

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PROBLEMS OF THE NEVER
MARRIED ADULTS IN NIGERIAN BAPTIST CHURCHES

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ABSTRACT

The title of this study is "An Investigation into the problems of Never Married Adults in Nigerian Baptist Churches of Ireti-Ogo Baptist Association of Lagos Baptist Conference". The purpose was to examine the level, causes and effects of delay in marriage on those who have the challenge.

The study design was a descriptive one with sample survey option. A self-designed questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The subjects of the study were Ninety-eight (98) members drawn from all Baptist Churches in Ireti-Ogo Baptist Association of Lagos Baptist Conference.

It was strongly established from the data collected that majority of the local churches visited were facing the challenge confronting the never married people. The research also affirmed that pastors are in a better position in taking care of the never married through their pastoral care giving and counseling.

Lastly, some recommendations were made to the pastor, the church, the family members, the singles, the theological institutions and the Nigerian Baptist Convention at large. Among the recommendations made are those: pastors should increase prayer programmes, seminars, vocational training and welfare. The church members should display their Christian virtue in identifying with the never married people. Also, the people concerned should not hide their feelings but to be open. It was suggested that studies on the same topic to be carried out in the other mainline churches to compare if the findings would be the same.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

From this research, it is shown that Baptist youths are aware of the never married people who have delayed in marriage which is a problem. And the churches in the Association aware of these problems and which brought about various programmes. Despite all these, there are quite sizeable male and female singles who are affected by these problems of marital issue which cuts across gender. Most groups who are seriously affected with these problems are those in the age range of 30 - 35 years. This is so because most singles at that period have attained an independent age in terms of educational and economical capacities.

Also, due to the cultural settings, religious background, and proximity, the proposal efforts always affected the female youths because they cannot express their desire to propose, or express their interest. There is nothing seriously bad in a lady making a move to propose marriage to a man if she really has the interest; therefore, there must be an orientation to change the attitudes, because some young men found it difficult to face a lady or even to ask for love in marriage, one has to make the move. There is a need for meaningful interaction and establishment of a godly relationship for the problems to be less burdensome. Therefore, a Pastoral care giver should introduce various programmes that will bring both bachelor and spinster together for interaction.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Solving the problems of never married people should be seen as a ministry that all the local Baptist churches should develop a measure of proffering solution, since it affected majority and it is common to our youths, so as not to engage or go into marriage with unbelievers. On the basis of the results of this study, the following

are some of the recommendations made in order to reduce the increase, causes and effects of delayed marriage.

1. Pastors should increase prayer programmes, seminars, vocational training and welfare for the never married in the church calendar of activities. Also, as there is need for couples' fellowship in the church, let there be available rooms for singles' fellowship.
2. The church members, either at a friendship level or married level should display their Christian virtue in identifying with the never married people in their midst, this could be done by recognizing, appreciating, loving, and giving them fair treatment in the congregation. Avoid questions and pity that can make them dejected or inferior. Have sincere and genuine concern for them.
3. The never married people should be encouraged not to hide their feelings but to be open to their pastors and church members who can use their wealth of experience to alleviate their problems through counseling.
4. The never married people should be admonished not to engage in an immoral or illicit relationship, not to sell out themselves under the umbrella of whom to marry or loneliness, but should be ready to make sacrifice of prayer and searching.
5. It is recommended that multi staff ministry be embarked upon by the local Baptist churches so that; there could be enough hands to attend to various cases. The reason had been that the numbers of youths who are faced with the problem of delayed marriage were in need of spiritual attention from pastoral care and counseling perspective.
6. The researcher strongly recommends that there should be no segregation between the never married and the married in allocating offices in the church.

Those never married should be given responsibilities in the church if they are qualified. This is to make them to feel relevant, belonging and profitably busy.

7. Another recommendation is that the church should form a spiritual, prayerful and functional marriage committee who will be seen to the problems of the never married people and to listen to them. The committee should be under the supervision of the pastor who will scrutinize every report brought to him. The committee members are not to be match-makers, but they are to advise and give counsel to the youths on pre-marital counseling.
8. Also, it is recommended that urgent attention should be given to counseling ministry in all local Baptist churches. An adage says "problem shared, is half solved". So these concerned people will have time and people to pour out their mind to. Apart from this, the family members and the community will also benefit from the counseling ministry. Therefore, this necessitates for proper publicity by constant announcement in the church, use of flier, bulleting, bill boards and if there is enough money, radio and television announcement.