

PASTORAL RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEM OF LATE MARRIAGE
AMONG CHRISTIAN SINGLES IN ADO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EKITI
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ABSTRACT

This research work is titled "Pastoral Response to the Problem of Late Marriage among Christian Singles." The general purpose is to investigate this phenomenon and the responses of pastors to this contemporary challenge and suggest ways of helping those singles in such situations and proffer preventive measures. The descriptive survey research was used and has aided the researcher to critically analyze and interpret the findings. The survey was carried out in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. A total number of thirty churches were randomly selected. Seventeen of them were from Agape I and Agape II Baptist Associations while the remaining thirteen churches were randomly selected from other Christian denominations. Two questionnaires were designed for the purpose of verifying the two hypothesis of this research: late marriage as a problem among Christian singles and the level of pastoral response to this problem. The population used was one hundred church members comprising of married and singles. Thirty church pastors were selected, ten social workers from the Social and Welfare of Ekiti State and ten medical workers from Ekiti State University Teaching Hospital, Ado-Ekiti. The questionnaires designed by the researcher were validated by expert in the field of biblical and theological studies. The data was analyzed by using simple calculation of averages and percentages. The research revealed that some Christian singles are facing the problem of delayed marriage due to several factors ranging from cultural, sociological, medical, religious and spiritual. It was found that pastoral response through timely care and counseling, pre-marital counseling, self empowerment programs, medical awareness and orientations, socio-cultural integration, marriage seminars and singles forums, parental care and societal integration are viable tools in reducing this contemporary challenge. It is recommended that the church through the pastor should be involved in curbing this contemporary challenge of late marriage. Churches should help singles who are having delay in getting marriage partners by not stigmatizing them but accord them with due respect like their married counterparts, they should not be denied of any lawful and rightful responsibilities and benefits. Singles who are experiencing delay should maximize the opportunity of singleness to achieve something beneficial. They should not lose their moral value and integrity because of the situation. Also the singles should plan for and pursue their marriage process early in life as they do for their educational and professional career. Both can go simultaneously. Pastors should teach Biblical principles about marriage to all categories of people in the church and especially concentrate on the singles early enough to prevent them from experiencing the challenge of late marriage.

pastor is highly needed to curb this challenge.

5.2 CONCLUSION

Having gone through this research work it can be concluded that Late Marriage is a contemporary problem among Christian singles in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State in Nigeria. Some single adults who are up to the age of marriage are experiencing delay in getting marriage partners. Although some single adults in the society are also trying to postpone marriage due to some factors but the society frown at it because of our cultural value placed on the issue of marriage and child bearing. Some of the factors responsible for delay in marriage include: inability to get marriage partner, lack of pre-marital counseling, problem of cohabitation and sexuality, cultural differences, religious differences, and many other social and personal issues.

The role of pastor in helping this problem is very crucial. Pastoral care and counseling aims at nurturing, growing and healing persons through each stage of lives. Then, pastors' intervention in helping the single adults who are experiencing delay in marriage is inevitable. The larger society is only putting stigma of reproach on these people through segregation and various ways of abuse. The pastors should approach late marriage through sound and effective marriage and pre-marital counseling, involvement in marriage process and quality teachings on purpose of marriage among many others. Therefore, the church through the pastor must intervene in the process of reducing the menace of late marriage among Christian singles. Singles are encouraged to marry early in life putting all necessary factors such as socio-cultural, medical and spiritual into consideration.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

With reference to the findings from this research work which was carried out among churches in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State in Nigeria in view of pastoral responses to the problem of late marriage among Christian singles, the researcher hereby make the following recommendations.

1. The church through the pastor should be involved in curbing of this contemporary challenge of late marriage. Churches should help singles who are having delay in getting marriage partners.
2. The church and members of the larger society should accord them due respect like their married counterpart. Proper attention and adequate recognition should be given to them irrespective of their marital status.

3. The church and the society should not deny them of lawful and rightful responsibilities. Position and offices due to them should not be denied. Those who have demonstrated high level of responsibility and commitment in the church and secular life should be recognized and rewarded accordingly.
4. The church through pastoral responses should provide effective pastoral care and counseling for singles who are having delayed marriage. One-on-one counseling could be adopted along side general counseling.
5. Special program targeted toward the need of these singles should be designed by the pastors. They should not be left with normal worship services. Special prayer, marriage seminars, singles forum and other youth centered programs should be organized.
6. Parents should be educated on how to relate with their singles that are having marriage delay. They should learn how to counsel their children on the choice of marriage partner.
7. Singles who are having delay should maximize the opportunity of singleness to achieve many other things. They should not lose their moral value and integrity because of the situation.
8. Singles should plan for and pursue their marriage process early in life as they do for their educational and professional career. Both should go simultaneously.