

Divorce as a Problematic Area in Christian Marriage in Nigeria

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Abstract

Marriage and divorce are two opposite side of a coin. Marriage signifies the unity of two persons to become one in a Christian conjunction while divorce signifies the disunity of this oneness to become two. The institutions of marriage and divorce in Nigeria are unique due to its philosophy about what make-up an ideal family. This paper in the above sense attempts to examine the concept of divorce as a problematic area in Christian families. The objectives of this paper are to evaluate critically the causes of divorce in a Christian home, the consequences of divorce and the implication of Christian counselling towards marital problems. The findings of this paper revealed that childlessness, early marriage, prolonged distance, poor communication, high expectations, financial crisis, infidelity and lack of intimacy are the major causes of divorce. The study also found that divorce always leave the couple with devastating effects such as; sleeplessness, decreased levels of happiness, tiredness, loss of appetites, loss of weight, increase in illness, increase anxiety and death. This paper adopts the qualitative methods of research, which relies on primary and secondary sources of data collection. Primary sources were obtained from counselling sessions while secondary sources were obtained from libraries and internet. The paper concludes by way of using the Henry Virkler approach to Christian counselling.

Keywords: *Marriage, Family, Divorce, Problematic, Institution*

INTRODUCTION

At the very outset of enunciating the nature and basis of marriage, it clearly implies that divorce or the dissolution of marriage bond could not be contemplated otherwise than as a radical breach of divine institution. It is impossible to envisage any dissolution of the bond as anything other than abnormal or evil. The paramount purpose for marriage is to live a long life commitment between husband and wife, till death do them part. Biblically, in (Malachi 2v. 14-15) "God hate divorce." Because in God's programme in establishing a home, marriage is considered of highest importance, it is to be permanent, un-dissolvable. Re-marriage therefore, is seen as committing adultery. Christian society in Nigeria does not encourage divorce because it is wrong. Both the husband and wife, including the children suffers the consequence of divorce.

In Newswatch Magazine of (1988) Ngozi Ojidoh, coordinator of Women in Nigeria (WIN) argued that, “ in Nigeria divorce women are considered an abandon property, children of divorce parents lack or suffer from the absent of love, care and training of either father or mother and most delinquent children come from broken homes. Broken down marriages, which ends up in divorce has it consequences in terms of pains, sufferings, and problems of many kinds. Many individuals found themselves embroiled in heartache, anxiety, depression, stress and complications associated with divorce and marital separations which are cause by the following reasons: problems of barrenness, sexual dissatisfactions and impotency, parental influence, marriage for convenience, problem of money, irritating habits, bad communication, incompatibility and adultery. Splinter (1992) opined that “...any one going through the experience of divorce will tell of it crazy time, as feelings run rampant, and stress is high”.

In Ola Akande’s book, Marriage and Home Making in Nigeria Society (1971) discovered that only 57% of couples could be described as having as stable, happy marriages. The other 43% represented varying degrees of marital failure, whether in divorce, separation, concubines, infidelity or other related symptoms. Through oral discussions, the researchers discovered that almost in every ten homes in Nigeria there may be two or three divorce cases. Thus, the entire institution of marriage is under greater stress and strain than ever before. In this complex society we live in, marriage couples are finding it very hard to keep their matrimonial homes intact. This made Murray (1961) to comment that, “The Church of God is being increasingly perplexed by marital situation which is one way or another related to divorce”. Sorokin commented, as quoted by Graham (1981) that, “the marriage, the family, the home has turned into a mere overnight parking place, not for every night and not always for the whole of any night”.

Divorce is speedily increasing in an alarming rate in Nigeria. And guidance and counselling experts are concern mostly with the school situation and do not give much interest in the foundation of building a happy family that is progressively collapsing. Thus, it is on this light that this paper attempts to analyse critically the question of divorce as a problematic area in Christian marriages in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF SOME BASIC TERMS

The two basic concepts that need to be conceptualize in this context are ‘marriage’ and ‘divorce.’ There are no single universal definitions of these two terms. These concepts mean different thing, to different people. It has been attributed multi-dimensional meanings and objectives, mainly because of it diversities in the system throughout the world. Marriage in itself is a natural accepted phenomenon kin of every society and culture universally. It is a lifetime and permanent union between a husband and a wife, built on unconditional, selfless love for the total person. The encyclopaedia of social science volume 9, page 1-22 defined marriage as,

Cultural approved relationship of one man and woman (monogamy), of one man and two or more women (polygamy), of one woman and two or more men (polyandry) in which there is cultural endorsement of sexual intercourse between the marital partners of the opposite sex with the expectations that children will be born in the relationship.

