

# STAGES OF RELATIONSHIP

Sylvester Onyemalechi

Every relationship passes through many stages of development to mature into marriage. No relationship reaches intimacy the same day it starts; it takes time to build up confidence and reach intimacy. These stages are worth studying to find what stage your relationship is right now, why some relationships never make it and how to get to the level of intimacy that is required for marriage to be consummated and succeed.

## 1. Acquaintance stage

This is the first stage in human relationship where one gets to meet or introduced to someone. Acquaintance speaks of casual knowledge of someone. To be acquainted with someone is to know someone slightly. The person cannot be said to be a real friend but an acquaintance. This type of relationship is not hinged on anything. It is just a casual knowledge of the person. Though an acquaintance may have an agenda, but at this time, all intentions are still concealed and not revealed for it will be premature to reveal such. Every relationship though by revelation must pass through this stage.

## 2. The Suspicion stage

As one starts thinking of drawing closer based on his or her positive observations about his new acquaintance, the relationship moves to the next stage. In this stage, one starts collecting information by asking many questions, so that proper relationship can be built. This suspicion stage is the stage where we as humans make up our minds if we are going to be willing to walk in relationship with our acquaintance or not.

Suspicion stage is a time to tread softly. It is a time we doubt the genuineness of the intentions of the person coming close to us. Suspicion stage is a stage of cautiousness as we attempt to give the relationship a trial. During this stage, personal information is slowly and cautiously released to your new friend. It is a time of judging the intentions of your new friend and watching and studying every word, expressions and actions to be sure he or she is real and have no hidden agenda, or can be trusted. It is a time of clearing all doubts and attempt to build confidence.

It is very important that we all go through this stage so that we don't find ourselves going back through it at a time when commitment is needed and not questions. All agreements and details have to be worked out in this stage so that proper relationship can take place. What we do wrong is we try to walk straight in to the next stage too early, which is the Confidence stage. By doing so we have not built the foundation of our relationships that comes only from the information gained in the Suspicion stage.

Until trust is established and all doubts about the sincerity and genuineness of heart cleared, it is not advisable to share very intimate things about your life journey so far. Many who have gone contrary to this rule ended up regretting it. It is a little at a time as the relationship develops by each passing day, and sincerity of heart more visible. Time reveals all things. With time hidden things in the heart and the past life of someone becomes revealed and no longer a secret. There are problems that are associated with this stage of development:

- a. The person becomes tired, bored and discouraged by the suspicion and the prolonged delay in gaining the confidence of the one he or she is seeking a relationship with - The waiting time is too long, as a result, no longer interested.
- b. Over-suspicion of the interested person leading to greater difficulty in trusting and embracing the relationship offered which if allowed will be the best thing that happened in his or her life.
- c. Unwilling to open up to encourage the seeker to draw closer – no “green light” to continue.
- d. Sharing too much too soon when not yet sure the person wants the relationship, leading to serious heart break, mental and emotional torture when it is discovered the person is not ready to continue and the information given being used against you.

### **3. Confidence stage**

This is the stage where faith in the relationship is established and waxing stronger by the day seeing the sincerity of the heart of the new friend and the possibility of success of the relationship. Confidence is the assurance arising from the appreciation of your ability and that of your friend to make the relationship work. The confidence stage is the stage where we begin to walk in proper relationship with the one we love having passed the suspicion stage. In the Confidence Stage, we are not so suspicious or critical, but we have gotten enough information that we can trust even when we do not have a full understanding of the person we are in relationship with. At this point, we are able to move beyond the alarms that would go off if we were walking in a lesser relationship.

The confidence stage is the stage where we are able to confide in each other and share deep things and about our past, present and future dreams and aspirations. It is a stage where secrets are revealed and shared in loving trust. At this time, more time is being spent together, and one is happy to let every important person in his or her life know about the relationship.

There is a warfare that goes on in this stage. It is meant for us to live in this stage, but the devil tries to push us forward or backward. We can't allow him to take us backward in to the suspicion stage, causing us to become immature in our relationships.

### **4. Intimacy stage**

As confidence is developed the relationship gets closer and deeper till it becomes intimate. Intimacy speaks of a very close friendship. The level of confidence in this stage of relationship is very high. There are no secrets between the lovers and they are very fond of each other. For those who do not know God they practice physical intimacy (sex) though they are not yet married. Sex is only to be practiced within marriage. But for the true Christian, intimacy in relationship before marriage does not include sex. It is the deep trust and openness to each other in close friendship.

Intimacy is having a detailed knowledge of the person you are in relationship with - A detailed knowledge resulting from a close or long association or study. Intimacy is being closely knit to another. It is being committed to another in relationship without reservation.

Your relationship must strive to achieve intimacy to guarantee marital success and happiness. Many young people rush into marriage and suffer terribly without achieving intimacy. Intimacy not achieved in courtship can never be achieved in marriage. Intimacy is possible between two people when they are compatible and are willing to work on themselves to establish the bond and unity that is required to succeed in marriage.

Examine your relationship to know what stage you are right now and identifying what you are doing wrong, why things are the way they are and how to move forward in your relationship to achieve your heart desire. Attempting to do in stage one what you are supposed to do in stage three or four will bring you untold complications and heart break. You must wait for the right time. Maturity is revealed in ability to understand the times. Knowing what stage you are and how to relate within that stage is maturity. Grow and become mature.