Ho is the capital city of the Ho Municipal District and the Volta Region of Ghana. The city lies between Mount Adaklu and Mount Galenukui or Togo Atakora Range. Ho lies between latitude 6 degrees 20 1N and 6 degrees 55 1N and longitudes 0 degrees 12 1E and 0 degrees 53 1E and covers an area of 11.65 square kilometers. It is about 159 kilometres drive from the national capital Accra. It is also the home to the Volta Regional Museum, a cathedral, a prison, and two courts of law namely: Ho Regional High Court and District Magistrate Court. It was also formerly the administrative capital of British Togoland now part of the Volta Region. It is believed that Ho was a part of the German colony of Togoland until World War I, when it was occupied by the British (Dogbey, 2015). History has it that Ho later became the capital of the League of Nations mandate of British Togoland and then French Togoland until that entity's incorporation into the British Gold Coast colony, which subsequently became Ghana (GSS, 2014; PHC, 2010).

According to UN Habitat report (2009), Ho town was initially inhabited by a group of people known as Hegbe (now Heve), followed by the people of Banakoe (which now corrupted to Bankoe). These two groups lived together with individual chiefdoms. The first known chief of the Bankoe people was Afede Asor I, known in his private life as Akorli. Bankoe is today the clan that produces the paramount chiefs. Even so, the chief of Heve was Anikpi I, who was known in his private life as Adzah Doe. The Aho and Dome joined the settlement at a

later stage but came to play leading roles in its development. It is believed that the people of Dome became the ruling class until the emergence of modern-day chieftaincy which they ceded to the Bankoe people. The people of Hliha are a sub-group of Bankoe. Some major areas within Ho Township today are as follows: Ho-Bankoe and Ho-Dome, Ho-Heve, Ho-Hliha, Ho-Ahoe, Fiave, Anlokordzi, Anagokordzi, Little Bethlehem, Voradep village, Barracks new town, Somey down, just to mention a few. Furthermore, the following communities are some surrounding towns and villages as some of them share boundaries with Ho in the Ho Municipality: Klefe, Ziavi, Shia, Tokokoe, Taviefe, Tanyigbe, Akrofu, Hoviepe, Akoepe, Kpenoe, and Sokode (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014; PHC, 2010).

According to UN Habitat report (2009) an online article on “Ghana: Ho City Profile,” the climatic nature of Ho as a town could be apportioned to all other communities within the Ho Municipality. Generally, mean monthly temperatures range between 22⁰ C and 32⁰ C while annual mean temperature range from 16.5⁰ C to 37.8⁰ C. The rainfall pattern is characterised by two rainy seasons referred to as the major (*adame*) and the minor (*keleme or mansame*) seasons. The major season being March to June or July while the minor season starts from August to November. The remaining three (3) months of the year are referred to as dry (*kudidime*) season. The annual rainfall figures are between 20.1mm and 192mm. The highest rainfall occurs in June and has mean value of 192mm while the lowest rainfall is in December recording a value of 0.1mm (UN Habitat, 2009; GSS, 2014).

POPULATION OF THE STUDY AREA

The population of Ho Municipality according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC, 2010) is 177,281 representing 8.4 percent of the region's total population. Females constitute 52.7 percent and males represent 47.3 percent. About 62 percent of the population resides in urban localities. The population of the Ho Municipality is projected by Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) to be at 213,960 by the end of 2018. By this, Ho Municipal is the most populous among the municipal districts in the Volta Region (GSS, 2014).

Table 3.1: Population of the five (5) Municipalities in the Volta Region today

NAME	STATUS	POPULATION Census Year: 2000	POPULATION Census Year: 2010	POPULATION Projection Year: 2018
Volta	Region	1,635,421	2,118,252	2,549,256
Ho Municipal	Municipal District	–	177,281	213,960
Hohoe Municipal	Municipal District	–	167,016	201,190
Keta Municipal	Municipal District	133,661	147,618	178,252
Ketu South	Municipal District	–	160,756	193,549
Kpando Municipal (North Dayi)	Municipal District	–	53,736	63,661
Ghana	Republic	18,912,079	24,658,823	29,614,337

Source: Adapted and modified from the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS, 2014)

<http://www.citypopulation.info/php/Ghana-admin.php?adm1id=04>.

The above table (Table 3:1) indicates that Ho Municipality recorded the highest population among the five (5) municipalities of the Volta Region with a population of 177,281 based on the 2010 census from Ghana Statistical Service and a projected population of 213,960 by the year 2018. Hohoe Municipality followed closely with a population of 167,016 in the year 2010 and a projection figure of 201,190 by the year 2018. Again, the municipality with the least population is Kpando Municipal with a population of 53,736 in 2010 and a projected population of 63,661 by the year 2018. Even so, according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census of the Ghana Statistical Service, the most predominant religion in the Municipality is Christianity which constituted 91.9 percent of the population. This therefore means that the municipality had a population of about 162,921 Christians out of the total figure of 177,281.

Marital Status and Nationality

The 2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC, 2010) of Ghana classified marital status as never married, living together/consensual union, married, separated, divorced and widowed. The operational definition of marriage includes any persons in any of the following types of marriages: civil, traditional and common law/consensual. About one-third (35.81%) of the population aged 12 years and older are married, 42.8 percent have never married. By age 45-49 years, about seventy percent of females (69.6%) are married compared to a little below two-third of males (60.1%). At age 65 and above, widowed females account for as high as 57.8 percent while widowed males account for only 13.9 percent.

In terms of nationality, the greater proportion of the population are Ghanaians by birth in the Municipality (86.8 percent) followed by 8.8 percent dwellers with dual nationality. Those who have naturalised constitute 2.8 percent and the non-Ghanaian population in the Municipality is negligible.

Marital Status by Sex and Age group

“The marriage institution in Ghana has experienced social changes due to education, urbanization, modernization, preferential marriage among others. These factors have delayed the marriage age in many societies in Ghana” (Nukunya, 2003 as cited in Ghana Statistical Service’s report PHC, 2014, p. 26). The report of the 2010 census also revealed that out of 133,303 of persons 12 years and older, 42.8 percent are never married, 8.6 percent are in informal/consensual union/living together while 35.8 percent are married. It further showed that 3.5 percent of the population is separated, and that 3.4 percent are divorced and 5.9 percent are widowed. With regards to the male population 12 years and older, 49.8 percent of 61,726 are never married, while 8.1 percent are in informal/consensual union/ living together and 35.4 percent are married. The number of males who are separated, divorced or widowed represent 2.7 percent, 2.3 percent and 1.7 percent respectively. Furthermore, out of the female population of 71,577, 36.7 percent are never married while 9.1 percent are in informal/consensual union/living together, 36.1 percent are married, 4.1 percent are separated, 4.4 percent are divorced and 9.6 percent are widowed (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

Educational Level of the Population

Education is strongly believed to be the key to success and a nation's ability to provide formal education is important to development. This is because education inevitably leads to improvement in the economic, health, and several aspects of life including behaviour change. Behavioural change can affect every aspect of life including ones perception about divorce and remarriage. Consequently, every country in Sub-Saharan Africa (including Ghana) has identified improved quality education as a key national priority. According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC, 2010) on the Ho Municipality, it is observed that out of 133,303 persons 12 years and older, 9.9 percent have no education, 56.7 percent have basic education and 20.0 percent have second cycle education while 10.3 percent have post middle/secondary certificate/diploma and 3.2 percent have tertiary education.

Furthermore, the data showed that men with tertiary education form only a small proportion (8.7%) of all married men. The corresponding figure for females is 2.5 percent. Even so, among the married, 11.9 percent have no education while about 3.1 percent of the never married have never been to school. It is worth noting that in terms of employment and economic activities, about 8 out of 10 of the married population (79.3%) are employed, 2.9 percent are unemployed and 17.8 percent are economically not active. A greater proportion of those who have never married (65.7%) are economically not active with 29.4 percent unemployed.

Literacy Level of the Population

According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC, 2010), literacy can be defined as the ability to read and write a simple statement with understanding. Information was however collected from persons aged 11 years and older on literacy in three languages: Ghanaian languages, English and French.

The results presented clearly showed that majority of persons in the Municipality representing (90.3%) are literate while less than 10 percent are not literate. The proportion of males that are literate (94.7%) is higher than females (86.5%). Conversely, the proportion of the females population who are not literate (15.7%) is higher than that of males (9.7%). The national priority at the educational sector is with the objective of achieving parity and equity in terms of school enrolment and literacy between male and female (PHC, 2010).

The data further indicated that 123,385 males and females 11 years and older are literate and 13,297 are not. It further indicates that 9.5 percent of both sexes can read and understand English only, 14.3 percent are literate in Ghanaian language only while 73.8 are literate in both Ghanaian language and English. Further, only a marginal proportion of both sexes of the population are literate in English and French (0.5%) and English, French and Ghanaian languages (2.0%) (PHC, 2010).

MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY/COURT RECORDS ON MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

In Ghana today, according to an online news article filed by Adjassah (2015) on “Divorce Rates High in Churches” based on national data on marriage and divorce from Ghana Statistical Service indicated that in the past decade, the issue of divorce has been on the ascendency and has increasingly affected a number of lives (individuals and society at large) in many parts of the country. The article further mentions a report by Ghana Statistical Service indicating that in 2014 alone, as many as six hundred thousand (600,000) marriages collapsed in Ghana.

It is worth noting that statistics or records from Ho Municipal Assembly’s Marriage and Divorce Department and law court revealed that divorce rate is very low. Below are data made available from the Ho Municipal Assembly as well as the District (Municipal) Magistrate Court in Ho which seem to be a little deviation from the national records on marriage and divorce.

Municipal Assembly records on marriage and divorce

According to Mrs. Beatrice Boateng, Officer at the Marriage Desk, the Ho Municipal Assembly (HMA) did not record any divorce case (i.e. zero case of divorce) for the year 2018. She further said concerning 2017 that “the Assembly recorded just one (1) case of divorce.” Mrs. Boateng was quick to add that the Assembly registered 32 customary marriages in 2018 as against 48 marriages in 2017. In her candid opinion, the situation could be that people were enjoying their marriages due to various reasons. She gave a vivid but mind blowing explanation

on how some couples were deterred from seeking divorce because of the relatively high administrative cost involved in the processes. She made it known that a good number of people only enquired about the processes, but never came back after they were told to pay Two Thousand Ghana Cedis (GH¢ 2,000) for divorce. This could be one among some other reasons why some people (married couples) seem to be enjoying their marriages as she said earlier (Ghana News Agency [GNA], January 9, 2019).

Even so, in a personal communication with Mrs. Boateng, one of the main reasons she gave was that most customary marriages were not registered at the Assembly, hence could be annulled secretly. In her view as a word of advice, couples especially women should ensure that their marriages, especially customary ones are registered with the local Assemblies. Mrs. Boateng again said that though customary marriage allows for men to be polygamous; when the marriage is duly registered, it protects the two parties during divorce. She further explained that it is unfortunate “most women only found out their marriages of many years were not registered when the marriage came under ‘threat’ with little or no opportunity for amends” (GNA, January 9, 2019). One can infer from the above statement that ignorance and the issue of payment of compensation are part of the factors contributing to the low rate of divorce cases in Ho Municipality.

Court records on marriage and divorce in Ho Municipality

According to a personal communication with Mr. David Deku in (May, 2019), former Registrar at Ho District Magistrate Court, it was disclosed that a total of 129 marriages were registered under ordinance while 25 marriages were

annulled in 2018. The Registrar further indicated that these were cases that were brought to the law court. Even so, those who divorced without their knowledge or those who did not bring their divorce cases to the law court officially were not counted. The Registrar was of the view that majority of the dissolutions were Christian marriages (personal communication, May 16, 2019). Looking at the figure from the Ho Magistrate Court indicates a nineteen percentage (19.3%) rate of divorce cases in 2018. This however does not suggest that 19.3% of marriages registered in 2018 only, got annulled. Again, relating the above data with the 2010 census, one can conclude that divorce rate is still relatively low in Ho Municipality if compared with other places in Ghana.

In a personal interaction with Mr. Gabriel Monyo, the current Registrar at the Ho District Magistrate Court in (2019), he indicated that the Magistrate Court has the sole duty to work on the registration of marriages and cases of dissolution of marriages in the Municipality. For this, no separate data was gathered from the Regional High Court in Ho. He, however, observed that families with larger estate and people of the higher class in society always made the attempt to send their marriages to the high court for dissolution (personal communication, May 22, 2019).

All the court registrars and lawyer the researcher had personal conversations with have identified various factors that are associated with divorce. In their views, understanding these factors may help one to take certain precautions against divorce. Some of the contributing factors of divorce are as follows: wrong guidance and counseling by Pastors, misunderstanding of the

general concept of marriage, misunderstanding of the wife's submission and husband's love, people's ignorance of what the Bible says about marriage, high expectations, the issue of sex in marriage, immaturity, poor communication, infidelity or extra marital affair, maltreatment or physical abuse, monetary or poverty issues, lies/falsehood, ex-boy-girl friend's re-union, distant marriage, in-laws interference, improper marriage, and extended family interference among others.



