**Phillip (LD Marriage) | Duration: 47:14**

I: Tell me about where you were born, who you are and a little bit about how you grow up… how you grew up rather.

P: Okay, my name is Phillip Mayiee Jeti from Kakamega County. I was brought up by my grandmother until I finished school, Standard 8, that was 1992.

I: Eh, hee, you are a very old man.

You must have experienced a lot.

P: Yes. So life was a little bit difficult but I thank God. We moved in with my grandmother who only one leg due to an accident. So, it was a little bit tough but we moved on.

I: Were you an only child or do you have brothers and sisters?

P: I had my sister who is… who is the second born, then the other two sisters lived with their auntie.

I: Aha.

I: So, you lived ... grew up seperately?

P: Yes, separate, yes.

I: And at what stage did you start your own family? How old were you? Where were you?

P: I started my family.. got married back in 2001, but by then my wife... we already had one child., who was born in 1997.

I: So you knew about the child?

P: Yeah, I knew about the child. There was no need for us to live seperately.

I: Okay, and how old were you at that time, when you got married?

P: When I got married, I was… okay, I was born 1975.

I:Eh... Let us do the math qiuckly.

P: Yes.

I: Let's say you are in your 20’s.

P: Yes. I got married in my 20s, and that is how we are at our fourth child.

I: So, where were you living your life together those early days?

P: I came to nairobi in 1997. Husstled for a while, got married, Got to a point we decided Nairobi was too expensive. After some time my family had to go back to my ancestral home, but I had to stay in Nairobi.

I: How did you make the decision to move your family seeing as you already had a child?

P: The decision to move was in 2006 and we already had our second child. My family moved to my ancestral home where I had acquired a piece of land. They went there to develop and manage the new land. Now, because we were building and trying to maintain the piece of land, I thought it would be easier for my wife to be there and oversee everything, because it was now our place and a little distance from my ancestral home.

I: According to you, what does family mean to you?

P: Family to me is good, because it changes the way you think, and makes you focus. You become responsible because now you have people to take care of.

I: What did you learn from your grandmother when you were younger that has shaped you and your mentality regarding family?

P: My grandmother was a nice person, she taught me how to cook.

I: Super. So what can you cook?

P: Yes. Two, because my father passed on in 1986, she taught me how to be strong and persistent in life. I learnt so much from her and my grand father, mostly to never give up and be strong.

I: So, tell me about your family members, your kids, wife. Your immediate family.

P: I have four kids. The first one was born in 1997, there is a bit of an age gap as the second child was born in 2004. The third one was born in 2012.

I: Eh, you clearly had a plan.

P: Yeah, 2012. Then the last one, 2020.

I: Ai, 2020! Phillip! okay, eh, champion father. Wow, you have spaced them really well.

P: Yeah.

I: Were you concious about family planning or did it just happened?

P: Yah, it was mostly family planning, yes.

I: That’s very good. Now that your family is in Kakamega and you work in Nairobi, how do you manage? How did you handle living separately from your family?

P: It took a while, from 2006 until… until 2017. It was tough, because…

I: 11 years.

P: Yah, it was tough for me because my wife and kids are together but I am in Nairobi. I used to go there once or twice per week… no, twice per month or once per month. So, I really tried to be consistent. I had to go to and fro as I work from Nairobi. Two, it was a challenge to me because there were things to be done as well. I get home, my family is eager to see me, but my thoughts are more on the development of the home. So sometimes there was conflict.

I: Expectations.

P: Sometimes you don't think, yah. So, that was a very big challenge. Two, my family used to visit during school holidays but I had little time to spend with them. I used to get home from work a bit late. So, because of my work schedule I didn't spend as much time with my family as I would like and they were around for a very short time.

I: Yah.

P: So, it was a challenge but we had to manage. I talked to my kids often, give them hope and make sure they are okay. Also talking to them gave me hope and strength as well.

I: Yah.

P: So, I challenged myself. I had planned on visiting them once a month but just from the conversation with them I got eager to see them more often, so I went more often.

