

**PERSPECTIVES OF DIVORCEES ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE IN
SELECTED CHARISMATIC CHURCHES IN ADENTA**

BY

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that this thesis is the result of research undertaken by Eugenia Tawiah Adam under the supervision of Dr. Harry Lawson Kwaku Agbanu and Rev. Dr. George Ossom- Batsa towards the award of Master of Philosophy, Religions at the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana.

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ABSTRACT

Although God intended marriage to be a lifelong relationship, the tragic fact is that divorce has become common occurrence in our society. Sadly, the dramatic rise in divorce rates in recent years has also affected the Christian community. Pastors and others providing counsel have become increasingly burdened with problems of divorce and remarriage, even among those regarded as active members of their congregations. This study seeks to highlight not only the perspectives of divorcees in charismatic churches but also on what policies charismatic churches hold on the subject matter and the kind of support given to divorcees in the churches.

A qualitative study approach was employed to facilitate the development of an in-depth understanding on issues of divorce and remarriage. One main research question and four sub questions were posed to direct the study. Interviews and focused group discussions were used to gather data from divorcees, some of which have remarried, Pastors and church leaders in selected charismatic churches.

The results indicated that divorce is an issue of concern in charismatic churches because most of their active members are getting divorced without informing their pastors due to the stigma attached to divorce. Again most charismatic churches do not have an official written document on the subject matter and therefore do not teach their members on the dangers and warning signals that could lead to divorce.

It is recommended that Charismatic Churches should have a written policy that will guide their members on issues bothering on marriage, divorce and remarriage. Members should be informed about the details of the policy and finally divorcees should be accepted by the church and given the necessary support as well as pre-marital counselling on marriage enrichment.



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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The importance of the home as the most basic unit for child socialization cannot be overemphasized. It is a key institution that shapes individuals and the society.¹ The home results from marriage which is essentially a union of a man and a woman that God established at creation from which various peoples, groups and cultures have emerged. Various people have understood marriage differently in accordance with their own worldviews, cultures, customs, beliefs and core values. While marriage rites may differ from culture to culture, marriage between a man and woman is the ideal in almost all cultures, both religious and non-religious. Marriage is considered a holy duty although most people regard marriage as morally permissible and desirable.² Norman Geisler explains marriage as “a lifelong commitment between a male and female that involves mutual sexual rights”.³ It does not consist in the mere fact that two persons feel that they are bound to each other in love.

Marriage in Christianity is believed to be a life time commitment of a man and a woman to live their life together until death. Thus, marriage only exists where the divine order of marriage is recognized as binding in itself and when two people know they are bound by it.⁴ Marriage is a picture of the God-to-man covenant.⁵ It is therefore a state of being bound together in a unique kind of union which is created

¹ Samuel Waje Kunyihop, *African Christian Ethics* (Nairobi: Hippo Books, 2008), 190.

² Judith Boss, *Analyzing Moral Issues* (New York: Mc Graw- Hill, 2008), 370.

³ Norman Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1989), 277.

⁴ George Thomas, *Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy* (New York: Scribner Press, 1995), 228.

⁵ Ray R. Sutton, *Second Chance: Biblical Blueprints for Divorce and Remarriage* (Texas: Domition Press, 1998), 10.

by the free decisions of the marriage partners but which thereafter makes demand on them and in their responsibility to their children.

The moral development of a child has been inseparably tied to the quality of the home and the kind of socialization given at the early stages of the child's development. The survival of the society depended upon the fertility of families⁶. It has been argued that child delinquency and criminality in later ages in life are mostly the result of broken homes or poor quality of the home. Family disintegration imposes other consequences on the emotional welfare of children. Samuel K. Waje affirms the importance of the home when he argued that a key institution that shapes individuals and society is the home. Therefore, if families are distorted, so is the whole of society.⁷

The quality of the home is also dependent on the quality of the marriage and marital relationships between couples on the one hand and children on the other. In other words, marriage or marital relationship is the determinant of the quality of the home in particular and the moral quality of society in general. Therefore when couples cooperate with one another, demonstrate affection to each other and the children and together endeavour to find solutions to their economic, marital and relational problems, they build a home which is conducive for child socialization.

Also inability to consistently renew one's commitment to the marriage and to cooperate in finding solutions to problems that arise in marriage could endanger the quality of the home as a unit of child socialization. Owing to the importance of marriage not only to the very survival of humanity but also to the creation of quality homes and society in which each individual feels secured, societies and religious

⁶ Patricia B. Jung and Shannon Jung, *Moral Issues and Christian Responses* (Belmont: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2003), 55.

⁷ Kuniyhop, *African Ethics*, 190.

bodies have over the ages made several efforts to protect it by adopting norms, principles, regulations, conventions and taboos sanctioned by religion and culture. Therefore, anything that threatens the quality, stability and sanctity of marriage is considered an attack on society in many religious and non-religious cultures.

One of the major occurrences that affect the stability, quality and sanctity of marriage is divorce. The aforementioned is the dissolution of a marriage contract⁸ between two people, thus terminating an existing relationship. Divorce means disunity, the separation of two parties who were formally united.⁹ This could perhaps explain why the church has always condemned divorce due to the Christian high view of marriage. If permanent monogamous marriage is essential to the mutual fulfilment and moral development of husband and wife and to the welfare of children, then there is every reason to safeguard it. Divorce is a delicate accident in marital relationship.¹⁰ Divorce does not only violate natural law but can harm a child's social and moral development. There is always a price to pay by the partners, the children, family and societal relations when divorce occurs.¹¹

In Christianity, divorce is mostly frowned upon although there appears to be no universal agreement among Christians on divorce.¹² As a result, the subject of divorce appears to be controversial with different churches taking different positions. However, the position on divorce is generally negative in most churches although some churches are more liberal on the subject than others. Myron Host argues that divorce and remarriage is a significant subject which many people as well as the church face. Many marriages are being disengaged by divorce. Today, the divorce

⁸Mish Frederick, "Divorce," in *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1990), 370.

⁹ Kuniyhop, *Christian Ethics*, 255.

¹⁰ John Mbiti, *Love and Marriage in Africa* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1977), 210.

¹¹ Norman Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Opinion and Issues* (USA: Baker House 2000), 282.

¹² *Ibid.*, 227.

rate is not different in the church than among the ungodly. Everyone has an opinion about it and everyone is entitled to hold an opinion about divorce and remarriage.¹³

The Catholic Church's view on marriage as sacrament, for instance, has generally made divorce more difficult in Catholic Churches than in some Pentecostal, Charismatic and or Protestant Churches.¹⁴

Nevertheless, there appears to be some common agreement among Christians on divorce. There is the view that divorce is not God's ideal because marriage, which was instituted by God, is supposed to be a life time commitment. That is why a woman was created by God for a man with the desire that they will both keep their vows until death. Again, divorce is not permissible for any cause, it violates God's covenant and breaks a vow made before God and man (the church and extended family members depending on how the marriage was contracted). Others are of the view that divorce can be permissible. They assert that one justifiable ground for divorce is adultery. Others also believe that abuse, infectious diseases and even neglect are also justification for divorce.¹⁵ It is perhaps inevitable in that some men and women, due to the frailty and sinfulness of human nature, their individual views and perception on marriage and their upbringing or exposure, will not make a success of their marriage. No matter what constitutes divorce, it is not helpful for marriage. It is not an ideal thing for marriage and so falls below the expectation of every marriage¹⁶

¹³ Myron Host, "Divorce and Remarriage: Why didn't we see this Before? Biblical Research Report, <http://www.biblicalsearchreport.com> [accessed February 17, 2015].

¹⁴ Norlen Gunner, *The Christian and Ethical Life: Being a Christian in Multi-Cultural World* (Tanzania: Makumira University Press, 2003), 303.

¹⁵ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 306.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 282.

Some divorcees remarry to fix themselves and to recover from their emotional stress from previous marriages. This decision attracts different reactions from different religious groups within the society. Some Christians frown on remarriage based on the reasons that divorce is a sin, therefore anyone who divorces a spouse and marries another man or woman commits adultery. Therefore, a wife must not separate from her husband: if she does, then she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. Others are of the view that even though it appears that those opposed to divorce are right in affirming that marriage ought not to be dissolved, remarriage should be considered a distinct issue. Just because divorce is deemed sinful does not necessarily mean remarriage is not permissible.

It appears that divorce and remarriage are now considered ordinary facts of life because the attitude of some people in their marriage relationships suggests that they are prepared for failure. Some individuals consider marriage as a contract which can be terminated at any time if a party feels that the contract is not fulfilling and uncomfortable. Some even go ahead to sign a pre-nuptial contract to protect them in case the marriage does not work.¹⁷ Divorce is an issue of concern due to its high rate of occurrence and its associated effects on families.

Although it appears that data on divorce in Ghana is not very accurate because some divorces do not take place at the law courts and hence not documented, many marriages end in divorce. Data gathered from the Statistical Department of the Judicial Service indicates that out of the 26 Judicial service zones in Ghana, only 8 zones keep record on divorces granted.¹⁸ Most of the registrars of marriage in the municipal and district offices only keep record of marriages registered and celebrated

¹⁷ John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 588.

¹⁸ Annual Statistical Report, Judicial Service, Accra, 2010.

but not those that end in divorce.¹⁹ The registrar in charge of marriage in Adenta Municipality, for instance, only keeps records of marriages celebrated with no record on how many have divorced. Nevertheless, many marriages are ending in divorce including marriages celebrated by Christians and within Charismatic Christian communities. Statistics available to the researcher indicated that about 348 divorces were granted during the 2014 legal year.²⁰ Meanwhile, divorce is generally regarded as a tragic event in most religious and non-religious societies because of the problems it creates for the parties involved.

No matter how pleasant it may be, remarriage has its challenges with regard to managing step-children, emotions related to the breakup from previous marriages and the challenges of coping with new relationships. Also, remarriage that involves blending two groups of children may pose difficult challenges.²¹ Much research work has been done on the subject of divorce but it is mostly centred on general reasons and the effects of divorce with little attention to how Christians interpret and apply the teachings on divorce when taking decisions. It does not also offer opportunities to those who have gone through divorce, those contemplating divorce and those who have divorced to share their experiences on the subject. This study, therefore, sought to explore and analyse the perspectives of divorcees on divorce and remarriage as well as their churches teachings on divorce and remarriage. It will also find out if the teachings in the church on divorce influence the decisions which members make especially with regard to seeking divorce and remarriage.

¹⁹ Interview with Registrar of Marriages, Adenta Municipal Assembly, 10th October, 2014.

²⁰ Interview with the Registrar at the Accra Circuit Court, April 20, 2015.

²¹ Gary Collins, *Christian Counselling: A Comprehensive Guide* (Beijing: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 608.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although marriage is important, living together can sometimes become difficult for couples. Despite the problems associated with divorce and remarriage, some individuals seek or consider them as necessary in their marital endeavours bringing about disintegration in their families. Christians are no exception and for that matter Christians who belong to the Charismatic group.

The motivation for the study stems from the researcher interactions with clients as a professional counsellor. Most of the issues which came up for counselling bothered on divorce and remarriage. Some clients who are Charismatic Christians were considering divorce, others have gone through divorce and are facing challenges of divers kinds, yet others are also struggling with issues of step-children. Few would disagree with the observation that the issue of divorce and remarriage is one of the most pressing social concerns today.²² The questions that were of concern to the researcher were that, if marriage is believed by charismatic Christians to be a covenant and ordained by God, and is expected to be an enjoyable lifelong union between a man and a woman, why should couples seek divorce? If marriage is to be honourable (Heb. 13:4), why are Christian marriages falling apart? What marvels the researcher is the fact that some Charismatic Christians who are “born again” and in their spirituality stress holiness ethics²³ consider divorce and some do seek divorce and remarriage.

Omenyo submits that Charismatics express their holiness ethics in their personal holiness or righteousness which for them is a new birth. According to him,

²² David W. Jones, “The Betrothal view of Divorce and Remarriage”, *BIBLIOTHECA SACRA* 165 (2008): 68.

²³ Cephas Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana* (Netherlands: Boekencentrum Publishing House, 2006), 216.

charismatics regard a life of holiness as the real proof of life in Christ.²⁴ Holiness is the state of purity which is also the nature of God. God is holy and without holiness, no one shall see God (1 Pet 5: 3).

If so, then every institution set up by God must be practised in consistency to God's word. Marriage is an institution of God, and so all Christians who get married are supposed to be married according to the very terms of Gods' covenant. Why then do the Charismatics seek divorce and remarry? Is marriage no longer considered by Charismatics as a covenant? What has been the response of Charismatic Churches to divorce and remarriage? Has marriage lost its sanctity? The rate at which Christians are divorcing makes the solution of this phenomenon an imperative academic pursuit. The study therefore seeks to assess the views which Charismatic Christian divorcees hold on divorce and remarriage.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

The general aim of the study is to evaluate the reasons why Charismatic Christians who are "Born Again", "Holy Spirit filled" divorce and remarry when it is not the Christian ideal. Specifically, the study sought to:

- a. Identify the Charismatic Christian's perspectives on divorce and remarriage.
- b. Evaluate arguments for divorce and remarriage by Charismatic Christians.
- c. Assess the Charismatic Christian attitude towards divorcees.
- d. Identify conditions under which Charismatic Churches grant divorce and remarriage.

²⁴ Ibid.

1.4 Research Questions

The main research question that guided the study was what inform(s) Charismatic Christian attitude(s) to divorce and remarriage? Other sub questions were:

1. What are the views of Charismatic Christian divorcees on divorce and remarriage?
2. How do the teachings of Charismatic Churches regarding divorce and remarriage influence Charismatic believers in making ethical decisions?
3. To what extent are Charismatic Christian divorcees accepted in the church?
4. Under what condition(s) are charismatic Christians granted divorce and remarriage?

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study focused on the views of Christians who are divorced and those who have remarried in selected charismatic churches in Adenta. The views of Pastors and church leaders were also considered within the selected churches. The churches selected were Harvest Chapel International, Manna Mission Church and Lighthouse Chapel International. Adenta was chosen based on the familiarity of the researcher with the study area which served as a primary basis for the choice of the study population. Also, the area has many charismatic churches that have divorcees as well as some Christians who had remarried. Since there was no data on the subject matter among the umbrella group of the charismatic churches in Ghana, this study serves as a foundational study that can be replicated and scaled up to cover the entire charismatic Christian community in Ghana.

1.6 Methodology and Methods of Data Collection

Qualitative methodology was adopted for the study to explore the perspectives of divorcees on divorce and remarriage. Qualitative study is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning which individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human phenomenon.²⁵ The aforementioned method enabled the researcher to develop an in- depth understanding of issues on divorce and remarriage, discovered the subjective meaning that people generate and attach to their actions as well as offered opportunities to those whose voices are rarely heard. Specifically, a field study was conducted to generate primary data through the use of interviews and focus group discussions. Data collected was then categorized according to various themes and analysed.

1.6.1 Primary Sources

Interviews

A semi structured interview guide was used. This allowed participants especially the divorcees to speak about their experiences. Follow up questions were used to explore the participants views on the subject matter of divorce and remarriage. Separate interview guide was used for the divorcees and the Pastors. Interviews were conducted at the convenience of participants in English and Twi, a common indigenous Ghanaian language used within the study area. Interviews in the Ghanaian language were transcribed into English. Interviews lasted between 30 to 65 minutes. The entire data collection process lasted for eight weeks.

²⁵ John Creswell, *Research Design* (London: Sage Publications, 2014), 4.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Two focused group discussions were done. A separate discussion was done for divorcees, and another one was conducted for pastors and church leaders. Respondents interacted with the researcher at the same time instead of the one-on-one interview. The approach gave respondents the opportunity to express their views as they interacted and exchanged ideas on the topic discussed. Each FGD had a five member group comprising both sexes. The researcher ensured mutual respect for discussants in order to avoid any occurrences of “hijacking”. The approach was employed because the subject of remarriage is a social and ethical phenomenon that many people have views on. The FGD therefore served as a platform where respondents let out their views on the subject matter.

