

THE PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF THEOLOGICALLY TRAINED
COUPLES IN MINISTRY

N.B.T.S.
M. DIV. TH.
Om — 56

A THESIS SUBMITTED
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY
FACULTY OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES
NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
OGBOMOSO, NIGERIA

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY (THEOLOGY)
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF JOB

BY
OMOMOLA GRACE OYEBOLA

MATRIC NO: 07/0036

2013-0686

JUNE 2012

ABSTRACT

The number of couple ministers is increasing tremendously in the Nigerian Baptist Convention Churches and many churches have not been giving proper orientation to couple ministry. Some couple pastors have graduated from the seminary and their impact are yet to be fully felt in Nigerian Baptist Convention. Many of the pastors' wives who have the call of God into the ministry are not properly placed and recognized in any ministry of the church. Most often the husband prefer the wife to work elsewhere so as to avoid the insults from people whereas in the secular both husband and wife work in the same institution with little or no inhibition. Therefore, some lady pastors often keep their seminary certificate from theological institutions in their wardrobe and return to take up secular jobs to avoid joblessness. Yet within the Nigerian Baptist Convention, there is the couples' ever increasing faithful dedication, diligence and dynamic involvement in the cause of missions, stewardship, discipleship and Church growth.

The essence of this thesis is to look at the contributions and prospects that theologically trained couples bring into the ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention and to objectively handle the challenges in the light of Jesus Christ's anticipation concerning clergy couples.

The study therefore analyzed the Old and New Testament's basis for couples participation in ministry and discovered that God delights in couples working together to reproduce divine offspring in ministry. The study also discovered that while many theologically trained couple ministers are not both remunerated and are not recognized, some are partially rated, and regarded as bi-vocational pastors but serve in subordinate positions.

5.2 Conclusion

Couple ministers need to set their priorities right by setting the spiritual goals which will enable them to be diligent, focused, committed and to measure their successes and failures. Misplaced priorities can bring loss of vision and thereby derailing the minister from the path of righteousness. Therefore couples should find time to assess each other by going for family retreat or annual vacation where there will be no distractions.

Clergy couples must be accommodating and friendly to those who might likely support or oppose their mission endeavour. They should show fervent love to the brethren because love covers multitudes of sin (1 Peter 4:8). As good stewards of the manifold grace of God, they should use the gifts of God entrusted to them by the Lord to strengthen and encourage fellow believers, "if anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God, if anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies" (1 Peter 4 :10).

Despite the societal perceptions and cultural implication that bring about various challenges in couples ministry and make some people and churches to be biased and skeptical about this new phenomenon yet there are many prospects that talented, determined, committed and intelligent couple ministers have brought into the ministry of Nigerian Baptist Convention.

On the part of couple ministers, they need to seek thorough and proper counseling from senior ministers before going for theological training in Seminary. It has been discovered that some couples face a lot of problems in their marriage before, during and after their training as a couple. Such problems include competition, lack of respect, lack of a place of ministry assignment, misunderstanding and rift between the couples to the extent that a spouse will wish her partner dead if one partner seems to outshine the other. They need to recognize that ministry is to honour God, propagate the kingdom of God, and depopulate the kingdom of Satan rather than to seek the applause of men, title or position.

Concrete efforts should be made to educate the couple ministers and the congregation to have good communication, good rapport and reach proper agreement on adequate remuneration before engaging in the church ministry or accepting a call into the pastorate. This will eradicate all the misgivings that usually bring spiritual and ministerial dogfight between the church and the clergy couples. By so doing, the fear of both couple ministers and the church involving in the ministry will be overcome and the waiting world will know that Jesus has true disciples who know the truth and walk in love, "a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13: 34 & 35).

Since the ministry of Jesus Christ involve men and women and cut across culture and societal perception, couple pastors should not cage each other's gifts in ministry but have pure motive before going to theological institutions, be

committed to preaching the undiluted words, teaching the whole counsels of God and practice what they preach at home, in the church and in the society.

For their testimony not to be jeopardized, they should have time for their children, train and disciple them to be useful instruments in God's vineyard. They need to separate office hours from house work, in other words, church matters should not interfere with home matters negatively. Church issues should not destroy the love, unity, joy, peace and harmony of their matrimonial homes. They should not neglect the need of home at the expense of ministry.

For the sake of accountability and coherence, couple ministers can have another couple as prayer partners or raise prayer team who are of the same minds, purpose and vision. They should prayerfully take joint decisions that will not impair the destiny of their lives, children and ministry.

Both couple ministers need to understand the God's mightiness and providence by being happy as they accept to do God's work. They should not pester the church to absorb them as couples into the pastorate. If the church is not buoyant to take them as couples, either of them can work elsewhere and work voluntarily in the church.

5.3 Recommendations

This is the submission of this writer and hence the recommendation. Some unpalatable experiences of some couples ministry in some churches should not make clergy couples to cage their God-given assignment as some pastor-husbands disallow their pastor-wives to take up the pastoral work in the same church. In

addition, some churches allow their pastor's wife to work elsewhere (despite her theological training) or even in another church. But if the church is convinced under the leading of the Holy Spirit to extend a call to both couples, they should be humble and bold to prayerfully and jointly accept the Master's call and then trust God for sustenance because He who calls them is faithful to provide and prosper them in the ministry. Let all couples who have been called into the ministerial leadership positions be free to courageously practice and make full proof of what God has called them to do. The call of God is without repentance, it is my earnest prayer that every couple minister will not jeopardize the divine investment of God over their lives due to the fear of unknown. It is therefore safe to conclude with the instructions of Paul to Timothy:

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of a sound mind. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling..., and a teacher of the Gentiles; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day (1 Timothy 1:7-12).