

NB 15
M. Div
A 16m
259.25

Title Page

MINISTERING TO SINGLE ADULTS IN NIGERIAN
BAPTIST CHURCHES: A PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELLING PERSPECTIVE

A THESIS PRESENTED
TO THE FACULTY OF THE NIGERIAN
BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, OGBOMOSO, NIGERIA.

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE
MASTER OF DIVINITY IN THEOLOGY.

BY

ADEWUMI PETER AJAO

JUNE, 1997.

99118

ABSTRACT

Singles go through different crises which weigh them down. Their crises are due, not to their state of being single per se, but to such factors as society's attitude toward singleness, especially where marriage is seen as the norm of the society. This, however, is not peculiar to the society alone but the church of God also has the same attitudes towards singleness. This is evident in their programmes which are always family-oriented. In fact, some pastors are guilty of this, which is highly unfortunate. However, we cannot say that all the problems being faced by singles are caused by others without singles also having their blames. Many singles also need to change their attitudes towards self, others, Church and God. There is also a need for them to develop some social skills to enable them establish friendship and good relationship with people regardless of sex and age.

Singles go through many problems such as loneliness, sexual frustration, financial crises, inferiority complex, etc. The concern here is to make pastors aware of these problems and to help them and the Church to understand what they can do to bail the never-married singles out of their predicament. In other words, this work aims at showing how Church, pastors and individual believers can effectively minister to the needs of the never-married singles.

Therefore, this work has its chapter one stating the statement of the problem, the purpose of the thesis, the methodology and definitions of some key words used in the work. The second chapter talks about Biblical perspectives on single adults by looking at some singles in both the Old and New Testaments. The third chapter dealt with some of the problems being faced by

singles, the causes of their singleness and their reactions to their status. The fourth chapter is the data analysis of the questionnaire with the writer's brief comments on some findings. The fifth chapter which is the last chapter is where pastoral care and counselling ministries, as means of ministering to the needs of single adults is discussed. It was followed by a conclusion and the writer's recommendations.

Therefore, single adults should change their negative attitude toward self, others, God and Church. Their evaluation of the Church may not be true. It may be of the past experience one had which might have been changed. Therefore, single adults should set aside all their pre-conceived ideas about the Church and attend church with an open mind. One may be surprised at the warmth and love that characterize today's Church.¹⁹

This attitude extends to the area of marriage. The Apostle Paul's life will be of help here. The Apostle Paul was a satisfied and fulfilled single because he had a healthy and good view about marriage. This view, if cherished and embraced will go a long way to help our singles adults. Paul realized that marriage was not for everybody and that singleness was a viable alternative for christians. Being married to a wrong person is worse than not being married. Being in wedlock out of God's will is more uncomfortable than being out of wedlock. We cannot deny the fact that there are disadvantages in being single. Nevertheless, it is possible to be single and be fulfilled and satisfied.²⁰

Finally, in line with single's negative attitudes toward themselves are low self-identity and self-acceptance. If they can have good self identity and affirm their self-worth, it will go a long way in helping them assert their worth in the society.

E. CONCLUSION

It is obvious from this research work that never-married singles have some problems that are peculiar to them. These problems, however, are jointly

¹⁹Brian L. Harbour, Famous Singles of the Bible, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980), p. 89.

²⁰Harbour, pp. 116-117.

caused by the society and singles themselves, due to their wrong attitudes and beliefs about singleness, low self identity, self rejection and lack of social skills. Nevertheless, the Church cannot be exonerated; it shares the blame.

The Church is one of the institutions that has the responsibilities in caring for the needs of never-married singles. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that the Church stands in the best position to minister to the needs/problems of never-married singles. The reason being that the nature of the gospel being preached by the church is universal, i.e. the plan, care and love of God is for all people, singles inclusive. The Church includes singles.

Therefore, the Church should take every possible step to minister to single adults. Pastors, individual believers, and the Church as a whole should change their wrong attitudes and beliefs about never-married singles. Church programmes should not always be family-oriented. However, never-married singles should also play their own part.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Proper care, recognition and respect should be given to never-married singles by the society and the Church. They should be treated like any other adults in the church. The church and pastors should avoid judgemental attitude towards singles, but should accept them as persons of worth. Their faith should **not** be questioned on the basis of being single.

There should be marriage seminars and pre-marital counselling from time to time. There can also be single forum or singles ministry where issues peculiar to them will be discussed. Singles should be involved at all levels of church programmes from planning to implementation. The church can also

provide never-married with single adult periodicals and christian literature where they can read about other singles and see how they managed their singleness. Singles also should learn how to, and develop healthy and right self-identity, self acceptance and close companionship.