

DOMESTIC THEMES AS PRESENTED IN PAULINE EPISTLES: A STUDY OF
I CORINTHIANS 7:3-6; 10-16

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ABSTRACT

A study of Domestic Themes as presented in Pauline Epistles with specific reference to (*I Corinthians 7:3-6; 1-16*) comes to reality as a result of witnessing to some marriages that are currently passing through turbulent periods.

The method employed in this research is majorly analytical. It views various contributions and submissions of scholars that have written extensively on the topic. It observes the problem of husband and wife not fulfilling their marital duties to each other, their inability in reaching mutual concession on issues when occasion calls for it, the problem of separation and divorce in homes, etc.

The research work examines the principle guiding marriage and the purpose of the principle. It explains the conjugal duties expected from each of the party concerned in the marriage contract, reasons why mutual concession is considered an important part of the contract, the havoc separation and divorce can cause, the ability of a believing spouse having the divine grace to sanctify and save the non-believing partner and the children of the marriage. It also reviews the implications of the major themes in homes, lives of the children, churches, and the society at large.

It is therefore established that husband and wife should fulfill their marital duties and responsibilities to preserve their home. It is also imperative for them to always hold mutual concession in high esteem in every matter binding them in all aspect.

The research however concludes and recommends that a believing partner cannot separate or divorce his/her spouse, they are encouraged to live at peace and make use of the grace that God has deposited in their lives as instrument of saving grace.

5.2 Conclusion

The study of domestic themes came to mind as a result of diverse of misunderstanding that usually arise in Christian homes today. This misunderstanding also rears its ugly head in the Corinthian Church members' marriages. Various types of arguments usually ensued between husband and wife. The issue of sexual relations in marriage is a major factor that causes separation and unresolved conflict in homes today which Christian homes are inclusive. Spouses see permanent abstention by depriving each other sexual relations as instrument of punishment which the scripture frowns at. Many ministers find it difficult to settle quarrel that relates to marital sexual relations conflicts.

This is so because many ministers too are too busy to engage in sexual relations with their spouses as well. Some ministers hide under the pretence of engaging in spiritual matters and thereby deprive their partners. Female partners also shy away from it and see it as an avenue to avenge their partners. Their reasons range from lack of taking proper care of them and failure to meet their needs. Spouses concerned find it difficult to discuss such related issues freely with their pastors. The few that summon courage by discussing sexual issues only do so reluctantly and women prefer to open up

to female ministers/pastors if they are at the receiving end. In the absence of a female ministers or a God-fearing elder that they can discuss freely with or lack of courage to open up, the affected spouse decides to pack out or continue to endure the marriage that is supposed to be enjoyed.

In the passage under review, Paul tries to tackle different relationship – situation within the church at Corinth in the context of the internal controversy between different groups. In as much as marriage is a special gift from God, which is established by him for increase and procreation, each member involved in the relationship must perform his/her duties as expected of him/her. Paul summarizes these duties to mean marital duty. Paul encourages both the husband and wife to fulfill their marital duties towards one another. He holds the fulfillment of marital duties in high esteem. Fulfilling each other's duties in the contemporary homes will promote peace and unity.

Also, Paul emphasizes the issue of mutual concession in marital sexual relations. This also lack of mutual concession in sexual relationships is viewed as a major constraints in homes in the Corinthian church. It also open door that leads to major problems in contemporary homes in the society today. Upholding mutual concession in homes today will solve the problems of over-spirituality, adultery, separation, divorce, and the likes to a great extent. There should exists harmonious agreement among the couple with regard to sexual abstinence and it must be only for a season. The period must not be prolonged so as not to allow Satan to creep in as a result of lack of self-control from the part of either of the couple or both. Harmonious agreement in marriages today will promote monogamy and prohibits polygamy to a great extent.

In Paul's submission as regards separation and divorce, he totally kicked against the two options. The wife cannot separate from her husband likewise can the husband divorce his wife. Paul appreciates a united family relationship. He admonishes husband to bestow due honour unto his wife by not divorcing her no matter the circumstances. The wife too does not have the grace to separate from her husband. Both are seen as joint heirs, it is for better, for worse. A spouse seeing himself/herself as being far more effective in the service of God without responsibilities of marriage is making a great mistake. In the contemporary age of separation and divorce, Paul is exhorting homes to avoid them and not opt out of difficult marriage relationship. He believes God will supply the strength and the power to work out the success of difficult homes. There is no option of having the ability to remarry on the part of either of the couple.

When they allow separation or divorce, the only option that is available for them is reconciliation. In Paul's defense of a believing spouse having the ability to sanctify the unbelieving partner and the children of the marriage, he exhorts that one believer does not only sanctify but also makes holy. The believer's holiness is extended to others in the family. The covenant of God's saving grace covers them since the children are brought up in a Christian way and community. He also insists that the sovereignty of God in saving all could make a believing partner save the other as useful instrument of God's saving grace.

5.3 Recommendation

In as much as married couples are different individuals which can not behave the same way, there may arise occasions when they have misunderstandings. When such occurs there is need for settlements.

In view of such an unforeseen occasion the following recommendations are given:

- That the husband should strive under any circumstance to fulfill his marital duties to his wife without any reservation.
- That the wife should likewise fulfill her marital duties to her husband at all times and in every situation.
- That the wife should be aware that her body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband.
- That the husband also should be aware of the fact that his body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.
- That the couple should not deprive each other except by mutual consent which must be for a certain period.
- That the period of deprivation must be for a specific purpose, for example – for devotion to prayer.
- That they must come together again so that Satan will not tempt them due to lack of self – control.
- That under whatever the circumstances no believing spouse must separate from her husband and if she does she is not opportune to remarry. The only option left for her is to be reconciled with her husband.
- That no believing husband has any excuse to divorce his wife.
- That in a situation a believing partner marries non believing partner, if the non believing spouse wishes to continue to live with his/her partner, so be it. The believer must not divorce or separate with the non believer, they should continue to live as husband and wife in accordance with the non believer's wish.