



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Theology

FAMILY ENRICHMENT STRATEGY FOR CHURCH GROWTH AND POLITICAL STABILITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This work explores family wellbeing through enrichment strategy that possesses disposition of advancing the church and promoting stability of political system in Nigeria. When family members display erratic behaviours that hinder relationship significantly, it becomes detrimental to church growth and political stability. Enrichment strategy however serves as a pragmatic instrument which prevents crisis that devastates relationship and cause fractionalization that is detrimental to growth and stability. The research is descriptive of imbalance scenarios in the contemporary families where dysfunction hinders growth and stability across family, church and political domains within the nation. Discovery from readings and news of happenings affirmed the fact that imbalance in families polarises coordination, meaningful planning that positively enhances every segment of life relationship. The research, therefore, encourages enrichment programmes for families common good; and recommends that caregivers should proactively conduct enrichment programmes for church growth, and political stability to boost national development and expansion of healthy commonwealth.

INTRODUCTION

The wellbeing of families grows out of the progressive process of enlightenment and instruction, which possesses dramatic enzymes that enhance the developmental stability of the home. The procedural inculcation of teachings stimulates realistic ripples that influence growth and stability, not within the homes alone but productively stretched across the church and the national political terrain. Most times the growth of families is determined by realistic mobilisation and enrichment programme emphasis that reinforces understanding, spectacular stamina for advancing, enabling resilient towards appropriating growth goals and encourage cordiality in a relationship for reformation and stability within the living. On the other way round, growth and development have a high tendency of being jeopardised where educative innovation fades off within an establishment or community.

Church growth and political stability strive better where family enrichment strategies are employed to vitalise, nourish, convince, enable, and equip a group of people for higher awareness on modalities for reactivating and rejuvenating the passion of getting things done. Certainly, enrichment strategies for achieving this particular goal of growth and stability in the church and the political setting according to Dayton and Fraser (1990:13) are “an overall approach, plan, or way of describing how we will go about reaching our goal or solving our problem” (n.d. retrieved from <http://churchplant.net/uploads/2016/09/Developing-Strategies-For-Reac>). The purpose of this paper is to postulate approaches or schemes through family enrichment strategy that will effectively accomplish the objective of growing and stabilising the church and the political system of the nation. Moreover, the central thrust of this work states that wherever the growth of a church is retrogressing and instability pervades a political system the realistic way out of such problem is the utilisation of family enrichment strategy to neutralise, heal and restore formidable change of growth and stability. The work now presents a brief survey of the family enrichment programme, church growth and political stability sequentially.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME

In the effort to build harmonious relationship among couples, David and Vera Mace organised marriage enrichment programme among a group of couples which later turned into a retreat programme with the Quakers in October 1962. Eleven years later, which was around 1973, the exercise metamorphosed into an organisation known as the

Association of Couples for Marriage Enrichment (ACME). Keith (1990:688-689) explains that Father Gabriel Calvo started the movement in Spain around January 1962, but in U. S., the enrichment programme was labelled as a marriage encounter. The movement attracted a significant number of people both lay and professional couples into its membership throughout the fifty states in America. As a Christian religious faith-based movement, there are about fifteen other related programmes that grew up alongside the existing one and ran concurrently with the enrichment programme.

A marriage enrichment programme was established to foster a better relationship, smooth running of the home, living harmoniously and enjoying lovely intimacy among couples within the context of the family. In other words, every marriage that has the qualities worth attributing as good has the potential of being appraised distinctly and upgraded highly as better marriage. The goal of marriage enrichment, according to Keith, is to foster personal growth and mutual fulfilment in enough marriages that the public image of marriage as a fulfilling relationship will be enhanced. A growth-oriented, potential-oriented perspective of the individual and a dynamic view of the marital system are a progressive way to promote an intentional companionship model of marriage in the varied programs (689).