1.6.2 Secondary Sources

Secondary data included selected relevant literature on divorce and remarriage from the fields of Christian ethics, Pastoral Psychology, Counselling and Biblical studies. Data by recognized institutions such as the National Council for Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches, the National Council for Charismatic and Christian Churches, Harvest Chapel International, Lighthouse Chapel International, Manna Mission Church, relevant statistics and published materials such as books, journals, and articles that relate to divorce and remarriage were used.

1.6.3 Population Sample for the Study

The population for the study was Christians who are divorcees, those who have remarried and Pastors and church leaders in Charismatic Churches where divorcees worship in Adenta. This choice of the selected population was made with the assumption that divorcees have experienced the entire process involved in the subject

matter, and therefore can respond appropriately to the issues of concern the study sought to investigate. The pastors are also capable of providing relevant information due to their roles and responsibilities to cater for the congregations including divorcees.

Most charismatic churches do not have accurate statistics on their members who have divorced perhaps due to the reason that the churches only celebrate marriages but do not grant divorce. Besides, members who go through divorce do not inform their churches because of shame and stigmatization. Another plausible reason is that some of the couple do not attend the same churches with their spouses hence they are able to keep their divorce from their pastors. However, data gathered by the researcher shows that an approximate number of six divorcees were found in each church. Five divorcees were sampled and interviewed from each church. In all fifteen divorcees were interviewed, four of whom have remarried. Four pastors and six church leaders were also selected and interviewed to collect data for the study. A non-probability sampling technique was employed because the target group was defined and they could provide appropriate response since they have expert knowledge in the field of study. Thus purposive sampling method was used to select the pastors, leaders and some divorcees. Snowball technique was then used to select the rest of the divorcees as the selected ones led the researcher to identify other respondents within their cohort.

1.6.4 Data Analysis Procedure

Thematic analysis was done using the interview guide. The process involved sorting and coding the data into themes by identifying and analysing repeating patterns that existed in the data. The themes were related to the research objectives and helped answer research questions.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The study used puritanism, which originated from a movement that arose within the Church of England in the latter part of the sixteenth century as a framework. Puritanism sought to purify or reform the church and to establish a middle course between Roman Catholicism and the ideas of the Protestant reformers. Those who advocated puritanism were called puritans. Some of their key beliefs and values are that, godly people are faster, hardworking and responsible and that God chooses one to be saved. No one can earn salvation through works, yet the saints are responsible for their actions.

The central tenet of puritanism is God's supreme authority over human affairs in the church as expressed in the Bible. Puritans try hard to seek both individual and corporate conformity to the teaching of the Bible and pursue both moral and ecclesiastical purity. To the puritans, a person by nature is inherently sinful and corrupt and can only be good by being disciplined, thus each person is consistently reformed by the grace of God to combat the indwelling sin and do the right thing before God. They therefore believe that man is duty bound to God's will and to understand God best, one must study the Bible.²⁶

The puritans' ideology is similar to the charismatic belief in God as the Supreme authority over human affairs in the church as expressed in the Bible. Charismatics also try to seek both individual and group conformity to the teachings of the Bible and to perceive both moral and ecclesiastical purity. They believe that man is inherently sinful and corrupt and can only be transformed by the grace of God through the works of the Holy Spirit. Thus charismatics also believe that man is duty bound to God's word.

²⁶ Feldmeth Greg, *American Puritanism* U.S. History Resources, 2004.

The Word of God is clear on how marriage may be contracted and the terms of marriage and for divorce. Adherence to the Word of God on the issue of marriage should not lead to divorce. However, the reality is quite alarming. If charismatic Christians who are likened to puritans seek divorce and remarry, it suggests that purity and strict adherence may not be sufficient enough to sustain marriage. Also couples seeking divorce may appear not living by the Christian principles of purity and adherence to God's word. It is curious therefore that Charismatic Churches which by their orientation, outlook and practices subscribe to puritan philosophical stances, should countenance divorce and remarriage as it appears to be an affront to God's ideal of marriage. It is this apparent contradiction that instigated the research.

1.8 Literature Review

The various perspectives on the seemingly controversy over divorce and remarriage among Christian groups have persisted for long. Although Biblical passages often discuss specific situations that can be difficult to interpret and apply today, most of the viewpoints tend to fall into one of the following categories: first, the view that marriage is for life and that divorce is never permitted, therefore remarriage is an adulterous act. Second, that there are legitimate biblical grounds for divorce and remarriage. Third, the view that some circumstances may arise in marriage that defy solution; divorce then becomes necessary for the sake of the mental, physical or emotional health of the spouses or their children.

Then there is another view held mostly by Roman Catholic writers that, a church court can annul a marriage and thus pave the way for remarriage.²⁷ Each of the above viewpoints has strong advocates. Many authors have also written indicating their opinions on divorce and remarriage. Thematic review on the debate on divorce and

²⁷ Collins, *Christian Counselling*, 609.

remarriage is discussed. The review discussed a brief overview of what constitutes Christian marriage because the subject on divorce and remarriage can be better discussed based on the nature of marriage in Christianity. The following constitute the outline of the review:

- The nature of Christian marriage
- Marriage, divorce and remarriage from African point of view
- Arguments advanced on grounds for divorce
- Arguments advanced on grounds against divorce
- Types of Divorce
- Legal grounds for dissolution of marriage by ordinance
- Causes of divorce and remarriage
- Effects of divorce and remarriage

1.8.1 The Nature of Christian Marriage

Marriage in Christianity is regarded as a divine institution.²⁸ This is because Christians believe that God after creating man realized that all his creatures had partners except man. He therefore took a rib from man, created woman, and brought her to the man who in turn recognized her to be a companion suitable for him.²⁹ Following the creation of woman, it is written that “therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh” (Gen.2:24). Thus, what God has joined together must not be put asunder. In the marriage partnership the man and his wife should therefore cleave together not only in

²⁸ John Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1999), 319.

²⁹ Zacharias Tane Fomum, *Divorce and Remarriage* (Accra: Christian Publishing House, 2014), 2.

flesh but also spiritually and emotionally because marriage between a man and a woman is essential to God's eternal plan.³⁰

Benezeri Kisembo, Laurenti Magesa and Alyward Shorter, in their book, *African Christian Marriage*, submit that the oneness in the flesh implies a very profound sharing between the couple.³¹ According to the Christian view, marriage should be monogamous and permanent. It is between a male and a female and involves sexual rights, discourages divorce, but implies fidelity and a lifelong faithfulness which is completely achieved only in a polygamous marriage.³² Its monogamous nature suggests the exclusion of sexual relationship with anyone except one's married partner.³³ Norman Geisler affirms Thomas' idea that sex is the exclusive to marriage partners and observes that "marriage is a lifelong commitment between a male and a female that involves mutual sexual rights".³⁴

Marriage from the Christian point of view also entails a covenant before God to be faithful to each other because it is a monogamous relation. A vow of fidelity is taken as evidence of their intention to form an enduring and exclusive relationship. John and Paul Feinberg submit that God is involved in forming the union as the partners make their commitment to each other and as long as this bond exists from God's perspective the couple should not seek divorce.³⁵ The discussions above suggest the permanence of Christian marriage. Christianity places high value on marriage as God ordained it

³⁰ Alan J. Hawkins and Tamara A. Fackrell, "Should I Keep Trying To Work It Out? Sacred and Secular Perspectives on the Crossroads of Divorce", *Brigham Young University Studies* 50, no. 2 (2011): 143.

³¹ Benezeri Kisembo, Laurenti Magesa, and Alyward Shorter, *African Christian Marriage* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 38.

³² Hans Haselbarth, *Christian Ethics in the African Context* (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1976), 70.

³³ Thomas, *Christian Ethics*, 227.

³⁴ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 277.

³⁵ Feinberg, *Brave New World*, 591.

and holy for only a male and female. Owing to this, it commits any two people who want to marry to vow before the altar trust and responsibility towards one another. The above discussions, therefore, provide the basis for the current research to analyse the policies and teachings of the Charismatic Churches on divorce and remarriage in their various congregations in Adenta.

1.8.2 Marriage from African Point of View

Since the study focuses on Charismatic Christians who are Africans, it is imperative to review literature on marriage, divorce and remarriage from the African Christian perspective. In the African context what constitute divorce must be viewed against the fact that marriage is a lifelong process. Once the full contract of marriage has been agreed upon, it is extremely hard to dissolve because in most African societies, although marriage is a recognized and regulated human institution, it is not considered solely as a human invention.³⁶

Samuel Waje Kunyihop in his book entitled *African Christian Ethics*, defines marriage as essentially a union of a man and a woman that God established at creation from which various people and cultures emerged and populated the world.³⁷ He argues that although African Christians' view on marriage inevitably reflects the African worldview and Western influences, it is vital that it is viewed from the Christian and biblical perspectives. He submits that it is important not to reflect on only the positive elements of marriage but also on the negative and sensitive elements such as infidelity and divorce.³⁸

³⁶ Stott, *New Issues*, 318.

³⁷ Kunyihop, *Christian Ethics*, 190.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 190.

Furthermore Mbiti's description of the African view of marriage has strong implications for marriage in contemporary times and more especially in the Ghanaian Christian context. For African people, according to Mbiti, marriage is the focus of existence.³⁹ Failure to get married under normal circumstances means that the person concerned has rejected society and society rejects him in return.⁴⁰ Asare-Opoku also confirms Mbiti's observations when he said, "Marriage is such an important stage in African life that elaborate preparations in the form of puberty rites are performed before young people enter in to it".⁴¹

According to Laryea, a Ghanaian theologian, "the institution of marriage has a divine origin", in that, "God planned, initiated, superintended and inaugurated the institution of marriage". As a Ghanaian, his view underscores the fact that the African Christian upholds the divine nature of the institution of marriage.⁴²

Kwame Gyekye also gives a historical background to the Ghanaian divorce situation by arguing that, in the fifteenth century, Christianity was introduced to Ghana along with Western culture. It is therefore evident that Christian marriage has some features distinctly different from the African traditional marriage.⁴³ The fusion of African Traditional marriage and Western Christian cultural impositions has created difficulties in marriages in Africa. According to Gyekye, societies in the pre-colonial era in Africa were largely traditional. Thus, in these societies, their beliefs and values about marriage were strongly enforced. With this background it can be strongly argued that the adulteration of traditional values on marriage has serious implications

³⁹ Mbiti, *African Philosophy*, 30.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁴¹ Kofi Asare- Opoku, 1978, 124.

⁴² A. Laryea, *The joining of lives: Inspiring Issues and Dynamics of Pre-marital Relationships* (Accra: Assemblies of God Press, 2002), 33- 37.

⁴³ Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996), 13-18.

for African Christian marriages. Samuel Kunyihop notes that early Christian missions in Africa permitted divorcing an unbelieving partner and remarrying a believing partner.⁴⁴ Many African initiated churches permit divorce and remarriage as well as polygamous marriage.⁴⁵ Each of the many Ghanaian ethnic groups has a unique way of looking at issues on marriage and divorce culturally. Therefore, it is obvious that the views of the Christians in the Charismatic Churches could be unconsciously influenced by the aforementioned perspectives.

Gyekye further explains that, in Ghana, when people get married, they try as much as possible to make the marriage stable because, in the Ghanaian society, marriage is seen as a life-long union which is to be terminated only by the death of one partner. Divorce is allowed but it is considered as an unfortunate thing and a tragedy and as much as possible families try to avoid it⁴⁶.

Asare-Opoku writes that, the factors that cause divorce in the Ghanaian society include adultery on the part of the woman, because it implies that the woman is no more interested in the man.⁴⁷ On the other hand, if a man has a sexual affair with another woman besides the wife, the man has to pay compensation, which is called 'mpata' to the woman. If a woman refuses to accept the 'Mpata' she can divorce her husband.⁴⁸ However, in spite of the fact that marriage is highly revered in Christianity, the African Christian is entrapped into two diverse opinions of culture; the western and the African culture. Among the diverse opinions which are cultural, some writers assert that marriage is monogamous and permanent. The African sees

⁴⁴ Kunyihop, *Christian Ethics*, 250.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 250.

⁴⁶ Gyekye, *African Values*, 18.

⁴⁷ Asare Opoku, *African Traditional Religion* (Awka: FEP International Private Limited, 1978), 124.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

marriage as focus of existence and failure to marry is turning one's back toward society.

Divorce and polygamy are frowned upon in Christian marriage but some African writers think these were the inclusion of the western culture of the 15th century when Christianity first emerged in Africa.

1.8.3 Arguments Advanced against Divorce

Available literature on divorce shows that many authors are against the phenomenon. Kunyihop, for instance, in his book *African Christian Ethics* argues that one key position against divorce is that marriage is for life and can only be terminated by death. He submits that the words *porneia* translated “except for marital unfaithfulness” in Matt. 19:9 should actually be translated “not even marital unfaithfulness”.⁴⁹ Nothing, in his views, justifies divorce. He therefore argues that divorce is not part of the creator's perfect design. If Moses permitted it, he did so because of the hardness of heart of the people at the time. Therefore any view of divorce and remarriage that sees the problem only in terms of what may or may not be done has already overlooked a basic fact. Divorce is never to be thought of as God's ordained morally neutral option but as evidence of sin and hardness of heart.⁵⁰

Garry Collins, in his book *Christian Counselling: A Comprehensive Guide* also argues against divorce from the perspective that, even when a couple agree to terminate their marriage, it hurts to separate because guilt, anger, resentment, fears and disappointments often dominates the divorced person's thinking and frequently there

⁴⁹ Kunyihop, *Christian Ethics*, 252.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 253.

is lowliness, confusion and low self-esteem. He indicates that no one wins in a divorce. All lose: the couple, their children, parents and the community at large.⁵¹

According to Keller, divorce is non-existent and incomprehensible to creation-marriage; therefore remarriage after divorce is even more non-existent, and more incomprehensible. He submits that any union of the married after divorce of a living partner is adultery. There is no salvation in the act of adultery. Therefore by permitting remarriage after divorce, the church is condoning the continual act of adultery-that is to permit wilful sin. There is no forgiveness for wilful sin but a certain fearful judgment (Heb. 10:26, 27). To teach that adultery on the part of the married is a license for divorce and remarriage is to teach that the first marriage is dissolved by adultery. The exact doctrine one thus teaches is that the original married adulterer is a dead partner that is the Westminster Confession.⁵²

Instone Brewer in his book *Divorce and Remarriage: Biblical Solution to a Pastoral Reality* notes that the Bible is the word of God to all generations which has to be translated from the language of ancient civilization. He argues that divorce in itself is not sinful but breaking ones marriage vows is sinful. That is the reason why only victims of broken marriages may decide to divorce and that Paul allowed remarriage if only one was divorced against one's will.⁵³ This view is debatable because divorce contradicts God's commandment and anything that contradicts God's commandment is a sin; therefore divorce is equally sinful and is not only the breaking of the vow.

⁵¹ Collins, *Christian Counselling*, 608.

⁵² John D. Keller, *Jesus' Doctrine of Marriage Divorce Remarriage* (Waldoboro, Maine: Goose River Press, 2006). For further discussion on the biblical view on Divorce and Remarriage, see Peter S. Buckman, *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage* (Pensacola: BB Books, 1980), 15-20; Johnson Lim, "Divorce and Remarriage in Theological and Contemporary Perspectives" *Asia Journal of Theology* (): 273-75.

⁵³ Instone Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage: Biblical Solutions to Pastoral Realities* (London: Paternoster Press, 2003), 104.

This is in line with Norman Geisler's assertion that marriage is a sacred institution and should not be terminated by divorce.⁵⁴

Laney, in his book, *Divorce Myth*, submits that all the passages that discussed the subject of divorce did not contradict Jesus' words that 'do not put asunder what God has put together'. He argues that marriage was designed by God to be a permanent relationship. Even though divorce was regulated in the Old Testament, it did not originate with God and never meets his approval.⁵⁵ Various writers and commentators frown on divorce in Christian marriage; whereas some view it as sin irrespective of any created conditions, some agree to it as a necessary evil in situations when marital vows have been broken. Nevertheless, most writers and commentators admit that divorce for whatever reason creates psychological disorder for the couples and their children.