The definition above suggests that marriages are of many kinds, changing from society to another. Such changes however, has common pattern, namely; there is agreement between a man and a woman to become husband and wife, certain procedures is followed before it is accepted or regarded as legal means of having sex between the man (husband) and woman (wife) and this children are accepted as legal because of the payment of bride price.

Similarly, the encyclopaedia Britannica's was also quoted by Audu (1999: 8), defined marriage as;

A legally and social sanctioned union between one or more husbands and one or more wives that accords status to their off-spring, and is regulated by laws, rules, customs, beliefs, and attitude that prescribes the rights and duties of the partners. The universality of marriage with different societies and personal functions performs such as procreation, sexual gratification and regulation, care for children, their education, and socialisation, regulation of lines of decent, division of labour between the sexes, economic production, consumption and provision for satisfaction of personal needs for affection status and companionship.

In the light of Audu's understanding, the definition is generally good because it has taken into account the universal understanding and function of marriage. To buttress more knowledge on the concept of marriage, Nwoye (1991), further explained that,

Marriage in itself is a sacred and permanent contract which is assumed to be enacted with two people (usually a man and a woman) decide on their own accord and in the presence of at least two witnesses to exchange the formal consent to live a life of vocation of love and sharing for other for the purpose of promoting their mutual growth and welfare as persons in their journey together through life.

Nwoye definition clearly ascertained that it is though this permanent union of two people usually (one man and woman) that society expects to guarantee the precreation and education of children by the contract of marriage that the two people concern are elevated to the status of husband and wife respectively. And this social term means some types of reciprocal, obligations of one for the other. Among the obligation to be reciprocated in this case is the expectations that each should help the other to grow or to fulfil his or her basic needs and that each should promote a life of fidelity, sincerity to each other so that the mutual trust required for the union to grow can strongly be safe guarded.

From the definitions of marriage above, it is clear that marriage is seen as an intimate relationship between a man (husband) and a woman (wife) which is recognized and accepted by society. This beautiful union can be interrupted or disconnected at any time due to so many reasons. Powers (1987) rightly explains that;

Marriage is a living, growing relationship and like anything it needs to be nurtured continuously. If this does not continue to happen, then the joy and delight of the marriage will turn sore, and if this is allowed to worsen further the relationship can withers and die, which means it can lead to divorce.

The discontinuation of this marriage is called, 'Divorce'. The word 'Divorce' is a derivation from Latin word *divolium*, to mean in the English word, to put away, put an end, separation, asunder, etc. Divorce officially means the dissolution of marriage, or to end marriage. In a simple manner and briefly too, Kore (1989 and 1999) defined divorce as "putting an end to marital relationship". Nwoye (1991) posited that divorce is only a ceremony that marked the end of official marriage just like the wedding marked the begging of the same official marriage. While Bell (1967) defined divorce as a "legal separation of man or woman affected or caused by the judgement of a courts' total dissolution or dissolving the marital relationship". For Gahler (2006) divorce is the judicial separation of the spouses and completely disruption of their marital relations. He further noted that the dissolution of marital relations means that

marriage is completely broken down either in social or legal context. Goldsteia (2008) sees divorce as the legal separation of husband and wife affected by the judgement of decree of a court and either totally dissolving the married relations or suspending its effect so far as concern the combination of the practices. He noted that divorce may create some vital problems in the family, like adjusting to new life. Unachukwu and Igborgbo (2001) noted that divorce maybe due to:

the quality of relationship that exists between the wife and her husband's relatives and vice versa; constant and over beating and maltreatment of the wife by her husband; infidelity; childlessness or bearing female children only; incompatibility on part of the men; over maltreatment of children by their father; men going into family life without knowing what it involves and without preparing for it; abject poverty on the part of the man, lack of emotional maturity on both side; problems arising from child-rearing; and a lot of problems arising from the children themselves.

