

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

Edited by G.S.Chukwuemeka

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Religion and Society

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ISBN: 978-978-59293-9-3

Printed and designed by DEBBICHUKS Printing and Computer Services, Stadium/Ogume Road, Kwale, Delta State

DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to the Holy Trinity.

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CHAPTER SIX

FAMILY LIFE AND RELIGION

By

Simon Sunday Ayodele

Introduction

Family life is defined as regular interactions and activities that a family have together when family members enjoy each other's company and spend a lot of time doing things together.

It can be further explained as a group of persons related by the ties of marriage, blood, or adoption, constituting a single household and interacting with each other in their respective social positions. In addition, it is seen as a kind of life a person lives after marriage. (merriamwebster.com)

Family life is described as a life a person normally live when one is married and has children. It is seen as a group of two or more persons related by birth or adoption, or marriage, who live and relate together, all such related persons are considered members of one family. Family life is also defined as regular interactions and activities that a family have together when family members enjoy each other's company and spend a lot of time doing things together, this is an example of good family life.(hrsa.gov/hill-burton)

Most religions see family life as a blessing and value the

stability of marriage. Christians believe the church should be a pacesetter for family life.

Types of Family

There are different kinds of families that can affect family life.

Nuclear Family

It consists of two adults and any number of children living together. The children could be direct offspring, steps or adopted.

Single Parent Family

Consists of a parent living alone without a partner, who has most of the day to day responsibilities for raising the children. Such children live with a single parent for most of the time but may still have contact with their other parent. (bbc.co.uk)

Extended Family

The extended family consist of grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins either living nearby or within the same household. For instance, if a married couple lives with either the husband or wife's parents, the family has changed from nuclear to extended.

Reconstituted Family

This is also known as the step family. It is a kind of family where one or both adults have children from previous relationships living with them.

Polygamous Family

Polygamy is the practice of having two or more romantic partners who may or may not be romantically involved with each other or with other people. (study.com)

Bible Definition of Christian Family

Technically the Bible does not define a Christian family, because the term cannot be found in the Bible. However, the Bible gives us an idea of what a family is and conveys its importance. The moment we have a biblical understanding of a family, we can carefully apply the adjectives Christian.

The biblical ideal of a family is one man and one woman united by marriage to become one 'flesh' for a lifetime (Genesis 2:24) and raise children whom they will nurture to adulthood. Ideally, a Christian family is where believing man and woman united in marriage and raised children in the way of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4) A good family would possess all the qualities necessary to be “a Christian” and “family”.(gotquestions.org)

A good Christian family is one that understands the God-given roles of a man and a woman as outlined in scripture. God gives us a family hierarchy that is to be standard for Christian households (Ephesians 5:23-33 ; 6:2-3). This may not be a popular concept but it is biblical. (lifehopeandtruth.com)

How to Maintain a Good Family Life

1. Balancing Work and Home Life

One of the problems couples face is how to manage work and home life. A lot of families have difficulties balancing work and their home life. To have a quality and happier home life, this aspect must be worked on. The work must be done in a way that would not rob the family of its quality family life. Your family will be happier to see more of you and enjoy happier family life together.

2. Family Altar For a Happier Family Life

A family must engage in the family altar. This is otherwise called morning and evening devotion at a time agreeable to all family members. When a family arms itself with God's word and prayer, there will be no limit to what a family can achieve.

3. Maintain Fear of God

Every member of the family must allow the fear of God to permeate his or her life. The parents are to lead their children to know Jesus Christ at the earliest possible time of their lives. The life parents live must demonstrate they fear God. Parents should not lie to their children or do anything that will put their faith in questioning. (familylives.org)

4. Be Flexible

Children, prefer to spend time with their parents. It is always good to create an unplanned visit to different places of interest. It is a thing you and your children will not forget. It is a good thing for busy families, it can be

scheduled in a few hours.

5. Let Christ Be The Centre of Everything in the Family

There is a popular chorus that goes thus “with Jesus in the family, happy home, happy home, with Jesus in the family, happy home.” When Jesus is allowed in the home, he makes things work easier for all. Most times, families exclude Jesus Christ from their homes, technically the effect is not palatable. Don't take any decision that will affect the family without first contacting God through Jesus Christ. Let there be a clear leading from God before you go ahead.

6. Spend Quality Time With Your Spouse

It is difficult to find time for you and your spouse especially when children are involved. But it is important to make time for each other. More importantly, children learn about relationships from their parents. Try to communicate with the children frequently about all that is happening daily, as well as just things you enjoy talking about. Try to organize a time that you can spend with each other. (ibid)

7. Maintain Boundaries

It is common that boundaries are maintained to protect children from harm or danger. A God-fearing family should explain why boundaries are there from biblical and societal norms. Parents are to give an explanation as to why each instruction is given. The information will help your children.

8. Communication

God does not leave his creatures without communicating with them. An example of God communicating with Adam and Eve is in the Garden of Eden. Communication is important during the good and tough times. Children often find it hard to put their feelings into words and just knowing their parents are listening can be enough. Talk to them about your life, not just about your problems but about your daily life. If they feel included in the things you do they are more likely to see the value of including you in the things they do as well.