1.8.4 Arguments Advanced in favour of Divorce

Most scholars who believe in the Bible share the view that God intended marriage to be a permanent union between a man and a woman and that God hates divorce. Although they agree that divorce is not commanded in scripture or encouraged, God does permit it. First, when one spouse is guilty of sexual immorality and unwilling to repent and live faithfully with the marriage partner, and second, when one of the spouses is an unbeliever who wilfully and permanently deserts the believing partner.⁵⁶

Divorce and remarriage are not God's ideal. Marriage was made to be a covenant union between a man and a woman for life. Unfortunately, in this sinful and broken world, God's ideal, though desirable, is not always possible. Divorce and remarriage,

⁵⁴ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 279.

⁵⁵ Laney, *Divorce Myth: A Biblical Examination of Divorce and Remarriage* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1981), 76-91.

⁵⁶ Collins, *Christian Counselling*, 629.

though not God's ideal, are biblically permissible for the innocent party in cases of adultery and abandonment. This has been supported through the study of Old and New Testament passages, as well as by considering biblical affirmations of marriage, pastoral implications of scriptural conclusions, and practical examples. Marriage should be held in high regard. However, it seems wise for Christians to err on the side of mercy when it comes to divorce and remarriage and not cast a burden that is too heavy to bear. Nevertheless, divorce and remarriage should not be done flippantly, but only after fervent prayer.⁵⁷

Others also argue that, in a metaphorical sense, marriages themselves die and that this death dissolves both the marriage covenant and the marriage union.⁵⁸ This position fails to emphasize the permanence of marriage union but stresses the justifiability of divorce. Another argument for divorce is the legitimate biblical ground on desertion. Scripture regulates divorce as it pertains to Christians by providing guidelines for two separate groups: marriages in which both partners are Christians; and marriages where only one spouse is a Christian. In the first case, where both husband and wife are professing Christians, neither party is ever to seek a divorce (1 Cor 7:10, 11). In the second case (the mixed marriage) the Christian husband or wife should never initiate or seek a divorce from an unbelieving spouse (1 Cor 7:12-14).

There are only two exceptions that allow for this initiative: A Christian may divorce a spouse only when his/her partner is repeatedly committing the sin of adultery (Matt. 5:32; 19:9), or if the spouse refuses to live with him/her and departs (abandonment) (1 Cor 7:15). Both exceptions present the believer with an option, never with a mandate.

⁵⁷ James M. Pruch Marriage, *Divorce, and Remarriage: An Evangelical Position Paper*, July 2012, 11, Charles C. Ryrie, "Biblical Teaching on Divorce and Remarriage", *Grace Theological Journal* 3, no. 2 (1982): 177-92.

⁵⁸ Kuniyhop, *Christian Ethics*, 254.

A better course whenever grace enables it is to forgive marital infidelity and seek healing in the marriage. This choice is especially desirable in cases where children would be further hurt and the family destroyed through divorce. Abandonment (a long-term physical withdrawal from the home with neglect of the responsibilities, support, and duties required of one partner within a marriage) would also prove the spouse's sinful conduct and could eventually allow for divorce.

1.8.5 Types of Divorce

There are various types of divorce but the most common are the de-facto and de-jure. de-facto divorce is a type which has no legal backing but the community or society generally accepts it. An example is when a marriage dies naturally as a result of desertion or separation for a long period of time. It is usually the characteristic of customary marriages but some marriages by ordinance sometimes die a natural death. de-jure divorce is the breaking of a marriage which has legal backing. An example is the filing of divorce by an aggrieved partner in court. Such a divorce is granted by the court.⁵⁹

Bryan Garner outlines several types of divorce including contested divorce, fault divorce and limited divorce. Contested divorce, a situation where both parties may want to divorce but disagree on the terms of divorce in court. Fault divorce is a type granted to a couple on the basis of proven wrongful act by the other spouse. Limited divorce is one that ends a marriage in court but does not address financial support, property distribution or care and custody of children.

Though most writers and commentators concede that these circumstances that threaten the foundation of remarriage sometimes make divorce rational, they would

⁵⁹ Kisémbó et al, *African Christian Marriage*, 34.

have rather wished that no matter the situation, the couples would find a common ground to save the marriage.

1.8.6 Legal Grounds for Dissolution of Marriage by Ordinance

The law governing the dissolution of monogamous marriage in Ghana is the Matrimonial Act of 1961. Act 367 section 1 states that a petition for divorce may be presented to the court by either party to a marriage and that the sole ground for granting a divorce shall be that the marriage has broken down beyond reconciliation. Sub section two (2) of the Act requires a petitioner to satisfy the court on the following facts; (a) that the respondent has committed adultery and that the petitioner by reason of that finds it intolerable to live with the respondent or (b) that the respondent has deserted the petitioner for a continuous period of at least two years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition or (c) that the parties to the marriage have not lived as man and wife for at least a continuous period of five years or (d) that the respondent has behaved in such a way that the petitioner cannot be reasonably expected to live with the respondent; or (e) that the parties to the marriage have after diligent effort been unable to reconcile their differences.

In addition to the above, the petition of divorce shall be the duty of the court to inquire as far as it is reasonable into the fact alleged by the petitioner and the respondent. Nevertheless, that the court finds the existence of one or more of the facts specified, it shall not grant a petition for divorce unless it is satisfied on all the evidence that the marriage has broken down beyond reconciliation. A certificate of divorce which I interpret as similar to the bill of divorce is issued by the court to dissolve the marriage. This bill of divorce would act as protection for the woman if she decided to remarry in that it would be a proof that she was not committing adultery on her first husband. This is incredibly important since the legal punishment

for adultery was the death penalty (Deut 22:22). The certificate of divorce therefore acted as a humanitarian form of protection for a divorced woman in case her former husband wanted to exact some sort of revenge by accusing her of adultery with her second husband.⁶⁰

The requirements for petition to seek divorce in the courts is cumbersome, thus just on the face value of documentation to be presented before hearing is permitted on divorce in the Law courts is self-suggestive of its deterrents. Thus, affirming the fact that divorce causes problem and is not always the solution for marital issues. A divorce in a Christian marriage apart from the legal processes, have to go through counselling processes which can sometimes take much longer time. The judicial system has these checks to only allow a marriage that cannot exist any longer beyond any reason. This makes divorce rather cumbersome. This is because the judicial system also views divorce as not the only panacea to the problems in marriage. Nevertheless, like any other civil contract, marriage might be dissoluble at the will of those parties to it.⁶¹ The aftermath of divorce could be detrimental to both parties.

1.8.7 Causes of Divorce

Literature available on divorce and remarriage indicates several factors that lead to divorce. From the African context, Kisembo and others asserts that reluctance of would-be couples to marry in church, wrong choice of partner and childlessness are some of the causes of divorce.⁶² Alan Douglas also submits that lack of pre-marital counselling, adultery, cruelty, desertion, drunkenness, bigamy, and incompatibility among others are the causes of divorce. John Mbiti indicates the following as causes

⁶⁰ Todd Scacewater, *Divorce and Remarriage in Deuteronomy 24:1–4*, *JESOT* 1, no.1 (2012): 66.

⁶¹ Tamara Metz, *Untying the Knot: Marriage, The State and the Case for their Divorce* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 68.

⁶² Kisembo et al, *African Christian Marriage*, 33.

of divorce; inadequate preparation for marriage; misconception about marriage; unhappy family life during childhood, failure to honour required marriage gifts; conflict in religious beliefs; mental illness; pride; financial challenges; parents and in-laws and difference in educational achievements among others.⁶³ This does not mean that all divorce is destructive, or remarriage of divorced person always leads to misery. Many divorced persons or those who have remarried may say that their lives after divorce are better than they were in the mists of the previous unhappy marriages. Many people including Christians and for that matter charismatics appears to have accepted the reality of infidelity and divorce as a way of life in modern society.

Garry Collins reiterates that although divorce may be seen as a welcome route to freedom or a convenient escape hatched from the difficulties of marriage, it does not deny the fact that for the majority, divorce brings pain and significant turmoil.⁶⁴

According to K. E. Kirk, either partner might with all intent and purpose divorce the other on the slightest pretence and marry again⁶⁵. Kisebo, Megesa and Shorter observe that in the past, the considerable difference in approach on the part of men and women to the marriage relationship were rendered less destructive by the parents' careful choice of marriage partner. The youth of today do not choose as carefully as their parents did. They lack experience and they act hastily and cohabiting before discussions on marriage begin and are concluded. They noted that People have become used to divorce and therefore efforts at reconciliation are no longer made as it was in the past. In their opinion, most divorces occurred among young partners in Africa⁶⁶.

⁶³ John Mbiti, *Love and Marriage in Africa* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1977), 210.

⁶⁴ Collins, *Christian Counselling*, 608.

⁶⁵ K. E. Kirk, *Marriage and Divorce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 33.

⁶⁶ Kisebo, *African Christian Marriage*, 33.

Gary Collins cited Lee and Leslie Parrot to support his view that there is nothing in the world worse than a bad marriage and at the same time nothing better than a good one. He mentions that bad marriages have led many people to divorce with the hope that they will find someone better⁶⁷. According to Maivis E Hetherington, divorce risk increases when one partner begins to put more emphasis on “me” than “we”.⁶⁸

Kisembo and colleagues submits that reluctance to marry in church, wrong choice of partner and childlessness are some of the causes of divorce.⁶⁹ Gary Collins mentions that when a society is more accepting of divorce and remarriage it is easier for a couple to divorce and go their separate ways.⁷⁰ Richard Gelles observed that families where the husband who is the head, holds a low income job have always run the greatest risk of divorce.⁷¹

1.8.8 Effects of Divorce

According to Collins Gary, there is a ripple social effect of divorce that extends to family members, friends and church members.⁷² Although divorce may seem to avert difficulties for some, it is not without its problems for most. Ahrons, in her findings on a research on family ties after divorce submits that parental subsystem continues to impact the nuclear family twenty years after marital disruption by exerting a strong influence on the quality of relationships within the family system.⁷³

⁶⁷ Collins, *Christian Counselling*, 609.

⁶⁸ Tara Parker Pope, *For Better: The Signs of a Good Marriage* (New York: Penguin Group, 2010), 253.

⁶⁹ Kisembo, *Africa Christian Marriage*, 33.

⁷⁰ Collins, *Christian Counselling*, 613.

⁷¹ Richard Gelles, *Contemporary Families: A Sociological View* (London: Sage Publications Inc, 1995), 395.

⁷² Collins, *Christian Counselling*, 617.

⁷³ Constance R. Ahrons, “Family Ties After Divorce: Long-Term Implications for Children” *Family Process*, (2007), DOI 10.1111/j.1545-5300.2006.00191.x, 1.

John Stott observes that marital breakdown is a tragedy. It brings pain, alienation, insecurity and often anger.⁷⁴ It leaves a scar in the life of the partners, their children, relatives, church members and the society at large. It is considered wrong and allowed only in cases of extreme necessity.⁷⁵ Even couples who amicably agree to divorce have some hurts.⁷⁶ This is because fear, anger, and disappointment often dominate the divorced person's thinking resulting into loneliness, a sense of rejection, insecurity, low self-esteem and the haunting concern about who is at fault.⁷⁷

Divorce sometimes permanently weakens the relationship between children and parents. It leads to destructive ways of handling conflict, diminishes social competence, leads to early loss of virginity, and it diminishes young adults' sense of masculinity or femininity. It could lead to more trouble in dating, more cohabitation, higher divorce rates later in life, higher expectations of divorce, and to less desire for children. In religious life, divorce is said to diminish the frequency of worship of God.

Educationally, divorce lowers learning capabilities; reduces household income and massively cuts the life-wealth of individuals. Also divorce massively contributes to the increases in crime rates, abuse and neglect rates as well as the use of drugs. Again divorce sometimes weakens the health of children and sometimes shortens their life span.

Finally, it increases behavioural, emotional and psychiatric risks, including suicide. It must be noted that not all effects of divorce apply to every child of divorce, nor is it likely that any one child has suffered all the effects. Nonetheless, many children who

⁷⁴ John Stout, *New Issues Facing Christians Today* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1999), 320.

⁷⁵ John Mbiti, *Love and Marriage in Africa* (London: Longman, 1977), 210.

⁷⁶ Gary R Collins, *Christian Counselling: A Comprehensive Guide* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publication, 2007), 608.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

see their parent's divorce are affected by the trauma. There is perhaps no way to predict how any particular child will be affected or to what extent, but it is possible to predict its effects on society. They are numerous and very serious. Not only do parents' divorce each other, there is a decline of the relationship between parents and children.⁷⁸ Divorced mothers, despite their best intentions, are less able than married mothers are to give the same level of emotional support to their children.⁷⁹ Divorced fathers are less than likely to have a close relationship with their children, and the younger the children are at the time of the divorce, and when the father is denied legal custody of the children he is more likely to drift away. Also, divorced and remarried fathers tend to become more involved with the children of their subsequent marriage. Children's relationships with both parents change after a divorce: they become more distant from both, more so even than children living with married but unhappy parents.⁸⁰ Children of divorced parents rate the support they receive from home much lower than do children from unbroken homes. These negative ratings become more pronounced by the time they are in junior high school.

This emotional distance between children and parents lasts well into adulthood, and may become permanent. As adults, children of divorced parents are half more likely to be close to their parents than children of intact families are. They have less frequent contact with the parent with whom they have grown up and have much less contact with the divorced parent from whom they have been separated by the

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Meneghan and Toby L. Parcel, "Social Sources of Change in Children's Home Environments; The Effects of Parental Occupational Experiences and Family Conditions". *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol.57 (1995): 69-84.

⁷⁹ Jane E Miller and Diane Davis, "Poverty History, Marital History, and Quality of Children's Home Environments," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 59 (1997): 996-1007.

⁸⁰Congress, "World Congress," accessed April 23, 2015, [http:// worldcongress.org/wcf2_spkrs/wcf2_fagan.htm](http://worldcongress.org/wcf2_spkrs/wcf2_fagan.htm).

divorce.⁸¹ The financial assistance, practical help, and emotional support between parents and children diminish much more quickly than that in intact families. Also, they are less likely to think they should support their parents in old age. Children whose parents divorce later in life; that is late teenage years and early adulthood have fewer difficulties than children whose parents divorce during their childhood. They deeply dislike the strains and difficulties which arise in long-held family celebrations, traditions, daily rituals, and special times, and see these losses as major.⁸²

Furthermore even grown up children continue to see their parents' divorce very differently than do the parents. Judith Wallerstein, a clinical psychologist from San Francisco, was the first to disturb the nation with her widely reported research on the effects of divorce on children.⁸³ Her research has continued in many follow-up studies on these children. Fifteen years after the divorce she found that only 10 percent of children felt positive about their parents' divorce even though 80 percent of the divorced mothers and 50 percent of the divorced fathers felt that it was good for them.⁸⁴

1.9 Significance of the Study

The noticeable deterioration of the institutions of marriage and the family in modern society has prompted many within the church to engage in moral evaluation of the practice of divorce and remarriage. Given the possible complications of divorce and remarriage, which range from matters related to basic Sanctification on a personal level to ministerial qualification on a corporate level, such ethical assessment is commendable. The study is significant because, although many scholars have written

⁸¹ Francine Klagsbrun, *Married People Staying together in the Age of Divorce* (London: Bantam Books, 1995), 87.

⁸² Klagsbrun, *Married People Staying together*, 89.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

on divorce and remarriage in general, yet much has not been written on the perspectives of Christians especially divorcees on the subject in relation to the teachings of the church on divorce and remarriage. It focuses on the perspective of divorcees in selected charismatic churches, on the subject of divorce and remarriage, in comparison with the various teachings by the selected charismatic churches. This research investigates how members apply the teachings in their decision making by indicating the various arguments that inform their decisions to divorce and or remarry. Furthermore, it provides relevant information to assist prospective couples to familiarize themselves with realities in respect of marriage before joining the institution. Individuals who are considering divorces are informed on the impact divorce have on their children, extended family, the church and the nation at large. The thesis serves as a foundational study that will inform and guide both scholars and practitioners on the perspectives of divorcees, their pastors and church leaders as to how the subject matter can be further explored within the charismatic Christian community.

