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THE SEX FACTOR IN
MARITAL CRISIS AMONG THE
CONTEMPORARY YORUBA:
A PASTORAL RESPONSE

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ABSTRACT

"The Sex Factor in Marital Crisis Among the Contemporary Yoruba: A Pastoral Response" is an attempt to x-ray the effects of sexual dissatisfaction among contemporary Yoruba couples. It is also the intention of this researcher to call the attention of local pastors to the need to respond positively and constructively to marital crisis via conjugal relationship among the couples. Such a response will enhance the physical, social and spiritual well-being of couples in our local churches.

This research is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction to the work. It contains the statement of the problem, motivation, statement of purpose, and definition of the key terms used in the topic of the thesis. Other sub-titles of this chapter include delimitation, thesis of research and methodology.

Chapter two focuses on the review of related literature, interviews, and questionnaire responses on the subject of the work. Both western and indigenous literature on the subject are reviewed. The views of the Yoruba people interviewed and the questionnaire responses are reported in chapter three. Causes and effects of the phenomenon on the contemporary Yoruba are also presented, based on the research findings.

Chapter four considers what a pastoral care giver can do to prevent the phenomenon of sex related marital crises. Here, the preventive, curative and maintenance responses from a pastoral theological perspective are presented. The last chapter concludes the thesis. Conclusions inferred from the study constitute the first part, while some recommendations on how to study the issue further in order to help couples enjoy unhindered sexual relationship winds up the thesis.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CONCLUSION

This thesis has tried to x-ray the problems associated with sexual intercourse between husbands and wives from the Yoruba Christian perspective. It is evident that sexual fulfillment is an integral part of marriage. Where it is deficient, it usually leads to crisis.

The research also reveals the causes of boredom in coitus among couples. Some of the major causes of boredom include: misconceptions about sex, psychological, sociological, socio-cultural, socio-political and physiological factors. The effects of these aforementioned causes are also examined in the work. This research has also shown the effects of sex related crisis on the husband-wife relationship, the children and the entire society.

In as much as sexual dissatisfaction exists and causes crisis among some contemporary Yoruba couples, the researcher has suggested some antidotes to sexual dissatisfaction in marriage. These antidotes are in three fold, namely: preventive, curative and maintenance responses. Preventive responses include biblical teaching about sex in marriage and celibacy, teaching on human anatomy and reproductive organs, teaching on the

psychology of male-female relationship, pre-marital counselling, new couple orientation and family planning.

On curative responses, the researcher listed marriage counselling, group therapy, and sex during pregnancy. These solutions are listed as means by which sexual dissatisfaction can be brought under control in marriage.

The researcher also suggested the following antidotes as ways to maintain positive conjugal relationship in marriage: marriage and family enrichment programme, preaching and teaching on sexual issues, discouragement of the feeling of being too old for sexual intercourse, prayer, emphasis on hygiene, practice of forgiveness in marital relationship, and the ministry of referral.

As a matter of urgency, pastoral care givers are encouraged to focus their attention on the family relationship now. Family issues, particularly problems associated with sexual intercourse between husband and wife need urgent attention because the peace of the contemporary society depends on the stability of families. So far, there has not been much attention paid to sex matters. In fact, the sex issue was tagged a 'no go area'. It is time to break the ignorance and silence from a Christian perspective. "Talking responsibly about sex therefore, should not be frowned upon or regarded as breakdown of moral."¹

¹Samuel O. Oloruntoba, Family Bliss (Ilorin: Atoto Press Ltd., 1987), p. 16.

As S. A. Adeniran says, "For pastoral care to be an effective healing tool in Nigerian culture, pastoral care givers need to start with the people where they are."² In order to care for Yoruba couples with barbaric views of sexual intercourse, biblical teachings about sex ethics have to begin in the Church. It is possible that in doing this adherents of other religions, like Muslims and traditional worshippers, may also be helped.

In this age of sexual promiscuity, where sexual "advertisements are lurid"³ through the mass media, the Church through her pastor must not keep silent. As the author of Proverbs admonishes young husbands, the pastor should always remind married men and women to rejoice in the spouses of their youth (Proverbs 5:8). The Church should "frown upon any sexual activity that transgresses the moral norm"⁴ of the Bible.

Since "sex is an outward and visible sign which conveys and deepens the inner mental and spiritual growth between husband and wife,"⁵ it is a union which couples

²Sangodahunsi A. Adeniran, "Pastoral Care in Nigeria: Applying Wayne Oates' Model of Christian Pastor," M.Th. Thesis (Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1992), p. 89.

³Daniel Sper, What Will Make My Marriage Work? (Grand Rapids: Radio Bible Class, 1982), p. 19.

⁴William Graham Cole, Sex in Christianity and Psychoanalysis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 302.

⁵Henry Okullu, Church and Marriage in East Africa (Nairobi: Uzima Press Ltd., 1976), p. 12.

should not feel shy or hesitate to participate in. The fact that one is a Christian does not remove one from sexual desire. Both husband and wife should accept their humanness and "physical impulses as God-given and legitimate and to strive and sweat out what it means to be a responsible person, especially in the area of life-sex."⁶

According to B. U. Enyicha, as already indicated, fifty percent of pastoral work centres around family and marriage counselling. Since much is expected from pastors on marriage and family life, more courses on marriage and family should be included in theological education in Nigeria. This will equip pastors with basic tools to handle the matter when they get to the field. The pastoral care and counselling course offered at the undergraduate level is no more sufficient for the sophisticated contemporary society.

Since it has been established that sex plays a major role in marital crisis, pastors need to remind their married parishioners that,

Conjugal intercourse before and after the birth of children, before and after menopause, continuing throughout married life is normal and so intended by the Creator. Biologically it releases tensions through ecstatic pleasures and satisfaction. Socially it is the indispensable part of the full commitment of two whole personalities in an intimate relationship. Psychologically it provides a sense of fulfillment and security and of inter-dependence as love and understanding are reciprocated.

⁶Okullu, pp. 20-21.

⁷Oscar E. Feucht, ed., Sex and the Church (Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), p. 218.

There is assurance that if pastors and their churches care for couples' sexual problems, most of the cases of divorce and abandonment of spouses and children shall be averted, or at least minimized. It is the wish of this researcher that the contemporary Yoruba society, particularly the Christians, will no more shy away from this basic truth and responsibility. It is also the hope of this writer that this contribution to the welfare of contemporary Yoruba people will have a lasting positive effect.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study so far, it is obvious that sex plays vital roles in marriage, an institution established by God. Without conjugal relationship a marriage is not completed. The researcher wants to suggest that the implications of sexual dissatisfaction in marriage for the contemporary society need to be looked into more thoroughly. Contemporary pastors and marriage counsellors need to work hard on this issue and publish books that will not only condemn illicit sex, but also teach biblical sex education.

For some centuries now, the Church and her pastors have been running away from sex education. The people of the world therefore teach what one can describe as 'empty and seductive sex education'. How wonderful it will be if the Church can provide fora where biblical and ethical

