

GKS MARRIAGE PROCEDURE

(Being a Paper by the Marriage Council of God's Kingdom Society – the Church of the Living God – Presented by Brother Patrick O. Ekireghwo, General Secretary, GKS, at the Marriage Seminar held in various Branches of the Church, 2007)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Hail Jehovah and Jesus Christ!

May glory, honour and profound thanks be to JEHOVAH, the Architect of the Universe, through His beloved Son Jesus Christ our Redeemer for His manifold blessings we enjoy daily and for this opportunity He has afforded us once again, to share his word in this Marriage Seminar with the Theme: **“The Essentials of a Successful Marriage”**.

May I also place on record my appreciation and gratitude to the Executive Board for the privilege given me to present this paper on behalf of the Marriage Council of the Church titled: “GKS MARRIAGE PROCEDURE”.

It could be recalled that during the Marriage Seminar which took place last year (2006), a paper titled: **“Understanding the GKS Marriage Rule”** was presented along with others. In that paper, the rudiments of the GKS Marriage Rules were clearly spelt out with comments by the grace of God.

In this paper with the title: **“GKS MARRIAGE PROCEDURE”**, the Marriage Council has decided to narrow down and elucidate on the application of the rules toward achieving a better understanding by the grace of God. Indeed, it has been observed that lack of in-depth understanding of the GKS Marriage Procedure has made some to falter and get themselves in direct conflict with the standing rules of the Church about Marriage. The Holy Scriptures say: “Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good”. It also says: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...” – Read Proverbs 19:2; Hosea 4:6.

By way of definition, **“Marriage”** is the legal union of a man and a woman as husband and wife. According to the Holy Scriptures, the Almighty God instituted marriage to:

1. Provide companionship and help to each other;
2. To fulfill the divine mandate of procreation, and
3. To serve as a safeguard against sexual immorality (fornication and adultery) – Genesis 2:18,21-24; 1:26-28; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5 etc).

“Procedure”, on the other hand, is defined in the *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* as “the official or formal order or way of doing something”.

From the above definitions, it could be understood that this paper is aimed at highlighting the formal order or way of processing Marriages in the God's Kingdom Society (*the Church of the Living God*). It goes without saying that the GKS Marriage Rule which forms the foundation for the GKS Marriage Procedure will be quoted exhaustively in this paper.

The Procedure

1. The GKS Marriage Rule says that any brother who wishes to marry should approach the Marriage Committee, which is the Administrative Committee in his branch to indicate his intention and to get advice and guidance in the Lord. Processes of Marriage proposals are to be handled by the Marriage Committee of the Branch where the proposed husband or suitor resides and NOT otherwise.

Note: *The aim of this is for the home Committee to monitor the consummation of the marriage as to continue to give necessary guidance and counseling by God's grace. Scriptures say: "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" – Proverbs 11:14; 24:6.*

2. Satisfied that the brother/suitor is of marriageable age and has the means to cater for a family, the Marriage Committee will then advise him to go and look for a wife. On finding one, he should return to inform the Marriage Committee. The Committee will, in turn, give a date for the proposed wife to be brought before her after which the suitor will be advised to get the consent of the spinster's parents or guardians.

Note: *A faithful or God-fearing brother will not have sex with a spinster before approaching her parents to seek their consent and when the marriage has not been approved, as to do so is a sin. No faithful spinster with knowledge and understanding of the law of God will accede to sexual relationship with her suitor without the consent of her parents and, more importantly, the approval of the Marriage Council for the marriage proposal. A spinster who allows herself to be defiled by indulging in pre-marital sex with her suitor is guilty of fornication and disrespect for her parents – whose prerogative it is to give her out in marriage. (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; Leviticus. 19:3; Ephesians. 6:1-3; Genesis 1:24; etc.) Thus, a suitor-brother is required to show or give full respect to the parents or guardians of his would-be wife.*

Some brothers are reported to have refused to marry sisters they had earlier proposed marriage to because such sisters refused to be lured into pre-marital sex with them. All such brothers should repent thoroughly because such rejection is sinful. Sisters who find themselves in this category should rejoice because they did well; it is a sign that the brothers in question are not fit mates for them. When the right man comes, whom God will give to them, he will take good care of them by His grace.

3. On getting their consent, the suitor and the spinster will appear before the Marriage Committee for interview, admonitions and counseling. The Marriage Committee will invite the spinster's parents or guardians to be satisfied that the marriage proposal has their full support.