Some legal grounds for divorce in Ghana today

According to Adam (2015) and corroborated in a personal communication with Lawyer Gordon Akpadie (April 23, 2019) it was revealed that in accordance with the Matrimonial Causes Act, 1971 (Act 367) which is the current law on divorce in Ghana, a petition for divorce may be presented to the court by either party to a marriage. Again, Danquah (2018) in an online article “Grounds for Divorce in Ghana: The Basics” supported the above point and indicated that the petitioner of the divorce (i.e. the person who starts the proceedings) must be able to provide evidence to the effect that the marriage has broken down beyond reconciliation. This fact becomes the sole ground for divorce (Danquah, 2018). However, this sole ground must be evidenced by proof of one of the following:

Adultery: Section 2 (1) (a) of Act 367

Adultery could be explained as sexual intercourse between two persons of whom one or both are married but who are not married to each other. It must be noted that the petitioner cannot rely on his/her own adultery. For Adultery to be proven there must be at least partial penetration. However, under Act 367,

adultery is defined as the voluntary sexual intercourse of a married person with a person of the opposite sex other than his or her spouse. Furthermore, a petitioner must provide a clear evidence to satisfy the court that he/she finds it intolerable to live with the respondent. Adam (2015, pp. 25-26) said: “This is incredibly important since the legal punishment for adultery was the death penalty (Deut 22:22). The certificate for divorce therefore acted as a humanitarian form of protection for a divorced woman...”

Unreasonable Behaviour: Section 2 (1) (b) of Act 367

In terms of unreasonable behaviour, Section 4 of the Act 367 provides that for the purposes of section 2 (1) (b), in determining whether a petitioner cannot reasonably be expected to live with the respondent, the court shall disregard any period or periods not exceeding six months in the aggregate during which the parties to the marriage lived with each other as husband and wife. Danquah (2018) in making reference to “Case law” said that “unreasonable behavior” can take the form of either an act or omission and can include serious issues of physical/emotional violence or more mild incidents. The conduct one complained about must be serious and higher than the ordinary wear and tear of marriage life.

Desertion: Section 2 (1) (c) of Act 367

Desertion is considered and explained as the separation of one spouse from the other with the intention on the part of the deserting spouse to bring cohabitation permanently to an end without the consent (approval) of the other spouse or without any good reason. However, the physical act of departure or absence by one spouse does not necessarily make that spouse the deserting party.

The petitioner must satisfy the court that the respondent has deserted the marriage and there is no intention to return. Again, the desertion must exist for a period of at least two years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition in order to qualify as a ground for divorce.

Two Years Separation with consent: Section 2 (1) (d) of Act 367

According to Akpadie (2019) and Danquah (2018), two years of separation with consent occurs when the parties to the marriage have not lived as husband and wife for a continuous period of at least two years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition and the respondent consents to the grant of a decree of divorce, provided that the consent shall not be unreasonably withheld. Consent is necessary to rely upon this fact. And the court must satisfy itself that consent to divorce has been given by the respondent only after the respondent has understood the consequences of his or her consent.

Not living as man and wife for five years: Section 2 (1) (e) of Act 367

In lawyer Akpadie's view, consent is not needed to rely on this fact if only the parties to the marriage have not lived together as husband and wife for a continuous period of five years. Section 7 of Act 367 provides that, for the purposes of section 2 (1) (d) and (i) in determining whether the period for which the parties to a marriage have not lived as man and wife has been continuous, the court shall disregard any period or periods not exceeding six months in the aggregate during which the parties resumed living as man and wife. The petitioner must demonstrate aside enlisting any of the above mentioned grounds for the dissolution of the marriage that the parties to the marriage after diligent effort

have been unable to reconcile their differences. The court shall not grant a petition for divorce unless it is satisfied, on all the evidence that the marriage has broken down beyond reconciliation (Adam, 2015; Danquah, 2018).

Procedures for divorce

According to Akpadie (2019) and Danquah (2018) who made reference to Section 1(i) of Act 367 which states the ground for the commencement of divorce proceedings, a petition for divorce may be presented to the court by either party to the marriage. However, for avoidance of doubt, court means the High Court or the Circuit Court (section 43 of the Act 367 subject to the Chief Justice's power to transfer an action under section 40 of the Act 367). The divorce petition is the document which starts divorce proceedings. This document informs both the respondent and the court the legal basis on which the petitioner is pursuing a divorce. The petitioner files a petition at either the High Court or Circuit Court and then the Registrar will cause the petition filed to be served on the respondent through the court bailiff. To issue a petition, it must be sent to the court in triplicate. There is a court fee for issuing a divorce petition. It is important to note that divorce petition cannot be issued within the first year of marriage. However, the petitioner can rely on events which occurred within the first year of marriage.

It is worth noting that there are restrictions on petitioning any court of law for the dissolution of any marriage the legal way. A petition for the dissolution of marriage cannot be presented to the court by the petitioner within two years from the date of the marriage. This clearly implies that a party to a marriage which is less than two years cannot commence divorce proceedings notwithstanding the

existence of any of the facts necessitating divorce under the Act 367. However, the court may on application allow the presentation of a petition for divorce within two years from the date of the marriage on the ground of substantial hardship suffered by the petitioner or depravity on the part of the respondent.

The above discussions presented some legal grounds for divorce in Ghana and the laid down procedures to follow in getting it done. These are indicative of the fact that it is not an easy thing for one to even begin the process of divorce, talk less of what happens during the proceedings as well as the compensation packages of divorce and the aftermath challenges it leads to. At this stage, one can say it is crystal clear that anybody who petitions a court of law and goes through divorce to its logical conclusion, meant it and ready to face any consequences attached to it or has a strong perception (conviction) about divorce and probably remarriage if he or she dares to enter into a new one. According to Lawyer Akpadie, it must be noted that the ordinance marriage law of Ghana does not permit polygamy, it is monogamous. A man can therefore not marry a second wife or remarry legally if his first marriage is not legally dissolved.

VIEWS OF CHRISTIANS ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE BASED ON COURT RECORDS

The word “perception” has been defined by Cambridge English dictionary as a thought, belief, or opinion, often held by many people and based on appearances. In other words, ones perception of something is the way he/she thinks about it or the impression or the level of understanding he/she has of it (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/perception>).

With the above explanations in focus, it would be expedient to explain briefly who a Christian is. Since the Bible is the authority for the Christian faith, let us find out what it says about the word “Christian.” The word appeared three (3) times only in the New Testament and at each instance it referred to the first “Christians” of the early church. The very first mention of it could be found in Acts 11:26: “...So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.” This was followed by: Acts 26:28 “Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?’” Lastly, is 1 Peter 4:16 “However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.” They were called “Christians” because their behaviour, activity, and speech were like that of Christ Jesus. The word Christian therefore means, “a follower of Christ” or “one belonging to the party of Christ.” According to Acts 4:13, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (KJV). Discussed below are the perceptions of the Christians in Ho Municipality based on court records available on divorce and remarriage.

Based on court records and personal communication with court registrars, it was made known that generally the perception of Christians in Ho Municipality stems from the culture of the people as they always try to blend it with the position of the Bible on divorce and remarriage. According to the dictates of Scripture, they are of the opinion that marriage is for life. Clearly, God’s standard

is chastity before marriage and fidelity afterwards, and Scripture teaches that divorce is always an abnormality arising out of human sinfulness (Mr. David Deku, personal communication, May, 2019). However, to say that God intended the marriage covenant never and never to be broken does not mean that the marriage union is therefore unbreakable in all situations. For instance, marriage can be broken by the death of either partner. Moreover, in Old Testament times, divorce was tolerated although not divinely approved. To them, Jesus also gave another condition upon which divorce is permissible which is marital unfaithfulness (adultery).

On divorce again, they commonly hold the view that divorce affects the upbringing of their children. They consider their children as the best gift of life as the scripture says that children are blessings from the Lord. To them, the custody of the children as in "...train a child the way he should go..." becomes a major issue; discipline of the children which must be done by both parents will be affected and this will have psychological effects on the children and that divorce is not a solution to marital problems among others.

In terms of remarriage, they hold the view that if the reason for your divorce is not genuine or morally acceptable, you may not be favoured to get a better partner from God as you may even end up being branded by society as an evil person, especially on the part of women. They again hold the view that the Church must be careful not to sanction unbiblical marriages and remarriages such as a Christian marrying a non-Christian or a church leader/member engaging in cohabitation. However, if divorce happens on biblically permitted grounds,

remarriage should be allowed if former couples fail to reconcile as in an unbelieving husband rejecting a believing wife in the light of 1 Corinthians 7. Before anyone remarries, even under the biblically approved conditions as stated earlier, that person should demonstrate sufficient penitence for sin and failure and must as well endeavour to maintain the dignity of Christian marriage in his/her next attempt.

It was also noticed that few of the Christians were so naïve or novice and have little or no understanding of the Christian and biblical concepts of marriage, divorce and remarriage. They therefore see wedding and court registration of marriage as modern age events that everybody must do and if it is not working to your expectations you quit. This view could be supported with a statement made by Joy Degbadzor, the former Volta Regional Manager of the defunct Gold Coast Securities in Ho. He said that too much expenditure on marriage with the desire to impress society especially by Christian sisters is a precursor for many divorce cases today. He further explained that many youths today invest too much in their wedding ceremonies which are for a day and incur unnecessary debts to the detriment of their marriages which are rather for life. The earlier the church does something about it the better (personal communication, July 18, 2019).

To the above issues raised by Joy Degbadzor, investing “too much” in one’s marriage can be relative depending on the financial capacity of those involved. However, individuals, especially Christian sisters going into marriage should be made to know that a man with an empty pocket is an angry man. Having the perception of making the marriage work should precede the desire to

impress their peers on a wedding day only. Again, the church and church leadership could be of help by taking care of internal decorations and making policies that regulate flamboyant and ostentatious weddings as much as possible. Finally, mass weddings could be encouraged in churches to drastically reduce the “too much” cost of weddings.

CONCLUSION

The researcher in this chapter sought to find out the demographic features of Ho Municipality ranging from the migration and settlement history of the people of the Ho Municipality and discussed the socio-cultural features of the land, structure of religious identity and cultural values, the geographical/political features of the study area, population of the study area, 2010 census data on marriage and divorce, Ho Municipal Assembly and court data on marriage and divorce, and the perception of Christians’ on divorce and remarriage based on court records. Data found here were extracted from relevant books, online articles and personal communications with: a lawyer, two court registrars, four traditional chiefs, a Pastor, a Deaconess and a financial expert.

Finally, this chapter which presented vivid demographic features of the Ho-Municipality, marriage and divorce rates from court data as well the perceptions of the people based on court records seek to provide a clear cut link to the next chapter of this research which will bring out research findings and the analysis of results out of the raw data collected from the field as to what perceptions are among Christians in the Ho Municipality on divorce and remarriage.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on data collected from the field which have been analysed and discussed. They are views or perceptions of the married, divorcees and some marriage Counsellors/Pastors including their church members on divorce and remarriage as interviewees/participants were selected by means of purposive sampling from some churches in the Ho Municipality (refer to *Table 1.1* on page 34 for the biographical data on respondents and appendices “B” and “C” for interview guides). Specific issues that were of interest to the researcher include: whether the married, divorcees and Counselors/Pastors were aware of biblical standards in relation to the teachings and policies on divorce and remarriage in their respective churches and how they interpreted them, as well as the effects and reasons why divorce still remains a challenge to individuals and the modern day church even though Christians are generally of the view that God frowns on it or hates it.

The total number of interviewees for this part of the work was thirty (30). The focus groups were made up of twenty (20) interviewees: ten (10) were married people and ten (10) were divorcees. The researcher also interviewed two (2) marriage Counsellors/Pastors (who were all males) even as they had eight (8) members from their churches interviewed. They were all purposively selected from some specific churches (denominations). The study maintained gender and denominational balance in the selection of interviewees except the pastors. The

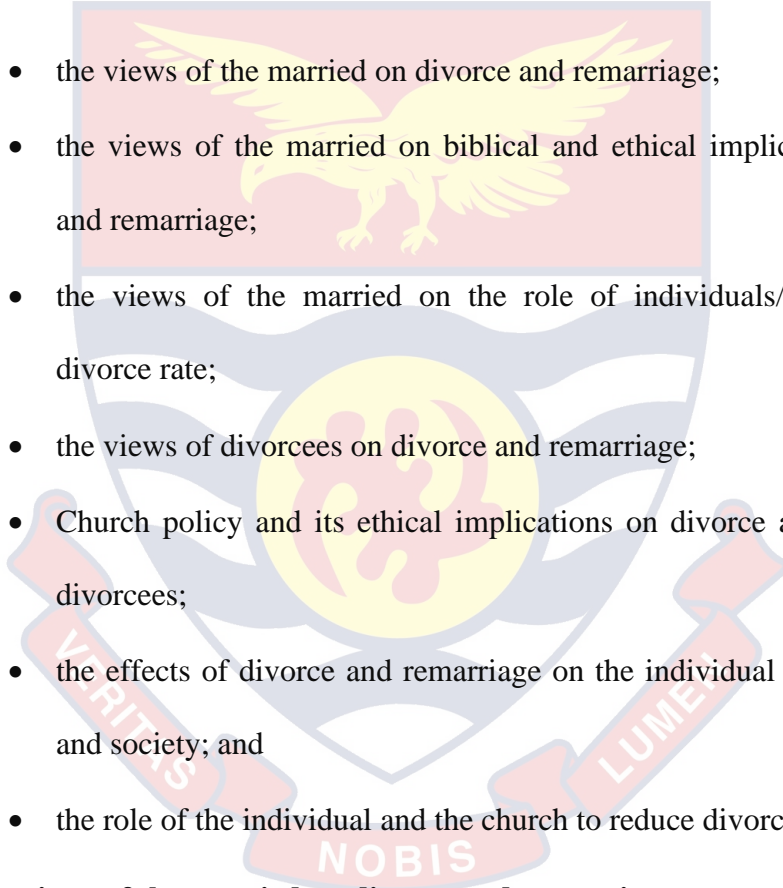
data presented in this chapter addressed the research objectives and questions. The presentation of results and discussions were done in line with the stated objectives of the study. It must however be noted that in some situations two objectives as well as two or more related research questions were fused under one sub-topic for clarity of expression and logical presentation in the discussion of results.