1.10 Organization of the Study

The thesis is has five chapters. Chapter one presents a general introduction to the study. It discusses the background to the study, the statement of the problem, aims and objectives of the study, research question, literature review, methodology and methods of data collection, theoretical framework, and scope of the study. It also presents the significance of the study, limitations of the study and organization of the study.

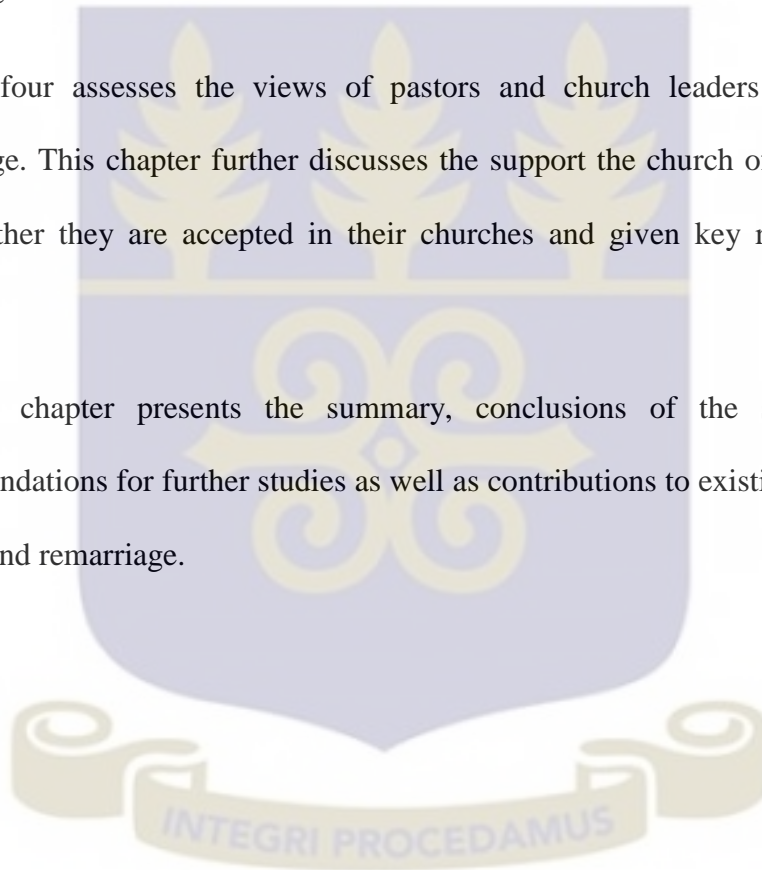
Chapter two focuses on the policies and teachings of selected Charismatic Churches on divorce and remarriage. The study specifically discusses the views or policies the selected Charismatic Churches hold and what they teach their members on divorce

and remarriage. It also explores what programmes the church has for strengthening Christian marriages.

Chapter three is the analysis on the perspectives of divorcees in Charismatic Churches on divorce and remarriage and how they interpret and apply both biblical and the church's teachings on divorce and remarriage when making decisions. The chapter further discusses the moral arguments that informed the divorcees to seek divorce and remarriage.

Chapter four assesses the views of pastors and church leaders on divorce and remarriage. This chapter further discusses the support the church offers to divorcees and whether they are accepted in their churches and given key responsibilities to perform.

The last chapter presents the summary, conclusions of the study and some recommendations for further studies as well as contributions to existing knowledge on divorce and remarriage.



CHAPTER TWO

POLICIES ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the policies of selected Charismatic Churches within Adenta on divorce and remarriage. Two distinct charismatic groupings exist in Ghana, namely Ghana Council of Charismatic and Christian churches and Ghana Council of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches. Two of the churches, namely, Light House Chapel International and Harvest Chapel International belong to the Ghana Council of Charismatic and Christian Churches, while Manna Mission Church belongs to the Ghana Council of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches.

Harvest Chapel International, Lighthouse Chapel International and Manna Mission Church were selected because the divorcees who served as respondents for the study worship with these churches. Therefore, there is the need to find out what the policies of these churches are on divorce and remarriage since they may influence the behaviour and attitude of their members and may influence members on their decision making processes in the area of marriage, divorce and remarriage. A brief history of the churches are presented before their policies are discussed to enable readers have a brief background on these churches. The churches' policies were considered because their teachings will mostly be based on them.

2.2 Views of the Selected Churches on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage

The discussion below focuses on the views and policies of the selected churches under discussion.

2.3 Harvest Chapel International (HCI)

Harvest Chapel International started as a students' evangelistic ministry known as Calvary Road with Spencer Duncan as the leader in 1977. Students from the University of Ghana (UG), Presbyterian Boys- Secondary School (Presec) and Aburi Girls Secondary School were the pioneers. It then extended to Adisadel College, Holy Child Secondary School, both in Cape Coast and then to other parts of the country. Their main aim was to reach out to students through drama and Music. The music wing became stronger in 1977 and an album was launched called 'greater love'. The group toured Lagos, Abeokuta and Ibadan, all in Nigeria.

A lot more students came on board during a programme held in Achimota Secondary School in 1980. Prominent among them were Fitzgerald Odonkor (Now President of HCI), Dag Heward Mills (Now Bishop of LCI) and Betty Donkor. These leaders did not have any official training in ministry, but they were determined to live according to the principles of the word of God.

Most of the students after graduating desired a more fulfilling fellowship. Then, with a deep desire, through waiting on God and prayer, Harvest Chapel International (HCI) emerged. The name Calvary Road was maintained in the schools and Harvest Chapel International for the church group outside the schools.

2.3.1 Purpose of Ministry

Harvest Chapel International is evangelism oriented. It also makes provision for the building of other areas of the five-fold ministry. It places emphasis on providing pastoral care and teaching Christians to become effective in their specific vocations. It also aims at building leaders who will influence their generations for Jesus Christ. Harvest Chapel International (HCI) also stands for strong families and is

committed to building strong Christian families. The ministry therefore seeks to win souls for Christ, nurture them in the tenets of the faith, teach them to be fruitful and, to disciple them to maturity ministry. Since its inception, the ministry has focused on the youth as the future leaders and change agents of our society and will continue to do so. The ministry is committed to building up a crop of young professionals who will blaze the trail of revival in our world. The influence of the ministry goes beyond the borders of Ghana, thus its international nature. Every member of the ministry is a potential firebrand, torchbearer and trailblazer of the gospel of peace.

2.3.2 Values of the Ministry

The core values of Harvest Chapel International are: Obedience to the word of God, honesty, respect, faith, excellence, holy ambition, hard work and achievement. The mission statement of the church is to preach the Gospel for the Salvation Oof the whole man, equip potential leaders for Ministry and effective Christian testimony in their vocations in an environment of love and strong family links.

2.3.3 The Marriage Policy of Harvest Chapel International

The church has an official nine page document spelling out her marriage policy. It indicate that, as a prophetic symbol of Christ's union with the Church, Christian marriage is an ordained institution by God, predating all other earthly institutions and it involves a mutual ministry of giving way and giving up in loving loyalty, service and obedience (Eph 5:20-2).

According to the policy, Christian marriage is not a wedding to which God is invited. It is a relationship between a man and woman formed and lived out in God's presence and discernment of God's will. The wedding ceremony is therefore the liturgical expression of that relationship. It is first and foremost a worship service of joy and

thanksgiving. It is the public exchange of vows and the proclamation of God's blessing.⁸⁵ Marriage is explained in the policy as a holy and honourable institution, which should not be entered impetuously, unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately and in accordance with the purposes for which God instituted. (Prov. 19:2, 20:18, Heb. 13:4).

The policy clearly stipulates the intent of the canons of the church that marriages solemnized in the church continue to be nurtured within the community of the church.⁸⁶ It further indicates that marriage is not something that happens at one particular moment. It is a life-long promise of companionship in which each spouse satisfies the other physically, emotionally, intellectually (without expectation of receiving anything in return) and together they seek God. Besides, marriage is a covenant of Companionship;⁸⁷ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh (Eph. 5:3).

Harvest Chapel holds the view that those who come to the church seeking God's blessing on their relationship should do so with a clear intention of maintaining an active participation in the life of the church. While there may be extenuating circumstances, it should be considered normative that a marriage takes place where the couple intends to worship.

⁸⁵ Marriage Policy of Harvest Chapel International, Un- published material. 2.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

2.3.5 Policy on Divorce

Regarding indissolubility of marriage, the policy of the Harvest Chapel International holds that God has directed that marriage be permanent. The promise made to a spouse is permanent not temporary.⁸⁸ It is not for as long as it feels good, but for life. Wisdom can be found in the traditional marriage vow that says ‘for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part’. Therefore ‘what God has joined together let no man separate’.

Harvest Chapel holds the view that Christian marriage is celebrated as a covenant and not contract. Divorce is never considered as an option by the church for solving problems or a way out of a relationship that seems dead.⁸⁹ Reference is made to Jesus’ teaching on divorce “... but I say that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the grounds of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced man commits adultery” (Matt 5:32). The church considers marriage as a sworn fidelity, a solemn covenant between a man and a woman, entered into before God, whereby He joins them in a life-long companionship of love for and commitment to each other but not a contract that can easily be broken. In view of this, the church always looks for reasons to restore the marriage relationship rather than for excuses to divorce.⁹⁰ The church policy stipulates that it will not celebrate remarriage of members who wish for it because of their strong position against divorce.

This policy is in consonance with the biblical teaching on marriage in the book of Hosea. The story of Hosea illustrates God's active role in the marriage covenant and reflects God's covenant love for His people. In obedience to God's command, Hosea pursued Gomer and accepted her as God restored the covenant relationship.

⁸⁸ Harvest Marriage Policy, 3.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

In an interview, Dr. Koranteng, the minister in charge of marriage and family life reiterated that “no matter what view one takes on the issue of divorce, it is important to remember Mal 2:16 “I hate divorce says the Lord God of Israel”. He said the Bible affirms that marriage is a life time commitment so when two people marry they are no longer two but one.⁹¹ Therefore “what God has joined together, let man not separate” (Matt 19:6). He argues that God realizes though that since marriage involves two sinful human beings divorces are likely to occur. But He by no means sanctioned it. Host shares a similar view when he said “God hates divorce and that divorcing one’s spouse removes the person from fellowshiping with him.”⁹² To him divorce and remarriage is a serious issue.

However, by the policy of the church, Pastors who become aware of potential divorce situations within the church, either through the parties involved or from outside sources, should encourage both partners to seek Christian marriage counselling, either from the pastors or from other qualified counsellors. God's love, forgiveness, and healing power should be stressed, especially where the offending spouse (who committed the marital unfaithfulness) is repentant and the offended spouse is reluctant to forgive and is unwilling to continue with the marriage.

Christ's teaching is that if a divorce takes place on any other grounds than that of marital unfaithfulness, it can have no sanction from God, and any new marriage which follows is an adulterous act, since from God's standpoint the original couple is still married to each other. Matthew 19:9 indicates that a valid divorce (on the grounds of marital unfaithfulness) entails the right to remarry. Paul, in 1 Cor. 7:12 15, cites the case of a man who becomes a Christian after marriage. His wife, however,

⁹¹ Interview with Rev. Dr. Isaac Koranteng, Minister in charge of Marriage at Harvest Chapel International, 12 October, 2014, Accra.

⁹² Host, “Divorce and Remarriage”.

remains an unbeliever but is willing to continue living with him. The injunction is that he is not to divorce her. But if she were to leave him, she is to be allowed to do so. Desertion is the destruction of the marriage which the Christian spouse was unable to prevent. The believer in such a case is not bound (that is, he or she is free to divorce and remarry); for Paul says, "God has called us to live in peace." (1 Cor. 7:15)

This implies that in the case of a serious breakdown of a marriage even when both parties are believers and peace has given way to open warfare, as in the case of extreme incongruity it may be better for the couple to separate, temporarily at least, rather than to continue in a relationship that has become intolerable. Even in such a circumstance, there should be no resort to divorce, let alone any intention of entering into a second marriage. In the case of such a separation, they are either to remain single, or earnestly work toward effecting a reconciliation (1 Cor. 7:10-11).

Some would understand Matt. 19:9 to restrict biblical divorce only to cases of physical adultery. However, we agree with John Murray that the issue addressed there is what constitutes legitimate remarriage. In other words, Jesus' point is that if one remarries without a biblical divorce, he or she is committing adultery. Further, such a restrictive understanding of Matt. 19:9 cannot account for Paul's grounds of desertion in 1 Cor. 7:12-15. To reconcile these passages we must search out the overriding principle from which they both derive, the one-flesh principle of the marriage mandate (Gen. 2:24; cf. Matt. 19:5; 1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:28-29). Both adultery and desertion break the one-flesh relationship.⁹³

Harvest chapel, however, holds that, according to the dictates of Scripture, marriage is for life. Clearly, God's standard is chastity before marriage and fidelity afterwards,

⁹³ Interview with Koranteng.

and Scripture teaches that divorce is always an abnormality arising out of human sinfulness.

However, to say that God intended that the marriage covenant should never be broken does not mean that the marriage union is therefore unbreakable. For example, it is broken by the death of either partner. Moreover, in Old Testament times, divorce was tolerated although not divinely approved. We discover from Deut. 24:1-4 that Moses was not instituting or encouraging divorce; he was simply attempting to regulate it in a culture whose practice of it was out of control.⁹⁴ It is important to note that the word ‘adultery’ does not appear in these verses for the very good reason that under the Mosaic Law, the punishment for adultery was death by stoning. Divorce was obviously an established custom which is neither commanded nor condoned in this passage.

Divorce is never considered as an option by the church for solving problems or a way out of a relationship that seems dead.⁹⁵ Reference is made to Jesus’ teaching about divorce. “... but I say that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery”. (Matt. 5:32). The church will always look for reasons to restore the marriage relationship rather than for excuses to leave it.⁹⁶ This is buttressed by the view that, no matter what position one takes on the issue of divorce, it is important to remember what is written in the Bible in Mal. 2:16; “I hate divorce, says the LORD God of Israel.”

⁹⁴ Earl S. Kalland, “Deuteronomy” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* Vol. 3, edited by Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 145.

⁹⁵ Harvest Marriage Policy, 5.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

It is stated in the policy that, the Bible clearly indicates that, marriage is a lifetime commitment, so when two people marry they are no longer two, but one". Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matt. 19:6). The policy indicates that, God realizes, though, that since marriages involve two sinful human beings, divorces are going to occur. In the Old Testament, God laid down some laws in order to protect the rights of divorcees, especially women (Deut. 24:1-4). Jesus pointed out that these laws were given because of the hardness of people's hearts, not because they were God's desire (Matt. 19:8). Nevertheless, divorce is permitted only in circumstances of grave repudiation of the marriage covenant, namely adultery and wilful, irredeemable desertion.

The Law indeed commanded that a certificate of divorce be written, if there were to be a valid divorce. But that is a very different thing from saying that they must divorce. God's call to us is to love and to forgive. Therefore, divorce is not necessitated even by adultery. There must always be the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation and this should be seriously pursued. Indeed, married couples who have experienced a break in covenant faithfulness should strive to repair their relationship through forgiveness, reconciliation and personal transformation before divorce proceedings are initiated.

2.3.6 Policy on Remarriage

The church has a strong position against remarriage. The story of Hosea illustrates God's active role in the marriage covenant and reflects God's covenant love for His people. In obedience to God's command, Hosea pursued Gomer and accepted her as God restored the covenant relationship. Likewise, the leaders should encourage the offended spouse to offer forgiveness and reconciliation with the hope of drawing the offending spouse back to right relationship in the marriage.

