

261.835
NBT S
~~XXX~~ DIV
J5642
C-17

ETHICS OF PAUL CONCERNING
MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE:
A CASE STUDY OF A NIGERIAN BAPTIST CHURCH.

An Essay Presented
to the Faculty of the
Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree

Master of Divinity in Theology

by
Ogadimma Edward Jim-Odoi
June, 1999.

~~99289~~ 03-579

the parties.

C. Recommendations

FOR THE CHURCH

1. The church today, without devaluing the contents of Scripture, should demystify sex by promoting the teaching of Christian sex education, courtship, marriage, and family life in the Church Bible studies. This will prepare young people to go into marriage honourably and to strive to sustain its sanctity. It will also help to ground married people in the knowledge of the biblical principles for Christian living in marriage.

2. Marriage Counseling should be incorporated into the main ministry of the church, to provide pre-marital, marital, and post-marital counseling to single and married persons in the church. People should be encouraged to break the cultural taboos and avail themselves of such services.

3. The church should exercise its mandate, not only to punish victims of divorce situations but should be prepared to work for the reconciliation and or rehabilitation of such victims and help them to fully resume fellowship with the church, without despising them.

4. The church should give full emphasis on marriage and family life in its teachings and preachings and caring ministry. Members should be made to understand that child-bearing may be necessary but not a sufficient condition for a happy enduring marriage. People's faith should be directed to the Lord.

5. These emphases should be included in the church's constitution to guide conduct of members in the church. The church must constantly work against marriage failures.

FOR THE PASTOR

1. The Pastor should take his home as his first church and give it all the attention it deserves, bearing in mind that the failure of the home is the failure of his ministry.

2. The pastor should help the church to see its responsibility to its members attain a happy home through counseling, teaching, pastoral visits and care, and corrections.

3. The Pastor must be prayerful, allowing God to deal with him in the area of family relations so as to become a model for his congregation, knowing that divorce or bad marital relations portrays the church as undisciplined and failing in its ministry.

FOR THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION (NBC)

1. The NBC should be definite on matters of family life, which affect both members and ministers, and should express its position more clearly in a document. It is about time we got a documented Baptist position on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Sporadic decisions occasionally taken by the Ministerial Board are not far-reaching as they concern only ministers' conduct and not members'. For instance, the decision cited in this paper states that divorced pastors should either resign or remain single for life. yet, nothing is said of other members of the church. If this decision extends to other members of Baptist congregations, it could have far-reaching consequences, and we may be pandering to celibacy with its anachronistic effect as it was on the Corinthian church. The NBC should, therefore, come out with a documented declaration.

This is important in the face of similar declarations by some other denominations as we have seen in the study. The nearest to what we are saying here is Dr. Clement A. Amadi's "Practices that Matter in Nigerian Baptist Convention Churches" which cannot pass for the general voice of the NBC for obvious structural reasons.

2. The NBC should honestly and sincerely discourage spiritualizing or rationalizing of Scripture in matters of life and death such as marriage, divorce, and remarriage pose.