VIEWS OF THE MARRIED AND DIVORCEES ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE IN HO-MUNICIPALITY

As prelude to the questions that can be found on the interview guide (i.e., before any major question was asked), the researcher posed a question to the married and divorcees. The interviewees were asked to indicate how long they have been Christians. This question was asked to find out the levels of maturity of the interviewees in Christian doctrines, beliefs and practices especially in relation to their understanding of issues concerning divorce and remarriage. In view of this, the study revealed that majority of the married and divorcees had been Christians for the past ten (10) to twenty-five (25) years. This indicates that almost all the respondents have been Christians for a long period of time and should be matured and able to understand basic Christian principles or doctrines, beliefs and practices, especially those related to marriage.

Even so, a follow up question was specifically directed to the divorcees to indicate whether their former spouses were and are still Christians. The interviewees asserted that their former spouses were born again and added that they have been Christians for at least five (5) to ten (10) years before they got married and are still Christians.

Below is the detailed analysis of the focus group discussions on Christians' perception on divorce and remarriage with some selected Christians (married and divorcees) in the Ho-Municipality under seven (7) sub-topics. The participants for the focus group discussions were carefully selected from Orthodox, Protestant and Pentecostal/Charismatic church backgrounds. The list of the seven sub-topics is as follows:

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- The logo of the University of Cape Coast is a watermark in the background. It features a shield with a yellow eagle at the top, a yellow sun in the center, and a red banner at the bottom with the Latin motto "VERITAS NOBIS LUMEN".
- the views of the married on divorce and remarriage;
 - the views of the married on biblical and ethical implications of divorce and remarriage;
 - the views of the married on the role of individuals/church to reduce divorce rate;
 - the views of divorcees on divorce and remarriage;
 - Church policy and its ethical implications on divorce and remarriage of divorcees;
 - the effects of divorce and remarriage on the individual within the church and society; and
 - the role of the individual and the church to reduce divorce and remarriage.

The views of the married on divorce and remarriage

Perception is a thought, belief, interpretation or opinion often held by many people and based on experiences in life and appearances. In other words, ones perception of something is the way he/she thinks about it or the impression he/she has of it. In relation to this study, perception refers to how Christians understand and interpret their experiences of divorce and remarriage in

Ghana today and in the Ho-Municipality in particular. Under this sub-topic, interviewees/participants were asked which situations in marriage they thought could make divorce necessary. All the interviewees agreed on adultery or marital unfaithfulness as a necessary situation for divorce. They added that adultery could lead to divorce based on the Bible and also from their cultural perspective. However, one of the interviewees said no situation should be necessary for divorce to be made possible in marriage if Christ is in it. The only thing that can separate the two parties involved in marriage should be death. He further added:

Though the Bible says that divorce can occur as a result of marital unfaithfulness (adultery), there can be forgiveness for the marriage to move on. Additionally, the book of Jeremiah 33:2-3 indicates that God establishes everything and whatsoever we ask Him will be given to us. Many Christians today do not lay the foundation of their marriages on Christ. Many marriages that collapsed did so not because of the adultery being committed but hardness of the heart. To me, harden heartedness is the root cause of divorce as adultery is just one of the fruits leading to divorce.

Another interviewee mentioned that when a marital relationship turns bloody (i.e., extreme domestic violence) that can lead to the death of any of the parties involved, then, divorce is necessary. One other main situation mentioned by all the interviewees as a situation that could lead to divorce is too much interference from in-laws if they try to control the marriage to the extreme. A clear example given by one of the respondents was a situation where a mother-in-law on a visit for some months occupied the bedroom with her son, leaving her daughter-in-law with the only option of sleeping in the hall alone.

One other major issue mentioned by one of the interviewees was lack of trust as a result of deep rooted deceit (blatant lies). He used what happened in his marriage as an example. Prior to their marriage, his wife lied to him that she was a

professional nurse. He got to know later that she was not even a Senior Secondary School graduate talk-less of becoming a nurse. Similarly, the two of them also condoned and connived with each other and deceived their Pastor to go through a full wedding ceremony against the lay down standard of their church even though his wife to be was about two to three months pregnant. Later in marriage, they could not trust each other because of these lies as his wife became very suspicious of him and kept on accusing him of cheating on her. This was actually one of the main factors that led them to divorce.

Some other common factors the interviewees mentioned were: irresponsibility especially on the part of the man, lack of agreement (no consent) especially if one party decides to live apart from his or her partner for a long time without the consent of the other, lack of understanding, poor sex or denial of sex in marriage consistently. These, to them, were factors that can lead to divorce or make divorce necessary. The above factors mentioned that could lead to divorce confirm what scholars such as Odoi (2015) and Anderson (2005) were quoted for saying earlier in this research. Looking closely at the factors responsible for divorce as mentioned by the interviewees, it is not just the existence of only one of these factors that could necessitate divorce in all cases; sometimes it could be a combination of two or more of such factors.

Interviewees were asked another key question to find out as to whether they could remain single in case their marriages end in divorce. Even so, they were expected to give reasons if yes or no. The interviewees were of two divergent views; some of them said they will like to remarry in case their

marriages end in divorce. The reasons they gave as to why they would remarry are varied. From the personal experience of one of them, as somebody who was single and now married, “two are better than one.” She will like to remarry should there be any issue of divorce in her life (marital life). She further added that there is so much blessing in marriage than single life.

However, another person with the same opinion said he would have to work on himself well if his first marriage should fail; there could be some weaknesses in his life that would need to be corrected or may need adjustment before remarriage. He would work on himself to take the spirit of discord or bitterness away from his heart (to him, forgiveness is needed) so he does not enter into the new marriage with that kind of spirit. He will also do well not to enter into any unhealthy competition with his ex-partner to marry again just to prove a point. With this mentality, he may not enjoy his new marriage.

Contrary to the opinion of the above, the other interviewees who shared a similar view had one of them saying that he will not marry again because what led to divorce in his first marriage can recur in the second one. A follow up question was posed to him as to whether he meant that even if his partner dies when he is about 28 years of age he would still remain single for the rest of his life. His answer was that it is a personal choice to remain single after his first marriage no matter what may be the cause of the divorce or separation; he will not go in for another. To him, he has seen many remarriages including that of his biological mother collapsing faster than the first one. This view of the interviewee affirms that of Mattox (1995) who posited that “marital failure often breeds marital

failure.” Mattox based this assertion on his research findings which further indicated that adult children of divorced parents are four times more likely to end up their marriages in divorce than those of intact couples (see page 88).

To the next person with a similar opinion, divorce is not a good thing. We must do everything possible to avoid it. We must study as well about marriage and pray to God to lead us to choose the right partners. Even in a situation of marital unfaithfulness, one can forgive unless it is an unbelieving partner who wants to quit with him. That is the only thing he cannot do anything to prevent from happening according to the Bible. The researcher asked him a follow up question as to what he would do if his partner who is also a Christian is bent on divorcing him. He said this is the reason why one must prayerfully enter into marriage so he or she does not fall into the hands of any “Jezebel.” To him, we should not think that any person we see at church is a Christian. “A real Christian cannot be bent on going into divorce or doing things that may lead to divorce in marriage. We still have ‘Delilahs’ causing a lot of harm to the ‘Sampsons’ today.” Though this interviewee mentioned only female counterparts of men who were terribly ungodly in their marriages, there could be male counterparts of the Jezebel and Delilah in our world today making life terrible for their wives.

The views of the married on biblical and ethical implications of divorce and remarriage

A question was asked as to what the Christian married interviewees think or believe is the Bible’s position on divorce and remarriage. All the interviewees were of the view that based on the Bible; one cannot divorce without the issue of

marital unfaithfulness (adultery). The other reason for divorce may be the issue of one getting married to a non-Christian before accepting Christ. To them, the Bible is clear on this as they made reference to 1 Corinthians 7:13-15 which allows divorce if the unbelieving partner decides to do so. With these situations at hand, the believer (Christian) has the right to go into remarriage. These were the very reasons given by researchers such as Jones (1980), Anderson (2005) and Odoi (2015) for biblically mandated divorce.

When another question was asked as to which instances will make divorce and remarriage to be considered right or wrong; an interviewee was of the view that apart from marital unfaithfulness as mentioned earlier that divorce was possible leading to remarriage, there are other factors. She was quick to indicate that falsehood such as a lady who lost her womb due to her promiscuous lifestyle in the past before getting married (a woman without a womb is a man in disguise) or an impotent man getting married to a virgin can equally be considered as marital unfaithfulness if the partner (the deceiver) knew about his/her condition before entering into the marriage with the other partner. For the earlier case of a woman with no womb, polygamy could be the solution as was done in the Old Testament era. This suggestion from this interviewee may not be accepted by many New Testament believers who preach monogamy. Again, on legal grounds per explanations given by Lawyer Gordon Akpadie, no man can marry more than a wife legally in Ghana today except it is a customary marriage. In a court marriage situation, the best thing to do is to first divorce the deceitful wife or husband for one to have the legal ground to remarry. Polygamy could only be

possible without any legal implications if the first marriage was a customary (traditional marriage only).

However, to another interviewee, prayer is so much needed before marriage and within marriage. This will move God to lead us to the right persons as it was in the olden days. A follow up question was asked to find out if prayer alone causes one's marriage to be successful because it looks as if our forefathers did not pray the kind of prayers Christians today are praying but their marriages worked well. The interviewee answered by saying that our forefathers were not only praying they also looked at character and would investigate and do their background searches to be sure one is of good conduct before going into any marriage. This is what many Christians fail to do today: "faith is not foolishness." The fact is that many marriages are failing today because of poor character formation and the hardness of the heart of human beings.

One interviewee seemed to share a divergent view even though she indicated that in the original plan of God divorce is not permitted by the Bible (Malachi 2:16). God does not just frown on it, He hates it if there are no genuine reasons in the sight of God and human being who represent Him on earth. We must, therefore, work against any possibility of divorce. She however was quick to give an example of a situation that can lead to divorce contrary to the earlier biblical position which may give room for remarriage. According to her, a real life story was told about a man who was married but deceived a young lady and married her before she got to know that the man was already legally married. The woman in this marriage as a second wife can call for this marriage to be annulled

on the grounds of deceit. With this situation in the view of the interviewee, this young lady is free to remarry. This corroborates the earlier interviewee's position that deceit could be a ground for divorce (refer to p. 136).

The views of the married on the role of individuals/church to reduce divorce

Respondents were asked as to how an individual or the church can help in reducing the divorce rate in society today. The first interviewee to speak to this issue has this to say as he quoted the Bible from Hosea 4:6 "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..." If only individuals could be careful to study scriptures on marriage and to learn the fundamental rudiments of marriage from adult role models who have their marriages working, he asserts, they would not experience what others are going through today. Another interviewee has this to say:

I think our generation of Christians is becoming too sensual and our young people today are too much interested in sex and are in hurry to go into marriage because they are blinded with sex but claim love is blind which is not correct biblically. Wrong character formation will surely affect the attitude of a man or a woman in marriage. Someone is in marriage but having sex with her ex-boyfriend just because she is not satisfied with her husband when it comes to sex. Some young women cannot cook or wash. Some young married men also overly engage their wives sexually because they got addicted to sex by having multiple sex partners when they were young and single. If good teachings and good counsellors can be there to guide young people, marriages will work.

Another interviewee directed his suggestions to the family and the church. To him, there should be collaboration between the biological family of a Christian and that of his or her spiritual family (Church) for total grooming and counselling to be done for those about to enter into marriage especially. He went further to say that:

Family members have a lot of roles to play if they see any questionable character in any of the partners-to-be, prior to their marriage. They must work on it. Some counsellors at the church level are also doing poor work. If a counsellor could only say “you are my son I know you so well; you are also my daughter, I know you are good,” without any proper teaching or counselling, marriages are likely going to fail. People should be made to know the ups and downs of marriage; the challenges and responsibilities of it before going into it. The church and the family must come together to get this work done.

The last interviewee who responded to the above question said: we should not look at only religious zeal to think that one is a well cultured Christian. Soul tie can also be a problem in some marriages and with this deliverance is needed. Counselling based on our traditional system, is a lifelong process. It should not be limited to one particular ceremony or those who ask for it. To the above response, a follow up question was asked to find out if counselling is needed before or after one’s marriage ceremony. All the interviewees agreed that counselling is needed but parents also have a lot to do on their children from the childhood to adulthood. To them, parenthood and parenting are for life. One of the respondents added that in the olden days, the grooming process for marriage started from infancy. “Train up a child the way he should go; even and when he is old he will not depart from it” says the Holy Bible in Proverbs 22:6. In fact, nobody really grows up to the age of thirty or twenty-four to learn how to cook or wash. One must get the fundamentals of life right before going into marriage in order not to be an embarrassment to his family and society at large, they said.

It can be argued from the points raised by interviewees above that marriage in the Ho Municipality for that matter Ghana is not just a relationship between a man and a woman; families are involved. This is a typical African

culture in which marriage goes beyond a man and a woman to families and even to an entire society, as posited by scholars such as Mbiti (1969), Nukunya (1992) and Ganusah (2014). Even so, counselling should not be limited only to the period one is getting married but should be a lifelong process in line with our Ghanaian (African) culture.

The views of divorcees on divorce and remarriage

This was the starting point of the focus group discussion questions mainly for the divorcees on divorce and remarriage. They were asked if they went through any marriage counselling at any point before or during their marriage or divorce. One interviewee had this to say: “my partner and I went through some counseling from our Pastor then but it was not deep in my estimation.” The respondent went further to indicate that the church was also involved because a pre-marital committee vetted them before counseling was organised for them which lasted for just a month before the wedding. Also, the marriage ban was published in this same church. “My church was really involved; we went for counselling; I did my counselling in the Assemblies of God Church although it was very short. The marriage was announced in church and the ceremony was well attended.”