9. Discipline

Often times discipline is seen as punishment. I advise parents to use it as a way of teaching their children how to meet their needs without hurting or offending anyone. Why you are right to be angry, it can help to keep calm and teach your children how they should handle a situation differently, and how they can handle the situation differently next time. Handling things this way can both be more positive and constructive. (ibid)

What is Religion

Wikipedia defined religion as social-cultural designated behaviors and practices, beliefs, prophecies, morals, ethics, worldviews, sanctified places, organizations which relate humanity to the supernatural. (Wikipedia.org)

Religions worldwide are estimated 10,000. About 84%

of the world's population is affiliated with Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism.

Religion can further be described as human beings' relation to that which they regard as holy, absolute, spiritual, sacred, divine or worthy of reverence. It is regarded as a form of people dealing with an ultimate concern about their lives and their fate after death. (Britannica.com)

Family Life and Religion

Family and religion are two closely related social institutions. Religious institutions not only stress the importance of families but also, provide advice, guidance and even appropriate norms for a family on some occasions. Often, families incorporate religion to find meaning in family relationships.

Religion has played a very important and crucial role and established deep-rooted effects on various customs and traditions of each society.

Culture and traditions are today linked with religion. It is, therefore, generally referred to as Christian culture, etc. Any society belonging to and following the customs of a particular culture, cannot separate itself from religious bonds and bindings. (Preservearticles.com)

The impact of religion can be felt easily even on such small things as dress, food, education, marriage and various celebrations of life. The clothes we wear are reflections of our religious outlook most of the time. For instance, Christians are always encouraged to wear

decent clothes. Similarly, it is a general trend that Hindus are mostly vegetarians, whereas Muslims and Christians are predominantly non-vegetarians.

In the same vein, various rituals of marriage are different in societies following different religions. Childbirth and birthday celebrations are all influenced by the religious beliefs of the people concerned. At death, different customs exist along religious lines followed by burial rites. These differences are not peculiar to our country alone but all over the world.

In a situation people free themselves from one religion, they will have to adopt the new religion and be guided by new religious customs and traditions. (ibid)

Religion becomes the measuring rod for morality and character in society. For instance, the act of drinking alcohol, theft, hatred and also negative attitude and behaviour is labelled as “sins” and are said to be awaiting judgment from God.

On the other hand, though religion is an independent variable, the family is also important to religion. To begin with, the family is the place where the intergenerational transmission of religious beliefs and practices takes place and thus is of crucial importance for the persistence and continuation of religious traditions and communities.

In Nigeria and most countries of the world, inter-denominational switching and conversion to another denomination in life is rare. Most people stick to the

denomination they were brought up. This shows that religious preferences, beliefs and affiliation are determined early in life as a result of parenting impacts.

Although parents are not the only factor in allowing the ideals of religious beliefs to be transmitted from one generation to another, they are by far the most influential. Religious transmission may also occur in religious schools or the religious community, but cannot be compared to the influence of parents. Also, religion is but one of the values parents will want to transmit to their children among other things.

Finally if family ceases to be, then religious organizations such as denominations and churches will cease to exist. Churches groom her memberships from family and parents help transmit biblical teachings to their children who become potential families in future with their spouses and children. In other words, both family and religion have a lot to derive from each other to keep each other growing and fulfilling biblical mandates on earth. (Vermeer, 2014)

Impacts of Religion on Family Life

In general, participating in religion appears to foster an authoritative, active warm and expressive style of parenting. Parents who devote themselves to religious activities may more likely to enjoy a better relationship with their children and may well interact with family members.

1. Family Ties

Parents and children who share the same faith are more likely to stay glued together. For example, those of the Christian faith have many instructions from the Bible to allow families to be united together. Such passages are (Ephesians 6:1-4, 5:22-26). Both passages enjoin children to obey their parents and parents not to cause anger in their children. The second aspect talks about what the wife should be to her husband and the husband to his wife. If these Bible instructions are adhered to, it will foster good relationships among family members. Parents and children who are born again are at advantage to relate well.

2. Reduced Divorced Rate

A couple who is more involved in religious practices, such as giving their life to Jesus and attending church programmes regularly may not dream of divorce. Though the divorce rate in the world is on the increase. The divorce rate may be on the high increase in the world, but the rate of its increase among Christian couples, for instance, is at a minimal rate. What accounts for this is the knowledge of most couples on what God says about divorce in the Bible. God frowns at divorce, he never wanted it. He created, marriage until death put them apart.

Also, servants of God, make periodic preaching on marriage and in the process of preaching they demonstrate that God hates divorce. And divorce was not God's original plan for marriage. Couples hearing such

messages, do not see divorce as an option. Thus their Christian faith helps them to stick to their spouses regardless of whatever they face in their marriage. In this manner, religion can be seen to reduce divorce among Christian faith adherents. Therefore, divorce rate in the church cannot be compared to what is obtainable outside the church.

