

NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, OGBOMOSO- NIGERIA

NBTS
Oj1-m
MATS

MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH TO THE COUPLE DELAYED IN BEARING
CHILDREN: ZION BAPTIST ASSOCIATION AS A CASE STUDY

AN ESSAY PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY
OF THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
OGBOMOSO- NIGERIA

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARTS IN THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

BY
SAMUEL OLUSEGUN OJUADE

JUNE 2007

07-0737

ABSTRACT

This thesis "Ministry of the Church to the Couple delayed in bearing Children: Zion Baptist Association as a case study" is aimed to study the causes of delay in baring children and how the church could minister effectively to the couples who are experiencing delay in bearing children. This study sampled the opinions of the selected couples across selected churches within Zion Baptist Association of Ogun State Baptist Conference.

Questionnaires and interviews were designed and administered to medical personnel in selected hospitals, couples experiencing delay in bearing children for more than five years, couples who had experienced delay in bearing children but now with children Also, available textbooks and journals were consulted for relevant information on the subject.

In order to come up with a fairly justifiable research, the researcher found significant answers to research questions, some of the questions are: what are the major causes of delay in childbearing? What are the effects of childlessness on the delayed couples in bearing children and how can the church minister effectively to the needs of the childless couples?

Based on the findings and data gathered, the researcher recommends that the church through the pastor should not neglect the ministry to the delayed couples, rather develop programmes to educate and minister to the needs of the waiting couples. Government officials should also provide medical facilities, drugs/treatments at affordable cost and above all, couples who are delayed in bearing children should be hopeful and instead of considering extra-marital affairs and children outside wedlock, the researcher recommends the consideration of adoption as a better and biblical alternative.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The result of this study has undoubtedly revealed that delay in childbearing is a crisis in the society. Since the church has members, no matter how few that are delayed in bearing children, this study reveals that the church has a ministry to the couples who experience delay in bearing children. Since causes of this great calamity have been discovered, then the solution to the problem seems apparent. It is clear that the church alone cannot deal with the problem, and it is important to know that where necessary appropriate referrals should be done. Medical and scientifically approach to the problem should be referred to the medical personnel especially the gynecologists to handle. However, the church has a role to play in the spiritual approach to encourage the concerned, and minister hope and assurance to the couple that with God all is possible even when it is scientifically clear that their situation is hopeless, "waters can still come out of the desert land".

Recommendations

Recommendations for the Christian Ministry:

Based on the findings from data gathered, the following recommendations are for the church.

The church should develop a program to educate and minister to the couples who experience delay not only for their members but the childless

couples around them. Such program includes; exhortation, educative seminars: inviting professionals to give talks, free medical consultations in the church premises, inviting couples that have overcome the crisis to give testimony etc. Concern in ministering to this few groups in the church is a challenge to the community.

A constant visitation is also recommended. To visit people in crisis is to identify with their problem. Jesus also taught that when we visit people who are in need, what ever we do for them it is unto Him. Church ministry should develop a strong visitation group that will include ministry to the waiting couples.

Some of them would have overcome their problem if they were financially strong. Simple medical tests may be enough to solve their childlessness. The less privileged should be assisted. This may be too expensive for the church; the researcher is of the opinion that no amount spent on members is too expensive – life is precious. The early church went as far as selling their properties to meet the needs of the members just to ensure that no one lacks anything in the church. This may be a milestone, yes a turning point for the church today!

Again, the researcher recommends for the church ministry to always be sensitive in dealing with the couples delay. Be mindful of public utterances, the kind of prayer points raised in public prayer services, kind of jokes used during services, members should be educated how to relate with the couples experiencing delay as well. Most of them are having pathetic experiences that little things may upset and worsen their situations.

Recommendations for Church Pastors

Based on the data received and findings, the researcher recommends the following to ministers of the Gospel:

Pastors should not neglect the ministry to the waiting couples in the church. No matter how few the numbers may be; the same attention given other areas of the ministries are expected to be devoted to them as well. If Jesus could attend to Zacheaus by leaving the crowd to follow him to his house; He also stood still to attend to the woman with the issue of blood, then even just a couple in this category in the church needs pastoral attention.

Time must be created to counsel with the couples experiencing delay. Pastors should understand that childless couples are selective as far as revealing their problems. So if pastors seem to be the confidant of those experiencing delay in child bearing, they must not be disappointed. Pastors should allow them to talking because talk is therapy. Take time to speak hope and encouragement so as to heal their emotions and psychological wounds. Share the experience of those in the Bible who have similar hurts and of others in our contemporary life; couples who have been in the crises before and how God helped them to overcome. This goes a long way to assure them and to give them hope as well.

Pastoral visitation is also recommended. Apart from church's visitation team visiting the waiting couples, the visit of the pastor is therapeutic. People tend to believe that the appearance of their pastor in their homes is the appearance of God. It is a relief and psychological healing seeing the pastor visiting and praying for them even at home goes a long way.

Recommendations to the Childless Couples

Based on the data received and findings, the researcher recommends the following for the couples delayed in bearing children:

They should always be hopeful. Anxiety, fear and tension could also stand as hindrances. It is recommended to always be prayerful, and with faith that at the appointed time, God will surely answer them.

The researcher also recommends that they should not allow the extended families and society to intimidate them and push them to do what is not right before God. They should but not lose focus but stand firm and wait on God.

Instead of considering extra-marital affairs and children outside wedlock, the researcher recommends their consideration of adoption as a biblical alternative. Child adoption is Biblical. Relationship between Abraham and his servant Eliazar, suggest adoptive status. Jacob adopted Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph's children (Gen. 48:5) Egyptian princess adopted Moses and he was nurtured in Pharaoh's palace (Exod.2: 10). Modecai adopted Esther, (Esther 2;7, 15) and Naomi adopted Obed, the son of Boaz and Ruth, the Moabite.

The two should agree in the adopting of a certain number of children. Pray seriously for the Lord's guidance so as not to adopt a sickle, a demonic child or a child with HIV. Follow all protocols and observe all legal requirements. Bring them home and train them with love and in the way of the Lord.

