

Your In-laws are not Your Enemies!A case for family unity

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There is a phenomenon that is so common in marriages that some have unconsciously accepted it as normal. It has come to be expected that a wife will mistreat her husband's siblings and mother-in-law especially, and vice versa. All other extended family members also are treated by the wife mostly as intruders, while the in-laws see her as the obstacle to them getting any help from their brother, uncle etc. Before you crucify me for saying this, I know, believe and hold on to the word of God that says, "A man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and the two of them shall become one." One, I believe in everything pertaining to their lives pre-marriage. These include but not limited to; heart, body, money, property, good relationships and more. Marriage therefore is the unifying entity.

In many world cultures, when you get married to a woman, she is supposed to become a member of your extended family. In those days, the woman is even brought into the large family house where she must integrate or find life very unpleasant. Some women therefore develop a defensive attitude to protect themselves against oppression from in-laws. What has always intrigued me is the fact that if you are a wife to someone, you are also most assuredly an in-law to another person or aspiring to be. The circle of strife must be broken!

The case in question is this; each woman must make up her mind to uphold the word of God that tells us to "do unto others as you would they do unto you." If you are treating someone with respect and all they do is treat you with disdain, there usually comes a breaking point. Take for instance, if you visit your married brother or cousin and look forward to having a good time with his wife and children, then find out that from the minute you step in the door you are being marginalized, the atmosphere becomes electric. The sign in the air is, "keep off, they have come again!" "They have come to interfere, they have come to take from us

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" What happens then is that you retreat into your shell, and anyone can predict the outcome of that visit. I must say here too that there are in-laws who come prepared for war, whereas the wife has no negative intentions. If you are the kind of woman whose attitude is a terror to the wives of the men in your family, it is time to look inwards and know that what goes round comes around. You probably have a daughter too

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who you pray to have a settled home, and if your attitude is bad, your daughter's will probably be too because the apple does not fall far from the tree.

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Someone that comes to mind from the Bible is Ruth, the Moabite who became the wife of Boaz. Many people have repeated and continue to repeat Ruth's reply to her mother-in-law Naomi when she told her to go back to her people after her husband's death. Hear this, "Entreat me not to leave you, or turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge, Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried" (Ruth 1:16). I am sure that there was a lot of love flowing between the two so much so that Ruth could not bear to be parted from her. The decision brought her enviable blessings from God.

Some traditions need to be abolished. I heard the story of a woman whose husband died and the in-laws came and took everything from her and her children, while she was left to fend for herself and train her children. I am wondering; do those in-laws have in-laws too? What would they do if such a thing happens to them? The Bible says, "Love your neighbor as yourself." It brings unity that makes achieving high easier. It enhances the prosperity of the whole family which the Lord delights in.

Rev. Grace Eledan is the founder of Women Aflame International, a ministry established to mobilize Women to evangelize. The ministry is involved in Youth empowerment and the ministry of Help to Orphans, Widows and families in need through its entity Grace Relief Initiatives International. Grace also Pastors along with her husband @ Leaders' Church International.