The programme of enrichment focuses on improving couples wellbeing while living together with children as a family. It also provides encouragement towards responsible living which surely inculcates harmonious living if the values of mutual living, cordial relationship and the spirit of togetherness that binds people in a relationship as a unit are upheld and practised effectively. That usually nullifies suspicion, self-centeredness, and forceful approach that can hamper fellowship goal between two individuals or among a group of persons and class of diversities that make up the structure of the family. However, where trouble, feud and broiling attributed to behavioural lapses exist (Gwamna, 2010:1) within the family, people living within that boundary would no more see themselves as providentially united for mutual co-existence. Whereas, the values of oneness, cordiality, respect, enthusiasm, kindness, care for each other, rapport, and genuine love needed for cordial relationship within complacent environment could be crushed and devastated without enrichment instruction that would reenergize right thinking to enhance growth and development which will influence other sectors for success.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CHURCH GROWTH

Donald McGavran (1984:241) who is third generation

missiology in India became inquisitive about the way some churches grow and multiply while others remain stagnant and are declining. To satisfy his curiosity, he made an extensive study which involved travelling, both far and near. His discovery led to his conviction on why some churches grow, and others do not. Johnson (1984:21), said McGavran was displeased with the words 'evangelism' and 'missions' which have little or no meaning to him after serving over thirty years with Disciples of Christ Ministry. He later combined the term 'church growth' which stand to means all that is involved in winning men and women who never have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ into fellowship with him and learn from his word (scripture) and become responsible church membership.

Wagner (1976:11) said the idea of church growth was muted by McGavran in 1936 while serving in India. After the formation of the church growth movement, it reached North America in 1972. When McGavran's works *The Bridges of God*, 1955 and *How Churches Grow*, 1959 were published, the movement became popular. The principles postulated in the books were studied and adopted by national and international mission bodies. McGavran established the "Institution of Church Growth" in 1961 at the Northern Christian College in Eugene, Oregon. The school moved to Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California in 1965 and was named "School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth," before he published *Understanding Church Growth* in 1975 (Johnson 1884:22).

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF POLITICAL STABILITY

The factor that can enhance putting up any description that might be tenable about political stability requires careful examining what politics stand for and or explaining its structure which all behavioural practices revolve around or attach its focus. A clear view of political behaviour as Claude Ake (1975:271-283) observe starts with members within an organised society supposes to have few people affects the distribution of the power to make decisions for that society. Political behaviour is ubiquitous. Members of the society sometimes behave as responsible political stakeholders through adhering or violating the laws of the society which they belong or undermine its power of stratification system. Obedience to the law constitutes political behaviour just as much as contesting elections do.

Ake (1975) further averred that political stability simply refers to the peaceful state of a nation without violence, disruption, and terrorization among the citizenry; or flagging disintegration of the government into the condition of commotion that forcefully holds the administration into ransom or compulsion to change mantle of leadership by an act of violence or unruly attitudes and behaviours. John Irish observed that France purposely give a substantial sum of money (30 million euros which value is equivalent of \$34 million) as assistance to the Gambia for political stability, self-reliance, stable economic. That step, according to a French diplomatic source, will support consolidating its democratic transition and stability of the region after some political wrangling and tussle which brought Adam Barrow to power as President of Gambia in December 2016.

The aid provided by France comprises 5 million euros for budgetary support, 20 million for drinking water projects and 5 million for agriculture. Under President Emmanuel Macron, France is attempting to broaden its economic influence in Africa to Anglophone regions. French firms, including Bolloré and energy group Total, are among those vying for contracts in the Gambia (n.d. retrieved from <https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKCN1OUOZATP>)

The above submission stipulates necessary efforts that could be put in place to forestall peace, a better relationship, smooth

running, and harmonious directing of the affairs of a nation. In other words, wherever stability would be seen or recorded in any organisation or governmental establishment or nation at large those at the helms would strive hard to avoid any action or inaction that could trigger violence among the citizenry and classes of people within the terrain of the government. It is quite correct to declare loud and clear that there is no human institution in the global terrain that is immune against difficulties and challenges, traversing thick and thin and experiencing cold and hot climate within the eco-social domain of existence. The next section of the discussion focuses on ups and downs human institutions encounter is ascertained to vary from one particular setup to another.

