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THE PASTOR'S MATRIMONIAL HOME
AND ITS EFFECT UPON MINISTRY

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by

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B. Conclusion;

Brook K. Falkner writing in the Church Administration Journal believes it is a myth to think that a minister's wife will break him⁴. Although there might be some grain of truth in this position, there is no doubt that a pastor's matrimonial home can enhance or diminish the success of his/her ministry.

The following conclusion is deduced from the study:

The Pastor's matrimony is an important factor in pastoral effectiveness. First, the married pastor is trusted more by the congregation. He is believed to be more experienced and matured in handling issues. Secondly it is believed that he is more likely to be free of sexual sins. Consequently the ministry of preaching, teaching and pastoral counselling is much enhanced under a married pastor.

It has also been found that it is not every matrimonial home of a pastor that enhances the ministry. While a stable pastor's matrimonial home would be an asset, that of an unstable one could erode pastoral authority. The Nigerian Baptist people will want to see in their pastor's matrimony a model that they can be proud of and emulate. Consequently, pastors are advised ^{not} to put their ministry before their families, because if a pastor loses the family he may likely lose the ministry.

It has been found out that many pastors do not spend enough time with their spouses and other family members. This comes out from the desire to please his congregation at all times.

It is lamentable that many pastors are not satisfied with their pay cheques. It will be an illusion to think that pastors, because of their spirituality must be able to endure material deprivations. If a pastor is unable to take care of his home he cannot be emotionally stable since he knows that this makes him worse than an infidel (I Tim. 5:8). The attempt to meet his financial needs may make him to become a pawn in the hands of a few rich people in the church. That will of course erode pastoral authority, confidence and perception.

It is also certain that the picture of the pastor's matrimonial home is fast changing in the convention. Although female clergy person have not

been accepted at local congregations as pastors the fact that they are being appointed to staff position, challenges the generality of people to review their conservative attitude to women in ministry. It is also evident that dual clergy marriages are becoming a reality in the convention. All these call for positive changes. The era of two for a pay ^{cheque} is fast receding and the church must react positively to this.

The roles of many a pastors spouse should be commended. It has been shown that they provide the primary service of social and emotional support to the pastors. However, a situation whereby the spouse and children are active participants in the church and suffer common stressors together may not eventually prove helpful to the ministry. It will therefore, be pertinent if the pastors family should have some significant others with whom they share their burden. The church should be more supportive of pastors families.

Pastors children; It will not be wrong to conclude that many pastor's children are not the devils they are usually painted. What could have been responsible for this picture which has been invalidated by this research is their being on display to the world. What this means is that Pastors should take the training of their children seriously if they would not be occasions for attack. Although the research indicates that pastors are not to suffer for the sins of their children, the fact still remains that whatever happens to the children will have one form of impact or the other on their parents' ministry (Tit. 2:8).

The pastors matrimonial home also aids preaching and teaching of the word. First of all is the power of example. It is believed that a pastor's sermon flows out of his personal life and home. Through this research, it has been found that many pastors have exemplary homes. Secondly, the fact that the pastor and his spouse take active part in the teaching and preaching has been demonstrated and it provides examples to follow.

Stability in their homes also allows the pastor to preach with confidence and boldness. Finally, the fact that majority of the spouses give sermon feedback is an asset. The fact that majority of the pastors' spouses are able to ~~to~~ candidly speak and communicate freely even unpleasant issues helps the matter most. Consequently the pastor's spouse can critically, objectively and lovingly point out errors for rectification and suggest areas that need the pastor's attention.

The research has revealed that although the convention has ruled that divorced pastors do not qualify to serve as pastors and therefore shall not be considered for ordination, there is evidence to suggest discordant voice among both the pastors and laypersons of the convention.⁵ A situation like this shows lack of decisiveness and a dangerous signal to the spiritual health of the church. The greatest front the devil directs his assault is the home and if the homes of pastors who are looked up to as models fail, what then holds for the family in general? Pastors are generally seen as exemplars, counsellors, ^{and} teachers who must incarnate the word they preach. No matter what the society is they are expected to tower above their respective pews if they are to make any appreciable impact. The existence of commuter clergy couples does not augur well for the ministry. This erodes the support base of the family and portrays lack of faith. It shows a tendency to put financial interest above spiritual consideration. One wonders how such a pastor can preach faith and encourage families in his congregation to have common focus or place the kingdom of God first. Such a situation also affects the training of the children who are usually with their mothers. The positive role the father should have on the development of the children is thus absent. It has been found that if a man is not with his children on daily basis, he must show extra pains when he is with them to ensure that his children know that he loves them and he is interested in their welfare⁶.

It is believed that if a child feels that his parents really love him and is interested in his problems, one of the child's basic need is met. Unfortunately commuter pastors who visit their spouse will most likely do so during the week when the spouse and children may not be available. Although it has been shown that many of the commuter spouses are still active in the church, the examples they are to show in their spouses' ministry are lacking. Their role as encouragers are also not fulfilled. Apart from this they may grow spiritually apart. The emotional security their presence ought to provide each other is missing. Eventually if care is not taken, they may go to a church where the Lord does not want them just because they want to be together.

Evidences exist through this research that some clergy couples do not agree on the ministry. While there are some pastor spouses who see themselves led into the ministry and desire to be actively involved, others are not so enthusiastic. In some situations it is the pastor who does not enhance the wife's participation. The writer knows a pastor whose wife is theologically trained up to the degree level but is not allowed active participation in the ministry. In some instances it is the church that limits the pastor's spouse. Consequently, it is hoped that a pastor should clearly define the role of the spouse based on his/her knowledge and agree with his church before going into the pastorate.

The disparity in educational attainment between pastors and spouses should be a matter of concern. Unfortunately evidence exists to show that it is many a wife who sacrificed to see the husband through school who become intellectually deficient themselves and unable to facilitate the ministry of the spouse. This has produced serious tension in the matrimonial homes of pastors since it limits the congregation which the pastor can minister to.