It is in this view that, Hornby (2001) defines divorce as the legal ending of marriage so that husband and wife are free to re-marry. From the point of view of Hornby, it is the process of putting an end to a marriage by law by separating couples that were together before. From the two definitions above, one would understand clearly that marriage and divorce are two side of a coin. The former signifies union, togetherness and unity while the latter signifies separation, un-togetherness and disunity.

WRONG REASONS WHY PEOPLE GET MARRIED

People get married every day, and some of them even for good reasons. Of course everyone gets married because they fell in love and want to spend the rest of their lives with each other. But when it comes to choosing a life partner is not something to be played with. Often time's people marry for the wrong reasons. The synthesis of wrong marriage is divorce. It is often advice that potential couples should trade carefully. The reason why people marry for the wrong reasons are: family pressure, wrong expectation, sex, time is kicking, friends are getting married, un-expected or un-planned pregnancy, want to become rich quick, if the partner is well to do, financial security, longing to join the married term, competing with friends etc. All these reasons stated above are ingredient for an unfruitful marriage. When partners married for the wrong reasons, divorce is always not far from the corner.

CAUSES OF DIVORCE

The greatest tragedy in marriage is divorce. The causes of divorce are different for every marriage. The causes may come as a result of one or two of the couples' behaviour. Among these causes are

Childlessness or Bareness: Nyam (1988) remarked that children, especially a male child ensures the family continuity. For married couple to be childless or wife to be barren is not only considered a disgrace, but a curse in some Nigeria societies. When a childless wife becomes frustrated in her matrimonial home, divorce is not far away the corner. In some societies, a woman who miscarriages is looked down upon as a 'witch' nickname as 'eating her children in the womb.' Counselling session with divorcee (name withheld) revealed that, no matter how good a wife may be, her husband together with his family may not be satisfied with her because of her inability to bear a child. In many societies in Nigeria, a wife may be divorce if she fails to give birth especially to a male child, even worst none. Looking at the worst case scenario on emotional collapse, Brix (2014) averred that in the desire to get children, when couples do fertility treatment, they usually come with a burning desire to have a baby. If

this wish cannot be fulfilled, the couple have a far greater risk of becoming divorced than couples whose fertility treatment results in a baby. In Nigeria many couples believe that children are essential to a happy marriage.

Unplanned Pregnancy and Teenage Marriage: In Trobisch book “I Married You”, Trobisch (1971) described this kind of wedding by getting pregnant as ‘Sex Entrance’, instead of ‘Love Entrance’. An important point raised by Trobisch was, sex created marriage, instead of love. Sex is a problem that causes divorce in many homes today. Kore (1991) noted that teenage marriage leads to early divorce. When couples marry at a very young age, say between 13-19 years for male and 12-16 years for female, the chances of getting divorce is very high. Divorce rate is high because at the early period they have little idea of marital relationship and responsibilities. Since they entered into the marriage club way too hastily, without first counting the cost they may be ill prepared to face marriage responsibilities and challenges. So many couples take marriage lightly and only continue when it feels convenient or comfortable. A little spark will destroy the marriage to a point of no return. Teenage marriage is mostly prompted by pregnancy. Studies show that today teenage marriages in Nigeria are two to three times more likely to end in divorce than are marriages between people 25 years of age and older.

Prolonged Physical Separation: Educational or career attainment can widen the gap of communication between couples and distancing parents from children. Distance is a barrier in marriage and can break the marriage to pieces. Some couples have ended their deplorable marriage because they have misplaced their priorities and importance of marriage as they put it on their jobs and educational pursuit. Brown (2018) argued that couples who become familiar with distance in their marriage tend to get in the habit of making work their priority. They give each other a cold and insufficient greeting in passing. Prolong physical separation make the husband and wife to habitually refrain from making physical, verbal, and emotional contact with each other daily, they become used to being physically and/or emotionally distant from each other. ChristiaNet observed that emotional toll of long distance marriage problems can result in alienation of affection and worse, infidelity. Husbands and wives who endure separations for the sake of career or duty to country are more prone to marital mayhem and divorce than those who consistently share the same household. Prolonged isolation away from loved ones and a lack of physical intimacy and companionship can open the door to unfaithfulness. Humans are designed by God to engage in intimate contact, stimulating conversation and a mutually satisfying emotional interchange. Over time, men and women who are deprived of intimate contact due to long distance marriage problems are more likely to yield to illicit relationships and adulterous affairs. The sense of betrayal and lack of trust caused by an extramarital affair will not be easily overcome but would end in divorce.