HUMAN INSTITUTIONS WITH DECISIVE CHALLENGES

The consensus of scholars, according to Shishima (2016:9), is that "there is no human institution or endeavour that is not confronted with a series of conflicts or challenges. That is also true of the marriage and family institutions. Thus, whether in African religion, Islam or Christian families' conflict is inevitable." The truth that requires drawing from that assertion according to Ogunipe (2016:226), pinpointed the fact "that human species are complex beings who encounter difficulties and varieties of problems, which are tackled in diverse ways;" Invariably, series of Christian counselling and marriage enrichment programmes provide encouragement and guidance which motivates personality growth and development. They also help couples towards coping maturely with perennial problems, assistance for resolving interpersonal tensions and decisive help to those whose life patterns are self-defeating and resulting in unhappiness (Collins 2007:36).

Marriage enrichment programmes is a plan with the passion for enlightening couples about salient issues and facts that usually prop up marital friction, misunderstanding, conflict and crisis within relationship and coexistence. The submission of Iwegbu and Okobia (2010:63), which cannot be brushed aside with the back of the hand states thus: myriads of challenges, difficulties, upheavals, misgivings, discord, bitter confrontations and unpleasantness hits couples beyond imagination. They form elements which have been troubling marriage in Nigeria and all over the world causing partial separation, disjointedness in a relationship, incompatibility in communication, hipping up of wrong allegations, which sometimes leads to perennial disengagement and breakups. The consequence of divorce in marriage most times results in growing rebellious youth, unruly characters, harmful and notorious gangs, and lawless individuals, lawbreakers in the community and ruffians who disrupt the tranquillity of the society. It has become evident that disintegration of marriage leads to increase of hoodlums, criminals, thugs, prostitutes and rascals roaming the nooks and cranny of communities.

Wherever lopsided relationship entrenches establishment or institution, the outbreak of conflict becomes inimical. Adeogun (2006:16), observed that "contradiction is arising from the difference in interest, ideas, ideologies, prescriptions and tendencies. These contradictions exist at all levels of the society, individual, group, institution and nation as well as in interpersonal and international relations." In other words, challenges are inevitable within human community and relationship because of multi-dimensional differences that emerge most times within divergent opinions and interest but invariably be at variance with personal or corporate policies which may trigger misunderstanding or disagreement. Amid such opposing views and approach to handling issues, conflict and disruption may likely emerge.

From psychological point of view challenges may emerge from issues which may be far from reality, genuine, truth or legal standard and may provoke questioning actions, sometimes authority or submissions which may result to

conflict and tussle which usually arises when there is a struggle between two or more alternatives that may have characteristics of approach and avoidance. Collins (1988:81) elucidate further that “to approach is to tend to do something (also) to move in a direction that will be pleasurable and satisfying. (While on the other hand), to avoid is to resist doing something, perhaps because it will not be pleasurable and satisfying.” That motivates this writer’s suggestive approach that enrichment strategies serve as a pragmatic instrument to prevent fundamental crisis where insecurity overwhelms administration of an organisation or governmental establishment and devastate a relationship, cause fractionalization that is highly detrimental to growth and stability.

The process that requires a subtle paradigm shift to alleviate evident pressures when delayed may lead or create uncertainty due to the influence of approach and avoidance; hence, a clash of interest may develop. Times when group members display erratic behaviours that hinder harmonious relationship in coexistence, it becomes detrimental to church growth and political stability in a significant parameter beyond imagination. The reality that cannot be conceded stems from the fact that incompatible goals, ideas, views or visions on the pursuit of two or more individuals over something that is considered essential but scarce in existence may result to unnecessary conflict. Those in conflict state according to Frost and Wilmot (1978:1), “face the problem of reconciling their individual needs for power, success, attainment, and winning with their relationship needs for trust, affection, collective benefits and mutual growth.”