The rest of the divorcees said they had some form of counselling but was not formal counselling as in church leader or a pastor doing it for them. They rather had normal family education on issues pertaining to marriage. They attributed this to their failure to go in for church wedding but some of them had it registered at court.

One of the divorcees noted that she was very anxious to marry because she was really naïve and was only dreaming about the good side of marital life. Her marriage was purely a customary one without any official church leadership involvement even though she was a member of a church. She added that she was barely nineteen years then. She however mentioned that she had an elderly woman she called her mum in Ziavi (a village near Ho), a Deaconess in another church who spoke to them concerning marriage.

From the above story of the divorcee young lady, reference could be made to Glenn and Supancic (1984) who said that “age, religious faith, and family background also affect the divorce rate.” To them, divorce is higher among those who marry young and three times greater among people who never attend religious services. In another vane, the responses of the divorcees are evident that even though majority of the divorcees got married as members of churches, they ended up divorcing. This shows that divorce does not only occur among those who married in the court but also those who married at church.

When they were also asked as to what were some of the factors that led to their marriages ending in divorce, all the interviewees mentioned a factor that was common to them: in-law interference (mother-in-laws were of prime influence on their children in their marriages). A female respondent said: “I was faced with excessive influence from my mother-in-law on my husband; she actually became a rival to me. She thought I was hindrance to her receiving money from my husband who became broke at a point in time.” One of the male divorcees said:

We separated for no clear reasons. The whole marital process was a mistake. It was unplanned pregnancy situation that led to the marriage.

The lady was seriously in love with me, she made me fall for her as she used gifts and financial support to lure me into it. Though we were young then, she wanted me to prove my love to her with sex. This was what led to the pregnancy and the marriage was the end result as we had a son from it. The only reason I can give that led to the separation (the divorce) for over three years now is that my father-in-law did not want the marriage to exist because of his social status. He is a rich man and I am from a very poor background. He even threatened his daughter that he would cease to be her father should she remain in this marriage. It was after our separation that I knew I really loved her. I cannot marry any other woman.

These were the other factors one of the divorcees mentioned that led to his divorce: separation for three (3) years without his consent, false accusations from his wife even in public, and the use of abusive language and words. However, it must be noted that they had two sons out of this marriage before it collapsed. One of the female divorcees also said: “I was naïve about marriage and very young when I got married. It was a typical traditional kind of marriage whereby I did not meet the man I was going to marry physically neither did he meet me to propose marriage to me directly.” One reason why their marriage landed on the rock was: too much hardship as she had to do menial jobs such as working on the farm for people to earn a living which she was not used to. Other factors she mentioned were: lack of compatibility, poor communication, lack of trust, infidelity (I caught him red handed), as well as physical and psychological abuses.

The issue of infidelity (marital unfaithfulness) mentioned by one of the interviewees is in line with Asare Opoku’s (1978) submission that one of the key factors that cause divorce includes unfaithfulness. He further explained that, if a man has a sexual affair with another woman besides the wife, the man has to pay compensation, which is called “mpata” (among the Akans) to the woman. If a woman refuses to accept the “mpata” she can divorce her husband (Refer to page

20). Again, all the factors mentioned by the divorcees seem to confirm what the married interviewees said earlier and this goes a long way to affirm the views of researchers and scholars such as Jones (1980), Anderson (2005) and Odoi (2015).

Based on the above facts, it can be argued that most marriages break down as a result of external influence especially influences from in-laws can easily mar the beauty of any marriage than any other factor. At least one the divorcees lost his marriage not because the two parties involved in the marriage had problem even though the process that led to the marriage was not considered a sound one. The divorce was actually imposed on them by the father of the woman. The likelihood that these two love birds can come together after the death of this in-law is very high; this is because the young man is not ready to go into any other marriage in life at least not now.

They were asked a question to find out as to what were their personal views on divorce and remarriage as at then. A male divorcee was quick to say this:

I feel it never happened and even now should my former wife come back, I will accept her for the sake of our children. Once that does not seem to be possible now, in order to avoid sexual immorality, I will marry again. However, it is actually easier to remarry if no children are involved. I am therefore going to be very careful in taking this step. I will wait for my children to grow up a bit.

To another interviewee, “it is a big no for me. I am of age and do not see the need to enter into any new marriage now.” One other divorcee said: “I have decided not to marry again especially because of my son, I do not want anybody to come and maltreat him.” He added that he does not want to go through the pain of break up again. “What is the assurance that what led to the breakdown of the

other one cannot recur? I want to have my peace of mind,” he said in conclusion. One of them who seemed to be ambivalent about remarriage after divorce had this to say: “To me, initially, I had wanted not to marry again after the divorce until my former husband died. Per the standard of the Bible: “... till death do you apart” I believe I am free now to remarry. The society in which I live seems to be in favour of me going into another marriage. I am therefore interested in getting married again.

Church policy and its ethical implications on divorce and remarriage of divorcees

The divorcees were asked to explain whether their churches’ policy or teaching had any influence on their decision to seek divorce. All the respondents were of almost the same voice that their churches’ policy did not make it easy for their resolve to end their marriages in divorce. One of the male interviewees got this to say:

My church’s teachings are all based on the Bible but these teachings actually made it very difficult for me to seek divorce. In my church, divorce is frowned upon and is made a no go zone. Meanwhile my marriage process was in three dimensions: customary marriage, court wedding (ordinance) and church wedding. My Pastors tried their best possible to prevent divorce from happening especially my counsellor after three years of my wife’s separating from me. However, when matters became worse and my former wife was committed to getting divorce, our church became cold towards us. The teaching of my church was and is completely against divorce. It was really difficult for us to get through even at the court of law as our church leaders were very hesitant to serve as witnesses to any of us.

Another divorcee said “though I did not do any official wedding or marriage at the church level, my church did not make it easy for me even though

they could not stop me from doing it either.” One of the female divorcees was of the view that:

No church influence came for me. I got married the traditional or customary way and our divorce was not made known officially to my church but to few of my family members. And now my former husband is dead. The only challenge I had after my husband’s death was false accusation from my mother-in-law. She did accuse me of killing her son. Initially society believed it but later got to know the truth when my late husband tried marrying a new wife. The marriage ceremony did not even take place because my former mother-in-law was at the throat of the wife-to-be of my former and late husband.

A follow up question was asked to find out if it would be easy to get their Churches’ consent to remarry. All the divorcees were of the view that it would be very difficult to get it done in their churches. The church and its leadership will make you feel very uncomfortable if you dare enter into divorce or try to remarry. No church leader would like to associate himself or herself with the issue of divorce. They usually base their argument on Matthew 19:6 “...What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” Church leaders therefore see divorce as a situation of hardness of the heart (Matthew 19:8). To explain this further, an interviewee had this to say:

My church is very strict on issues of divorce and remarriage. If you are going to do it again (remarriage), you must probably do a customary marriage and not church wedding. Unless your partner dies you are not allowed to remarry. You either need to go to another church for the wedding to be done in case the doctrine of that church is not against it or the church leadership there is not so much aware of your past marriage record. For my church, even if you do the wedding elsewhere and come back, they will not recognise it. If you are a position holder like a Pastor or a Deacon, you will lose it. Divorce leading to remarriage is not entertained in any way.

Another divorcee said: “It is not so easy in my church too. If you make any attempt to divorce, they oppose it and if you do, no Pastor or church

leadership will be interested in your next marriage.” To the interviewee, this situation is breeding hypocrisy among divorcees. They hide to have illicit sex but if they want to make it legal or official, they oppose it with all their might. Some have separated physically, psychologically and emotionally but remain like that as though they are still in marriage. This situation made known by the divorcee confirms what Asante, Osafo and Nyamekye (2014) said as they cited Sasse (1997) for saying that divorce usually does not happen in a day but goes through the following three general stages: The first stage is *isolation*; the couples become separated from each other as intimacy behaviour breaks down, although they might still converse and be polite to each other. The second stage is *invalidation*, it is a period within which the couples begin to negatively assess each other’s worth and belittle one another, which give rise to accusations. The third stage is *betrayal*, where trust is broken down and there is no support from each other.

Below is a discussion of ethical implications based on church policies on divorce and remarriage affecting the individuals especially the divorcees and the church in the Ho Municipality.

The first ethical implication that one can argue from the views of the interviewees is that tolerance of divorce and remarriage will breed religious and moral care free life style. The more the church allows divorce and remarriage especially among church leaders, the more other people are influenced to go into divorce even for very trivial reasons or some members’ even get scared of getting married. There, the issue of hardness of the heart according to the Bible will surface (Matthew 19:8).

Secondly, it may lead to pretense and double standard life. Should the church and church leadership take a strong stand never to allow any form of divorce no matter what the reason is, except that one's life partner is no more, the likely it will be to promote marital unfaithfulness or separation in disguise as supported by Asante, et.al (2014). According to Tak (2006) "What the Bible prohibited is remarriage after illegal divorce."

The third ethical implication is that the interdependent nature of marriage will be affected. According to Arthur-Norman (2015), social exchange theory evolved from the interdependence theory of Thibaut and Kelley (1959). Even so, it was first applied to marital relationship by Levinger (1965). Interdependence theory emphasises the dependence of each spouse upon the marital relationship, and the ability of that relationship to fulfill individual needs. Kurdek (1993) hypothesised that couples in marriages where one or both partners exhibited low levels of relationship dependence would be at higher risk for divorce. When individuals have problems in their marriages, it affects the church as a whole. It must be noted that marriage in Ghana (Africa) goes beyond two individuals. Families will surely be involved (Mbiti, 1969; Nukunya, 1992 & Ganusah, 2014). This situation of divorce could create division in the church and cause members to leave one church for the other especially if one is bent on marrying somebody or wants to remarry against the standard of his church which seems to be very rigid to a very large extent.

The fourth one is step-father/step-mother relationship. Any marriage in which children are involved especially if these children are young, divorce and

remarriage can cause more harm than good no matter how genuine the reason might be. This supports the idea posited by Anderson (2005) who said “...divorce can have a devastating impact on both adults and children.” Anderson meant that this situation of divorce may cut one generation off from another. It could also lead to a situation where children are being reared without the presence of their fathers or mothers.

The last factor is the challenge of child in marriage conflicts. Remarriages with partners coming into it with children from their previous marriages are bound to experience a lot of conflicts. Based on some points raised by the interviewees, it is better to remarry early enough when one’s partner dies or remarry late when children involved in the previous marriage become old enough to take care of themselves than when they are in their middle ages.

Effects of divorce and remarriage on the individual within the church and society

Interviewees were asked as to how divorce affected them at church, within their respective families and in the society at large. One of the male divorcees said that divorce affected him as an individual at church as well as the society. He also believed that any effect divorce had on him equally affected members of his church and the society within which he lives. He added that:

My church attendance dropped drastically as I was almost always late to church. Pressure of domestic chores mounted on me as I had to cook for my kids all the time, wash their dresses as well as clean the environment because my children were below six (6) years then. I also had to cope with rude despising or derogatory comments from people in society as well as in my church because I was a leader in my church. They kept asking me as to whom I was. Some also referred to me as a wicked and a bad Christian who sacked his wife from his young kids.

It also affected me emotionally; sometimes I would go to church and could not concentrate. I shed tears sometimes instead of song of praise. Some people might see me at church shedding tears and mistake it for a touch from the Holy Spirit not knowing they were tears of regrets and frustrations. I also had to deal with the issue of loneliness; this time around I was not alone because at least I had strong boys around me but I was still feeling lonely. The sense of loneliness is deeper than the one I felt before entering into marriage as a single person. My spirituality and spiritual life dropped; I was overwhelmed with guilt as I found it difficult to pray, fast and to read the Bible. In terms of communication, I had to be very careful not to incur anybody's anger else they attacked me by linking it to my marital failure. It affected my children also; their colleagues sometimes make mockery of them and they do mount pressure on me to get their mother back so they too can have their mother around them like others.

Another divorcee said people were insulting her and saying all sorts of things about her. As a result of this, she became depressed and confused. Initially she decided not to marry again. However, the same people who were against her in the past are now worrying her to get married with the reason that she is too young to remain single as a woman, especially after the death of "my divorced husband." "Society is actually very complex and sometimes makes things very complicated in handling issues of divorce and remarriage. At any point in time they are at your neck to do something."

Another male interviewee said, becoming a father without really planning it was the greatest challenge he had to handle as a young man. He felt the effect of divorce especially separating from the one he loved not by choice but by force. He went on to say this:

In my situation, I was attacked verbally on so many occasions. I was and still a chorister. One day, as I was going up stage to go and sing at church, somebody approached me and exclaimed: "*ele gu dom hamea*" meaning "you are defiling this church." This meant that some of them started seeing me as a deviant and somebody who was immoral because of my divorce situation. This affected my self-esteem in society and at church as well. I, therefore, became confused and discouraged about life and

everything. At a point in time, it affected me to the extent that I nearly went mad. But my Pastor was helpful by consoling and counselling me on what to do and how to handle such situations effectively.

I finally had to leave that branch of my church where I was having extreme difficulties for another congregation where people did not know so much about my past to be using it against me. At another point in time at my former church, they had wanted to make me a youth leader and later a church Deacon but I refused to take up these responsibilities because of my past in relation to my marriage and divorce. I was accused of destroying the church and giving it a bad name in that community. They also said of me that I was a fake Christian and a pretender.

Again, a female interviewees said that society will really push you to the wall and compress you more than the divorce issue itself. As for us women when we begin to have problems in marriage, one thing we so much desire is freedom. However, when freedom becomes freedom for the one who so much wants it, she realises that there is no freedom in divorce. You feel labeled and stigmatised. “Your own people and friends including brothers and sisters in the Lord will begin to ask about your rings and your husband among other things when they meet you and you always have to be explaining things to them. I wished it never happened.”