I: What was your drive? Did you miss them alot, want to spend time with them? What made you go there so often?

P: I love children. I wanted to spend time with them, my family. Two, I really wanted to be together with my family so I am not a stranger to my own kids. Also, talking to them, going to see them so they know who I am.

I: That you are their father.

P: Yes, so they know that… I’m the father.

I: Yah, that’s very important. It’s very interesting, I want to know how you raised your kids. For example, between yours and your wife's careers, how do you instil discipline, good values? How did you manage?

P: When it comes to discipline and raising them… okay, I play my part as a father and their mother plays her part as well. We have always agreed to raise our kids together in a respectful environment. Kids will make mistakes, sometimes against their mother and other times against me.

I: What do you mean? What is the difference?

P: Sometimes their mother has given them chores in the kitchen but then they don't do it. When it gets to that I don't intervene. I let my wife handle it seeing as she assigned the tasks. I respect whatever form of discipline she doles out. After that, I have a conversation with the guilty party to explain the reason they are being punished and to learn respect.

I: So, you come in with the advise?

P: I come in between as a bridge. I don't want a situation where either of them doesn't feel seen or heard.

I: It’s true, you have a nice balance.

P: Yah. My wife reciprocates when the tables are turned.

I: So, you share responsibilities?

P: Yes we do as we move along.

I: At least there is a parent to talk to after all is said and done.

P: Eh, but at the end of the day you explain that what they did was wrong and that is why they are being punished.

I: Yah.

P: So, that is how we have been raising them.

I: What about the heavier decisions, for example, building, adding to the family? Between you and your wife, who brought them up more?

P: I propose some of my ideas then my wife advises on why it would be a good or bad idea and vice versa. I propose most of the main decisions in the family and my wife backs me up. Before I make a decision I ask for her opinion. Sometimes we agree, other times we disagree, but I make the main decisions.

I: Na…

P: Because when you come in a family, your parner's thought process might differ from yours, they might not see your vision. The person with the most focus makes the decision most of the time.

I: So, in this same dynamic in your family, do you and your wife share financial responsibilities?

P: I handle most of the financial responsibilities, while she manages/oversees everything else. Most of the time you find a situation where both parties have not communicated to each other and want different things. We talk about everything and agree so everyone can play their part accordingly. Communication is key.

I: So, you both agreed to the kind of marriage you want?

P: Yah.

I: how did you do it? How did you start? Where were you?

P: It started in Nairobi. Alot of people meet in church or through friends but we met on the street. I was just walking and saw her. I thought she was beautiful, struck up a conversation and we became friends. From 1997 to 2000. When we got married, we had been in a relationship for a long time. I was not ready to get married but then I was diagnosed with TB.

I: Wow.

P: So, it was difficult to walk because my feet were swollen and had trouble breathing. I used to get to the house after a long day of work, in pain, wanting to rest. Sometimes I didn't even have the energy to cook for myself. So, I figured, part of the reason people get married is so you have someone to be with you through tough times. That is how I made a decision after I recovered. I wanted to get married and she was the person closest to me, so I married her.

I: You told me you sat down and talked about the kind of marriage you both wanted.

P: Then yah… We talked. I remember it wasn't like a story. 1 month into the relationship, we sat down and discussed our expectations of being together, what would work for us, likes and dislikes. We finally came to an understanding.

I: Until…

P: We also talked about our limits. Where to draw the line and not cross each other's boundaries. After that we moved on.

I: So you agreed, then decided to live together and build a house. Did you have another conversation about you working in Nairobi while the family moves to Kakamega ?

P: Yes we did. It was not a hard decision to make. I told them I had bought a piece of land in Kakamega and we had to hire someone to oversee its development. My wife actually proposed to do it because she was unemployed at that time, she lost the job when we got a child. She managed everything that was going on in the homestead. I used to try my best to go see the family,and when she got a chance she came to Nairobi to see me. That is how we operated, but Iwas the one who went most of the time.

I: Yah.

P: She used to come once in a while

I: I think it helped because you had a bike.