Challenges arise within the human community most times in the process of interaction or inter-relationship, causing disharmony and bitterness. That informs Adeogun’s move to uphold Imobigbe’s (2003:20) assertion that distasteful challenges among humans are a condition which results to disharmony and easily breaks interaction process due to a clash of interest between personalities that involve in such relationship. The disposition of clash of interest could occur in the sense that they may be pursuing incompatibility goals, or they are using incompatible means to pursue their chosen goals. Challenges, therefore, should not be viewed as evil in the real sense of it amidst the gathering of people with divers’ interests, views and mentality. Scholars think that challenges are natural, healthy and advantageous wherever growth, development and change will occur. Therefore, how to manage challenges at their sprout become the herculean task which needed addressing towards bringing growth and development wherever they manifest and poses a threat within the human community, human establishment or human institution for positive reward and decisive outcome when adequately handled.

COMMON FACTORS CONNECTING FAMILY, CHURCH AND POLITICS

From church growth theory, the standard particulars that connect family, church and politics in the opinion of this writer are the proposition of “a set of governing principles, and develops a strategy of missionary activity” (Costas, 1974:103). That stands to mean, there are universal principles that govern the three institutions, and likewise, there are careful plans of activities that can be utilised to achieve their growth and to keep them stabilised as viable and reliable institutions. McGavran and some missiologists postulated some strategies and principles of growth which are relevant and seasoned in understanding the structure of the three institutions and their peculiarities that unified them. At this point, the principles of church growth would be drawn to establish typical particulars (factors) that are essential to the growth and stability of the tripartite institutions are shared hereafter.

Lausanne occasional papers (1978:3), cites homogenous unit principle postulated by McGavran which states that “a section

of society in which all members have some characteristics in common” tends to grow and develop rapidly. That principle holds firmly to the fact that “the church grows best when planted in social groups that are ethnically and socially homogeneous” (Dayton and Fraser, 99). In the same vein, family members and political system that have same characteristics have the disposition to trust and build confidence in themselves; have like-minds to think alike, or possess similar zeal, interest and passion for relating together with undaunted virtues and values that enhance growth and stability within the establishment (Enyubara, 2015:60). The commonalities that could bind such social groups may include geographical, ethical, language, social, education, vocation, or culture, tradition, economic, or a combination of several of these and other factors. That common feature would make them feel at home with each other with a sense of belonging when they can identify with their group or society (Lausanne Unit Principle 1,3, 1978:3).

People movement principle also serves as means of enhancement to growth and stability. The United Nations gave an estimate of nations states of the world as 220, but in the viewpoint of world evangelisation, the world classification was into ‘tens of thousands’ of groups within this global world. It has been suggested by researchers that “There are over fifteen thousand different ethnic groups. Linguists have identified more than five thousand distinct languages. Also, there are occupational groups, such as taxi drivers in Seoul, Korea, and Whalers off the coast of South Africa. There are people bound together by crises such as famine and war refugees in Central Africa” (Dayton and Fraser, 6). Those groups of people cited have varieties of needs to be cared for and to be identified in order to be protected. An assurance of growth and stability among groups of people in those categories is sure if they are evangelising. People movement, therefore “results from the joint decision of several individuals – whether five or five hundred – all from the same people, ... thus enabling other groups of that people, across the years, after suitable instruction, to come to similar decisions and from Christian churches made up exclusively of members of that people” (McGavran, 335). The visible opportunity arising from people movement rest on the connectivity of the groups that unifies and knight them for purposeful endeavours.

Marketing the church principle is a concept used to meet the interest of the church ministry of soul winning. This principle of church marketing according to George Barna (1988:48), “is the performance of both business and ministry activities that impact the church’s target audience to minister to and fulfil their spiritual, social, emotional, or physical needs and thereby satisfying the ministry goals of the church.” He thinks that the process of marketing the church for purposeful achievement takes the following five stages: researching, vision, marketing plan, implementation and feedback which produce positive results when administered appropriately (54-58). The marketing system requires relationship among people to develop sharing the love and work in response to their needs. The place of the market comprises any area people are living which serves as the constituency to distribute or share the product; advertisement through verbal expression by trusted individuals helps to make the product known, while total commitment to righteousness (Rom. 3:21; 5:17), stands as the price to be paid for marketing the product. Prompt and judicious utilisation of the principle in other institution yields the same effect of growth and providing stability of the system.

