

AFRICA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY


DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE AND THE DILEMMA OF THE CHURCH IN KENYA

BY
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ABSTRACT

Divorce is one of the most painful and emotionally draining experiences a human being can ever go through. The institution of marriage is under siege now more so than at any other time in history. Cultural analysts attribute the rise of divorce to the casual way in which the current generation handles marriage as well as the pressures of modern day life that have assailed couples from within and without.

This research seeks to understand root causes to the problem of divorce and presents ways of resolving such problems. We approach this research through a multi disciplinary strategy:

- Theological foundations are derived from what the Scriptures say about divorce and remarriage. The Bible reveals that God hates divorce. Jesus, in Mathew 19, clearly endorsed the permanence of marriage. He makes direct reference to Genesis 2:24, '*what God has joined together, let no man separate.*' Of importance however is his reference to the Mosaic exclusion in Deuteronomy 24, "*Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning (Mathew 19:8).*" Jesus demonstrates that this was a concession to human sin with the intention of limiting its effects particularly on wives in Moses' context. Pauline teaching in 1 Corinthians 7 reaffirms this position.
- Our Literature review demonstrates that Western sources are a lot more liberal on the question of divorce whereas African sources are more conservative on divorce.
- Examination of traditional African society supports the hypothesis that the society provided stability to the family union and there was little or no divorce. It is only in the most extreme circumstances that divorce was allowed.
- An analysis of Kenyan divorce Law reveals that the drafters chose to make the process of divorce draining and arduous with the hope of rendering it an unattractive option for disgruntled spouses.
- In our field research, the analysis of interviews demonstrates that there is little or no preparation for couples getting married and the situation is even worse when it comes to finding help when a marriage is in trouble. According to our sources, Nairobi churches are not responding to the growing number of divorces in ways that promote reconciliation.
- We have presented recommendations to the Church on ways to deal with divorce and remarriage. Church based initiatives must include prevention or pre-marriage preparation, crisis response and management (dealing with divorce when it occurs), issues of remarriage in biblical ways and being a place of healing for individuals who have gone through the pain of divorce