Christ's teaching is that if a divorce takes place on any other grounds than that of marital unfaithfulness, it can have no sanction from God, and any new marriage which follows is an adulterous act. Matthew 19:9 indicates that a valid divorce (on the grounds of marital unfaithfulness) entails the right to remarry. Paul, in 1 Cor. 7:12-15, cites the case of a man who becomes a Christian after marriage. His wife, however, remains an unbeliever but is willing to continue living with him. The injunction is that he is not to divorce her. But if she were to leave him, she is to be allowed to do so. Desertion is the destruction of the marriage which the Christian spouse was unable to prevent. The believer in such a case is not bound (that is, he or she is free to divorce and remarry); for Paul says, "God has called us to live in peace." (1 Cor. 7:15).

This implies that in the case of a serious breakdown of a marriage even when both parties are believers and peace has given way to open warfare, as in the case of extreme incongruity, it may be better for the couple to separate, temporarily at least, rather than to continue in a relationship that has become intolerable. But in such a circumstance, there should be no resort to divorce, let alone any intention of entering into a second marriage. In the case of such a separation, they are either to remain single, or earnestly work toward effecting a reconciliation (1 Cor. 7:10-11).

Some would understand Matt. 19:9 to restrict biblical divorce only to cases of physical adultery. However, we agree with John Murray that the issue addressed there is what constitutes legitimate remarriage. In other words, Jesus' point is if one remarries without a biblical divorce, he or she is committing adultery. Further, such a restrictive understanding of Matt. 19:9 cannot account for Paul's grounds of desertion in 1 Cor. 7:12-15. To reconcile these passages we must search out the overriding principle from which they both derive, the one-flesh principle of the marriage

mandate (Gen. 2:24; cf. Matt. 19:5; 1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:28-29). Both adultery and desertion break the one-flesh relationship.

Harvest Chapel does not encourage remarriage of divorcees whose partners are alive and have not remarried. The church would rather seek to reconcile them by allowing them to separate for a period of time, within which it is believed that some agreements could be reached. In the situation where an attempt at reconciliation fails, harvest will not celebrate any remarriage. It is also indicated in the policy that the only condition under which remarriage may be celebrated is when a couple have successfully gone through the legal procedures on divorce as stipulated by the laws of Ghana, and after their families have confirmed. In this situation, remarriage is celebrated quietly and not public in the pastor's office. (The marriage bands will not be published). On the other hand, if one spouse is dead, then the other will be free to remarry publicly.

2.3.7 Conclusion

The primary data derived from the official marriage document of Harvest Chapel indicated that although the church is open to all people and families, it stands for strong families and is committed to building strong Christian families. therefore, divorce is never considered as an option for solving problems, or a way out of a marriage relationship that seems dead. Harvest chapel does not celebrate remarriages of members who wish for it because of its strong position against divorce. They however consider celebrating remarriage only when a spouse is dead and the surviving partner wishes to remarry. Pastors who become aware of potential divorce situations within the church, either through the parties involved or from outside sources, encourage both partners to seek Christian marriage counselling, either from the pastors or from other qualified counsellors. God's love, forgiveness, and healing

power is stressed, especially where the offending spouse (who committed the marital unfaithfulness) is repentant and the offended spouse is reluctant to forgive and unwilling to continue with the marriage.

2.4 Lighthouse Chapel International

Bishop Dag Heward Mills (affectionately known as Brother Dag) started a branch of Calvary Road Incorporated in 1982 when he was a medical student in University of Ghana in Legon-Accra. Although the fellowship faced challenges, Brother Dag held on the fort until he resigned when the leadership at the headquarters of Calvary Road Incorporated rejected his vision of holding Sunday services; indicating that their vision was not to start a church. Brother Dag then decided to obey the call of God and became a pastor to the Korle- Bu Christian Centre after which he was officially ex-communicated from Calvary Road Incorporated. He later changed the name of Korle - Bu Christian Centre to Light House because he believed the vision of Lighthouse extended beyond the suburb of Korle- Bu. The name Lighthouse was changed to Lighthouse Chapel International on 23rd December, 1989. The church currently has a lot of branches both local and International. It is one of the fastest growing charismatic churches with its head office located in Accra.

2.4.1 Policies of Light House Chapel on Divorce

Light House Chapel International unlike Harvest Chapel does not have an official written document stipulating their policy on divorce and remarriage. The church however depends on the views of the leader and founder of the church (Bishop Dag Heward- Mills) as expressed in his hand book on *Model Marriage*. He holds the view that marriage is not initiated by man because it is not his idea. God himself realized

man's need and addressed it.⁹⁷ It is the only institution that was established before sin came into the world. According to the founder and Bishop of the church, there are three ways of getting married; the civil marriage, customary marriage and spiritual marriage.⁹⁸ The civil marriage is done in accordance with civil laws where the marriage ordinance prescribes that a certificate must be acquired from the local or municipal authority granting a three months period within which the marriage may be celebrated if no one opposes it. Civil law marriage may be broken only by a legal divorce. It is therefore a crime to marry again while still married under the marriage ordinance. The customary marriage is one that involves families. The family of the man and woman meets and the woman is traditionally handed over to the man after the required rites are performed. Some families consider the ceremony to be a full and proper marriage and expect the couples to live together afterwards while others consider it as an agreement to marry.

The church does not recognize customary marriage as marriage unless it is blessed by the Church. The spiritual marriage is the one that gives an opportunity to the couple to vow to obey God's law in relation to marriage and also have the marriage sealed and blessed by God. The official position of Dag Heward- Mills, the Bishop, of the church regarding divorce and remarriage as indicated in his hand book on *Model Marriage* is that, the church does not encourage divorce and remarriage. This is because "the Creator made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'" (Matt. 19:4-5). God's design for marriage goes back to mankind's beginning. The family, as God's means of propagating His creation, grows out of this

⁹⁷ Dag Heward-Mills, *Model Marriage: A Marriage Counselling Handbook* (Benin City: Hosanna Christian Bookshop and Publishing House, 2012), 15.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

primary human relationship. The marriage relationship encompasses the deepest unity of man and woman in its social and physical expressions. The first woman was declared to be a suitable helper for the man (Gen. 2:18), the perfect complement (Gen. 2:23). God intended them to share both blessings and responsibilities. Mutual esteem and self-giving love strengthen the marriage relationship. God intended this physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual union to be focused on one partner only. Lighthouse International shares the view that marriage is to be an exclusive relationship, a lifelong faithful union with one's spouse. "What God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matt. 19:6).

The Old Testament recognized the existence of polygamy (marriage to multiple partners), but still declared that monogamy (marriage to one partner) was the ideal (Psalms 128:3, Prov. 5:18; 31:10-29; Eccl.9:9). "Lifelong" means monogamy and sexual fidelity until the death of one partner. Sexual expression with more than one partner violates the holiness of biblical marriage, and thus is sin in God's sight. Marriage is considered as a covenant, a solemn binding agreement made before God and man. Man therefore has responsibility to cleave to his wife and keep the covenant established by God through marriage. A wife is not expected to depart from her husband, but if she does, she must remain unmarried or get reconciled to her husband. Her husband must not put her away (Mal 2: 14-16).

The position of the church is that God does not like a broken fellowship of any sort. Thus, the concept of broken homes or life hurts God.⁹⁹ Besides, the church also shares the view that divorce inflicts an unending hurt, creates a bitter personality and breaks relationship or fellowship permanently. Both partners are often destroyed and sometimes fall beyond full recovery. Lighthouse International holds the view that,

⁹⁹ Heward-Mills, *Model Marriage*, 100.

marriage is a vow unto death so any individuals who cannot or will not keep the vow should not make it. Divorce is therefore not accepted nor encouraged in Light house chapel international.

2.4.2 Views on Remarriage

Regarding remarriage, the teachings of Light house indicates that although they share the view that a spouse is bound by the law to his or her partner so long as they live and is free to remarry after the death of a spouse, it is not an easy thing to do. Thus, a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies she is discharged from the law concerning her husband. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies she is free from that law, if she marries another man she is not an adulteress. No exceptions are explicitly mentioned that would suggest she could be free from her husband to remarry on any other basis.

The religious ceremony of the wedding before the church and community emphasizes that marriage is more than a legal agreement between two individuals. The church has a responsibility to support and nurture the marriage that has been affirmed by public vows.

2.5 Manna Mission Church

The Manna Mission Church is a New Testament model church where the word of God is demonstrably ministered through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. The church was born out of a vision the founder Rev Dr. Seth Ablorh had in October 1987. The vision was a ministry of compassionate medical care and evangelism. It was based on the scripture “For the breath of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world”. (John 6: 33). Out of the contest of this verse was

born the name MANNA, and thus the ministry Manna Mission Incorporated.¹⁰⁰ The ministry was officially launched on a 33 acre plot of land on 3rd July 1988. The ministry officially started rendering the compassionate medical care on the 17th of May, 1989 with anointed prayer as the heartbeat of the hospital, coupled with positive attitudes of the staff towards patients, and the clientele of the hospital grew by leaps and bounds. Many of the patients who became born again requested that the hospital organize a Bible study class for them since they did not have a regular place of worship. Thus Manna Mission Church was born and the first service was conducted on 20th August 1991 under a canopy at the forecourt of the hospital. The church is one of the main departments that pursue the evangelistic programs of the ministry.

2.5.1 Purpose of Manna Mission

The mission statement of the church is to proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, to nurture believers to grow in grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and to train believers to minister to their world. Some of the activities of the church include church planting, church services, living Manna radio broadcast programs, leadership programs such as ministers conference or national school of ministry. The church also organizes a resurrection power convention which is a yearly Easter power program aimed at bringing all Manna branches as well as affiliated churches together for revival services. “Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.” (Matt. 4:23).

There are branches and affiliate churches and ministers throughout Ghana and other African Countries. Some of the Branches in Ghana include; Adenta, Mataheko,

¹⁰⁰ Seth Ablorh, “Dream another Dream: God will Do it Again”, *Fresh Manner* 1 (1999), 2.

Lashibi (International Sanctuary), Afienya, Akporman, Teshie (Tsui –bleoo and Mornaa), Tamale and Bechem among others. This church has been blessed and currently runs two services on Sundays. The church also has a Bible School which trains ministers both for the church and other churches.

2.5.2 Policies of Manna Mission on Divorce and Remarriage

Manna Mission Church unlike Harvest Chapel International does not have an official document on marriage policy. The church however has a committee (a team of pastors and marriage counsellors) in charge of family life, chaired by one of the senior ministers of the church. The committee has a working document, which stems from the views and position of the members of the family life committee, and serves as an interim document used to address family life issues in the church regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage.

Focus group discussions with the head of the committee and some committee members brought to light the churches undocumented working policy on the subject of divorce and remarriage to the researcher. From the interactions, the researcher gathered that the church does not subscribe to divorce, and that divorce do occur due to the hardness of heart of the couples involved for in the beginning it was not so.¹⁰¹ The church also considers marriage as a completely new lifestyle ordered and structured by God for man. It is a called out life into a different life ordained by God himself. It is not man made. The requirement of the new lifestyle is that two are better than one, for if one falls, the other will lift the fallen one up and there is surely a reward. Marriage is therefore beneficial both to the individuals involved, their family, the church and the nation at large. Hence every member of the church who is privileged to be part of the divine lifestyle and is born again must believe the word of

¹⁰¹ Benjamin Torkornu, Interview, 15th September, 2014, Accra.

God and have faith that the marriage will be successful. Should there be any danger, challenges or difficulties, members should address it because divorce does not occur in a day but it begins with little misunderstandings and indifferences which when not resolved graduates to big issues that become difficult to resolve.

The chairman of the committee indicated that the source of divorce is the condition of the heart of the individuals in the relationship. He reiterated that Charismatic Christians who believe and accept the new created heart from the Holy Spirit must live with their spouses with the new created heart. He further indicated that, it is possible that a believer is born again but lives in an old heart. Such an individual is likely to consider divorce as an option in crises situation instead of checking the condition of the heart and making the necessary adjustments.¹⁰²

Manna Mission Church discourages divorce with strong teaching on the sanctity and permanence of marriage. This stand is obviously more stringent than the permissive attitude of society in general and the judicial system's interpretation of the laws of the land. The strong view of the church against divorce grows out of the clear statement in the Bible that God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16) and that no human being should separate two persons joined together in holy matrimony (Mat. 19:6). Yet the reality of divorce forces the church to draw from Scripture guidelines on divorce when God's ideal is not maintained.

In a focus group discussion, a member of the committee made reference to the Bible by indicating that, in an instance where both husband and wife are professing Christians, neither party is ever to seek a divorce (1 Corin. 7:10, 11). In a mixed, marriage the Christian husband or wife should never initiate or seek a divorce from an

¹⁰² Interview with Rev. Torkornu.

unbelieving spouse (1 Cor. 7:12-14). The committee chairman added that a Christian may divorce a spouse only when his/her partner is repeatedly committing the sin of adultery (Matt.5:32; 19:9), or if the spouse refuses to live with him/her and departs (abandonment) (1 Cor. 7:15). The committee members however reiterated that both exceptions present the believer with an option; but never a mandate. They suggest that a better course whenever grace enables it is to forgive marital infidelity and seek healing in the marriage. This choice is especially desirable in cases where children would be further hurt and the family destroyed through divorce.

2.5.3 Manna Mission's Teachings on Remarriage

On remarriage, the committee chairman concedes that it is a bigger challenge than divorce. He posed the question that if there are biblical grounds that permit divorce, does that also justify remarriage? Though Old Testament Law permitted divorce (Deut. 24:1-4), it placed limits on remarriage by prohibiting husbands from remarrying their former wives whom they had divorced. In a second marriage, the wife was bound to the new marriage covenant. After forming the second marriage covenant she was not to go back to her first husband. The chairman suggests that, the teaching of Jesus seems even more restrictive. He forbid the remarriage of divorced persons, condemning such as an act of adultery (Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18). By remarrying, the divorced person commits adultery and also causes the new partner to commit adultery. Jesus, however, made one exception to this rule: marital unfaithfulness (Matt. 5:32, 19:9).

Manna Mission holds the view that if a divorce occurs under a biblical exception as stated earlier, one is free to remarry. In other words, one who has been divorced because of the repeated adultery of a partner (Matt. 5:32; 19:9) is not bound by the former marriage and is free to remarry. The committee is of the view that the

exception clause porneia (“except for marital unfaithfulness”) refers to a continuing lifestyle of sexual immorality, not necessarily a single act. Wherever possible, sexually immoral practices should be dealt with through repentance, confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation, thus saving the marriage. The Chairman remarked that in no case does Jesus command divorce when unfaithfulness occurred; Jesus simply allowed it. He further said, Jesus did not command remarriage when divorce occurred. However, from Matthew 19:9 it seems that Jesus understood that the divorced would often remarry. Remarriage, like the first marriage, should be “in the Lord” (with a Christian).

The second exception for the remarriage of a divorced person is found in 1 Cor. 7:15. When an unbelieving spouse is unwilling to remain in the marriage and initiates a divorce, the believer is set free from the marriage and can remarry if he or she so chooses without committing adultery. The minister in charge of the marriage committee suggested that where these exceptional circumstances exist, the question of remarriage must be resolved by the believer as he or she walks in the light of God's Word (1 Cor. 7:15, 27, 28). According to him, remarriage is a new contract or covenant. Even though the first covenant, because of sin, did not endure, the new covenant must be treated with all the love, commitment, and permanence the first marriage contract should have received.

Manna Mission Church, unlike Harvest Chapel International, therefore celebrates remarriage of her members who desire to on the grounds of forgiveness and repentance. Their reason is that although the church does not encourage divorce, members who have divorced and wish to remarry must not be denied and left in sin if they have repented. It is in lieu of their repentance that a remarriage will be celebrated. The ceremony is celebrated publicly, unlike Harvest chapel where such a

remarriage is celebrated publicly. This does not mean the Manna Mission church is endorsing adultery. Rather it does not want to pass judgment on the people. The marriage committee chairman perceived marriage to be a sworn fidelity, a solemn covenant between a man and a woman, entered into before God, whereby He joins them in a life-long companionship of love for and commitment to each other.