P: Yah, in fact, I remember there was a time I hadn't planned on going home, but I left work and went home. I just got a feeling that I needed to get home, I didn't have enough money. So it was around 4. I was just thinking, what do I do? I didn't have money but my heart is telling me to go home. So I just fuelled the motorbike and left. It was almost 5 and I went very well, by 11 I had gotten home.

I: Was that the first time?

P: It was the fourth time, so I had experience with the highway, so I got home.

I: Isn't that so far?

P: It is…

I: That is almost 6 hours on the road.

P: It's 395 kilometres. So, I got home safe. There was a time I left here around 2 O' Clock, when I got to Naivasha it started raining. It rained the whole way till I got home still on the motorbike.

I: Weh.

P:I got home soaked. I remember my wife crying, that I was going to die on the road coming to see the family.

I: Oh.

P:But I had the spirit to go see howmy family was doing. So that is how we have been. So between Nairobi we had sat down and agreed, yah.

I: So in your personal life and family, where does church come in?

P: Church has been an important lesson. In fact when we were dating I used to go to church. So I remember there was a time she came to my house, I had given her the key. She comes to the house with her keys..... Sometimes I am busy with church errands till late in the evening and at that time we did not have phones. I get home and things have been done, clothes have been washed, the house cleaned and I know, oh, someone was around. So church has been a pillar. I have been raised in the church and still attend to date.

I: What do you mean till to date? Do you still go to church?

P: I still go to church, I love going to church. In fact, I am the treasurer in the church*.*

I: Nice. You are clearly a church person, proper. Now, okay, as you were saying earlier you used to make phone calls and maybe whatsapp video calls, but how have you maintained your household, because it has been 16 years?

P: Okay, My wife is the one who runs and manages the household. I just finance.

I: Okay.

P: So I,ve given her that... The power to control everything. So, I have never had a challenge in that area, although, when it comes to the kids we manage very well. So if there is an issue, infact there was.... there are times the kids are here with me, other times they are home with my wife. Other times I just make a decision and ask my wife to put them in a bus to come to Nairobi. I stay with them and take my time to learn their behaviour because they are used to being around their mother. I wanted them to disturb me the way they do their mother. So, that is how I am trying to be in their lives so my wife doesn't bear the responsibility alone.

I: You as the father, what lessons would you like to teach them?

P: I would like for them to do better than me, I would love, especially for the first born... I know a little bit about insurance, I wanted for them to be involved... I have connections but when they did the final exam, the grade they got didn't qualify for college. I was asking myself what to do, because he didn't do so well in the final exam. When I approached the college, they suggested we start from zero. Then when he passes the exam, the way we are going to train him he will go on with college, but he failed, and I went on a loss but I wasn't upset. So I gave him a break to think things through. After a while we had the same conversation again, asked him what he wanted to do with his life. He said he still wanted to do the same thing, the he is ready. Because what he expected did not happen.

I: Yah.

P: I asked what she thinks about make-up. So, she agreed and did well. In fact she is currently employed and she is doing well. There is a way I would like them to be but the challenge is the certificate and qualifications. But I like to stay with her, talk to her so she can tell me what she wants to do.

I: So you want to build trust with your children...

P: Yah.

I: And also.... also talking to them...

P: Yah, yes.

I: Listening to them.

P: So mostly you find that when I talk to them they listen. Because they know as their father, I make very good decisions and have good advice. That is why they are patient as they listen to me.

I: About marriage, what are your views on marriage? Is it a good thing or not? What do you think? Okay, I think probably you'll say marriage is a good thing but tell me what you think about it?

P: Marriage is a good thing and because, one, I said earlier, it gives you focus. So, in fact when you have money, you can't mismanage it because there is someone depending on you. So you keep in mind you have a family.

I: [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

P: I have a family and people, okay? So you become a caring and focused person that is the best part of being married. Marriage to a lot of people is a problem, it depends on the person you are with. If you don't agree, there is going to be a problem.

I: What about love? You didn't say anything about love.

