

EFFECTS OF PRE-MARITAL COUNSELLING
ON THE YOUTH IN
THE LOCAL BAPTIST CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

The effects of pre-marital counselling on the youths of the local Baptist church is an attempt to explain the biblical and theological basis for pre-marital counselling and its effects on the youths. It is divided into five basic chapters. The first chapter of the paper contains the general introductory materials. These include the statement of the problem, purpose and significance of the study, research methodology, limitation and definition of the operative terms.

The second chapter attempts to discuss biblical view for pre-marital counselling. This includes the biblical view of marriage in both the Old and New Testaments. The other part of this chapter discusses theology of marriage and cultural view of marriage.

Pre-marital counselling in the local Baptist Church is the focus of the third chapter. It is divided into other sub-topics such as purpose and goals of pre-marital counselling, resources for counselling like books, cassettes, writing materials and the Bible. Other areas covered by this chapter are: problem areas in pre-marital counselling, courtship, adjustment, relationship with in-laws, challenges for the church, pastoral and pre-marital counselling. The second part of the chapter deals with

preparations for marriage which include: filing of notice, betrothal, payment of dowry, engagement, the wedding service, reception, and the honeymoon.

The fourth chapter treats the results of pre-marital counselling on the couple and the Church. The effects of pre-marital counselling on the society is also considered. The concluding chapter gives a concise summary of the essay and recommendations. The research gives suggestions for further research.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study of marriage union is justified; apart from guiding against marriage crises, it is a means to ensure maximum realization of the good things this social institution has to offer. As a result of the uniqueness of marriage in human life and in the society at large, this writer recommends premarital counselling to every couple-to-be because it occupies a unique place in the stability and happiness of marriage life. The pastors in the local Baptist Churches should continue to organise premarital counselling from time to time. This will prevent numerous marital crises among couples. If there is peace in the family, the Church which is the body of Christ will be at peace and focus its task of missions and evangelism. Pastors in all local churches should have basic training in marital

counselling in order to be fully equipped for such a task. And they should continue to attend marriage lectures and seminars to add more knowledge on this area. Their good services will lead to strengthening of marriage relationships among their parishioners.

Furthermore, because of time factor, the pastor can organise group counselling for engaged youths. However, the counsellor should meet each couple separately at least once before the wedding day. The pastor should take note of areas where couples feel shy during group counselling. In addition, the Church should equip her library with relevant materials such as books, literature magazines and tape recorders. The Church through her pastor, should encourage the youths to make good use of the library. The Church should employ a competent person to serve as a librarian who will keep a good record of the movement of books.

The Christian marriage counsellor should mind the venue of the counselling sessions. Such venue must have privacy for the people who come for counselling. Furthermore, the Church of God is the spiritual life-wire as well as the moral voice of the community. She should continue to preach the gospel message that will lead members of the Church to know the value of a happy and stable Christian family. The Church should lead the congregation to avoid anything which

can disorganize the family. If the Church fails to do this, she has no right to criticize any act of misconduct in marriage among her members.

The writer agrees with Howard Clinebell as he gives his best counsel to the pastor when he says,

Proficiency in marriage and family counselling is the pastor's most indispensable counselling skill. In this area he should be among the best informed, most skilled persons in his community. A reasonable degree of proficiency in other types of counselling, his opportunities are so frequent and so crucial that a degree of competence approaching (expertness² is required to meet the needs.

The pastor needs to equip himself for the great tasks which are ahead of him.

However, husbands and wives should not be separated by posting them to different geographical locations. The present arrangement where husbands are working in one area and wives in another should be discouraged. Such practice has contributed and is still contributing to the distability of many families. Such unstable marriages hit the rock and end in divorce. Such situations have led to break in homes, adversely affecting the society.

Finally, the home is an educative agent of training for the children. Parents should train their youths about issues of marriage. Parents should live exemplary lives for their youths to follow. Through their godly living and Christian counsel, younger generations will have happy and stable families. The part played by the home in

²Howard Clinebell, Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 265.

the building and development of a nation is a significant one. Whatever happens at home will surely affect the society at large. Therefore, issues of Christian marriage should be the concern of everybody who wishes our society well. Admittedly, many indigenous books have been written on marriage and the home, but books on premarital counselling are very few. Therefore, additional materials are inevitable to complement the existing ones. Some of the existing ones fail to integrate African context or take into consideration the problems which bachelors and spinsters as well as their parents face. In order to create further awareness similar materials are needed.