Note: *The appearance of the parents/guardians of the proposed wife before the Marriage Committee is vital. It adds weight and family backing to the proposal. Effort should therefore be made by those concerned to accomplish it. In a situation where aged parents and long distance are involved, any representative(s) of the spinster's family living close to the Branch can appear before the Committee to express verbal consent to the proposed Marriage.*

4. At this stage, the suitor and the proposed wife will fill a Marriage Questionnaire Declaration Form to be attached to the Marriage Committee's letter of recommendation and dispatched to the Marriage Council at the GKS Headquarters.

Note: *Non-member suitors are to fill a different form titled "SUITOR" which includes an UNDERTAKING by the suitor. It is aimed at protecting the religious faith of our marriageable sisters forced by circumstance to marry non-members.*

Names of three Referees are required in the Marriage Forms. Guidelines for choosing them include the following:

- i. Family members and/or in-laws not acceptable as Referees.
- ii. Same Referees(s) by both parties not acceptable.
- iii. Non-members of GKS must not be chosen – whether they are Adamic relations or not.
- iv. Referees can be chosen from another branch of the Church if matured members are few in the branch where the parties reside, or if one chooses to do so for good reasons.

The fact that, in some cases, all information the proposed couple require in filling their Marriage Questionnaire/Declaration Forms may not be readily available, they are free to take them home, complete and return them to the Marriage Committee in the earliest possible time for appropriate attention.

5. Proposed Marriage partners should do Blood Tests to ascertain their compatibility in Genotype and Blood Group and are free from blood-borne diseases. For full documentation, photostat copies of Laboratory Results of the intending couple's Blood Tests must, in addition to filling it in the spaces provided in the Marriage Forms, be attached to completed Forms for submission to the Marriage Council.
6. Before the Marriage Committee makes recommendation to the Marriage Council, it must be satisfied that:
 - (i) The brother and sister are of marriageable age.
 - (ii) Both parties have the fear of God and they love themselves and are willing to be married for life as husband and wife in the Church of God.
 - (iii) They are not close blood relations (Leviticus 18:9).
 - (iv) They have performed blood tests to ensure that they are a compatible pair.
 - (v) The contracting parties have an appreciable degree of faith and understanding which must be seen in their conduct and works as evidence.
7. **COURTSHIP:** This is the time when future couple-to-be should seriously study each other to know if they would be fit mates for the life – long union called marriage. Courtship lasts from when both parents and the Administrative Committee give their consent to the marriage proposal till the approval is given by the Marriage Council. The duration of courtship varies from one case to another according to circumstances.

It is important to point out that the period of courtship also enables partners-to-be know more about the different families to which they are going into. What to look for should include religious beliefs, medical history, social inclination, and so on.

8. On receipt of letter of approval from the Marriage Council, the Marriage Committee will invite the couple for the last time to inform them of the approval. They are further counseled, admonished and charged. The Committee, at this stage, request to know from the proposed couple the type of ceremony they have chosen to celebrate their marriage – whether Church Wedding or Traditional Marriage ceremony or both. The proposed husband, in particular, is advised to pay the stipulated dowry and bride-price according to native law and custom. The celebration of the marriage then follows without delaying unnecessarily, so that the couple can start living together accordingly by the grace of God.

NON-MEMBER MARRIAGE

9. We encourage members to marry within the fold. If a brother does not see any girl he likes in his branch, he should make effort to go to other branches to look for one with the godly advice, guidance or help of elders in the branch. If he does not succeed then he is free to make his choice from outside the fold but he must consult the Marriage Committee for advice and direction in the Lord. He must be sure that the girl he wishes to marry is of good character and MUST accept the GKS Faith and be attending service and other assemblies of the Church before the marriage proposal is recommended for approval.
10. If a spinster sees no brother of her choice or no brother approaches her for marriage, then she should be allowed to marry a man who is not a member of GKS, but on the ground that, the man accepts the GKS Faith. This must be impressed on the suitor before he is brought to the Marriage Committee by the sister. The suitor will declare his acceptance of the Faith before the marriage will be allowed or approved. The spinster-sister may reject any non-GKS suitor who declines the invitation of the Marriage Committee to declare his acceptance of the GKS Faith. The sister must avoid sexual dealing with the man before the approval of the marriage.

Note: *The non-GKS suitor accepting the GKS Faith involves:*

- (1) *accepting to be attending regular meetings and assemblies of the Church;*
- (2) *promising not to interfere with the faith of the wife. Our sisters have an important role to play here - they are expected to talk and encourage the suitor in advance to accept the GKS Faith before coming to the Marriage Committee.*

To marry an unbeliever is dangerous. The party who is a believer faces the risk of apostatizing or compromising his/her faith. Marriage with unbelievers is forbidden in the Holy Bible. (Deut. 7:3,4; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 1 Corinthians 7:39). It landed King Solomon in trouble. (Nehemiah 13:23-27. See also Ezra 10:13,14). We do not allow interfaith in any shape or form. – Amos 3:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:22.