Communication Breakdown in Marriage: “In Marriage without Regret” by the precept Ministries (1988) as quoted by Audu (1999) indicated that, scholars have written volumes of books on techniques and principle of communications from the religion, psychological and sociological points of views, yet marriages in Nigeria are still disintegrating because of poor communication between couples. The precepts ministries (1988) specialists in the field of communication have estimated that 55 % of communication among couples is body language, 35 % is emotional, 8 % is verbal and 2 % is intuitive. If the above statistics are correct, then communication in marriage is much more than just what couples say to each other. The breakdown of communication makes divorce to be the alternative. Meyer (2017) observed that couples do not know how to talk to each other and they know even less about listening. According to her, the most important conversations couples have are with a spouse yet they put so little effort into wisely expressing their feelings and openly listening to their spouse. It is also common for spouses to want to avoid conversation they fear will cause them or their spouse pain. She further stated that if couple cannot communicate, he/her cannot solve marital

problems. The easiest way to build trust in a marital relationship is via open and honest communication skills. If “talking and listening” do not become a habit there is no hope in marriage. Communication involves talking about the bad things and coming together to develop a plan of action for solving marital problems. Marital problems cannot be solved without a willingness to communicate. Poor or no communication will lead to growing apart. And if couples are not able to communicate about the good and bad in their marriage, there is no way to feel fully secure in marriage.

High Expectations: Expectations and assumption go hand in hand when it comes to predicting whether a marriage will end in divorce or not. Finn (2019) observed that expectation starts in early life when people begin accumulating unhelpful beliefs and expectations about love and marriage from the moment they hear their first fairy tale. And society continues to pile them up through movies, books, quotes and, of course, societal norms. Meyer (2017) noted that women who buy the expensive wedding gown probably have very high expectations of marriage. Men and women both make a lot of assumptions when it comes to marriage and what to expect from a marriage. These assumptions are based on many variables and problems arising when the outcome (marriage) does not meet the assumptions or expectations. Marital expectations rarely align with the realities of what life is like inside marriage. Glenn (2016) also observed that the problems that may lead to divorce can come from having high expectations from spouses that cause fights and arguments. He pointed out that marriages, like all relationships, evolve over time. When that evolution is not for the better of both spouses, however, the evolution can serve as the foundation of disagreement between the spouses. What starts as a small crack in the form of arguments or feeling distant can widen over the course of time. Couples may lose faith in one another or stray elsewhere, damaging the trust established in the past. Finn (2019) argued that the real challenge comes when couples have unrealistic expectations in marriage that go unmet. That’s because unrealistic expectations cannot be met, no matter how much one demand or wish they are. Persistent disappointment due to unrealistic expectations can lead to stress, frustration, anxiety, sadness, despair, anger, and eventually a decision to give up on the marriage. The choice to end things after persistent disappointment is often seen as the only answer because unrealistic expectations can make it seem as if couples fell for the wrong person.

Financial Crisis: Money and marriage is an age old problem and is one of the causes that break a marriage easily. Financial problems are the leading cause of divorce in most marriages in Nigeria. Most financial issues in marriage come down to one main factor: both partners have different core values about money. There are various causes of financial difficulties, the most common one is over spending on the un-recommended or un-agreed needs such as the husband or the wife is blamed for spending money unnecessarily. For example the husband may over spend money on other women, drink about with friends lavishly, and sometime sink the money in gambling. On the other hand the wife may spend lavishly on dresses, expensive shoes, cosmetic, perfumes and worse! if she is a shopaholic, shopping unnecessary items. Mcwhinney (2019) observed that this process often builds resentment over the individual purchases made. It also divides spending power, eliminating much of the financial value of marriage, as well as the ability to plan for long term goals, such as buying a home or retirement. It can also lead to such relationship ruining behaviour as ‘financial infidelity’ when one spouse hides money from the other. Mcwhinney (2019) also notice another financial problem in marriage, “Debt”. He argued from school loans to car loans, credit cards to gambling habits, most people come to the altar with financial baggage. If one partner has more debt than the other or if one partner is debt free, the sparks can start to fly when discussions about income, spending, and debt servicing comes up. His advice that, couples in such situations may take some solace in knowing that debts brought into a marriage stay with the person who incurred them and is not extended to a spouse.

