

IMPROVING INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP
THROUGH CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES
IN OFFA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

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ABSTRACT

The project researched into improving interpersonal relationship through conflict resolution strategies in Offa Baptist Association. The work set out to expose the reasons behind incessant conflict in Offa Baptist Association and proffer workable solutions on how to improve love and unity. To that end, a biblical foundation was laid to establish the study first from the Word of God. Related literature was reviewed and scholars' opinions were studied and read. Manual were designed on the subject matter which had five studies with different topics. Two different questionnaires were also prepared called pre-test and post-test questionnaire. They were designed to test the effectiveness of the teaching of manuals on the participants. Sixty people were invited to the lectures cutting across all the groups and units of Offa Baptist Association. Different criteria were used in the questionnaire to drive the points home like age, marital status, number of participating churches and years of habitation in Offa. Other criteria are highest academic qualification and involvement in resolution of conflict. Chi – square was used to test for significant difference in the pre – test and post – test questionnaires. In the study, it was found out that conflict is inevitable because of relationship among people. There is no way a conflict cannot affect interpersonal relationship but if the conflict can be properly resolved, it is capable of increasing productivity and increasing love relationship among the people. Offa Baptist Association had suffered from the ugly experiences they have had in the past; their interpersonal relationship had been hampered and hatred had pervaded the whole place. Culture and tradition are playing a vital role in contributing to the reasons why conflict became rampant within the association. The pastors were not seeing themselves as the chief peace maker in the association rather, the elders and the leaders of the people assumed the position. That was why it was recommended that effective teaching and preaching of the word of God is very vital to restoring peace and order in the association. The pastors roles should not be neglected because they are called by God to ensure peace among the people of God. Programmes should be organized to bring people together and by so doing, interpersonal relationship will be improved greatly and conflict will be reduced to its bearest minimum.

Conclusions

From this project, the following conclusions are drawn:

Offa Baptist Association had been involved in conflicts for too long a time and a permanent solution should be sought before it is too late. It was ascertained that these conflict had damaged love relationship between Pastors to members, members to members and pastors to pastors.

It can be said from the theological framework for the project that God is a God of peace and he seeks unity among its own. Also, it can be concluded that problems are meant to be solved and not ignored thereby allowing it to damage interpersonal relationship.

The project also conclude that those conflicts allowed to linger are those they tore churches and fellowships apart. As a result, many evil behaviours grow in such fellowship or church and confusion will begin to set in leading people away from God and the church or fellowship.

From the study, conflicts emanates from spiritual, personal communicative and behavioural causes which has to do with interpersonal relationship. Culture and traditional believe had gone a long way to affect divine gathering of the children of God particularly in Offa Baptist Association wrong doctrines and satanic influence are the leading factors in the spiritual causes of conflict in the church individual differences should be recognized and endured to avoid incessant conflict among Christians.

Conflict has both positive and negative implications or effects. Those positive effects, however, emanates only when conflicts are either attempted to be resolved or are resolved. If this happened, co-operation among members could be built after a successful resolution of conflicts. The danger is that, if a conflict is allowed to linger, division and factionalism will be the order of the day. Some churches even gave victory to the devil by taking themselves to court of law to settle conflict.

It was also established that there are different outcomes of conflict resolutions. Some can end with a win – lose outcome which means that a group will be justified and the other condemned. Some can end with lose – lose outcome where the two parties will be condemned out rightly. But the best outcome that we should work towards is the win – win outcome. This is where a compromise will be reached and each person will be given reasons to appreciate the other.

Pastors can be very important in restoring good interpersonal relationship among the people of God in their churches. If they are asked not to meddle with the affairs of people, thinking problem solving should be the responsibility of some elderly people in the church or the Association, this can split the church into factions. As much as the church needs elders to resolve issues, they should only work together with the Pastors in the process.

The pastor should not shy away from his responsibilities. He should see himself as God sees him, a leader, a peacemaker, a loving visitor, a preacher and teacher of God's word and above all a man of God. A Pastor should not be trapped into conflict either through money, women or position of authority. A Pastor trapped in conflict, if care is not taking, will loose his dignity, integrity and honour both with God and with men.

Recommendations

From the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Effective Preaching and Teaching of God's Word

It was observed that many people easily forget that they are Christians anytime they are angry, subsequently causing great conflicts that may be difficult to resolve. It is therefore recommended that pastors should make it a point of duty to be preaching and teaching the Word of God on conflict, conflict resolution, how to improve interpersonal relationship and the likes to foster love and unity in the Association.

2. Circumcised Heart

Assumptions, rumour mongering, backbiting, gossiping and other vices are actually responsible for the incessant conflict in the Association. It is therefore recommended that each member should seek to know the Lord intimately, having their hearts circumcised in order to accommodate love, trust and understanding and put off hatred, dissensions and schism.

3. Recognition of Pastoral Role

The Pastor is called by God to shepherd His flock under Him. That qualify the Pastor to be the chief peacemaker in the churches and the Association. Therefore, as good as the elders and influential people can be, the pastor should be allowed to lead in any conflict resolution process putting in mind that he is called for that purpose.

4. Indigene and Non – Indigene Factor

It is written that we are brought together by Christ through His death on the cross which is making all Christians friend of Jesus(John 15:11-17). Therefore, Baptist family in Offa should be seen as family indeed whether one is an indigene or not. The indigenes should put on the mind of Christ and not allow culture or traditional believes to blind them against God's plan and love for the world.

5. Congregating Together

Having recognized the power of unity and oneness, it will be good if the Association will be organizing programmes that will be allowing all churches and peoples in the Association to be coming together. The gap created by the past conflicts will gradually be eroded if this is done. The programmes should be for different groups and categories of people in churches and the Association like the pastors meeting together, deacons meeting together etc.