The indigenous church principles which significance cannot be pass holds that the world is made up of thousands of different pieces of a people group. The church has the potential to grow in divers’ rates within each culture and language setting. Only that the method of reaching each language or cultural group requires variation before a

practical impact can be made in soul winning. McGavran (62) once said "The Christian faith flows well within each piece of the Mosaic, but tends to stop at linguistic and ethnic barriers. Most congregations are shut up to one language, one ethnic unit and frequently to one social or economic class." In other words, to evangelise an indigenous group of people demands an understanding of the culture, language, and social life of that community. Reason being that an indigenous church is "a group of believers who live out their life, including their socialised Christian activities, in the pattern of the local society, and for whom any transformation of that society comes out of their faith needs (Smalley, 1981:497). These principles discussed have the dynamic potentiality of fostering church growth beyond imagination and possesses the capacity of effecting positive change in other institutions saturated with people; while next area of consideration handles usability of family enrichment strategy for growth and stability.

ENRICHMENT STRATEGY TO GROW FAMILY, CHURCH AND STABILIZE POLITICS

Family enrichment strategy focuses on processes towards achieving a specific aim that is designed to bring changes into odd situations or cause modification on the lifestyle that is defective and transform maladaptive behaviour that needs reformation. It also enhances revamping dysfunctional problems in the family and proffering growth, development and stability among a group of persons and institutions such as family, church and political system. Counsellors can organise a family enrichment plan which will address crucial issues that bother couples in their relationship. The right parameters for establishing a congenial atmosphere which encourages cordial relationship include motivation. That involves self-disclosure or having pleasant feelings and thoughts which might lead to concentrating on present issues and real strengths of the mates. Teaching communicational skills and how to accept conflict positively and resolve it creatively is essential while seeking behavioural and attitudinal change, advocate for a companionship model of marriage, which enable the renegotiating of commitments and the reforming of contracts (Keith, 689).

The series of life connecting values mentioned above cut across relational issues in human institutions which requires attention and concentration for decisive improvement on coexistence and interactions within a human eco-social system for progressive growth and stability. The strategy that can ensure growth and stability need to be in a tripartite form comprising the family, church and political system. The trio should focus on possible measures that can operate swiftly in making a dynamic impact to the wellbeing of people on personal and collective growth; moreover, they need to contribute to the development and improvement of quality life for contemporary people and the global community to ensure stability in a broad perspective (Yusuf and Dansu, 76-96). The contributions of enrichment strategy according to the submission of Ogundipe (2015:107-118), enhances the better relationship and works decisively in promoting understanding and openness within the family, church and political system to promote growth and stability as enumerated herewith in the x-ray below that show its functionality and significance that comprises:

1. Encourage of Broad Mindedness and Real Acceptability
2. Encourage Simple Mindedness in Living
3. Encourage Sincerity to Self and Others
4. Encourage Purity of Heart for Interconnection
5. Encourage Adherence to Norms and Values

CONCLUSION

This work examined exploration of family enrichment - then delete article "the" before strategy and the sentence will flow rightly.

The strategy for church growth and political stability. It

emphasises that family enrichment strategies serve as a pragmatic instrument to prevent a fundamental crisis of stagnancy, underdevelopment and instability which overwhelms families, churches, and political system in nations. In any organisation, government establishment and institution that devastation occurs in a relationship, causing fractionalization that is highly detrimental to growth and stability or imbalance scenarios and dysfunction abounds causing ripples of effect across family, church and political domains family enrichment strategy would prop up solution significantly. An imbalance in families, churches, and political environment that polarises coordination, meaningful planning and positive enhancement of cordial relationship has a disposition of revamping through family enrichment strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the narrative on an exploration of family enrichment strategy for church growth, the following recommendations set here state that:

1. Enrichment programmes for families should be instituted to affect all strata of the human populace for enjoying a common good.
2. Caregivers should proactively cultivate and imbibe the spirit of equity with sustenance measures that would quicken citizens' sense of belonging towards the common good.
3. Behavioural and ethical principles to fairness and justice should be adapted to deter unconventional practices within the framework of sharing the family commonwealth.

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