Infidelity or Cheating: White (2020) rightly revealed that Infidelity is one of the worst things that can happen in marriage. It is one of the main reasons that couples seek divorce. It destroys the foundation on which a marriage is built and can cause severe damage to the relationship. One of the big reasons why relationships struggle after the discovery that a spouse has been unfaithful is because it breeds a devastating amount of distrust and trust is sacred in all marriages. It also causes an incredible amount of grief, not only to the person who finds out their partner has been cheating, but also to the cheating party. Feelings of insignificance, anxiety and depression, mixed with frustration and anger can cause the relationship to spiral into a place of no return. A victim of an affair may even withdraw from those around them in order to avoid the pain of confronting the reality of their circumstances. While some marriages can survive infidelity and time can help the healing process, overcoming the pain and betrayal is tough and many couples do not make it. Fensterheim (2018) opines that infidelity breaches trust that cause painful and traumatic relationship injuries. He noted that it's very sad to hear how devastated couple are when they learn of their partner's betrayal. Some couples stay mired in their troubles, sinking under the weight of betrayal and pain sometimes for years before they do seek help or decide to break up the relationship. Cheating spouses ruin the family. They wreck the security of the home and negatively affect the future of the children.

Lack of intimacy: Human beings require intimacy. This is why simple physical affections such as hand-holding, cuddling, hugs and kisses are important to marriage. These simple actions encourage partner to know that they are there for one another, and they matter to each other. Brien (2017) revealed that a marital relationship needs intimacy. Regardless of whether it's a physical intimacy or an emotional intimacy, marital relationship will slowly wither and die without it. Limarzi (2018) posited that intimacy is an important factor in a marriage. However, over time a number of married couples find themselves having issues with intimacy. Often, couples who have been married for years lose interest in sex or fall into a routine. Lack of intimacy can result in a sexless marriage, which can lead to serious marital problems. Humans are sexual beings, and sex is an important factor in a romantic relationship and partnership. Smith (2019) examined that if intimacy is missing in marriage, there will be cracks in the marital relationship, leading to a permanent loss of emotional and verbal connection with spouses. Sex establishes intimacy and connection in a marriage. Unfortunately, without making an effort to maintain a healthy sex life, many couples lose desire and passion for each other. Lack of sexual intimacy can result in the dissolution of the relationship. Wong (2017) noted that in most sexless marriages, the absence of any physical connection divides couples.

Sex: Is another important point to ponder. The present of sex sometimes does not guarantee sexual satisfaction. For example, inadequate sexual satisfaction can cause divorce most common among polygamous families. Where a husband cannot adequately satisfy all his wives sexually, it pushes some of them to engage in extra-marital sex which may ultimately lead to divorce. Likewise a husband can put away his wife for inadequate service. This problem is mostly experienced in Northern part of Nigeria.

CONSEQUENCES OF DIVORCE

Divorce is a problematic area in marriages that have devastating consequences on the emotional, psychological, physical and social wellbeing of the divorcees, their children and those close to them. Most people do not enter into marriage with the intention of getting divorced. But divorce is fast becoming a common event in Nigeria. After divorce the couple often experience devastating divorce effects including, decreased levels of happiness, disturbed sleep, tiredness, loss of appetites and weight, increase in illness, increase anxiety and death. Parkinson (1987) declared that admission rate to psychiatric hospital and suicide rate are much

higher for the divorced and separated than for married. Stott (1984) also averred that a marital breakdown is always a tragedy.

