

BIBLICAL TEACHING ON MARRIAGE AS A DETERRENT TO  
DIVORCE AND LEVIRATE MARRIAGE

OYEDELE, OLOYEDE

A project in the Department of THEOLOGY  
Faculty of Theological Studies

Submitted to the School of Postgraduate Studies  
Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso.  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree.

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY of the  
UNIVERSITY OF JOS.

JUNE 2012.

## **Abstract**

God is the one who created and instituted marriage, and his purposes for doing so are that man should not be alone by himself, but he should have an helpmate to be a companion to him, second, the man and the woman should find sexual satisfaction within the confine of marriage, and thereby avoid the sin of fornication that could have come in if they had been alone. The third purpose is the procreation of children. These reasons are sufficient to support why God took marriage as a very serious institution, and planned that it should be for life. However, information have shown that people, Christians inclusive, have taken the institution of marriage with levity, as divorce rate is on the increase, premarital sex is now the in-thing among the youths, and so many marriages are going through turbulent times.

As a means of stemming the tide of divorce, premarital sex, and making the people to regard the institution of marriage with esteem, and making the Christian to understand levirate marriage and position of New Testament on it, this project examined the deterrent effect that biblical teaching on marriage has on divorce and levirate marriage, using Unity Baptist Church, Ogbomoso as a case study.

The researcher carried out the project by way of designing a manual. The manual contained five sections with the aim of educating deacons, church officers and church members on the biblical concept of marriage, and thereby

check its deterrent effect on divorce and levirate marriage. In order to do this, two sets of questionnaire were designed, the first was a survey of the understanding of deacons, church officers, and church members on the biblical concept of marriage. A total of 110 questionnaires were distributed out of which 107 were returned comprising of 10 deacons, 18 church officers, and 79 church members. This was immediately followed by the manual implementation. Following this, the second questionnaire was administered, to determine if there is improvement in the understanding of biblical concept of marriage by deacons, church officers, and church members. During this stage of the project, 80 questionnaires were distributed out of which 67 were returned comprising of 10 deacons, 18 church officers and 39 church members. It was also meant to see if biblical teaching on marriage will serve as deterrent to divorce and levirate marriage.

The project revealed that biblical teaching on marriage serves as deterrents to divorce and levirate marriage. There was improvement in understanding of the respondent after the manual implementation, as shown by their new understanding of the research questions. There was, however, only a marginal improvement in the case of improvement in understanding of levirate marriage and New Testament position on it. This was probably due to not enough time, during the course of the manual implementation, to teach on it. It is therefore recommended that pastors or teachers of God's Word will take time to regularly teach on biblical concept of marriage, if they want to see

improvement in their members understanding of it, and for it to serve as deterrent to divorce and levirate marriage.

## **Conclusions**

The researcher drew the following conclusions from this project:

From the reviews of related literature, it was concluded that God's plan for marriage, as revealed in his (God's) Purposes for it is that the couples should be companions, the marriage bed should not be defiled, as marriage is meant to avoid fornication. The provision of children, which are normal blessings of marriage which is meant for procreation, should also be the lot of the married couples. The man is expected to leave his parents, and cleave to his wife so that the two of them will become one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

Furthermore, it was concluded that adequate preparation for marriage, in the choice of marriage partner and during courtship period, is paramount to the good success of Christian marriage and family. Adhering strictly to the divine order for the family, by the Christian couple, and appropriate sexual relationship in marriage as admonished by the Scripture, will in no small way aided the Christian family to become more stable, peaceful and joyful.



From the study, it is clear that God wants the family to be stable, peaceful and joyful. God is against divorce for any reason whatsoever, once marriage is contracted, it should last for life. The teachings of both the New and the Old Testament testified to this fact. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16<sup>a</sup>), and the wife is bound by the law as long as her husband lives, but if the husband dies, she is free to remarry, but it must be to a Christian (and vice-versa) (I Corinthians 7:39).

The objective of the project was to bring to the consciousness of the Christian the danger of divorce and levirate marriage, and to see to what extent biblical teaching on marriage can serve as deterrent to them. From the analysis of the pre-test and post-test questionnaires of the project, it was clear that the objectives of this project were met. For example, through the manual implementation, a sizeable percentage of the respondents at the pre-test stage, that were of the opinion that couples should divorce themselves if their marriages cannot produce children, were mostly of a contrary opinion at post-test stage of this project. This in essence means that among Christians adequate biblical teaching on marriage will serve as a deterrent to divorce and levirate marriage.

### Recommendations

From this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. That teachers of God's World should include the knowledge of who instituted marriage when designing their teaching material.
2. That God is the One who instituted marriage and both the Christian singles and couples concern should involve Him, the way they should, in their preparation for marriage, and in their marital life.
3. That to reduce headship tension in the family, couples should have a deep understanding of divine order for the family.
4. That the issue of increase in premarital sex should be of concern to the Christian church. That Christian singles who are engaging in premarital sex as a result of inadequate teaching of the scripture should know what the Scripture says on pre-marital sex.
5. That divorce is not a solution to solving marital problems. That a sound doctrine that God hates divorce should be expounded and taught to Christians regularly.
6. That Christian may inadvertently enter into or may support levirate marriage as a result of their ignorance of what levirate marriage is and position of the New Testament on it.

