

PROBLEMS OF DIVORCE AND PASTORAL RESPONSE  
IN BEULAH BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, ILESA,  
OSUN STATE.

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## ABSTRACT

This study looked into “Problems of divorce and Pastoral Response in Beulah Baptist Association Ilesa.” The issues examined are problems of divorce, their causes, effects and their impact on the family, church and society; as well as pastoral responses by a way of alleviating or eradicating divorce and remarriage. The study was carried out by using questionnaire technique. The causes deduced from the study were social, religious, economic, psychological and cultural; and were structured into questionnaire, which were administered in the field survey. Also the pastoral care under social, religious and economic responses were administered separately. The design of the study was descriptive sample survey. The target population was the church members from Baptist churches in Beulah Baptist Association, Ilesa of Osun State. Sampling was taken from all the twenty churches in the Association. The total number of questionnaire distributed to these churches were 180 for church members; and 80 for pastors and leaders. Out of them, 150 and 60 questionnaires were returned respectively. This formed a total returned rate of 83 percent of the respondents from all churches in the Association and 75 percent from the pastoral responses. These were analyzed, and findings were presented in descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that churches in Beulah Baptist Association were patterned after divorce problems with major causes under the following: social, economic, psychological, cultural and religious. It was also discovered that the issue of divorce is affecting the families and the pastoral work. However, there were pastoral responses in tackling the problems through social, religious and economic responses by the churches; the pastors and leaders. At the end of the work, recommendations were suggested. These include meeting the youths’ need on choice of life partner, pre-marital counseling, social ministry, single parents and reconciliation ministry. They are ways of enhancing pastoral works in the ministry. It was further recommended that this research work could assist the pastoral work in the ministry and meeting the social, psychological and spiritual needs of churches in Beulah Baptist Association and Conference and Convention at large.

## Conclusion

The problems of divorce as earlier analyzed and discussed in the five major factors: social, economic, psychological, cultural and spiritual and religious factors responsible for divorce represent the perception of the respondents. Also the pastoral responses as treatment of the problem of divorce have not only attempted to answer the research questions but also gave enlightenment to families and awareness to the church entirely. It has also aimed at enriching and transforming lives of the congregation. Definitely, the research work will be able to caution any family proposing divorce.

One major area of weakness of this research work was the leadership of some churches in the Association who are without pastors. This could greatly affect the solutions to divorce issues in marriage. The expectation of pastoral response could be very low especially in the ministerial duties such as pastoral care and counselling,

spiritual enrichment programmes, marriage seminars and singles' fellowship programme.

Deacons and leaders may not be able to do much.

The study also revealed that in the area of social and economic pastoral response, the churches performed above average. Christians are reminded that character attributes of love, forgiveness and empathy when dealing with those who are going through marital transitions are essential spiritual ingredients in marriage especially when irreconcilable differences are generating to separation and divorce. The biblical appropriateness of divorce is an extreme case when it may want to lead to shedding blood. Nevertheless, if the instruments offered in this research work and other previous works or scholars are applied, such family could avert it.

#### Recommendations

The problem of divorce is a perennial issue that will ever remain a thorn in the flesh of the church, as such; the church must always have positive responses to it. Part of the responses should involve preventive and curative measures. Prevention they say is better than cure. It is far better to prevent marriage from breaking down than to look for solution after it has broken. The following recommendations were offered through the research work in order to prevent the prevailing occurrence of divorce and to cure its root causes.

#### Education:

The pastor and the church should endeavour to teach believers the love of God for the family. The purpose of solemnization of marriage should be taught so that people both old and young will understand what marriage stands for. It is believed that if this awareness is made known to the congregation, divorce will be a thing of past,

seminar is also needed. Both married and singles may have separate seminars where each group will be taught according to the needs for the people involved.

Apart from this, symposium, where many believers will participate in the thorough discussion of divorce is also necessary. Seminar is an effective way for both preventive and curative measures for marriage and divorce. The teenagers and adolescents should also be educated very well on issues relating to marriage, and choice of career. If they are nurtured from the grass-root, there will be a good number of them who will make successful homes in future, and more percentage of the will escape divorce. The church could invite a well trained pastoral counsellor to handle the teachings for effectiveness. Biblical teachings that will touch the spiritual and moral lives of the people are very essential in order to get to the solution, not just their social, emotional and material needs. The quality of teaching will produce positive response.

### Preaching

According to Paul's charge to Timothy, "Preach the Word! Be alert in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (II Tim. 4:2). Preaching is an essential spiritual ingredient to address solution to problems of divorce, because divine healing of the wounds sustained by the affected group in divorce cases can occur through the message from the pulpit. Preaching is a way of communicating the will of God. If this is true, pastors should engage themselves in sound education to gain knowledge for good preaching and teaching the word. The sound preaching would go a long way in addressing the problem of divorce. Through preaching, God will effect changes in the lives of members as they listen to His word. The pulpit ministry which makes the listeners feel that they are being talked with by God through His anointed servant, instead of mere conversation

with suspicion from casual friends if debated by the pews. In other words, preaching is one of the effective weapons in solving the problems of divorce and remarriage.

### Pastoral Counselling

Counselling opens the door so that education particularly religious education can enter. Counselling is a means of making personal, educational application of theology and the life-developing principles of Christianity. Pastoral counselling is all inclusive tool to solving the problems of marriage, not just divorce. It meets the moral, spiritual, emotional, mental psychological, religious, social and spiritual needs of the divorced or families in the marital crises.

It is ministering beyond the pulpit extensively and with closer touch of the concerned people. A pastor's counselling ministry, teaching ministry, and preaching ministry should be regarded as inseparable. The church must not play away her supportive roles in the counsellee in carrying out the counselling. If the church is very serious with the solutions to problems of divorce, she would clamour for the Church family's welfare, and promote the gospel of Christ widely; counselling ministry should not be taken with levity. A pastor's counselling ministry outside the pulpit reveals the need for his counselling ministry on the pulpit.

### Visitation

The pastor should arrange for regular visit to divorcees. His sincere concern may work things out better for the person concerned. By Baptist polity, deacon ministry are encouraged and allow to play supportive leadership role in the pastoral ministry. If so, deacons should faithfully join hands with the pastor for effective solutions to problem of divorce and other issues on marriage on crisis situation.

### Prayer for the Family in Crisis