The above responses on the effects of divorce and remarriage from the divorcees on marriage go a long way to confirm the research assertion of Agnes Odoi. She indicated that the effects of divorce on married couples and children cannot be over emphasised. Sometimes, divorce does not even affect the couples and children alone but some family members or relatives of the couples. A broken marriage has consequences in terms of pain and suffering and problems of many kinds which are not removed by forgiveness. The divorced partners will still have to come to terms with, and line with, these consequences (Odoi, 2015).

The role of the individual and the church to reduce divorce and remarriage

Interviewees were asked as to what steps an individual and the church can take to reduce the rate of divorce and remarriage in Ghana today. The result showed that all the divorcees agreed individuals must renew their minds: the two parties involved (the woman and the man) should purpose in their hearts to make the marriage work. Individuals must also learn and read books on marriage before going into it.

Again, our churches (church leaders) today should not take things for granted but teach their members what marriage is and let them know, especially the females that marriage is not only a place of enjoyment but comes with a lot of responsibilities especially in this modern era. Today's marriages have a lot of complexities as well as ups and downs which must be well understood. According to the interviewees, such complexities include unemployment, high cost of living, and cheating made easier by means of modern-day technology (today people engage themselves in internet dating and cyber-sex even as they exchange nude pictures).

One of the female divorcees had this to say about what the individual and the church should do in order to reduce the divorce rate in Ghana today:

My grandparents told me as a female that “marriage is like sitting on a hot stone or rock.” Endurance and determination to make the marriage work by the two parties involved especially the woman is what they were trying to tell me. In other words, marriage is for better for worse. With this mentality, you can purpose in your heart to let your marriage work if it depends on you. Infants or novice and the naïve people should not be allowed to enter into marriage. Such people see marriage to be a simple thing and may enter into it without making careful choices or knowing that marriage is a life-long institution which is capable of making or breaking you.

The points raised by this female interviewee are indicative of the fact that perhaps many couples today do not get to know the dynamics of the marriage as an institution before going into it. They are therefore not able to cope with the various challenges they encounter in their marriages. This could result in divorce.

No doubt, another interviewee had this to say to the family: counselling should be well done for young people and those that are about to enter into marriage. The issue of counselling should not be limited to church leaders. Parents and family members should prepare their children well ahead of time for marriage as it used to be in the olden days. According to the interviewee, he has learnt one thing from his personal experiences that the customary or traditional education helps marriages work better if well blended with church education. “When you tamper with the culture of your people you are joking with marriage and the success of it.” It can be argued here that societies and churches, if not church leaders who down play traditional family education and the value of counselling and only highlight church doctrine if not dogma to would-be-couples do them a lot of disservice. The two must rather go hand in hand.

On the role of the church and church leaders such as Pastors who also serve as counsellors, he said that most Pastors today only know the Bible and are not familiar or do not care to know anything about the culture of the people. Some of these Pastors also preach and teach the Bible in abstract terms without looking at their life applications. This leads to half-baked couples-to-be through poor counselling and preparations towards marriage. In the Bible somewhere in Genesis 24, when Abraham was going to marry for his son, Isaac, he followed the

culture of his people duly and not the religion (idolatrous practices) of his people. No doubt this marriage worked though it went through a lot of difficulties. Teaching programmes should be organised to educate their members well on Biblical standards of marriage. Churches, particularly marriage counsellors, should not avoid teaching their members practical issues and challenges they are likely to face in marriage and how to handle them. The church especially church leaders should not become overly spiritual to teach their to-be-couples and those already in marriage about sex and sexual satisfaction in marriage. Many Christians especially those in Charismatic and Pentecostal churches in his estimation are committing adultery for lack of sexual satisfaction yet they pretend about it. Some are also committing abortions but denying their husbands sex for lack of knowledge on the right family planning methods to use. He also made mention of what the Bible says in Hosea 4:6 “for lack of knowledge my people perish.” No doubt, many marriages are collapsing today because of lack of knowledge.

The last interviewee’s response on this issue seemed to have summarised the views of the earlier interviewees in this few words on the role of the individual and the church in reducing divorce and remarriage:

I have realised that our marriage failed because we did not or at least one of us did not understand marriage. Individuals should therefore do a lot on themselves to study and to show themselves approved in marriage (a paraphrased version of 2 Timothy 2:15). They should do character tests for their to-be-partners rather than focusing too much on the physical qualities of the person. Divorce especially at the court of law is not a joke. Nobody should enter into marriage with the idea of divorce at the back of his or her mind. Believers should read sound books on marriage. Churches must also organise regular marriage seminars for their members as well as post marriage counselling programmes.

Finally, this respondent concluded by saying that some Pastors are not naturally crafted for counselling but they are forcing themselves to do it. The church and Pastors today should make good use of people other than Pastors; people who are capable of counselling their church members on issues of marriage to come on board to offer assistance. Getting things to work in marriage should be important to them than he who takes the glory for counselling couples.

VIEWS OF THE COUNSELLORS/PASTORS ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

The incidences of divorce and remarriage have spread so widely and so fast that almost every Christian has encountered them not only in his or her church, but also among his or her close friends or relatives. This segment of chapter four assesses the views of marriage Counsellors/Pastors on divorce and remarriage in the Ho Municipality (see appendix 'C' for detailed information on the interview guide). Apart from these two Pastors, eight (8) of their church members, four (4) from each church were interviewed to cross check (i.e., for confirmation or otherwise) the facts provided by their Pastors. It must be noted that the views of these church members were sought only on issues that needed attestation based on the discretion of the researcher.

Counsellors or Pastors are key stakeholders of their various institutions. Their perspectives on this subject as a matter of fact should be considered very important because they direct the policies of their churches and influence individuals. Also, it is most likely that these Counsellors/Pastors might hold personal divergent views on divorce and remarriage which are incongruent to the

policies of the churches they lead. This chapter further discusses the role the church plays and the support it offers to divorcees as to whether they are accepted in their churches and given key responsibilities to perform or not.

The discussion below is an analysis of questions that were posed to the interviewees to elicit their views on divorce and remarriage. It outlines the analysis under themes in the following order:

- background of Counsellors/Pastors;
- church policies on divorce and remarriage of the counsellors/pastors;
- Biblical views of the counsellors/pastors on divorce and remarriage;
- ethical/moral implications of divorce and remarriage; and
- the role of the church in reducing divorce rate in the church and society.

Background of the Counsellors/Pastors

The data below are on the responses of two (2) Counsellors or Pastors who are cross breed of orthodox and charismatic churches in the Ho Municipality. The researcher used purposive sampling to select these two Counsellors/Pastors who are senior pastors from the Lord's Garden Ministry International (God's Garden) and Fruitful Living Sanctuary. These two pastors were selected because they grew up as Christians from the Roman Catholic and Evangelical Presbyterian Church origin respectively as one of them has a practical remarriage experience.

The interviewees were asked to indicate whether they were married and the number of years they were married. This question was asked in order to investigate whether they were officially married or not, and the number of years the interviewees were married. All the interviewees said yes, they married

officially and are blessed with children. The first interviewee added that he has been in marriage for six (6) years and has been counselling for more than ten (10) years now. The second interviewee said he has been in marriage for about twenty (20) years with a counselling experience of not less than twelve (12) years as he is having about twelve (12) pastors under his control as the founder and general overseer of his ministry.

They were also asked to indicate the type of marriage they were engaged in or contracted (customary/ordinance/church wedding). The summary of the responses given reveals that all the Pastors (Counsellors) contracted church wedding which was preceded by the customary requirements. One of the interviewees said: “I did customary marriage first and did my church wedding as well. The one who officiated my wedding was Bishop Tackie-Yaboi of Victory Bible Church, Accra.” This indicates the prestige that is attached to a church wedding especially if a Pastor is involved. They all indicated that they preferred the church wedding to the court wedding since that is the type of marriage most charismatics encourage their members to engage in.

The above finding gives a clear impression that marriages are celebrated in church to outdoor the marriage. This supports the idea of the types of marriages we have in Ghana today according to Odoi (20015) and Shem (2018) but does not fully support the views of a scholar such as Lodonu (2009) who gave a list of ten (10) types of marriages we have among the Ewes. It must also be noted that most marriages are celebrated under ordinance in the church today with the intention of

seeking the blessings of God. There are few cases where customary marriages are also blessed at church or by church leaders but not so much celebrated.

When a follow up question was asked as to whether they were faced with some challenges especially from the families of their wives, one of them has this to say:

No marital process is smooth anywhere and surely one or two issues would crop up. The family is entrusting the destiny of their child into the hands of a total stranger. That is why I personally define marriage as ‘entrusting your destiny into the hands of a stranger.’ It was therefore normal to me when the parents of my wife-to-be asked some questions or had to investigate into my background before giving me their daughter. I also have daughters now and I am going to do the same for young men who would come to marry them one day. However, on the part of hard liquor being part of the items of marriage, the family knowing very well that I was a Pastor allowed me to substitute them with money.

Church policies on divorce and remarriage of the Counsellors/Pastors

Policy plays a very important role to guide organisations and companies to achieve their goals and objectives. The church like all other organisations has goals and objectives and it needs to have policies to guide it and to help regulate the decisions and actions of its members. Based on this fact, interviewees were asked a question to find out if they have policies on marriage, divorce and remarriage in their respective churches and to give details if yes or no. The first interviewee who is the leader of the Lord’s Garden Ministry International said yes, they have a policy but not an officially written one. Below is what he presented as his church policy on marriage and divorce:

I am a leader and as a shepherd, I have some sheep under my care and I am expected to take some critical decisions. For couple-to-be to marry in my church, I need to make both parties know each other very well. I need to let them understand that marriage is not a “trotro” as in a car moving from Ho to Accra where you can get to Kpong and decide to alight there. Marriage is a private car that must take you straight to your destination.

What I do is that I engage them in series of teachings to let them understand marriage. Marriage is not for fun, you do not marry to prove a point to anybody. It is an exchange affair. Marriage is a partnership and a barter trade: I give you love and you give me love; I give you respect, you give me respect back. If you don't get this right your marriage will be in shambles even in ministry.

In view of the above, a follow up question was asked to find out what his church policy is on counselling and how long it lasts for couples-to-be. In his response, he said he does not have any time frame for counselling. "I understand some churches do it for six months. But I believe that the quality of marriage counselling does not depend on how long you do it." According to him, what he normally does first is to investigate the background of the partners-to-be to know they have clean sheets to marry as culture demands, then, he does his religious and spiritual testing to be sure they are compatible. If they are found compatible, there are basically three concepts he used to teach them to understand: respect which involve good communication and care for each other; love which includes the ability to forgive each other and commitment; and support which demands being there for each other and being responsible.

However, if by his investigations he does not see them to be compatible; he would not allow them to marry. "If this causes them to leave my church so be it. I strongly believe that the quality of counselling does not depend on the length of time but the wisdom imparted into the people." He firmly added this "Do not give counsel to the fool he will only despise your wisdom." To him, marriage is greatly about your level of understanding (the perception you have about the basic concepts of life). "Anything you do in this life without having a good understanding of it cannot work or work well." Marriage goes with good and bad

moments (smooth and rough roads). “Where do you want to go if you are going through bad moments? You need not to focus on the faults of your partner if you want your marriage to work. Marriage is a life time commitment. With this mentality you can forgive each other if there is any mistake and life goes on,” he added.

It can be argued from the above information provided by this counsellor that he seems to be sharing his personal opinion rather than a church policy. If this could be considered as a church policy, then, it is not a well-structured one. On the issue of divorce, he had this to say:

I am a very controversial person when it comes to the issues on divorce. The Bible said ‘what God has put together let no man put asunder.’ In the first place, why should a good and a working marriage need divorce? No, but a marriage with teeth, knife and battles at war should not be allowed to exist because God did not put anything together to be like that. Whatever God has done is good; He cannot put together any bad marriage. This bad kind of marriage that God did not establish, He can put asunder. Again, no man of God would allow his daughter to be in a marriage that is violent or a marriage in which his daughter could be killed. As we stand before our congregations, we must be transparent and truthful to them. We must not become too much spiritual. If you become too much spiritual, you become foolish. John 3:6 says ‘give to the spirit what is for the spirit and to the flesh what is for the flesh.’ I will therefore not allow any blood shedding marriage to exist. On any other ground, divorce is not possible in my church and none has happened yet.

A follow up question was posed to him to find out what his opinion was in relation to Malachi 2:16 which indicate that God hates divorce. He said yes, it is true that God said I hate divorce but He hates divorce with no justifiable or genuine reasons. Anyone who tries to go into divorce with selfish intentions is an opportunist and God hates that. He went further to explain by giving a practical example that in our culture a woman is expected to give respect to her husband

and the husband must also love her. This is in line with what the Bible says (Eph. 5:22-25).

However, one male counsellor (not from his church) who divorced his wife mentioned disobedience as his reason for the divorce and said that: “We agreed to give birth to three children. After our third child, I was there one day when she came with the result of a laboratory test that she was pregnant with our fourth baby. I was so upset and felt that my wife was immoral and deceptive.” His question was why should his wife get pregnant after their decision not to give birth again? He had to divorce her because he thought she deceived him. This issue leading to divorce in the counsellor’s opinion was pure wickedness on the part of this man for which divorce was not necessary and he should not be given the chance to remarry.

Looking at the above issue critically and by inference, there seem to be a missing link in communication between the aggrieved couples. This lack of communication is as a result of lack of knowledge or understanding. This situation could have been avoided if the man had encouraged his wife to use family planning methods. Even so, most of the reasons that trigger divorce these days could be considered as flimsy as anything.

On the contrary he said: “come to think of this, if God so loves and forgives every sin, then, why would He allow somebody to go to hell? You see, the Bible is a physical book which contains spiritual words. If you are with the Bible you must understand it from a spiritual point of view not from carnal or academic point of view.” He added that he was not talking about legal issues here.