Recommendations agreed by the committee which serve as a working document indicate that divorce under any circumstances should not prevent continued attempts to reconcile the couples involved. This is because those who remarry after an improper divorce commit adultery and are subject to church discipline. As with all other transgressions, these too are covered by the blood of Christ and members may be restored to fellowship when guilt is acknowledged and true repentance for sin is expressed. Church leaders and Pastors must therefore exercise utmost care in considering divorced persons as candidates for church office. This implies that the committee which oversees family life in Manna Mission may not recommend divorcees to hold key positions in the church.

The head of the committee suggested that:

Divorced persons should give prayerful thought to discover if God's vocation for them is to remain unmarried, since one failure in this realm raises serious questions as to the rightness and wisdom of undertaking another union. If any minister has any questions about the readiness of a divorced person to remarry according to these principles, the family life committee should be consulted and its agreement sought.¹⁰³

The Manna Mission holds the view that any discussion of divorce and remarriage should be conducted in a spirit of genuine humility. The chairman of the committee in charge of family life in Manna Mission submitted that conclusions cannot be reached

¹⁰³ Torkornu, Interview, 10th November, 2014, Accra.

lightly on divorce, but only on the basis of a prayerful and diligent study of the teachings of God's Word. Difficult ethical problems may arise in any divorce, and very few of these problems are so simple that right judgment can be easily made. Parties that are “innocent” are seldom to be found.

Manna Mission’s undocumented policy and teaching on divorce and remarriage is in congruence with the biblical perspective. They therefore wish and encourage that members uphold the sanctity of marriage by guarding themselves from divorce. For the Bible declare “I hate divorce says the Lord God of Israel. (Mal. 2:14-16). If there is “hardness of heart” and the parties are unable to reconcile and so proceed to divorce, the leaders must indicate that it strongly disagrees with that action, while maintaining lines of communication and love to both husband and wife. Even divorce should not preclude continued attempts at reconciliation, until one spouse remarries or refuses reconciliation in such a way as to reveal him or herself to be, in effect, an ‘unbeliever’. Attempts to reconcile are mandatory after a divorce. Leaders are to exhort the spouse(s) under their jurisdiction to continue as long as reconciliation is possible. Reconciliation should be encouraged in the case of biblical divorce as well, that God may be glorified in the healing of relationships among his people.

In light of Scripture's clear teaching on the sanctity of marriage and God's strong opposition to and restrictions on divorce, Christians cannot ignore the easy accessibility to divorce in our contemporary society. Increasingly we must emphasize the lifelong commitment implicit in the marriage covenant, and especially in Christian marriage which should be a constant witness to God's order of creation and to the new order of recreation in Christ.

May those involved in a divorce without biblical grounds ever remarry? Or can the offending spouse in a biblical divorce ever remarry? Jesus explicitly teaches that those who are involved in a remarriage after an improper divorce commit adultery. Although members may come under discipline for remarrying after divorce, there is always the prospect of restoration of that member if he or she demonstrates true repentance. The blood of Christ is sufficient for the sins of all true believers.

However, when one of the spouses in a former union remarries, we may conclude that the other is free to remarry because the former marriage relationship has been permanently broken by the remarriage. The Church must be careful not to sanction unbiblical marriages; but, as noted above, when a former spouse has remarried, or refuses reconciliation in such a way as to reveal himself or herself to be, in effect, an unbeliever, remarriage to another person becomes a valid option for the other party in the light of 1 Cor. 7. Before anyone remarries, even under these conditions, that person should demonstrate "sufficient penitence for sin and failure," and manifest "a firm purpose of an endeavour after Christian marriage."

The church should encourage anyone considering remarriage to participate in counselling to ascertain their penitence and desire for a Christian marriage. In addition, they should be encouraged to prayerfully consider if God may be calling them to remain unmarried, as Paul encourages in 1 Cor. 7:8, and in view of that fact that "one failure in this realm raises serious questions as to the rightness and wisdom of undertaking another union".

What about those cases in which people have been involved in an unbiblical divorce before becoming believers and have since remarried? Wise and loving pastoral oversight should encourage such individuals to seek God's gracious forgiveness, in the

assurance that He will forgive them and accept their present marriage. Does this mean that in this case God has changed or lowered His standards? Not at all but it does mean that even divorce and remarriage under such circumstances, serious though they are, are not unforgivable sins, but with all other transgressions, are covered by the blood of Christ.

The family life committee must exercise special care in the case of persons considered for church office that have divorced or remarried on unbiblical grounds. In such situations, guilt must be acknowledged and repentance for sin expressed. The persons concerned must have been rehabilitated sufficiently in the confidence and respect of other Christians as to be able to fulfil in an exemplary way the requirements of church office with regard to marital and family relationships.

The committee should consider that even when such care is exercised, there may be circumstances in which it would be inadvisable, even though technically permissible, for such divorced or remarried persons to serve as church officers. It should be noted that serving as an officer of the church is a privilege, not a right. Community awareness of the situation might also be considered so that no scandal is brought unto the church. Above all, leadership should follow scriptural guidelines carefully in dealing with present or prospective church officers who have been divorced, keeping foremost in mind that the honour of Christ is made manifest in the church and the community.

We believe that congregations within the Manna Mission Church can take many helpful steps to minister the redemptive love of Christ to their members who go through the tragedy of divorce and to reach out to those outside the Church who are suffering the aftermath of divorce.

It is the divine intention that persons entering the marriage covenant become inseparably united, thus allowing for no dissolution unless caused by the death of either husband or wife. The remarriage of divorced persons may be sanctioned by the Church in keeping with the redemptive gospel of Christ, when sufficient penitence for sin and failure is evident, and a firm purpose of and endeavour after Christian marriage is manifested. Divorced persons should give prayerful thought to discover if God's vocation for them is to remain unmarried, since one failure in this realm raises serious questions as to the rightness and wisdom of undertaking another union. If the Minister has any questions about the readiness of a divorced person to remarry according to these principles, the Church leaders should be consulted and its agreement sought.

We believe that, according to the dictates of Scripture, marriage is for life. Clearly, God's standard is chastity before marriage and fidelity afterwards, and Scripture teaches that divorce is always an abnormality arising out of human sinfulness.

2.6 Conclusion

Harvest Chapel International has an official, documented policy on marriage which was drawn by a team of pastors and church leaders. Lighthouse Chapel International uses a handbook on marriage written by Bishop Dag Heward-Mills as their official guide to resolving marriage issues, whereas Manna Mission church relied on a marriage committee to guide marriage issues in the church. Thus Manna Mission does not have an official document on divorce and remarriage.

All three churches vehemently do not accept divorce. Their understanding is typically lifted from Mal 2:6 that God hates divorce. Harvest Chapel International does not approve of re-marriage except in cases where one spouse is deceased. In this light,

Harvest Chapel was silent on situation where a partner ignores his or her marital responsibility and travel elsewhere with the aim of permanent separation.

The Manna Mission on the other hand permit remarriage of couples divorced and who had repented and forgiven one another to remarry again. The Lighthouse Chapel is silent on their position on remarriage and indicated that issues on remarriage were considered on a case by case basis. The researcher having gathered data from the selected charismatic churches, then interviewed divorcees to explore their perspectives on divorce and remarriage. Details are provided in chapter three.



CHAPTER THREE

HOW DIVORCEES VIEW DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the views of divorcees on divorce and remarriage from selected charismatic churches in Adenta. (See *appendix* for a detailed information on the interview guide). Specific issues that were of interest to the researcher include; whether divorcees are aware of teachings on divorce and remarriage in their respective churches and how they interpret and apply these teachings in deciding to divorce. Again, it discusses the attitudes and support of the church towards divorcees, the reasons and moral arguments that informed the divorcees to seek divorce, as well as their views on remarriage. Further discussions focuses on data collected from the field which have been analysed, discussed and presented where applicable in tables and charts. The data addressed the research objectives and questions. Results and discussion on the findings are presented in line with the stated objectives.

3.2 Analysis of Interview Guide for Divorcees

Below is an analysis of questions that were posed to the respondents to elicit their views on divorce and remarriage. It outlines the analysis under themes in the following order:

- Background Information
- Reasons for divorce
- Teaching of church on divorce and remarriage
- Attitudes and support of church towards divorcees
- Views on divorce and remarriage

3.2.1 Background

The respondents were asked to indicate how long they have been Christians. This question was asked in order to gauge the levels of maturity of respondents in Charismatic Christian doctrines, beliefs and practices. The study revealed that, majority of the divorcees had been Christians for the past twenty one to thirty years. This indicates that majority of the respondents had been Christians for a long period of time and are matured in the Charismatic Christian doctrine, beliefs and practices.

A follow up question was asked for the respondents to indicate whether their former spouses are Christians and for how long. The respondents asserted that their former spouses were born again and added that they have been Christians for over ten years. The result showed that the former spouses of divorcees were also matured in Christian doctrines, beliefs and practices. Thus they fall within the category of respondents (Christians) needed for the study and could respond appropriately.

They were also asked to indicate the type of marriage they were engaged in or contracted. The summary of the responses given reveals that most of the divorcees contracted church wedding¹⁰⁴ preceded by the customary requirements while the remaining respondents contracted court wedding¹⁰⁵ preceded by customary requirements. Majority of the respondents indicated they preferred the church wedding to the court wedding since that is the type of marriage most charismatics encourage their members to engage. This finding gives the impression that marriages celebrated in church also end in divorce. It does not support the views of scholars such as Kisembo and others who submit that reluctance to marry in church is a cause

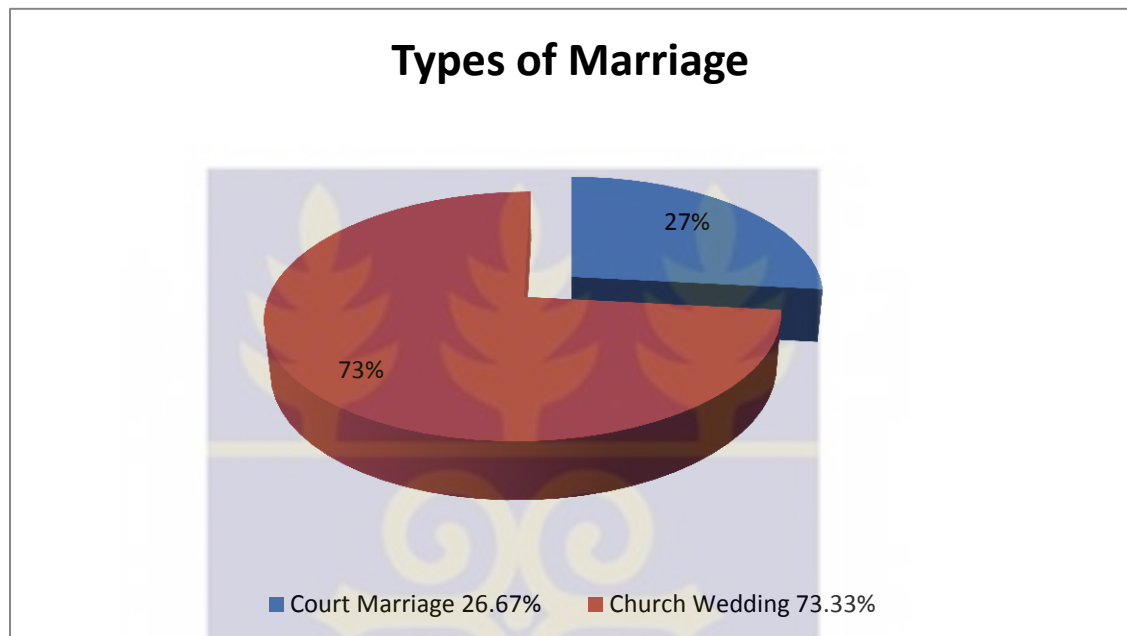
¹⁰⁴ Marriage celebrated under ordinance in church to seek the blessings of God

¹⁰⁵ Marriage celebrated under ordinance in a court but not blessed in a church.

of divorce ¹⁰⁶ because majority of the divorcees married in church and yet got divorced.

The summary of the responses given are depicted in figure 1.

Figure 1: Types of Marriage Contracted by Respondents



Source: Field Data (2015)

A follow up question to respondents to elicit how their churches were involved in their marriage underscores that those who contracted the court wedding did not have their churches involved in any way in their marriages. A female respondent added that she got pregnant and decided not to inform the church and preceded to the court for the marriage formalities. She retorted:

No, that was my mistake; my church was not involved in my marriage. I think I rushed into it, I always blame myself. Sometimes one cannot really blame the other person much. You know sometimes when you make a mistake you know. The truth of the matter was that I fornicated but you know as a Christian I am not supposed to do so. I did and got pregnant

¹⁰⁶ Kisembo Benezare, Laurenti Megesa, and Aylward Shorter, *African Christian Marriage* (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1997), 33

along the line so I was scared and I agreed to marry him to avoid the shame. So the marriage didn't start on the right note you see, my church was not involved. So I always say that the divorce you see it immediately before you enter the marriage, I was not at peace, hmm¹⁰⁷

Some of the divorcees who had church wedding asserted that the church was very instrumental in their marriage ceremony from planning to the organisation of the ceremony, and also provided counselling services, gifts as well as cash to support them. One respondent had this to say:

My church was involved because a pre-marital counselling was organized for just a month before the wedding and also the marriage ban was published in church. The church really supported me.¹⁰⁸

Another divorcee also affirmed that the church was involved in their marriage. She responded that:

My church was really involved; we went for counselling I did my counselling in light house although it was very short. The marriage was announced in church and the ceremony was well attended. I was anxious to marry¹⁰⁹

One of the divorcees noted:

Yes we had counselling, not in our own church because my husband was a pastor. I have an elderly woman I call my mom in Tema and she goes to Presby church so she took us to one of their woman counsellor who spoke to us concerning that. Well my Pastor in light house at that time was also involved but not too deep.¹¹⁰

Even though majority (80%) of the divorcees had church wedding, not all of them went through pre-marital counselling and the few (20%) who did were rushed through. From the analysis, it can be construed that the inability of majority of the divorcees to benefit from counselling sessions before marriage could be one of the reasons that accounted for their divorce. This assertion supports the observation of the

¹⁰⁷ Interview with a divorcee on 20th February, 2015. (All interviews were conducted in confidentiality and the names of the divorcees are withheld by mutual agreement).

¹⁰⁸ Interview with a divorcee, 20th March 2015.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with a divorcee, 24th February, 2015.

¹¹⁰ Interview with a divorcee, 25 march 2015.

General Overseer of Harvest Chapel International that, couples that do not go through pre-marital counselling mostly end up in divorce.¹¹¹ Allan Douglas in his book *God's Answers to Man's Questions* submits that lack or improper counselling before marriage can result in divorce.¹¹² Perhaps because the couples do not get to know the dynamics of the marriage institution before joining and are therefore not able to cope with the various challenges they encounter in their marriages, it often result in divorce. A divorcee remarked that "There was no counselling before the marriage and also before the divorce; there was no counselling as well".¹¹³ She noted:

We performed the engagement and then we went to court to sign. We were supposed to have our wedding after I finish school. I was then in the university, but the church wedding did not really come on because I got pregnant. So we did not go through any pre-marital counselling.¹¹⁴

Respondents were asked to indicate how long they were married to their former spouses. The question was asked in order to know the numbers of years the divorcees were married to their former spouse and if it influenced their decision to divorce. The findings of the study revealed that, none of the divorcees were married for 16 years and above. Majority of the divorcees were married between 1-5 years bracket.¹¹⁵

This affirms that majority of the respondents divorced within a very short period of time after marriage indicating how serious divorce as a moral issue has become, even among Christians. Statistics from the Greater Accra Head Office of Legal Aid Ghana indicate that majority of marriages celebrated in the region end up in divorce within fourteen months.¹¹⁶ A follow up question to ascertain the ages of the divorcees at the time of marriage indicated that nine 9 out of the fifteen divorcees interviewed got

¹¹¹ Fitzgerald, Odonkor, interview, 25th March 2015, Accra.