Much as the laws against marriages with non-members are expressly stated in the Holy Bible, the effect of the grace brought by Jesus Christ makes it to be allowed by God's grace. – John 1: 17; Proverbs 2:10; Psalm 112:5.

Admonition

- i. A GKS spinster, who has not got a husband to marry in the Church should not rush or be in haste to marry a non-member husband. She should put her salvation, which is paramount, into consideration and exercise faith in God. Patience is a Christian virtue that is also required of such young sisters. The Holy Bible enjoins waiting on God and His time in all our hearts' desires. – Read Psalms 37:3-7, 27:14.

- ii. Brothers and sisters in search of partners or who are proposing marriage must pray fervently to God for guidance on right choice.
 - iii. Members should not marry for carnal reasons like wealth, education, social status, beauty or ethnic background. These are carnal. The important things to consider are good character; adorned with faith, knowledge, fear of God, and so on.
11. After approval has been given to a marriage by the Marriage Council through the Marriage Committee, it is then the couples can formally contract the marriage by either native law and custom or wedding in the Church.

Note: *In whatever form the couple chooses to celebrate their marriage, there should not be anything indecent or sinful. The wedding date should not be too long after approval has been given to the marriage. If before the wedding the bride becomes pregnant, then she must not come before the altar for solemnization of the marriage. We encourage those who want to wed or have their marriages solemnized to restrain themselves or keep themselves chaste till wedding day.*

12. In wedding invitation cards and programmes, it should be written that the brother weds the sister, and not vice versa. In other words, we can say for example “Peter weds Mary”; NOT “Mary weds Peter”.

The couple and their train are required to be punctual to the marriage service.

13. During marriage arrangements and occasions, members should avoid such things as pouring of libations in honour of the dead or ancestors, bachelors’ eve; kissing and use of wedding rings during the wedding service and music groups that do not belong to the Church.

Note: *There is nothing spiritually wrong in Marriage Couples using ring as ornament of dressing after their Church Wedding Ceremony. As stated above, it should not be part of the ceremony. – Luke 15:20-22; Romans 4:15.*

14. Joint Marriages, that is, solemnization of two or more marriages at a time is allowed in the GKS. However, the Marriage Reception may be held separately if the couples so desire.
15. GKS Members should be preferred as Chairmen of Reception, Masters of Ceremony (MCs), Movers of Vote of Thanks, Cake designers and other important functions to avoid embarrassment from non-members who, sometimes, use pentecostal and other spiritually inexpedient languages in our gatherings.
16. The bride’s wedding gown and the dresses of those in the bridal train should conform to the proper order of the GKS dress code – i.e. no exposures of the body and hair; they should not be tight, short and transparent.
17. On Native Law and Custom ceremony, the practice where-by the bride is made to sit on the laps of the bridegroom, and at another stage, kneeling down before the parents or family heads for blessing are not acceptable to the GKS Faith. Scriptures say that things may be lawful but they may not be expedient. – 1 Corinthians 10:23; 6:12.
18. Marriage celebrants should observe moderation in planning for the ceremony. They should avoid extravagant or unnecessarily over-blown celebrations. Scriptures say that our

moderation should be known unto all men. – Philippians 4:5.

Registry Marriage: Marriage in the Registry by GKS members is not encouraged. If a couple decides on their own to go and contract their marriage in the Registry, they should be told the implications. If any unpleasant legal complications, which we do not pray for, later erupts in the marriage, the Church will not be involved in any way.

Trial Marriage: Trial marriage is the practice of two unmarried persons living together like husband and wife and without any reference to the Marriage Committee. This is unchristian and it is sinful. What the Holy Bible enjoins is out-right marriage, NOT trial marriage. (Hebrews 13:4).

Note: *Trial marriages often break up causing feelings of guilt, emotional pains, stress, disappointments, reproach, possible spreading of venereal diseases, vexation of spirit and so on.* Moreover, it is an immoral act that can lead one to everlasting destruction. (1 Corinthians 6:9,10; Galatians 5:19-21; etc)

May God Almighty Father – JEHOVAH – the Maker of man bless all those who do His will by His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thank you.

Issued by:

**The Executive Board
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Salem City, Warri.**