What he was saying was a spiritual thing and it takes people with spiritual insight to understand. To him, physical abuses that lead to the removal of somebody's teeth or breaking of one's eye should not be allowed to exist. He concluded by saying that "if you are privileged in some aspects of life do not mock the pain of others."

The second interviewee, the leader of Fruitful Living Sanctuary also said "yes, we have." But his church like the Lord's Garden (God's Garden) does not have an official written document stipulating their policy on divorce and remarriage. The church however depends on the views of the leader and founder. This interviewee (Pastor) being a son (mentee) in the Lord of Bishop Dag Heward-Mills follows greatly and uses the policy of the Light House Chapel International as expressed in their hand book on marriage with the title *Model Marriage*. This interviewee therefore holds a view similar to that of his father in the Lord that marriage is not initiated by man because it is not his idea but that of God.

In his church, you must first meet the church marriage board or committee after your initial intentions of getting married are made known to the church by filling a form. The church marriage committee is made up of two elderly men and a woman filled with the Holy Spirit, full of wisdom and of good marital repute. They have the responsibility to vet the would-be partners and to investigate them (tracing them to their background) especially by interacting with the parents of the man to be sure the couples-to-be have a clean sheet to marry each other.

After this process which is expected to last for one month, the to-be-couples are referred to the Pastor for counselling to begin. This counselling usually lasts for a minimum of two months if the to-be-couples are serious but can last beyond three months if they do not seem to be very committed and available for counseling sessions as expected of them. Over the years, the interviewee has been using the following three (3) books of his father in the Lord Bishop Dag Howard-Mills for his counselling sessions: *Model Marriage*; *How to be a strong Christian*; and *Born Again*.

When he was asked as to whether there were some challenges during the processes of vetting and counselling, he said sometimes parents hinder the process of marriage. A particular case he made reference to was about a young man whose mother was against her son getting married to a young lady with no tangible reasons. “We had to go to the family and even to the church leadership of this mother in question. The only reason she gave finally was that she did not like the young lady.” According to him, Christian mothers are mostly hindrances to the marriages of their sons.

On his church’s policy on divorce, the interviewee quoted Jesus for saying that “...it was not so from the beginning” (Matthew 19:8). It was hardness of the hearts of men. His church therefore does not allow divorce to happen no matter what the reason may be. “We rather work on the hardness of the heart such as: assumptions, greed/selfishness, manipulations (emotional and spiritual manipulation from your background), and influence from the third party” he said. “It will interest you to know that by the grace of God I have officiated over 30

church weddings in my church but there was no case of divorce talk-less of remarriage.” To him, remarriage can only happen in his church if one’s husband or wife dies. He was very bold to state that “this is the reason why I do due diligence with the process of the marriage itself. If the work is well done, there will be no need for divorce.”

The respondent concluded by saying that his church shares the view that marriage is to be an exclusive relationship, a lifelong faithful union with one’s spouse. He quoted Matt. 19:6 which says “What God has joined together, let no man separate.” To him, though the Old Testament recognised the existence of polygamy (marriage to multiple partners), the Bible still declared that monogamy (marriage to one partner) was the ideal situation (Prov. 5:18; 31:10-29; Eccl.9:9; Malachi 2:14-16). His church believes in lifelong policy and “lifelong” means monogamy and sexual fidelity until the death of one partner. Sexual expression with more than one partner violates the holiness principle of biblical marriage, and thus it is a sin in God’s sight. Marriage is considered a covenant, a solemn binding agreement made before God and man.

These policies discussed above support the views of scholars such as Adams (1980) who said divorce should be differentiated in its sense from marriage because it is not instituted by God. He further defined divorce as “the repudiation and breaking of covenant in which both parties promised to provide companionship for one another.” In other words, divorce is the expression of a human emotion that a covenantal companionship no longer exists. In this respect, Tak (2006) said: we are able to possibly perceive that divorce is not from God’s

will. It is because of the fall of humankind. The above views are indicative of the fact that it is the fallen standard of humans that creates the room for divorce and remarriage and the church must work against it.

The researcher again asked a question to find out if divorcees were allowed to fully participate in every ritual of the church (e.g. communion). They were to give reasons if yes or no. One of the interviewees said yes, divorcees are not demonic people. We should, therefore, not use religion to tie ourselves and to discriminate. “Who has not sin before in this life?” he quizzed. It is because of sin we all need forgiveness. Many people sin out of ignorance. They need to be called and counselled, he concluded. The second interviewee shared a similar view and said “yes, they are allowed to participate.” He queried: “How can the sinner change if you deny him what can make him strong to overcome sin?” He explained that communion is to awaken one’s spiritual inner-man, a drunkard or fornicator cannot stop until they have the upper hand over sin. That is exactly what communion does. He further had this to say:

From my twelve years’ experience as a counsellor, I have taken notice of something that many marriages are collapsing as a result of spiritual problems or influence or attacks. If marriage is divine and has a spiritual connotation then divorce as well is a spiritual thing. God hates divorce so He cannot be the one causing it to happen. I believe it does not make sense for a man to leave his wife for no reason and go after a promiscuous young lady who does not even know how to cook or wash. How can a Christian woman leave her husband who is also a Christian to go and marry a wretched traditional priest? These are clear signs of spiritual attack. Listen to this, a decent and a well to do man came to my church for prayer because his wife left him for another man with the reason that their third child was not for him (the husband) but for another man she used to cheat on him with.

Another effect of demonic influence in marriage that can lead to divorce is what he referred to as the pride of life. This, to him, shows itself in unreasonable arrogance and too much self-importance. How could a woman divorce her husband because of her higher income or higher educational level? Can one marry her money or certificate as husband? He quizzed. He considered this not to be any normal happening. He further said:

Women who are too proud will find every reason to divorce their husbands even if they are living happily provided they are educated than the men or are getting more income than their husbands. On the contrary, if the men are more educated or getting more income than their wives, there is usually peace in such marriages. This pride and lack of God-fearing attitude in women must change. Prayer and counselling are the only solutions here!

This confirms the assertion of Bumpass (1991) and Castro-Martin et al. (1991) who posited that the higher the educational attainment of a woman the higher the risk of marital dissolution, as cited by Akuamoah (2013). Even so, this assertion was sharply refuted by White (1990) and Orbuch (2002) who argued that women who are educated have some form of skills and are likely to be employed into higher income jobs for the provision of the needs of the family. To them, “when the level of education increases the risk of divorce decreases” (Akuamoah, 2013).

In the researcher’s view, with reference to the assertion of the Counsellor/Pastor above, there seems to be some element of truth, but he drew a hasty conclusion. Firstly, women could be described as emotional beings (weaker) than men as the Bible says in 1 Peter 3:7-8, but are not demonic beings. Secondly, in most cases, it is rather in unhappy (violent or unreasonable behaviour)

marriages that are more likely to get divorced if they were employed, whereas employment does not so much affect divorce in happy marriages. In other words, women with economic resources are likely to leave unhappy marriages, regardless of whether they involve abuse. This has nothing to do with demons.

Lastly, degree-earning women were more likely than less educated women to leave violent marriages, regardless of their feelings of dissatisfaction. It could be that education has independent effects because it sensitises women to abuse or raises their marital aspirations, and not because it increases the availability of outside opportunities such as having a swift access to a remarriage partner.

Biblical views of the Counsellors/Pastors on divorce and remarriage

A question was posed to the Counsellors/Pastors to find out what their views were on the Bible's position on divorce and remarriage. They were also asked to indicate if they had any issues of divorce and remarriage in their churches. The first interviewee on the Bible's position on divorce and remarriage said he was hundred percent sure that the Bible is not completely against divorce and remarriage. He added that one does not become a demon if he or she goes into divorce. He was quick to say that no flimsy reason should be given for divorce. Remarriage is neither bad nor good depending on how it is done. Once the marriage becomes bloody as in physical violence of removing of tooth and breaking of eye, divorce can be allowed and so is remarriage after this kind of divorce.

When he was reminded of what the Bible says in Matthew 19 which states, except on the ground of marital unfaithfulness there should be no divorce,

and as Paul also said if an unbelieving partner desires separation from the believing partner, it should be allowed (1 Corinthians 7), he answered the researcher with these statements:

I greatly stand against divorce of any kind even that of marital unfaithfulness because there can be forgiveness for all of them. But I support divorce with a particular reason, the bloody one. We should not let religion cloud our good sense of judgement and our interpretation of the Bible. So many Pastors today are only pretending in their marriages that are not working and end up sleeping with their church members. For me, I say it the way it is. I am not operating in the anointing of Paul but that of Jesus. That same God who blessed King Saul as king over Israel, took it from him and gave it to David. So God can today take a good woman from an abusive husband. God would do it only through human vessels just as He removed King Saul from the throne. He sent Prophet Samuel to make the pronouncement and to install David in his place. So it is with the issues of marriage, divorce and remarriage. God must use human vessels to get these things done.

The other interviewee was of the view that “if you divorce your partner, you need not marry again in my church, period.” He went ahead to clarify issues on a particular wrong notion about what is considered marriage. Many go into marital relationships without going through the formal processes of marriage. This is no marriage, should it break down, we cannot consider that to be divorce. It is just an elevated fornication by means of cohabitation. “This means that Matthew 19 cannot be used here because they put themselves together not God. On the other hand, if they put themselves asunder, God will not be offended.” Aside the earlier mentioned issue; there is no reason tangible enough for divorce. You can only remarry if your partner dies. That is the whole stand of the Bible on divorce and remarriage. This view of the Pastor supports the idea of Shem (2018) and Odoi (20015) on types of marriages in Ghana but contrary to the list of ten (10) types of marriages among the Ewes posited by (Lodonu, 2009).

As to whether there were any issues of divorce and remarriage in their churches, the two pastors unequivocally said no, not even one case of it was recorded in their churches. They were quick to add that it is not because there were no challenges or temptations that demanded divorce or remarriage but our policies, systems (structures) and teachings we receive here prevented them from happening. However, they encountered some normal relationship break-ups and issues of marital conflicts that were resolved quickly.

By way of attestation as to whether no divorce or remarriage cases were recorded in these churches or not, the researcher sought the views of eight (8) members of the two Pastors. They all agreed and confirmed that there is no known or recorded case of divorce or remarriage in their churches once the couples went through the due processes under the tutelage of their Pastors. However, two members from the Lord's Garden Church International said there were some attempts by some former members of their church to divorce each other but had to leave their church to get it done. The couples never returned with this problem. Similarly, a marriage committee member from Fruitful Living Sanctuary was of the view that there were some issues of separation that their spiritual leader was able to handle that did not degenerate into divorce. She also added that remarriage is allowed for members who lost their partners through death that was not caused by them.

Even so, another question directed at the Counsellors/Pastors was to unveil circumstances or conditions under which their churches allow divorce or remarriage. The first interviewee noted that though divorce never happened in his

church, the only situation that can lead to it is “bloody marriage.” That is if there is too much violence in the marriage that can lead to the death of one of the two partners. It can be argued here that what he considers to be too much violence may not be considered by another person as violence. He again said that “Divorce does not happen here because I am plain and firm to people on matters concerning marriage. If I do not see you to be compatible, I do not bless your marriage. You can decide to leave my church if you think I am not fair to you. Some people actually left but later came back.” To him, remarriage can take place after the dissolution of a bloody marriage and if one’s partner dies. There seemed to be a contradiction between what this Pastor said here and what his church members said above. His church members said, some people left the church and never came back. However, there is also the likelihood that his church members were making reference to a particular case as the Pastor was making a general comment.

The second interviewee (one of the Pastors) also had this to say: “There is no room for divorce in my church no matter the reason or the situation.” He strongly believes that divorce happens because of hardness of the heart (un-forgiveness). What he does is to pray for the heart of flesh for his members and teach them how to forgive each other in life generally and also in marriage. Remarriage can only be permitted to those whose partners die when they are still young and willing to remarry.

Ethical/moral implications of divorce and remarriage on the church

Ethics deals with moral principles that govern a person’s behaviour or the conducting of an activity. Christianity or the church has ethical principles to

determine whether a moral decision or action is right or wrong. The researcher therefore asked a question to find out the ethical/moral implications of divorce and remarriage on the churches of the interviewees. The two Counsellors indicated that there is no noticeable ethical or moral implications of divorce and remarriage on their churches since no marriage ended in divorce in their respective churches and if anybody did remarry it should be one whose husband or wife died.

A follow up question sought to know about the ethical and moral implications of divorce and remarriage on society at large since the churches of the interviewees are part of society and people from different churches and walks of life come to them for counselling. The first person in his response indicated that many churches take issues of marriage lightly leading to divorce cases and remarriage in some situations. One thing some church leaders have forgotten is that the family and for that matter marriage is the institution that supplies raw materials (producer of human resources) for the church. In other words, the breakdown of the family affects the church directly.

Again, the truth is not being preached the way it should be by many men of God. Many marriages are going into divorce because of ignorance. The Bible says for lack of knowledge my people perish. He went further to explain that:

A Pastor, who just left my office when you were coming in, is a married man. He just came to me for marital counselling. No matter how anointed you are, if you are married to Jezebel, your ministry and gift could dwindle. He married a divorcee who came with a child from her former marriage. Now she is unable to conceive. The man is growing and his wife is also getting to a stage where biologically she would not be able to give birth. The crux of the issue is that the woman mocks him with her child and society also sees the man as the cause of their infertility because he

never had any child in life before marrying her. When the daughter of this woman came to live with them, it became another issue. This Pastor was so nice to the young lady and his wife started accusing him of having amorous interest in her daughter. Some of these things are no longer secrets to members of his church. How to deal with this complex issue was the reason he came to me for counselling and divine guidance.