3. Lower Level of Stress

Stress is one of the major causes of mental health disorders that are prevalent in the world today. Many factors contributory to this, such as the high rate of the poverty level in the society, family unresolved problems, unresolved conflicts at workplace and so on. Unlike in the society, the church has a lower level of stress rate. The encouragements Christians derive from the word of God could account for this. (1 peter 5:7; Mathew 11:28) they are all encouraging Bible passages and others not mentioned that enjoined Christians to shift their problems on Jesus Christ and live as if they don't have a problem. The belief in the word as a solution to human problems have helped reduce stress to the barest minimum among Christians except those with little faith or who take their problem above God's solution. (marripedia.org)

4. Lower Level of Mental Health Disorder

Mental disorder is on the higher increase in the world today. Both developed and underdeveloped nations are not left out in this saga. During Covid'19 outbreak a lot of people developed mental health disorders in the United Kingdom, the United State of America and other

countries of the world. The role of the religious practice of the Christian faith has reduced its gravity. Christians turn back to God for solutions to their problems. Most Christians are now able to manage their depression, anger, excessive anxiety, etc. better than unbelievers and perhaps and likely healthier than unbelievers.

5. Domestic Violence

Couples who shared the same religious commitment are likely to shun domestic violence. Domestic violence is one of the vices on the increase in our society. It could be a result of a mental disorder that is on increase among people in society and coupled with other reasons. Men who attend weekly activities are likely to commit domestic violence against their partners. Many words of God enjoin us to live at peace with all men. It is not God's will that Christians should engage in an act that can tarnish the name of Christ. This understanding makes many Christians behave themselves and shun act of domestic violence.

6. Healthy Relationship Between Parents, Children and Extended Family

Religion advocates for loving and maintaining a healthy relationship between parents, children and extended family members.

7. Religiosity Reduces Suicide Rates and Alcoholism

Christianity for example discourages people from taking their own lives for whatsoever reason. Christians believe that life is in sanctity and only God can take life. He has not saddled any human being with that responsibility.

That discourages Christians from taking their own lives. They will rather endure hardship and keep on trusting God for solutions rather than take their lives. They will rather be prayed to move from one place to the other than to commit suicide.

8. Spiritual and Emotional Support

Those who are part of religious groups afford spiritual guidance and emotional stability. In a complex world, some families may be equipped to handle the issues of other family members. For instance, a Christian community is a good place to seek advice and emotional support during difficult times.

Families that surrender their lives to Jesus Christ and attend church programmes planned to enrich and bless their souls, are stronger and well-equipped to face the challenges of life.(Connelly, n.d)

9. Solid Set of Values

Religion offers an excellent avenue for parents to teach their children important values. For example, those who belong to the Christian faith can teach values like being humble, God-fearing compassionate and kind. All these teachings can be well established from the word of God.

Religious organizations, such as churches also offer resources that can help families strengthen their value system. A family that is part of an organized faith will also experience solid community support and guidance, as the saying goes, “it takes a village to raise a child.”

10. Gives Understanding To Marriage

Religion offers a thorough understanding of issues of marriage. For instance, Christians have the idea that God was the one who designed marriage for humanity. This was first described in Genesis and later affirmed by Jesus Christ, marriage is a God-ordained, covenant relationship between a man and a woman. This lifelong, sexually exclusive relationship brings children into the world and thus sustains the stewardship of the earth. Biblical marriage marked by faithfulness, sacrificial love and joy display the relationship between God and his people.

11. High Level of Community Support

As a norm, organized religion can present a high level of community support for a family. Religion can help guide a family about the values, and behaviours that are “good” or “bad”. For instance, people who are of Christian faith may be more connected to one another and more empathic.

12. More Harmonious Family Life

Research has found that more religious parents had a more cohesive family relationship. This research also proved that religious parents had fewer conflicts in their marriage. It is also discovered that adolescent children of religious families managed their emotions and actions better.

One likely reason religion promotes family harmony is that it encourages members to follow a common set of values. For example, the Christian faith teaches us to live

out the virtues of love, patience and humility and these are useful for dealing with difficult relationship issues. (nae.org)

Negative Effects of Religion on Family Life

1. Religious Fanatism

When a religious person becomes a fanatic, it poses a threat to the society. Some religions are fanatic in that they do not tolerate any opposing view. Thus, it is only their religion that is real religion, and their principles are from God. This fanaticism may give rise to religious and even political conflict. Fanatism is a threat to another's freedom of religion, as it only seeks to impose one's religion on another.

2. Women's Inferiority

Women's inferiority is also obvious in most of religious sects. Women are restricted even by the scriptures and the teachings of the sect. They are not allowed to head or officiate in most religions. This practice is an encouragement of female inferiority. (Wilson, n.d)

3. Discrimination

Religion encourages discrimination amongst people from other religious sects. for instance, one would prefer to marry from his religious sect than otherwise

4. Supporting Atrocities

Because religion is a revered sect, they are given that regard and they are most liable to be trusted. This allows a safe ground for people to hide under the shadows of

religion to commit evil. Religion, therefore, serves as a shield to do evil in most occasions.

5. Encourages Suffering

The teachings of most religious sects encourage suffering as opposed to pleasure. People are encouraged to abstain from the pleasures of the world and subject themselves to suffering and sacrifices in readiness for their reward after life.(Connelly, n.d)

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