The negative consequence of divorce is very tragic to the emotional and psychological feeling of both couples. Schlesman (2019) explained that divorce is a death of a union, and therefore the death of a dream, a promise, a life, and a family unit. Everyone involved even a perpetrator will feel grief and loss during a divorce. If there are children involved, they will experience severe grief over the loss of being with both parents together, living under the same roof. They will feel a familial loss. Divorce also separates in-laws. Grandparents lose their daughters or sons-in-law; they might lose easy access to their grandkids, or they might have to assume a parental role to help their son or daughter. Grief hits every part of a family during a divorce. D'Onofrio, (2011) also noted that numerous studies have found that parental separation and divorce is associated with a range of negative outcomes for younger children and adolescents across various domains.⁵⁻⁷ Parental separation or divorce is associated with academic difficulties, including lower grades and prematurely dropping out of school, and greater disruptive behaviours (e.g., being oppositional with authority figures, getting into fights, stealing, and using and abusing alcohol and illegal drugs). Children and adolescents who experience the divorce of their parents also have higher rates of depressed mood, lower self-esteem, and emotional distress. Garoo (2019) stated that drugs and alcohol become the avenues for adolescents to vent out their frustration and anxiety. Research has shown a higher incidence of substance abuse in teens whose parents are divorced. Of course, there are other factors like the care provided by the single parent, which determine the adolescent's tendency to have drugs. However, the probability of an adolescent succumbing to the temptation is considerably high. Long-term substance abuse has damaging effects on the well-being of the child. Ogono (2020) assert that children who experience these strategies are likely to internalize the insults toward their parent and believe they are not loved and the divorce is their fault. They carry this blame for the most part of their lives as a result; they develop low self-esteem and ultimately, depression. Garoo (2019) further buttressed that many children falsely consider themselves the reason behind their parents' divorce and assume the responsibility to mend the relationship. This can lead to immense stress and pressure on the young mind, which can have several repercussions like negative thoughts and nightmares.

Divorce also causes depression, and depression is a very dangerous silent killer. Studies have also found that some cases of hypertension are as a result of depression. Ogono (2020) expressed further that depression is a very serious problem and could cause a variety of problems such as mental health problems, engagement in criminal acts. It is also difficult for a person with low self-esteem to get meaningful employment. It may also be difficult to the children to pursue a university degree. Depression is a major risk factor for suicide. The deep despair and hopelessness that goes along with depression can make suicide feel like the only way to escape the pain. In Nigeria, most people rarely recognize symptoms of depression, until it has gotten out of hand. D'Onofrio, (2011) opines that that following a divorce, parents and children often experience emotional problems that can last for years, even for the rest of their lives. Anxiety, depression, fear of abandonment, distrust, insecurity, lack of intimacy, confusion over sexuality and/or gender, guilt, avoidance of conflict, faithlessness, control, loneliness, bitterness, and rebellion manifest themselves in children who have lived through a parents' divorce.

Another consequence of divorce according to Komay (2020) is remarriage! Remarriages can also be stressful for children. Not only do they have to get to know someone new, but that someone new is going to function as their parent. In addition, the new spouse may already have their own kids, so the children will need to learn how to get along and live together. There may be even more people competing for the parent's attention than before, like the new spouse's family and friends, which are all new characters in the child's life. This is a

lot to ask a child to adjust to especially when it was never their decision in the first place. Remarriage can be painful if the child does not live with the parent who is getting remarried. This is because the remarried parent needs to devote more time to their new family, which may include more children that the child may view as their "replacements." This is more challenging when the remarried parent moves to a new city away from the child. The child may feel like, "Why bother? Mom has a new family now. She doesn't need me around anymore. This in effect will open more room for the children to venture into life ignorantly, with no one to direct them. They become the replicate of their parents' character when they grow up.