One can infer from this story that divorce and remarriage can cause more complex problems for the individual and society. Again, when one succumbs to public opinion or plays his or her marital roles to the gallery, it leads to more disappointing situations. Finally, one who tries to solve a problem he or she does not understand creates more problems than ever.

The other interviewee shared some effects of divorce and remarriage linking them to their ethical and moral implications. According to him, the moment you are involved in divorce or remarriage, you may no longer have the moral right to correct or counsel people because yours is not working. Some people go all the way to consult mediums or for sorcery (juju) to sustain their marriages. Again, some are killing themselves or getting killed because of divorce and remarriage. Some are affected mentally or psychologically. Many more are also going through emotional trauma and pressure from society day in day out (no peace of mind). Many people do not learn anything from their divorce situation; they only blame their ex-partners for everything even as they do what is known as “Biblical text-proof” to see if there is anything in scripture they can use to defend them or support their actions.

Furthermore, God originally designed marriage to be permanent (Gen.2:24). That is why He hates divorce because it violates the blue print design (Mal.2:16; Matt.19:4-6). This means that by the application of the principle of the

lesser evil, God recognises that divorce is sometimes the lesser of two evils. He recognises that because of hardness of the heart (Deut.24:1-4; Matt.19:7, 8).

Furthermore, getting a divorce because of incompatibility is simply trying to correct an earlier problem instead of prolonging it. People are not incompatible by nature; they become by choice. Any human being with wrong principles and morals will find it difficult to live with anybody peacefully in society. Most people who have problems in their marriages either have character defects or are ignorant. Lastly, two good people can have un-reconcilable problems in marriage if they have fundamental problems with adaptation; especially a female who cannot adapt to the man (husband) she is married to. Should the man adapt to the woman to some extent, the likelihood that he becomes the woman in that marriage and the woman the man is very high.

Role of the church in reducing divorce rate in the church and society

According to the Bible (1 Corinthians 12:12-14; Ephesians 4:1-16), the Christian church is referred to as the body of Christ. The church must therefore be seen playing a major role in the reduction of the divorce rate in society. Even so, the researcher made a conscious effort to find out from the interviewees as to what efforts their respective churches made and will be making to prevent or reduce divorce cases in the church/society. The first interviewee said that men of God must cultivate the spirit of truthfulness in teaching their members on marriage. According to him, because of his Radio ministry and teachings on marriage, his church members are not careless about marital issues and who they want to marry. Prayer is also a necessary tool for any marriage to work.

Finally, counselling should not be only done when people are about getting married. We must make it one of the most important aspects of our teachings in our churches today. “Personally, I do organise get-together monthly for married couples in my church where we interact on marital issues. There, we share ideas on marital challenges or conflicts as we pray and look for their possible solutions” he concluded.

The second interviewee also said we must be using sound doctrines and good teachings to guide our members and also to work on the hearts of believers to do away with all wickedness of the heart. “I actually use three books to coach would-be-couples in particular during their counselling periods. These books are: *Model Marriage*, *How to be a strong Christian* and *Born Again*. I am currently working on acquiring a fourth book with the title: *Key facts for New Believers*, to be added to the books I have been using.” According to him, the author of these four books is Bishop Dag Heward-Mills.

He also added that in his church, marital issues are handled on a team work basis. Before any issue is referred to him, it might have gone through a marriage committee of the church. This team work spirit must be in our various churches to be able to minimise drastically cases of divorce and remarriage.

CONCLUSION

The above was the research findings, data analysis and discussions of results on “Christians’ perception on divorce and remarriage in Ghana: a study of selected Christians in Ho-Municipality.” Data analysed and discussed under chapter four of this study, was collected from thirty (30) Christians made up of

ten (10) married people, ten (10) divorcees (for the focus group discussions). On the other hand, two (2) Counsellors/Pastors and eight (8) members of their churches were selected for one-on-one interviews.

The various responses given by the interviewees: the married and divorcees on one hand and Counsellors/Pastors and their church members on the other hand are indicative of the fact that marriage is a lifelong covenant. The married interviewees as well as the Pastors interviewed mentioned that they resolved within themselves and have tried not to break the covenant but keep it to express their acceptance before God and the church and also serve as role models for others to emulate. The divorcees also accepted that divorce leading to remarriage is not God's plan or the best solution to marital problems. All the respondents agreed on one thing, that couples usually seek divorce because of the hardness of their hearts if not ignorance. It was also acknowledged that divorce has a lot of negative effects on the individuals (parents and children; young and old) and society as a whole.

As remedy to these challenges, it was suggested that individuals should be committed to making their marriages work. The church leaders should also come up with good policies on marriage as well as pre-marital and post-marital counselling programmes with sound teachings made available to their church members and the Ghanaian society.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The past two or three decades arguably have witnessed a tremendous and wide-ranging change in the family patterns in Ghana as a result of socio-economic factors such as globalisation, proliferation of media, and urbanism. Some of them seem to be strange to our culture. Amongst these changes are phenomena such as growing number of divorce cases, births out-of-wedlock, and the absence of fathers or mothers leading to single parenthood, and same-sex marriages (Akuamoah, 2013).

Human right issues such as freedom of worship and association and some other unbiblical conditions for divorce seem to be enshrined in the constitution of Ghana. Such issues include the desertion of one's partner, two years separation with consent and couples not living as man and wife for five years according to Act 367 of the constitution. These factors have worsen the situation and limited the religious control the church had on its members in the past in terms of marriage as to what one can do or what he/she cannot do as a Christian. Below are the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

SUMMARY

This study was conducted to explore and uncover the perception of Christians on divorce and remarriage in Ghana as some Christians were selected by means of purposive sampling from the study area (Ho Municipality). This

indeed helped to uncover the reasons, causes and challenges of divorce, the key policies of churches on marriage, ethical implications of divorce and remarriage as well as the role of the individual and the church in curbing the situation.

From the perspective of Christian ethics, this study affirms the view that God is the originator of marriage (Genesis 1:26-27). God made male and female in His own image, and His main purpose for marriage was for companionship (Gen. 2:18, 24-25). Even so, the biblical ethical perspectives do not only offer clear indications of healthy marriage and family life, but also indicated that a Christian attitude in marriage and family life can serve as a remedy for the damage caused by the new trends in our modern society.

Again, God intended marriage to be a lifelong relationship as He frowns on divorce (Matt. 19:6; Mal. 2:16). It is worth noting that divorce has become a common happening or feature in our Ghanaian society today. Throughout history, the beauty of marriage has been stained in all cultures by conflicts or misunderstandings thereby resulting in marriage break ups. The study also underscored the fact that the issue of divorce has now become a universal canker.

Even though there is a dramatic rise in the divorce rate with its problems on the individual and society in recent years which has also affected the Christian community in Ghana, the divorce rate in Ho Municipal seems to be relatively low. It should be noted that the divorce rate in some other parts of the country such as Accra Metropolis, Kumasi Metropolis and Cape Coast Metropolis ranges from about 30% to 40% as against a range of 3.4% in 2010 to 19% in 2018 of Ho Municipal. It, therefore, became very imperative to uncover the perception of

Christians as to why even those who have the responsibility to work on issues of marriage such as Counsellors or Pastors and others in providing counselling services have also been overly burdened with problems of divorce and remarriage, even among those regarded as active members or leaders of their congregations or churches. Some reasons given for the low rate of divorce cases in Ho-Municipal included the following: the high cost of the administrative processes of getting divorced and the issue of compensation (alimony). Again, most customary marriages were not recorded at the District Assembly and such divorce cases could not be traced and captured on their records.

In an attempt to address this issue, the study surveyed the scriptures as presented by scholars to understand what they have to say about marriage, divorce and remarriage. In this, the study looked at the biblical historical and ethical background to the issues of marriage, divorce and remarriage by closely looking at the Mosaic teachings especially of Genesis, the other prophets such as Hosea and Malachi in the Old Testament; and the teachings of Jesus and Paul the Apostle in the New Testament. The biblical background further indicates how the Scripture persistently and consistently upholds marriage as a sacred and a permanent covenant between a man and a woman witnessed and protected by God. It was also observed in this study that marriage as a sacred covenant was effectively used in the Old Testament to portray God's relationship with Israel even though God at a point in time threatened Israel with divorce. In the New Testament, marriage represents Christ's relationship with His church. It

presupposes that He indeed regards and holds in high esteem marriage as a divine and permanent covenant relationship which should not be treated haphazardly.

This study did not seek to devalue any church policy on marriage neither did it seek to undermine the culture of the people of this land or complicate the task of pastoral care and the exercise of Christian discipline within the subject matter of divorce and remarriage. The focus of the study was to highlight not only the possibility of divorce and remarriage cases within the Christian Community, but to investigate the perception of the married, divorcees, and marriage counsellors as well as the attitude of the church towards divorcees, and also to identify conditions under which the church grants divorce and remarriage.

It was revealed in this study that all the respondents had been Christians for 10 or more years with the majority of the divorcees married through ordinance either in the church or in court. It must be noted that one of the divorcees among the respondents was a church leader (supposedly, a Deacon). Varied views were expressed by the divorcees as to why some Christians go in for divorce today. They basically see or understand divorce as freedom from the following: incompatibility, lack of trust, physical or verbal abuse, selfishness (greed), immaturity, low self-esteem, irresponsibility and inability of spouses to get along with in-laws. Surprisingly, only one of the respondents went in for divorce because of marital infidelity (unfaithfulness) which is the only ground on which two believers (not a believer and an unbeliever) according to the Bible particularly the New Testament are allowed to divorce. Since the tragedy of divorce has dire consequence not only on the couples but also on the children and

society, the study also looked at its effects on children and the following were gathered: stigmatisation, living with single parents, lack of parental care or negligence, physical and emotional abuse, financial difficulties and low self-esteem among others. Even so, some of them see remarriage as a solution to divorce especially if infidelity was involved.

The research further showed that churches of the counsellors did not have any well documented policy on divorce and remarriage; perhaps because of their strong position against divorce and remarriage. These churches however relied on the views of their leaders or founders as the standard. The study further indicated that some of the married or divorcee respondents did not engage in any premarital counselling talk-less of post marital counselling just because they did not do church wedding or better still did not go through the acceptable marital rites or processes. This confirms the notion that lack of counselling, not just pre-marital counselling can have negative impact on marriages and can lead to divorce in most cases.

The result of this research further showed that churches of the respondents did not have any support for members who divorce because of their strong position against it. In the light of this, all of the divorcee respondents claimed they divorced without involving their churches and only one informed the church leadership officially after their divorce. This is in contrast to the views of the Counsellors/Pastors who acknowledged that the church did not have any tangible policy regarding divorce and remarriage but added that it never happen in their churches and should it happen they would be prepared to heal the wounds of

hardness of the heart to bring the parties back together as husband and wife. However, one of them noted that he would support divorcees of “bloody marriage.” These pastors were more than convinced and admitted that divorce is a serious issue in many churches today but not as such in their respective churches because of the sound teachings they give on marriage based on the Bible and the existence of pre-marital and post-marital counselling. This has helped their churches not to experience any situation of divorce or remarriage at least for now, they affirmed.

All the counsellors/pastors interviewed asserted that divorcees could be allowed to fully participate in all rituals of their churches if such people (divorcees) were to have been in existence in their churches. They mentioned participation in communion and prayer among others as some of the rituals they could allow them to participate in. However, all the Counsellors/Pastors again said they have never blessed any marriage in their respective churches that ended in divorce.

CONCLUSIONS

The researcher per the results of this study, affirms the biblical view that marriage is a divine (sacred) and permanent covenant witnessed by God Himself. This strongly opposes the secularisation of marriage. Again, based on the analysis and review of data collected from the Ho Municipal Assembly (HMA) and the Magistrate Court in Ho, it can be concluded that the divorce rate is relatively on the ascendancy but still low in this part of the country if compared with some districts in other regions based on the statistical data from: Accra Metropolitan

Assembly (AMA), Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA) and Cape Coast Metropolitan Assembly (CCMA) in Ghana. It has also been established that divorce rate is prevalent among young couples and those who marry during their early ages of adulthood.

It must also be noted that it was difficult for court records to provide the exact percentages of Christian divorce cases only. Even so, it has been established that about 92% of the entire population in the Ho Municipality are Christians (refer to page 100) and some Christian divorcees were married to people belonging to the other religions (Islam and African Traditional Religion) before their divorce occurred. This gives a clear indication that almost all, if not all divorce cases at the Ho District Magistrate Court could be attributed to Christians.

The general perception of Christians in the Ho Municipality based on the results of this research: the married, divorcees and the counsellors/pastors clearly indicated that divorce is considered evil. Findings showed that both the faith and the secular societies must wake up from their slumber and deal with the problem of divorce seriously. This is, on the part of Christians, divorce as well as remarriage (if not caused by the death of one's partner) defeats and defaces the Christian conviction and faith as it blows God's original plan for marriage out of proportion. On the other hand, it defeats our cultural values and social norms and beliefs since divorce leaves in its wake challenges, especially to the couples and their immediate family members because it breaks down the rich family system we once had. The problem of divorce which used to be unusual among Christians

in time past is gradually becoming a normal or an acceptable standard which is threatening the norms of the Christian faith.

More so, the respondents asserted that divorce is not a solution to marital challenges though they indicated varied reasons for divorce. Even so, they admitted that incompatibility, selfishness, low self-esteem, irresponsibility, unfaithfulness, immaturity (being too young to enter into marriage), as well as physical and emotional abuse were the prominent ones. With regard to attitude and support of the church towards divorcees, majority of the divorcees asserted that they did not receive any form of support from the church during and after their divorce while the minority said they received a little support from some leaders in the church in the form of counselling and guidance. The result, therefore, showed that the churches hardly give support to their divorcee members. The researcher is optimistic that based on the suggested views of the respondents, divorce and remarriage can be reduced in churches to their barest minimum. But, pre-marital and post-marital counselling, retreats and seminars, and teachings on marriage and divorce at the various denominational levels for singles, would-be partners and married partners are needed.

