

MARITAL CRISES AS BARRIERS TO CHURCH GROWTH IN ABEOKUTA
NORTH-WEST BAPTIST CHURCHES

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the causes of marital crises, its effects on the church growth and the strategies for resolving marital crises among couples in Abeokuta North-West Baptist Churches. The research work revealed that the problem of marital crises were inimical to the spiritual growth of the churches in Abeokuta North-West Association. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection to carry out the research work among the church members of the selected association. The research questions were analyzed using simple percentile method to reach reasonable conclusion on the subject matter. The findings revealed, among other things, emotional challenges, such as sexual abuse, incompatibility, physical abuse, financial problem were the causes of marital crises. It was thereby, recommended that pastors should endeavour to do their best in teaching, preaching the biblical standard of marriage, and praying for peaceful coexistence among Christian homes in their churches. At the same time, pastor and Christian homes should be role models to the church members and people around. Based on the findings, recommendations were made that Pastors should carry out biblical counseling before and after marriage, engaged in prayer for peaceful co-existence among Christian homes in their churches.

5.2 Conclusion

This thesis has established the fact that many marriages has problems and the causes of these problems are many and they differ. To make an easy reading and more understanding of this research, the researcher sampled opinions of married Christians. From the findings of this study, it is clear that there are various critical factors of marriage failure in Abeokuta North West Baptist Churches for which there is need to signal the way forward.

Based on the findings from different authors and the questionnaires, the following conclusions were drawn by the researcher: crises were inevitable in marital relationships; marital crises were barriers to church growth because the state of home determines the state of church. As a result of these, there is need for more experts on marriage and home issues than more experts in church growth because if the home will not grow, the church will not grow. Couple must seek understanding of the biblical reasons for the establishment of the marriage institution.

S.T.A. Akande, Prevent a Divorce in your Marriage, Ibadan: Day Star 1999. Pg. 9

As for suffering, we know from Scripture that suffering would be present in the life and maturation of the Christian. However, what is becoming apparent is that so many of our marital crises are due to our own bad choices, made worse by our lack of trust in Christ to heal the situation. First, the church is not doing enough to prepare couples for covenant marriage. In other words, we are not “making disciples” as we have been commanded. This is simply one more symptom of the reductionist gospel in which we are focused only on achieving “conversions” rather than fulfilling the Great Commission.

Second, the church must be prepared to intervene and work to rescue those marriages that are under marital crises. This means that those who are struggling in marriages need to engage their church pastor. There is no biblical mandate to suffer in silence. We have been joined to the body of Christ and this body is called to “bear one another’s burdens,” working together to resist the effects of the fall and to restore sinners. The church must resolve to wage war against the sin that threatens its families, using the weapons of spiritual warfare outlined in Ephesians 6:10–17.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Counselling sections should be organised. Premarital counselling sessions for couples intending to get married. Counselling therapy for conflicting families should also be highly emphasized. With this the church will be able to solve the problem of incompatibility in marriage; and also prepare their minds for likely challenges in marriage so as to know how to endure.

2. In relating with couples and solving crises arising from marital crises, prayer should not be neglected. The devil knows that the only way to attack the church is by attacking families, so the weapon the church can use to wage war against the enemy and conquer the enemy is prayer
3. The church's yearly calendar should always have Marriage seminars, marriage symposiums, sermons that spur members to love. This will give the church opportunity to solve some problems at the minimal level, before they grow to become crisis at home.
4. The church can empower her poor and unemployed members who are going through marital crisis by providing financial assistance, seminars, job creation, etc., with this they will be empowered to face their challenges. Dennis said, "From the Old Testament to the New Testament, ministering to the families that are less privileged spiritually and materially, will deliver them from economic/ financial crisis that they are battling with."⁸⁷
5. Constant visitation to the church members should also be on the priority list of the pastor. Visitation to the houses of the members will bring about a sense of affinity among church members and this will make it easy for such members to confide in the church Pastor on issues of their family. Visitation by the pastor will also help the pastor to know some issues in the families of members.

⁸⁷ Dennis Rainey, *Is there Hope for a Lasting Marriage?* Campus Crusade for Christ Production, pg. 24.