

PASTORAL CARE APPROACH TO FAMILY CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

This research work investigated the Pastoral approach to family conflict. The paper stated clearly that no home is crisis free but whenever there is conflict, God the author of home must be consulted through prayer and the conflict should be resolved amicably before it is too late.

To come out with a more realistic result, the researcher conducted interview with some pastors. Twenty Pastors were interviewed from the following conference in Western states; Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Kwara, Ogbomoso and Oyo conferences. The result of the interview revealed that causes of the family conflict cannot be generalized, it is relative in the sense that, what cause conflict in one family may not lead to conflict in another because each family is unique. The following were believed to be the common causes of conflict in the family and were discussed in this paper: incompatibility, childlessness, and in – Laws- influence, family finance, poor communication, extra marital affair. Others causes mentioned during the interviewing process but were not discussed were : Jealousy, Unfaithfulness, Sexual frigidity.

The following approaches were suggested for Pastors when dealing with family conflict: Cultural approach, Wholistic approach, Ecclesiological approach and Biblical approach. Above all the pastor much pray very-well and depend on the leadership of Holy spirit to find a lasting solution to family problems.

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

It is obvious that no family is crisis free, every home has her peculiar problem(s). Couples must therefore learn to live together in unity so that the plan of God for the establishment of home in the garden of Eden will be fulfilled. Couples must realize that there is no perfect human being and nobody is supernatural except God Almighty. So, husband and wife must accept each other's weaknesses and use these as a source of building a strong, indivisible and united family.

It is also essential for the couples to love each other and keep their marriage vows which they took in the presence of God and many witnesses that they will take care of each other until death brings final separation. Therefore, marriage is a life commitment which can only be terminated by death.

Divorce or separation is not part of God's design for family, rather the couple must love each other and do away with anything that can take away the agape love from the family.

The Bible says in Eccl. 8:7 that

Many waters cannot quench love
Rivers cannot wash it away
If one were to give all the wealth of
His house for love, it would be
Utterly scorned (NIV).

When there is love in the family, God's plan for the family will be achieved. Pastoral care holds that peaceful co-existence of the family must be strengthened. For the family to experience peaceful co-existence, the following suggestions will be helpful:

The family altar must be established so that the couple and their children will pray always and communicate the family weaknesses to God. The family altar must however not replace individual quiet time (i.e. a time of being alone with God), if this is done, God will not be far from the family.

The couple and the children in the family must not forget their responsibilities to one another as recorded in Ephesians 6:1ff. Children must obey their parents, fathers 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. So, neither the husband nor his wife can be complete without each other and the children cannot feel secure when their parents are not together.

Family must share together all the honours that come to them. Neither of them must get all the honours to himself or herself because they are made for each other.¹⁹

The couple must also learn to forgive each other quickly. They must not keep diary of offences, rather, they must forgive and forget.²⁰ The Bible says “Be angry, and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your wrath”) Ephesians 4:26 (NKJV).

There are two important things the couple must do before they can experience God’s presence in their homes as recorded in Hebrew 12:14 “Pursue peace with all men and holiness without which no one shall see the Lord” (NKJV). The first one is living peacefully with each other, the second one is living a holy life.

The Lord cannot live in the home that knows no peace and where holiness is not practiced.

Couple must not engage in immoral practices since this can jeopardize the plan of God for the family.

¹⁹S.T. Ola Akande, For Better for Worse, p.

²⁰Ibid.

Conclusively, 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 relationship at home and in the church.

Members of the Churches are product of families, whatever affect the family will surely affect the Church. The Church through her pastor can plan good programmes for the families that will make them to dwell in unity, promote the well being of the church and the wellness of the society.

This essay has been able to inform the readers about God's plan for the institution of marriage and family, the necessity for the family members to live peacefully and settle amicably their differences. Various approaches were also suggested for the pastors to manage family crisis.

Churches and pastors should see pastoral care and counseling as a viable tool that can help couples and individual manage whatever conflict that may arise. The most important one is that pastors should depend on the leadership of the Holy spirit as he seeks to find solution to the problems confronting families.