IMPLICATION OF COUNSELLING: THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

It is important to re-emphasize that marriage is an important institution before the creator. The theology of marriage reminds us that marriage was instituted by God and to be held in honour among all men. Audu (1999) posited that since God is the author of marriage, couple and those intending to enter into marriage relationship should fully understand the implication. In any successful marriage, there is however, the need for peaceful understanding and co-existence between couples. Steward (1970) expressed marriage counselling in a Christian point of view "as a process in which a counsellor helps the potential couples and married couples to make plans and how to solve problems in the area of courtship, marriage and family relationship". This definition is concise but also comprehensive because it has taken into consideration the role of Christian perspective to counselling. Mosier (2018) also noted that marriage is a God-designed, holistically intimate, sacred uniting of lives meant to give honour and worship back to God. Because of its powerful potential, it is top priority for the enemy... it's prone to major attack. All marriages are under fire, as darkness seeks to steal, kill, and destroy what God created to bring abundant life, community, and impact!

Virkler (1997) argued that the primary reason given in the biblical account for marriage is friendship or companionship. Marriage was designed by God to overcome loneliness. It is to be a context for personal and spiritual growth, for the mutual fulfilling of needs, for supporting one another's work and achievements, to give and receive love, to cherish and be cherished, to protect and be protected, to give and receive the enjoyment of sexual love, to enjoy the fulfilment of creating and raising children together, and to feel security and a lifelong commitment to and from another person. In Good News Bible, (Malachi 2:16) God Himself stated categorically clear that: *"I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel. "I hate it when one of you does such a cruel thing to his wife. Make sure that you do not break your promise to be faithful to your wife."* The book of Mark also stated in (Mark 10:2-12) when some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" 3 *"What did Moses command you?"* he replied. 4 They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." 5 *"It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,"* Jesus replied. 6 *"But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, 8 and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."* 10 When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. 11 *He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. 12 And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."*

Divorce as a term is dissatisfactory to the hearing of God Almighty. Christian's counsellor should not impose their will on couples passing through divorce process but should make them understand that God loves them and He hates divorce. And that God Himself blesses and ordained marriage and is pleasing in His eyes. The International Children's Bible (Hebrews 13:4) captured that *"Marriage should be honoured by everyone. Husband and wife should keep their marriage pure. God will judge guilty those who are sexually immoral and*

commit adultery". Purity, loyalty, faithfulness, truth, forgiveness are the basic ingredients God demands in a true Christian Marriage. Virkler (1997) advised that God's laws are set up with our best interests in mind, and He is much wiser than we are, Christian counsellors should make sure that their counselling is biblically informed. And counsellors should not impose their beliefs on unwilling clients, but when we have clients who want to know what God's will is, counsellors need to know what that is. They should be able to fulfil the biblical mandate found in II Timothy 2:15 which says: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth (NIV)."

Finally Virkler (1997) identified 5 major ways of demonstrating God's Grace in marriage counselling. He advised thus:

When couples come in for marriage counselling, they often are in a great deal of pain, and they often feel hopeless. One important way to minister God's grace is to show empathy for the pain and hopelessness they feel. Another way of providing grace is to give both persons an opportunity to share their pain in a safe, non-judgmental environment. The third way of demonstrating God's grace is to present the knowledge of Biblical principles regarding marriage and divorce is not something the counsellor automatically shares with a client. Knowledge of Scriptural principles may serve more to inform the counsellor's goals. The counsellor can help the couple work toward a biblical goal (restoring the marriage) without bringing out biblical commands at a time when to do so would be counter therapeutic. Another way of ministering God's grace during the initial session is to ask the couple to spend a few minutes (after identifying the problem areas) remembering back to when they met, and the qualities that drew them to each other. Taking some time to do such recollections can remind the couple that there have been times when their relationship has been enjoyable and has fulfilled their personal needs. Finally, the counsellor should adopt and use the solution-focused approach, asking the couple what they would like to have happening in their relationship again, and asking them to identify what would be the first steps they would have to take in order for that to happen.

CONCLUSION

The paper had examined critically the factors that cause divorce in Christian families, its consequences and the implication of a counsellor. The paper had revealed that divorce has a lot of destructive consequences on both the parties involve and most especially on the children who are the leaders of tomorrow. Unfortunately most couples do not often put into consideration these negative effects before going into divorce. It would possibly appear that many people rash into marriage without consideration and weighing the outcome result, and for other reasons rather than mutual understanding and patience that is needed to sustain and consolidate the marriage. For the counsellor, he/she must first of all understand the background and possibly the reasons for such problem. After doing that then and through such understanding can a sympathetic handling in solving the problem can begin.

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