P: Love requires training, that is what I believe. If I get to a point where I see things are not going well, I have to talk, and say eh-eh, I want it to go this way. Communication is important in a marriage, love is understaning each other.

I: I would like to understand how you understand marriage, the importance, most importantly creating a family.

P: Marriage is sweet depending on your partner, the person you with matters a lot. I say it depends on how you began. If you started well together, everything will be fine. Once number one, you became friends, then fell in love, so mainly love controls all, because when you have not seen each other, it's only love, okay?

When it comes to marriage, it has to be more than love, what you need to do together apart from love. It is important to pick your partner wisely, you choose the wrong person your marriage will be in trouble because the other person might not be ready for marriage.

I: That’s true.
P: So, you were ready for marriage. So, you find that you are two people, but don't have the same focus.

I: True

P: So, there is going to be conflict. You get to a point as a woman where you decide you want to be married.

And as a man you decide you want to marry someone, and start a life with someone. When you don't agree, the relationship won't last

I: True.

P: There will be a problem

I: And.....
P: Marriage brings.... most problems occur when both parties don't agree in the beginning. Two, problems arise when you are not of the same mind, okay, you have come up with something to do but instead of understanding.... you talk and agree. When you get to that point where you cannot make a decision together, you then interfere with the other person's idea, even if it was a good idea. Try and listen to your partner and your marriage will be fine.

I: True, and, in your extended family, especially relatives, do they view marriage the way you do, which is maybe one man, one woman, or is it okay to have multiple partners?

P: In our culture.....

I: Or more than one woman.

P: At home, my grandfather had two wives, but from my point of view, unless there is a reason. Most people want a second wife, because maybe there is a problem, and number two maybe the wife is disrespectful to the family.

I: Okay, let's start with your grandfather. He had two wives.

P: Eh, my grandfather had two wives and many children. So, there are those in the family.....

I: I am laughing. Sorry, no offense. You saying he had many children is funny.

P: Oh, I thought it was just noise.

I:Okay, start over about your grandfather, sorry.

P: Okay, my grandfather had two wives. I never asked him why he had two wives, I didn't question him, but it is something a person decides. They have to think twice how to come up with two of them.

I: Because it is hard, it is work.

P: Yes, maintaining is not easy or simple. Although some like my friends I've seen with two wives, have their own reasons and the ones who have managed the families understand each other, so there are no issues. You find that I'll have permission from the first wife because of A B C D. It is better off this way, because you are given the go ahead.

I: Not scaring the other person?

P: Yes. They agree to it because of A B C D, one two three.

I: Yah.

P: I give you an okay, with conditions, yah.

I: So, you were saying earlier, one of the reasons to have children is so they take care of you when you are older. In your family, is this your culture or the job falls to the parents.... not the parents but kids of the older parents?

P: First of all, family is important, any family has to have children. They play a very big role in the family. Two, What is that one thing you are looking for? So, because the children you are going to get. So, you find that it is also a lesson to you as you raise them. And they know their father is around.

I: So, you raise them in a way they respect you and thank you later.

P: Yes, so, they will know later in life, it's good to have a family. You tell them about guarding, also it depends on the family. There are families that agree that the last born will stay with the parents to take care of them. But latey this has changed because everyone is husstling. You find the last born has left, maybe even out of the country. You find what you expected didn't happen but atleast you have a family, children. So, the worst thing to happen to a family that you were born into, when you have no children, you don't have people, no one loves you.

I:True

P: Yes, no one loves you, because you are like good for nothing. It especially hurts the parents, when your daughter is grown. Sometimes the girl is even chased away from the home...

I: Wow.

P: Because you are asked, what you are doing in your parents’ house, you should in your own house with a family.

I: Now....

P: But you are here in the homestead.

I: But now in this economy, the way life is hard, maybe this is the only way.

P:Like, at home they believe you have to get married. Like, in Luhya land you can't live just like that, the man has the final say. So, you won't have a chance. Number two when your parents pass, now there is something in our family, you find that in the homestead men are the ones who remain and marry wives. So even if you were born there, and the men have married....

I: There is no space for you.