¹¹² Allan Douglas, *God's Answer to Man's Questions* (New York: Kennedy Publishers, 1991), 241.

¹¹³ Interview with a divorcee, 20 March 2015.

¹¹⁴ Interview with a divorcee, 15th March, 2015.

¹¹⁵ Margaret Robinson, *Family Transformation through Divorce and Remarriage: A Systematic Approach* (London: Rutledge, 1991), 14.

¹¹⁶ Legal Aid. "Legal Aid Ghana, More Women file for divorce," last modified March 16, 2015, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/Ghana Home Page/News Archives/artikel php? /=21783>.

married between ages 20 to 23. Four of the divorcees married when they were between ages 25 to 30 and the remaining two got married in their late 30's. This shows that majority of the divorcees interviewed, married at an early age.

According to Kerby Anderson, those who marry in their teens are more likely to end in divorce than marriages that were contracted when the people were older.¹¹⁷ He further indicated that, essentially the increase in divorce rate comes not from older couples but those who marry young.¹¹⁸ He observed that people who married when they were in their teens are twice likely to have their marriages end in divorce than those who married after age twenty five and above. The study indicated that though none of the respondents married in their teens, majority of them fall within the age bracket where it is observed marriages are most likely to run into difficulties. It is obvious that people below age twenty five (25) might have high divorce rates probably due to emotional immaturity and lack of educational resources that will enable them to overcome storms in the marriage. It could also be argued that they may not have fully separated from their parents and therefore have several psychological identities.

3.2.2 Conclusion

Ideas gathered from the background data indicated that divorcees who served as respondents for the study have some level of maturity in Charismatic Christian doctrine, beliefs and practices. Even though majority of the divorcees married in church, yet they ended up divorcing. This shows that divorce does not only occur among those who married in the court but also those who married in church.

¹¹⁷ Kerby Anderson, *Christian Ethics in Plain Language* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc. 2005), 132.

¹¹⁸ Anderson, *Christian Ethics*, 132.

3.2.3 Reasons for Divorce

Many personal qualities combine to bring about success in marriages. To this end, the respondents were asked to mention two personal qualities of their ex-spouse which they liked most or admired. These qualities in the opinion of the researcher should be qualities that would override the decision of the divorcees to break up the marriage. Respondents listed hard work, patience, intelligence, caring and neatness as qualities that do stand out from the transcription of the interview guide. Divorcees also indicated that they liked their spouses because they were Christians, and that they showed understanding and were therefore helpful in one way or the other. These personal qualities were then analysed to assist the researcher gain insight into the variations from the respondents. The findings revealed that, though divorcees admired the listed qualities about their spouses, those qualities could not override their decisions to seek divorce. A male respondent remarked:

“Although my ex-wife was intelligent and caring, she only shared what she had with her family but not mine and that was not the best for me as a man. Besides she had other negative attitudes that were not too friendly”.¹¹⁹

Another female divorcee responded by stating this:

My husband was very hard working and nice but he was not committed to the marriage. We had irreconcilable differences because he trivialised any serious observations I made and we never agreed peaceably on an issue.¹²⁰

It can be deduced from the preceding quotes that although the spouses of the divorcees had some positive qualities, there were other negative attitudes that were

¹¹⁹ Interview with a divorcee, 15th March, 2015.

¹²⁰ Interview with a divorcee, 17th March, 2015.

overlooked and which eventually led to the breakdown of their marriages. Divorce means something different for every person who experiences it.¹²¹ The researcher then requested the divorcees to indicate any two major reasons that led to their divorce. Respondents gave varied reasons but the most prominent ones among them were; incompatibility, selfishness, low self-esteem, irresponsibility and unfaithfulness among others.

Incompatibility: From the interactions, majority of respondents stated that there was an irreconcilable difference between them and their spouses. At a point they got tired of making it work and accepted the divorce. They tried their best but all effort proved futile. Others also said they just wanted separation because the marriage was not working and they think they were not compatible in the sense that they never agreed on an issue but always had opposing views. In the course of everyday life, disagreements, abrasive behaviours, being put down, and not being listened to can lead to negative effects in close relationships.¹²² The following is a quote in this regard:

I believe in every relationship we need trust, commitment and we need to agree amicably on an issue to make it work. When one person is very committed and does not get the other person's response, it makes you feel tired and wearied because you have done everything you know best to do and it is not working.¹²³

Yes, incompatibility is the main reason to my divorce because he was not plain to me. Every woman needs a man she can trust. I was transparent, he was not. We did not agree on many issues, besides he was not committed to me.¹²⁴

¹²¹Heather L Wagner and Marvin R. Rosen, *Understanding and Coping with Divorce* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), 8. See also Christine R. Schwartz & Robert D. Mare, "The Proximate Determinants of Educational Homogamy: The Effects of First Marriage, Marital Dissolution, Remarriage, and Educational Upgrading", *Demography* 49 (2012): 629–650 DOI 10.1007/s13524-012-0093-0.

¹²² Katherine P.H. Young, "Rethinking Marriage" in *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage* ed. Katherine P.H. Young and Anita Y. L. Fok (Aberdeen: Hong Kong University Press 2005), 4.

¹²³ Interview with a divorcee, 10th march, 2015.

¹²⁴ Interview with a divorcee, 15th March, 2015.

Selfishness: Respondents expressed the fact that their ex-husbands were egocentric and did not know how to handle family issues, much as to involve their families. One divorcee submitted that her husband whom she took very good care of could not be bothered when she was bedridden while studying abroad. She has this to say:

Although my husband was responsible, he was very selfish and did not care about me and my family. He was only interested in what he will gain from the relationship. When I needed his support when I was bedridden abroad, when on further studies, he did not avail himself.¹²⁵

Two of the male respondents described their ex - wife's selfish attitude as illustrated here: "Much as my wife was involved with her family, she cut off my family and a lot of my friends. She will not even entertain my parents. No! As a man I feel this cannot be, so I let her go."¹²⁶

Another divorcee who is a male responded by indicating the following as his reason for divorce: "She didn't like my family so I was torn between wife and family. She would not understand why my brother should visit me and why I should support home. So after a second thought I had to choose my family and let her go."¹²⁷

It can be deduced from the preceding quotes that selfishness of a spouse can lead to divorce especially when one partner, whether male or female is egocentric. This affirms Maivis Hetherington's view as cited by Tara Parka Pope that, divorce risk increases when one partner begins to put more emphasis on "me" than "we".¹²⁸

Irresponsible: Again, majority of divorcees strongly agreed irresponsibility of their spouses was major reasons for their divorce whereas the other divorcees strongly disagreed with the assertion. Four of the divorcees assigned their spouses

¹²⁵ Interview with a divorcee, 20th March, 2015.

¹²⁶ Interview with a divorcee, 15th March, 2015.

¹²⁷ Interview with a divorcee, 15th March, 2015.

¹²⁸ Pope, *For Better*, 253.

irresponsible behaviour to their family background. Others also submitted that when their spouses become upset, their homes are not safe. Some even threaten to kill the children or do anything to the children. They do not care about the health of the children.

Unfaithfulness: Majority (70%) strongly agreed that unfaithfulness was a major reason. One of the divorcees added that she caught her husband in the act on their matrimonial bed. The results showed that unfaithfulness accounted for breakdown of marriage among the divorcees. One of the divorcees said, her ex-husband was womanizing and was not committed to the marriage. The following is a quote in this regard:

He was womanizing; he wasn't committed to the marriage at all. He was into computer system and does software for hospitals, any hospital he goes he gets a girlfriend and one bad afternoon for me, I caught him in bed with a woman. That was it. We were not compatible .and I wanted something tangible to stand on, besides he did not show any remorse even though I was waiting. So that was it.¹²⁹

It can be inferred from the above quote that for this divorcee, although her former husband had committed adultery, she was ready to forgive him if the man had expressed remorse and pleaded for forgiveness. The difficulty of forgiveness is often complicated by the subtle tendency of some spouses to hold onto a sense of moral superiority in social interactions.¹³⁰ So the actual reason for the divorce is the failure of the man to show remorse. The response from the divorcee indicated above, suggest that unfaithfulness on the part of men can also lead to divorce. This is might account

¹²⁹ Response of a divorcee in an interview with researcher on 12th march 2015, in Adenta.

¹³⁰ Cheung, "Forgiveness in Marriage", 93.

for the reason why Lianne Yau-Yee Tai submitted that the value of fidelity in women has undoubtedly contributed to less social acceptance of remarriage for the female than for the male.¹³¹

This is line with Asare-Opoku's submission that one of the factors that cause divorce includes unfaithfulness. He further explained that, if a man has a sexual affair with another woman besides the wife, the man has to pay compensation, which is called "mpata" to the woman. If a woman refuses to accept the Mpata" she can divorce her husband.¹³² To support this idea, John Mbiti opined that marital unfaithfulness arises out of various situations. He mentioned lengthy separations, lack of sexual satisfaction, pure greed or selfishness and lack of self-control.¹³³ Gary Collins also shares a similar view by naming infidelity as the most common destructive force in marriage, the most devastating and the most universally accepted justification for divorce.¹³⁴

Although both partners may contribute to the infidelity in a way, usually one is involved in the actual offence. This may be a onetime spur of the moment occurrence but it can create a huge impact on the marriage relationship. The innocent partner may feel betrayed, rejected and hurt which in many cases lead to divorce. From the biblical point of view, marriage is a sworn fidelity, whereby God joins a man and a woman in life-long companionship. Nevertheless, divorce is permitted only in circumstances of grave repudiation of the marriage covenant, namely adultery and wilful, irremediable desertion. The original text of the Westminster Confession, as approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1647, is very emphatic when it states,

¹³¹ Lianne Yau-Yee Tai, "The Making of a Second Spring: The Experiences of Remarried Persons in Hong Kong" in *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage* ed. Katherine P.H. Young and Anita Y. L. Fok (Aberdeen: Hong Kong University Press 2005), 198.

¹³² Asare Opoku, *Traditional Religion*, 34.

¹³³ John Mbiti, *Love and Marriage*, 199.

¹³⁴ Collins, *Christian Counselling*, 612.

"Nothing but adultery or such wilful desertion as can no way be remedied by the Church or civil magistrate is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage." The offended party in such circumstances is free to remarry, as if the offending party were dead.

In Matt. 5:31-32 and 19:3-9 Jesus cites 'marital unfaithfulness' as the sole grounds for biblical divorce and remarriage. This word *porneia* is usually understood as sexual sin. However, a better translation would follow the *New American Standard Version* in rendering it 'immorality.' Brewer shares a similar view on the grounds for divorce.¹³⁵ In contrast to *moicheia*, which is always translated 'adultery,' *porneia* refer to all kinds of sexual immorality which breaks the one-flesh principle. "It has been said, "Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce." But "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for 'marital unfaithfulness' cause her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery."(Matt. 5:31-32). Moses' Law indeed commanded that a certificate of divorce be written, if there were to be a valid divorce, but that is a very different thing from saying that they must divorce. God's call to us is to love and to forgive. Hence, divorce is not necessitated even by adultery.

The controversy over whether divorce and remarriage is allowed according to the Bible revolves primarily around Jesus' words in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. The phrase 'except for marital unfaithfulness' is the only thing in Scripture that possibly gives God's permission for divorce and remarriage. Some interpreters understand this 'exception clause' as referring to 'marital unfaithfulness' during the 'betrothal' period. In Jewish custom, a man and a woman were considered married even while

¹³⁵ David Instone-Brewer, "What God has Joined", *Christianity Today* (2007): 27.

they were still engaged or ‘betrothed.’ From this perspective, immorality during this ‘betrothal’ period would then be the only valid reason for a divorce.

Another divorcee submitted that she was relegated to the background by her ex-spouse. She had this to say:

Well when we started living together, I saw a different side of him. I realized that he was not helpful in the sense that he had this notion of women having to do everything in the house and he was always thinking he was better than me because he was a doctor and I was not, so he felt he was better than me. Whenever he talks and I talk, he feels there is no base in whatever I said.¹³⁶

This divorcee further indicated that her ex-husband did not show concern for her sick mother even though he was a practising medical doctor. All the issues mentioned contributed to her decision to seek divorce. She has since moved on to remarry and she feels better because her current husband accepts and respects her. Another male respondent indicated that gross misconduct of his wife led to their divorce. He noted that:

the reason for the divorce was gross misconduct, when she becomes upset, the TV is not safe, the house is not safe, anything can happen, she can crash anything around so I don't know what will happen and she threatens to kill the children or do anything to the children to get at you, she will do anything to get at you if she is upset and I don't feel comfortable with that lifestyle, that was one thing.¹³⁷

3.2.4 Teaching of Church on Divorce and Remarriage

A question was posed for the respondents to indicate whether the church talks divorce and remarriage. The results of the study show that all the divorcees selected from Harvest Chapel International, Light House Chapel, and Manna Mission submitted that their churches do not officially teach on divorce and remarriage. The results suggest that the churches do not teach members about the challenges in divorce and remarriage. They probably do not teach because Christianity frowns on divorce.

¹³⁶ Interview, with a divorcee, 20th February 2015, Adenta.

¹³⁷ Interview with a divorcee, 22nd March, 2015, Accra.

A follow up question was then posed to the respondents to indicate the position of the church regarding divorce. The 3 respondents who said the church talked about divorce were of the view that the church frowns on divorce and always encourage marriage couples to stay together and even during crisis they should seek the help of God and the church. Also, the respondents were asked to state the position of their church on remarriage. The divorcees were of the view that the church did not encourage remarriage especially when the spouse is alive but the church is sometimes considerate when one of the spouse die or when one of them remarried.

This view is in consonance with the policy of Harvest Chapel regarding indissolubility. Harvest Chapel International holds that God has directed that marriage be permanent. The promise made to a spouse is permanent, not temporary. It is not for as long as it feels good. It is for life. Wisdom can be found in the traditional marriage vow that says; “For better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part...” Therefore “what God has joined together, let no man separate.” Harvest Chapel International holds and observes that Christian marriage be celebrated as a covenant and not contract. Divorce is never considered as an option by the church for solving problems or a way out of a relationship that seems dead. Jesus said that divorce is not permissible except unfaithfulness (a sexually immoral lifestyle, not a confessed and repented act of adultery, Mathew 5:32). The church will always look for reasons to restore the marriage relationship rather than for excuses to leave it. The church policy stipulates clearly that it will not celebrate remarriages of members who wish for because of its strong position against divorce.

3.2.5 Attitude and Support of Church towards Divorcees

Some churches in Ghana have a policy regarding divorce and remarriage in the church. To this end a question was posed for the respondents to indicate how the

church policy influenced their decision to seek for divorce. All the respondents asserted that regardless of church policy they considered their marital problems or what they were going through some of which they said are life threatening and affecting their work. A respondent noted:

The policy of the church did not influence me in anyway. When I contemplated divorce I knew right from the word go that the church was not going to support me so I made my decision outside of the church. There was no way my general overseer would have said that 'I agree, go and divorce'. Interesting enough, I would have divorced earlier but the fear of what the Senior Pastor would say was what was holding me back. I felt that I am in the church and I do not own myself so if there is anything like that I should have at least talked to a father in the church before I took such a decision. So I dropped little, little hints for them to know that it was not going well but then I went ahead and filed the petition for divorce without telling them that this is what I have done. I didn't seek their permission before I did but then at least I do not think it came as a surprise to them because they saw all the signs so that was my way of letting them know that 'hey this is it'. I felt that I was suffering enough and there was no point because it would get to a point that then I would not be in the position to even still serve the Lord and be in something like this.¹³⁸

Another divorcee responded that:

I did not even know whether the church had a policy or not, I know they had a book on it, I mean Bishop Dag Heward Mills' book on model marriage and I have not read the book and I have not asked, I don't think the policy would have influenced me if I knew because I was suffering and the marriage was not just working, so why should I stay. More so the man asked for the divorce so I had to accept it, after all I was suffering alone and not with anybody.¹³⁹

My church's teaching didn't influence me because they don't preach about divorce and all that. I cannot say my church has a policy but all I know is that they do not teach on divorce. I took my own decision to divorce. We are all Christians and we are matured, we all read the bible and all that besides, after that you are a learned person but I don't know but I wanted to do the right thing, I wanted to legally get my papers and everything, so that tomorrow if I get married he will not come back to claim me as his wife and all that.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ A divorcee, name withheld, interview on March 20 2015 in Adenta.

