

PASTORAL CARE APPROACH TO FAMILY CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

This research work investigated the pastoral care approach to Family Conflict. This essay states clearly that no home is free from crisis but whenever there is conflict, God the author of home must be consulted through prayer and the conflict should be resolved peacefully before it gets out of control. From this research work, it is revealed that causes of family conflict cannot be generalized; it is relative in the sense that, what causes conflict in one home may not leads to conflict in another home, because each family is unique. Therefore, the following were believed to be the common causes of crisis in the family and were discussed in this work: incompatibility, childlessness, influence of third party, negligence, lack of submission and spiritual forces. Other causes were mentioned but were not discussed, these were: poor communication, lack of proper pre-marital counseling, poor financial management, unfaithfulness and poverty sequel to poor economy. The following approaches were suggested for pastors when dealing with family conflict: Pastoral approach, Biblical approach, holistic approach and cultural approach. Above all, the Pastor must pray very well and depend on the leadership of the Holy Spirit to find a lasting solution to family disputes.

5.2 Conclusion

God hates crisis, viciousness, and violence in the home. He wants every home to enjoy peace and love so that His plan for family can be achieved. The plan of God for family is to have godly children. Pastoral care holds that peaceful co-existence of

the family must be strengthened. For family to experience peaceful co-existence, the following ideas will be helpful.

They should take prayer seriously; the family that prays together stays together. The couple must establish family altar so that they can always pray together *with their children and communicate the family weaknesses to God corporately. This does not disturb individual quiet time with God (i.e. a time of being alone with God).* Once this is done, the plan of God for the family will come to fulfillment and God will not be far from the family.

The couple must share together all benefits or honours that come to either of them. Neither of them should get all the honours to himself or herself because they are made for each other.¹³⁵ The couple must also learn to forgive each other immediately. They must not keep record of offences, but they must forgive and forget.¹³⁶ The Bible says “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry (Ephesians 4:26 NIV).

There are two important things the couple must do, before they can experience God’s presence in their home as recorded in Hebrew 12:14, “Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord” (NIV). The first thing is living peacefully with each other; second thing is living a holy life. The Lord cannot live in the home where there is no peace and where holiness is not practiced. Couples must not engage in immoral practices because these can jeopardize God’s purpose for their family.

The couple and the children in the family must not forget their responsibilities to one another as stated in Ephesians 6:1ff. Children must obey their parents; father

¹³⁵Akande Samuel T. Ola, *For Better for Worse*, (Ibadan: Vantage Publishers Int. Ltd, 1996), 86.

¹³⁶ibid.

must not provoke their children, wives must be submissive, while husbands must love their wives. Husband and wife must learn to appreciate each other, knowing that they need each other. As long as one of them is away from home, part of their lives is also away. Therefore, neither the husband nor his wife can be complete without each other and the children cannot feel secure when their parents are not together.

5.3 Recommendations

Marriage and family ministry must be the number one ministry of the church and the pastor. All pastors must take it seriously in order to promote healthy relationships at home and in the church. Because members of the churches are product of families, whatever affects the family will surely affect the church. The church can organize or plan marriage and family enrichment programmes for the families that will help them to dwell in peace and unity, promote the well-being of the church and the society. This will help to reduce increasing trend of family conflict in our society.

However, the followings are recommended for the couples in order to avert conflict in the home.

1. The husband and wife must allow an agape love to exist between them, and should be practical not mere saying 'I love you'. They must love themselves very well and be ready to practise sacrificial love which is not based on condition.
2. Wives must be submissive to their husbands and they must try to respect one another. Ephesians 5:22 says, wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. Akanmu submits that deep respect is one of the characteristics of African marriage and family life.¹³⁷ Therefore the couple should respect each other,

¹³⁷Samson O Akanmu, *Sex Singleness & Marriage an African Christian Perspective* (Lagos: Greater Heights Publications, 2003), 8.

and also they must respect their in-laws from both sides. As an African woman, the wife must respect every child met in the home including the ones born a day before her wedding and all the elderly ones.

3. Couples should give their body to one another in sex. The Bible says the wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife(1 Corinthians 7:4). They should not deny themselves conjugal fusions because it is only the unifying factor that strengthens love between them. Thus, sexual relationship in marriage does not have expiring time, it continues throughout their life span on earth.
4. There should be openness and trust in their marriage. The couple should not hide anything from each other. This will prevent crisis in their family.
5. Above all, husbands and wives should equip themselves with the Word of God by study and meditating in it and be prayerfully enough to wage war against every act of the devil and his agents against their family.

In conclusion, churches and pastors should see pastoral care and counseling as a viable tool that can help couples and individuals manage any form of conflict that may arise. The most essential one is that pastors should rely on the leadership of the Holy Spirit as they seek to find adequate solutions to the problems facing families. This research is therefore recommended for the pastors, lay leaders, principals, teachers, community heads, family heads to use the approaches mention in this paper to resolve conflicts.