P: There is no space for you, because families are starting and they are the ones controlling the home.

I: Everything has changed, eh.

P: You go to your place, look for your own place. This is someone else’s home now.

I: There is so much pressure on the women.

P: So, it happens... when you say you are going back to your parents home, the last born is the one who took over the property.

I: And they have....

P: And they have a wife. So when you get there everyone is just wondering what you came to do. You should be at your own home. So it brings several challenges and hiccups that force you to make a decision

I: In your family, do you follow your culture strictly, for example, circumcision and baptism, do these things happen in your family?

P: We do. Like in luhya land, Tiriki people never circumsice their kids in a hospital. Like, I lived in the forest for 1 month. No mother, sisters, only my father used to come see me and some of my cousins. Only men, no ladies were allowed.

I: How old were you?

P: I was 13 years. No woman is allowed. So we live in the forest for 1 month, over 1 month unti you heal. After you are healed is when you can sociolize... So in fact, like to me I was not happy because I lost my father and I found out after i healed. I was happy to finally go back home, I had missed my family. Only to find my father's grave.

I: Oh, he was already burried?

P: He was already buried and I had no Idea. This culture story... they made it so I never asked where my father was. I noticed when I got to the gate, that I had not seen my father for 3 weeks, he might be the one in the grave.

From that time, I am not a fun of circumsicing the traditional way. In fact my son is 14, and I took him to hospital. Some of my family complained that I was going against culture, but I had already made my decision.

I: Yah

P: I can make my own decisions. They didn't like it but there was no way out.The culture still runs....

I: So, you aadopt it the way it makes sense to you...

P: I made my own way. So, it depends on a person's belief. If they are okay with it, well and good.

I: Is there anything else in your culture you still practise as a family?

P: Family? No. I have never seen. Only circumcision still happens but everything else like intermarriage no one is forbidden. In homestead, we have like 3 Kikuyus, and five Kambas...

I: You have counted them well.

P: There are also Luos, so we are mixed up. There are boundaries....

I: Boundary

P: You can't cross this line.

I: You as a church goer, what about baptism, so maybe catholic there is confirmation and all, have you done that?

P: We follow the church's protocol. If you are a member of the church you have to follow the protocol.

I: We are almost done. When you look at your family, what do you think makes your family special?

P: Most of the time, when things don't go as planned, they are the people closest to you, give you morale, when you want to do something you just look around and see what you have... there is a child smiling at you, so you feel like everything is okay.

You just look at your kids, who depend on you, you feel proud, so you cannot mess yourself.

I: Well, clearly you have done a good job of maintaing your family through all these years. What special memories do you have of your family when you are away from them? What makes you happy?

P: Special…

I:They can be several, not one specifically.

P: The joy for me, okay I don't have to explain but I feel goodwhen they are around me... When I get to the house, I feel welcomed. The kids are now older so when you get home they tell you, eh daddy, the water is ready, go take a bath. You just think, wow, my family cares about me. Instead of friends who can't care for you in such a way. A memorable time is when I was ill before I got married. The way my girlfriend supported me, sometimes she would even go to work late because she was taking care of me. I was so happy, I thought maybe I found the right person.

I: Maybe you are loved.

P: So, that is one. Two, I was hospitalized after an accident,I just called my family. I had X-rays done and there was no way I could be discharged. Ihad a broken arm, so theyadmitted me immediately.

I: Yah.

P: I had not notified my family that I was being admitted and I have never slept away from home, so I had to let them know. I had made a call earlier that i was getting treated and will let them know the progress. But....

I: You didn't want to scare them.

P: But it was very funny. My wife brought the two younger kids with her to hospital. I hadn't told them which hospital I was in, but she found out from my cousin who I was with. I didn't know they were coming, so I was very suprised when they came and hugged me as I was waiting to be admitted. It gave me strength and morale. It is so good to have a family.

I remember the last born saying to me, you will get better and come home. And I thought to myself, yes, I have to go back home even if it's for two or three days. So, these memories make me very happy.

I: They are very beautiful, thank you!