

MARITAL CRISIS AS A BARRIER TO CHURCH GROWTH: A CASE
STUDY OF CHURCHES IN OYO EAST AND NORTH BAPTIST

ASSOCIATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This research was designed to study marital crisis and its effect on church growth in Oyo East and North Baptist Associations. The fundamental nature of marriage is till death do us part, but the occurrence of various marital crisis that at times end in broken marriages is so alarming that it called for attention among Christians. The research work disclosed that the problem of marital crisis was so vital to the spiritual growth of the church at large. Questionnaire was designed to carry out the research work within the church members of the selected associations, and the analysis was done with simple percentage to reach reasonable conclusion on the subject matter. There were several findings that this research was able to come out with, such findings include, emotional challenges such as sexual abuse, incompatibility, physical abuse, financial problem and several others brought about marital crisis. It was discovered as well that a church can be poor as a result of poverty at the level of her members. It is thereby recommended that Pastors should endeavour to do their best in teaching, preaching the biblical standard of marriage and praying for peaceful coexistence among Christian homes in their churches. At the same time, pastors' homes should be a role model to the church members and people around.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this thesis has established the fact that many marriages have problems and the causes of these problems are many and they differ. To make an easy

reading and more understanding of this work, I tried to sample the opinions of married Christians across ten churches in Oyo East Baptist Association and Oyo North Baptist association, Oyo. By this one can easily see why this work is so important to everybody.

Also with the findings from different authors and the questionnaires, I want to conclude that marital crisis is a barrier to church growth. The state of home determines the state of church. If homes are spiritual, the church will be spiritual and if homes are full of crisis, the church cannot be free of crisis. Therefore, as we have more experts on church growth we suppose to have more experts on marriage/home issues, because if homes will not grow, church will not grow.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Marital crisis is a serious threat to the institution of marriage, church growth and the society at large. What do we do when a Christian is involved in marital crisis which could jeopardize his or her life? When a Christian's marriage is in crisis, it becomes a serious problem for that person, his or her spouse, families and the church that he or she belongs to. (Smith Robert www.iclnet.org). Since Church cannot be without home, and the state of homes determine the state of church. It is now good for the Church to respond to the challenge of marital crises. Base on the findings of this study, the researcher made a numbers of recommendations, which are likely to reduce the several reoccurrence of marital crisis as it affects the growth of the church as this work is concern.

(i) Couples' Fellowship

Couples' Fellowship is a gathering of the married ones, where the issues on marriage will be the main focus. How to foster love among the couples, the way to handle in-laws, problems that are peculiar to each genders, contemporary problems

that are facing Christian homes, financial management in marriage, examining the common marital cases in around, answering disturbing questions from the couples and many more are the focus of couples fellowship. This will give the church opportunity to solve some problems at the minimal level, before they grow to become crisis at home. The Couples' Fellowship can be financed by the church, or the fellowship herself, if she has developed to some extents.

(ii) Singles' Fellowship

The Singles' Fellowship is another way through which the church can respond to the issue of marital crisis. The singles' Fellowship is just the opposite of Couples' Fellowship. It is the singles' (Bachelors and Spinsters) gathering, where the singles' peculiar issues will be the main business. The sole aim of the fellowship is to prepare these singles for the future's challenges of career and marriage. So issues on how to choose one's career and marriage partner, how to handle or cope with other challenges of life will be central focus of the fellowship of the fellowship. With this the church will be able to solve the problem of incompatibility in marriage, and also prepare their minds for the likely challenges in marriage so as to know how to endure it. (Dennis 22)

(iii) Widows and Widowers' Fellowship

The book of Acts revealed to us how important the widows were to the early church. Organizing Widows and Widowers' Fellowship, is a way of fulfilling the scriptural mandate, of catering for those who have lost their love ones. Some of them are too young to remain single forever; also some of them may not be able to cope with singleness because of their sexual nature. The Widows and Widowers' Fellowship may give some of them opportunity to remarry. Not only this, the fellowship will be giving them encouragement and teachings that can help them to

cope with their state. Ministering to these people materially is another very important ministry of the fellowship; in fact it is one of the functions of the church. So, organizing a fellowship like this will make church respond to the marital crisis facing the widows and the Widowers in the Church. At the same, they will belong (Dennis 23)

God has instructed those who follow Him to protect and provide for widows and orphans, and clearly state that He will judge those who abuse them. Church should thus be in the vanguard when it comes to protecting them (Samuel Waje 264). As James 1:27 reminds us, such action is a sign of “pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our father”

(iv) Meeting the needs of less privileges

From the Old Testament to the New, ministering to the less privileges is not a joking matter. If Church takes this serious, ministering to the families that are less privileged spiritually and materially, will deliver them from economic/financial crisis that they are battling with. (Dennis 24)

Empowerment Programmes for the poor and unemployed ones in the Church

Empowerment is to give someone more control over their own life or situation (Long man Dictionary of contemporary English, 512) this is another way through which the Church can respond to the marital crisis buffeting her poor and unemployed members. The Church can empower these family people through financial assistance, seminars, job creation, etc. With this, they will be empowered to face their challenges.

(v) Marriage Affairs Committee

The over-arching objective of marriage affairs committee is to strengthen the family as a discipline center. The family was established by divine creation as the