From the findings again, it has come to light that the selected churches do not have laid down or official policies, plans and procedures in responding and dealing with the issue of divorce. Moreover, it is also noted that a lot of Pastors and marriage counsellors are ill equipped to handle the issue of divorce in their congregations. Counsellors/pastors who were respondents in this research work from the Lord's Garden Ministry International and Fruitful Living Sanctuary

seemed to be resourceful in terms of counselling even as they have a strong stand against divorce and remarriage but strange enough, one of them accepted divorce on a ground that is rather not biblical: that is a marriage that involves too much physical violence (bloody marriage).

Finally, the study also shows the perception of Christians in Ho-Municipality on divorce and remarriage which is indicative of the fact that marriage is in actuality treated as a sacred and lifelong institution with little or no room for divorce. As such, divorcees are generally not well treated or supported within the church setting and this issue needs to be addressed. Although the generalisation and applicability of this research is limited to some extent, the study has provided insights into the perception of Christians in relation to the problem of rising divorce rates in Ghanaian churches today and provides a basis for further research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Marriage is a sacred institution and should not be easily terminated by divorce in order to uphold God's original standard of lifetime marriage. Looking closely at the findings from this research work, the researcher deemed it fit to give the following recommendations for further research on the perception of Christians on the subject of divorce and remarriage.

The study revealed that the divorcees did not go through sufficient post-marital counselling and teaching in the church on marriage and divorce. It is, therefore, recommended that a study be conducted on the impact of pre-marital

and post-marital counselling on marriage. This study would help to ascertain how effective counselling can be to help sustain Christian marriages.

Pastors and church leaders should be well trained in the Word of God as marriage counsellors. Pastors who have not had formal training should be encouraged to attend Bible Schools. Other church leaders should pursue courses in exegesis and hermeneutics in order to be well equipped for better and accurate understanding and interpretation of the Word of God, especially texts that deal with the issue of divorce. The researcher believes that this will contribute to their knowledge and broaden their horizon in teaching topics on marriage.

In addition, some few respondents indicated that they went through some pre-marital counselling before getting married, yet they have divorced. It would be interesting to carry out a comparative study on pre-marital counselling and post-marital counselling to underscore which type of counselling contributes more effectively to the sustenance of Christian marriages. Counseling should be taken more seriously in the Churches. Emphasis must be laid on both pre-marital and post-marital counselling and this should be done frequently. The researcher is of the view that the church should institute post-marital counselling whereby couples will continue to, at least for the first three years, receive counselling and to get couples to understand why they need to continue to submit themselves to the Word of God. In this regard Christian marriage counsellors in Ghana should organise marriage seminars at regular intervals where married couples and “would be” couples would come and learn.

The church must play a lead role in educating the youth and married couples on issues related to sex. Sex education in marriage must be given much attention during counselling. This will go a long way to help married partners to be satisfied with each other and to avoid extra marital affairs, thereby curbing the issue of divorce. Churches must devote time to teach on marriage as they teach on topics such as deliverance, blessing, salvation, transformation among others.

The study also revealed that despite the effects of divorce on divorcees and children as well as the church and society at large, most churches do not have a policy on divorce and remarriage and some of them that had it did not have it officially documented. It is recommended that churches should have clear and officially documented policies on divorce and remarriage and such policies should be made known to the church members. While most churches were totally against remarriage, it is clear that it is unavoidable as long as divorce continues to exist within the church. The churches need to have a clear policy on the conditions under which remarriage will be allowed. Any Church that would be satisfied that remarriage is justifiable, the couples should be offered participation in divorce recovery programmes in which past failures in marital relationships are honestly addressed. By so doing realities such as guilt, resentment, bitterness, frustration, fear and anger resulting from the previous marriage are not carried over into the next one.

Mature Christians who have been through divorce and have reconsidered the causes of the divorce in their previous marriages and have reconciled themselves with biblical teachings should be used as resource persons in

premarital counselling rather than the church closing its doors on them in the area of leadership roles. In this way, the church can make use of their experiences and God given talents and gifts to help develop others within the church. They are possibly and invaluable resources to help stem the tide of divorce in the church and society today.

The youth in the church or society should be taught to know that building a successful and satisfying marriage entails commitment and handwork. They should not take marriage lightly but must stand in direct opposition to any neo-cultural standard or ideology which destroys the sanctity of marriage and provides convenient excuses to quit when things become tough. They should also be encouraged to establish themselves in their chosen professions before making marriage commitments so as to minimise the incidents of divorce among young couples. This is because when one is not ready for marriage or uses the wrong approach or reason to enter into one, the likelihood of this marriage ending in divorce is high. In view of this, the issue of high cost of marriage must be addressed by the church in its entirety as church leaders must be deeply involved. This is because many marriages that have lasted long were not because the couples were rich or were people who made their marital rites glamorous. Making ones marriage simple and less expensive should be encouraged by the church. Churches in one locality or community could also organise mass marriage (wedding) ceremonies for young couples. This, in my candid opinion, shall drastically reduce the high cost of wedding ceremonies and its lasting effects on the sustainability and longevity of marriages today.

Finally, in the light of the increasing rate of divorce, which is becoming a social issue for both the church and the state due to its effects, the state should support or fund the work of researchers in the area of divorce and remarriage in Ghana to bring ideas that will help alleviate the issue of divorce. It is also recommended that the state should take interest in training Pastors and church leaders to develop continual habit and interest in their members especially married couples within their churches and fellowships and create an atmosphere that allows couples to share and discuss issues affecting their marriages. The clergy should make it a point to encourage married couples to stay united in love, forgiving each other by maintaining principles of marriage enshrined in the Bible.

Suggestions for Further Study

For further study in this area, it is suggested that a larger sample size from different churches be used so as to increase the generalisation of the findings. Again, it is suggested that female pastors and traditional leaders should be considered for a better gender balance for any future study.

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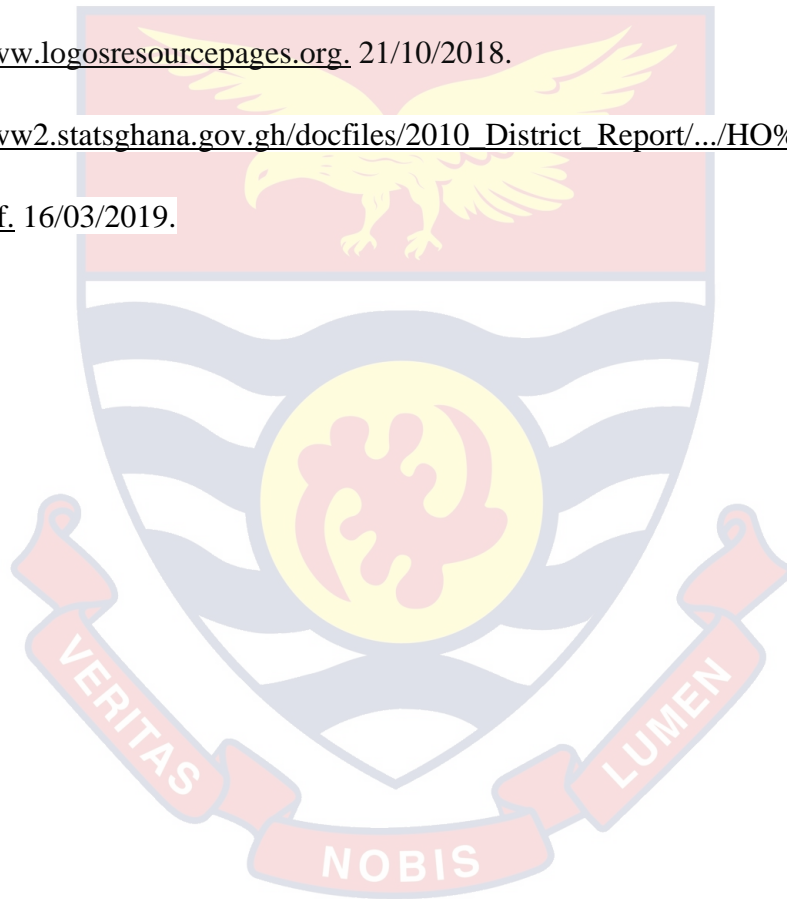
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS (PERSONAL CONVERSATIONS)

Lawyer Gordon Akpadie - Native of Ho and Law Lecturer at Accra Technical University, Accra.

Madam Rose Bansah - Deaconess, Assemblies of God Church & Former Presbyter, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Sokode.

Mr. David Deku - Former Registrar of District Magistrate Court, Ho.

Mr. Gabriel Monyo - Current Registrar of District Magistrate Court, Ho.

Mr. Joy Degbadzor - Former Volta Regional Manager of the defunct Gold Coast Securities, Ho.

Rev. E.K. Kpogo - Head Pastor, Assemblies of God Church, Sokode.

Togbe Adintsri - Fiaga of Sokode-Gbogame.

Togbe Adza Kodzo III - Fiaga of Ziavi Lume.

Togbe Gbeku Yao - Chief of Hiheve/Nkuasi (now the late).

Tsiami Afram - Chief Linguist of Ziavi-Lume.

APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION AND HUMAN VALUES

I am a student of the above institution and this interview guide is designed to research on “Christians’ Perception on Divorce and Remarriage in Ghana: A study of selected Christians in Ho-Municipality.” This research is purely for academic purpose, answers given therefore shall be treated confidentially.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

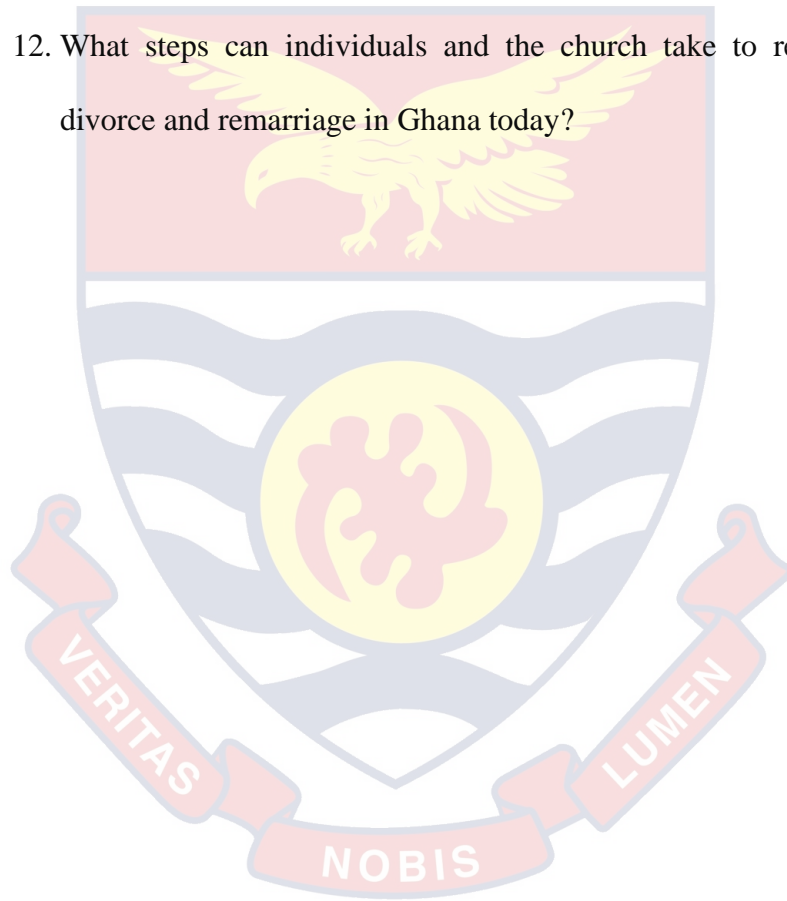
A: QUESTIONS FOR THOSE IN MARRIAGE ONLY

1. Which situations in marriage do you think will make divorce necessary?
2. Will you remain single in case your marriage ends in divorce? Give reasons if Yes or No.
3. What is the Bible’s position on divorce and remarriage?
4. In which instances will divorce and remarriage be considered right or wrong?
5. How can individuals and the church help in reducing the divorce rate in your area today?

B: QUESTIONS FOR DIVORCEES ONLY

6. Did you go through marriage counselling at any point before or during your marriage or divorce?
7. What were some of the factors that led to your divorce?
8. What is your personal view on divorce and remarriage as at now?

9. Did your church's policy/teaching on divorce influence your decision to seek divorce?
10. Was it or would it be easy to get the Church's consent to remarry? Give reasons if Yes or No.
11. How did the divorce affect you at church, your family and society at large?
12. What steps can individuals and the church take to reduce the rate of divorce and remarriage in Ghana today?



APPENDIX C

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION AND HUMAN VALUES

I am a student of the above institution and this interview guide is designed to research on “Christians’ Perception on Divorce and Remarriage in Ghana: A study of selected Christians in Ho-Municipality.” This research is purely for academic purposes, answers given therefore shall be treated confidentially.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PASTORS/COUNSELLORS

1. Are you officially married?
2. How old is your marriage and how long have you been a counsellor?
3. Which type of marriage did you engage in? (Customary/ Ordinance/ Church wedding)
4. Does your church have policies on marriage and divorce? Give details if Yes or No.
5. Are divorcees allowed to fully participate in every ritual of the church? (e.g. communion). Give reasons if Yes or No.
6. In your view, what is the Bible’s position on divorce and remarriage?
7. Do you have any issues of divorce and remarriage in your church?
8. Under what circumstances/conditions does your church allow divorce or remarriage?
9. What are the ethical/moral implications of divorce and remarriage on your church?

10. What efforts is your church making to prevent or reduce divorce cases in your church/society?