¹³⁹ A divorcee, name withheld, interview on March 20 2015.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with a divorcee

It is clear from the above discussions that most of the divorcees are not aware of their churches policy on divorce and even if they do it may not influence their decision on divorce in anyway. Therefore there is the need for the various churches to draw a laid down policy on marriage and divorce and educate their members on the subject.

A follow up question was asked whether the church was supportive during and after divorce. Majority of the divorcees asserted that they did not receive any form of support from the church during and after their divorce while a minority of the divorcee said they received a kind of support from some leaders in the church in the form of counselling, material and financial. The result showed that the Church's support to divorcees is very rare. The divorcees shared the following:

no, no, no, the church did not give me any support, so I remember that my former pastor who was a father in law sent me a strong power mail telling me that I am on a coalition course against the word and God hates divorce and he also hate divorce and he does not mind whatever has happened. So I better be careful. Then I said fine its God's word and not his word so let God handle the issue. That time he was so emotional, very subjective about the whole issue, he had taken a clear stand. That was the opposition I received from the church.¹⁴¹

Another divorcee had this to share:

As I told you earlier the church did not provide any post-marital counselling. They didn't even know we had such a problem because as at that time my husband did not want anybody to know the challenges in the marriage because he felt it was deep, I mean it was beneath us to be having problems because people were seeing us as very spiritual, well-educated and so he felt people knowing that we have problem would not speak well of us, especially him, because he is a medical doctor and a Christian. He was in the choir so he did not want people to know he had problems in the marriage, he did not want issues in the marriage to be sent out¹⁴²

Another male divorcee submitted that:

The church I was in before the divorce was not really involved and as I said, that time I was attending church alright, but I wasn't really involved in church activities. I just go to church, when there are functions, I was not really committed as I am now, so I didn't really involve the church but for my church if I had told them I wanted divorce, they wouldn't have

¹⁴¹ A divorcee, Interview, March 20th 2015, Accra.

¹⁴² A divorcee, Interview, March 20th 2015.

granted it. They do not accept divorce, to them marriage is till death so you have to die in it; they don't agree to divorce, that I know since they use the Bible.¹⁴³

It can be deduced from the above discussion that most of the divorcees did not inform their churches about their marital challenges and therefore ended in divorce. It is in the opinion of the researcher that if they had informed their churches about their marital challenges, the church could have been of help.

A follow up question was posed to the divorcees to indicate whether they had the support of the church regarding their decision to remarry. The responses showed that a majority of 11 divorcees indicated that they were still single and had not remarried but they are aware that it might not be easy. Two of the four divorcees who had remarried indicated that they did not have the support of the church of their decision to remarry while the other two divorcees stated that the church was in support of their decision to remarry.

I knew that the door has been opened for me to remarry but it was not easy at all in my current church. I think I was flowing very well with a lot of people in the church who did not really know my background until I said I wanted to marry .I had already told one pastor, so some pastors knew that I had married and divorced and definitely will marry again so they knew but rather encouraged me to reconcile with my ex-wife, that was my current church's position. I also felt that, that was history and I would not go back but I want to marry so the church said if that is the case then my marriage will not be blessed in church. I met the executive council a couple of times not less than three times on the same issue. They had gone to meet my ex-wife, may be they felt they needed to hear her side whether she was ready to come back. Well according to them she was not interested but they felt if I should make an effort with their involvement, there can be a reunion so that was their opinion. So it wasn't easy, I had to take my decision, so I said fine you are trying to protect me so I will deal with God myself unless God deals with me, it's an individual decision and my wife who had also gone through divorce said she seems to have believed that she had met a man she want to settle down with so she said ok...then we will take our own destiny into our own

¹⁴³ An interview with a divorcee on 8 March, 2015.

hands. So we said we will go and look for a minister who will bless it, so that's how we got remarried.¹⁴⁴

Another divorcee who happens to be the wife of the respondent above shared her experience

I think my church will only encourage remarriage when the other spouse had moved on, has also gotten married. In my case my husband's ex-wife had not married yet and so it was a big blow for them. The lady was showing signs of interest but she was faking but they didn't know she was faking it but she is even married now and she has given birth. She was faking it because she didn't want my husband to move on so that was the main bone of contention but for that my church would have blessed our marriage. For them to remarry you, I think if the other partner had moved on and the divorce and everything is settled, they will do it for you. It had taken like ten years and my ex had moved on, he had even gotten married.¹⁴⁵

From their responses it was revealed that the church was not in support of remarriage. Also, the divorcees were asked whether apart from the church's position and that of the bible on divorce and remarriage, what other factors influenced their decision to proceed with divorce. All the divorcees affirmed that personal interest was the major reason that influenced them to proceed with divorce.

Another question was posed to the respondents to indicate whether it is easy or difficult to get the church consent to remarry. It was evident that majority of the respondents were of the view that it is difficult getting the consent of the church and added that even though the church did not have a policy, the church in their views frowns on remarriage and did not encourage their members while only few respondents said it was easy getting the consent of the church and asserted that the church have a policy on divorce and remarriage. Again, a follow up question was asked to determine whether the divorcees intend to remarry. The result showed that quite a number of divorcees who had not remarried expressed their desires to remarry and gave the reason that they cannot stay single for the rest of their lives while only

¹⁴⁴ Interview with a divorcee, 15 March, 2015, north Legon in Accra.

¹⁴⁵ Interview, with a divorcee on 15 March 2015 at North Legon in Accra.

few asserted that they intended not to marry again and explained that the experiences they went through discouraged them from marrying again. They added that they wanted to enjoy single life which they think would give them peace of mind. A growing percentage of divorced adults face the possibility of long periods of living alone.¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, the researcher observed that some of the female divorcees who expressed the desire to remarry submitted that it was not an eminent decision. This view affirms the contribution of Gallup and Todd that women are much less likely to remarry than men after a divorce. They indicated that the number of years for women prior to remarriage is greater than that of men. This is because their reproductive value declines and they cannot compete as effectively with younger women.¹⁴⁷

Some of the divorcees interviewed had remarried. Those who have remarried indicated that they did not encounter any difficulty before they remarried in the church. The reason is that the couple were both divorcees who had moved from the charismatic church they attended before their divorce. More so they had already performed the customary rites before joining their present church. Thus the church did not consider them as divorcees but rather married couples who had decided to complete their marriage procedure with a church blessing. The other divorcees indicated that they did not get the support of their churches so they had to celebrate the marriage on a neutral ground.

¹⁴⁶Jenny de Jong Gierveld “Remarriage, Unmarried Cohabitation Living Apart Together: Partner Relationships Following Bereavement or Divorce”, *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66, no. 1 (2004): 2. There has been varied discussions on the effects on divorce. See Terry Whitman & Donald Akutagawa “Evaluating the Implications of Marriage and Divorce”, *Journal of Clinical Activities, Assignments & Handouts in Psychotherapy Practice* 1, no.2 (2001) 59-64; Andrea N. Lambert, “Perceptions of Divorce Advantages and Disadvantages”, *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 48, no.1-2 (2007): 55-77. DOI: 10.1300/J087v48n01_03, Clifford L. Broman, “Thinking of Divorce, but Staying Married”, *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage* 37:1-2, 151-161, doi10.1300/J087v37n01_09

¹⁴⁷ Buckle L. G. Gallup, and Z. Todd, “Marriage as a Reproductive Contract: Patterns of Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage”, *Ethology and Sociobiology* 17 (1996): 2.

Another question was posed to the respondents to indicate which church they were attending before the divorce. All the respondents said they were attending charismatic churches. A final follow up question was asked which church they were attending now. All the respondents said they are still attending charismatic churches but some said they attend charismatic church at a different branches or location and added that they felt embittered that the church considered their decision to divorce as inappropriate, inability of the church to give them support and also for fear that they will be stripped off their position in the church.

3.2.6 Views on Divorce and Remarriage

When asked to express their personal views on divorce, the respondents explained that divorce affect the upbringing of the children, the custody of the children become a major issue, discipline of the children will be affected, have psychological effects on the children and that divorce is not a solution to marital problems among others.

The views from the respondents had a bearing on the position of the Bible on divorce. According to the dictates of Scripture, marriage is for life. Clearly, God's standard is chastity before marriage and fidelity afterwards, and Scripture teaches that divorce is always an abnormality arising out of human sinfulness. But to say that God intended the marriage covenant should never be broken does not mean that the marriage union is therefore unbreakable. For example, it is broken by the death of either partner. Moreover, in Old Testament times, divorce was tolerated although not divinely approved. We discover from Deut 24:1-4 that Moses was not instituting or encouraging divorce; he was simply attempting to regulate it in a culture whose practice of it was out of control. It is important to note that the word 'adultery' does not appear in these verses for the very good reason that under the Mosaic Law, the

punishment for adultery was death by stoning. Divorce was obviously an established custom which is neither commanded nor condoned in this passage.

Divorcees hold diverse views on remarriage. To this end, a follow up question was posed to the respondents to express their views on remarriage. Majority of the respondents were in the affirmative and suggested that one needs to find another partner who they think is compatible to enable them move on with life. They further added that if the relationship does not work, there is need to try another relationship but with maximum care. However, when one of the spouses in a former union remarries, we may conclude that the other is free to remarry because the former marriage relationship has been permanently broken by the remarriage. The Church must be careful not to sanction unbiblical marriages; but, as noted above, when a former spouse has remarried, or refuses reconciliation in such a way as to reveal himself or herself to be, in effect, an unbeliever, remarriage to another person becomes a valid option for the other party in the light of 1 Cor 7. Before anyone remarries, even under these conditions, that person should demonstrate ‘sufficient penitence for sin and failure,’ and manifest ‘a firm purpose of an endeavour after Christian marriage’.

Some respondents indicated that they have not disclosed their identity as divorcees to the church because of stigmatization. This affirms the submission of Kwaku Oppong Asante and others that divorced women experience more stigma than their male counterparts.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Kwaku Oppong, Asante, Joseph Osafo and Georgina K. Nyamekye. “An Exploratory Study of factors Contributing to Divorce among Married Couples in Accra, Ghana: A Qualitative Approach.”, *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 55, no. 1 (2014): 16-32.

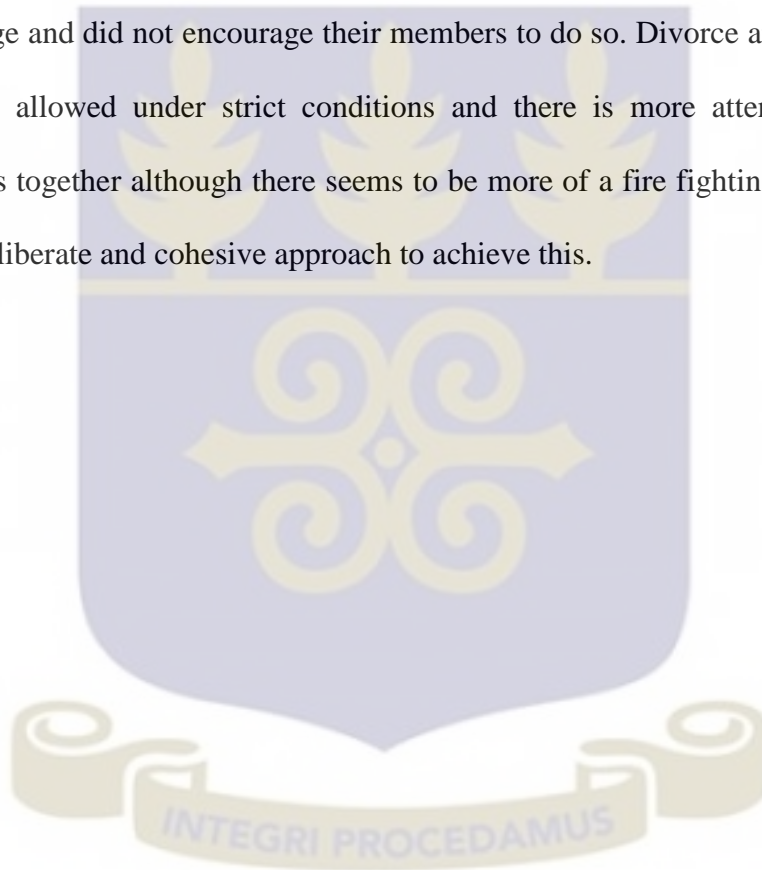
The divorcees could not say divorce is good though they found themselves in that position. They also think divorce should be the last resort when all efforts prove futile. Their view support research findings that a believer should never cause divorce, either by separating from his or her partner or by neglecting marital obligations, but if the marriage ends despite the best efforts, he or she is entitled to a divorce and is free to remarry.¹⁴⁹ Some also understand divorce when it bothers on death, thus when one party threatens to kill the other. Again, some of the divorcees said God hate divorce and all of us do hate it. Most of them have regretted divorcing because it is something God does not want us to do. Divorce is also a major crisis you go through one of the painful thing that can ever happen to you. It affects your confidence, and the zeal for life. The divorcees also believed that God is a second chance God and a covenant keeping God but there are instances that God give people others chance and some of these issues are very technical and doctrinal.

3.3. Conclusion

Following the findings of chapter two, the researcher in this chapter sought to find out from the divorcees their views on divorce and remarriage, reasons for divorce as well as attitude and support of church towards divorcees. There is a general consensus among divorcees that divorce is not a solution to marital challenges. Respondents gave varied reasons for divorce but the most prominent ones among them were incompatibility, selfishness, low self-esteem, irresponsibility and unfaithfulness among others. There is also an agreement that divorcees should be accepted and supported within the church. With regard to attitude and support of the church towards divorcees majority of divorcees asserted that they did not received any form

¹⁴⁹ J. de Jong Gierveld, "Remarriage, Unmarried Cohabitation Living Apart Together: Partner Relationships Following Bereavement or Divorce". *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 66, no. 1 (Feb., 2004): 240.

of support from the church during and after their divorce while the minority said they received a kind of support from some leaders in the church in the form of counselling material and financial. The result shows that the churches hardly give support to their divorcee members. With the exception of one, all churches surveyed had no official documented policy on divorce and remarriage. It was also evident that majority of the respondent said it was difficult getting the consent of the church to remarry and added that even though the church did not have a policy, the church in their views frown on remarriage and did not encourage their members to do so. Divorce and remarriage are generally allowed under strict conditions and there is more attention on keeping marriages together although there seems to be more of a fire fighting approach rather than a deliberate and cohesive approach to achieve this.



CHAPTER FOUR

VIEWS OF PASTORS AND CHURCH LEADERS ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

4.1 Introduction

Chapter four assesses the views of pastors and church leaders on divorce and remarriage. (See appendix for a detailed information on the interview guide). Pastors and Church Leaders are key stakeholders of their various institutions. Their perspectives on the subject matter are important because these direct the Policies of their Churches. Also it is possible these pastors and leaders might hold personal divergent views on divorce and remarriage which are incongruent to the policies of the churches they lead. This chapter further discusses the support the church offers to divorcees and whether they are accepted in their churches and given key responsibilities to perform.

The chapter focuses on data collected from the field which has been analysed and discussed. Participants were selected using purposive sampling. The data addresses the responses of pastors and church leaders in charismatic churches where the divorcees who served as respondents attend. The data addressed the research objectives and questions. The presentation of results and discussion were done in line with the stated objectives.

4.2. Analysis of Interview Guide for Pastors and Church Leaders

The discussion below is an analysis of questions that were posed to the respondents to elicit their views on divorce and remarriage. It outlines the analysis under themes in the following order:

- Background of respondents

- Policy of the church on divorce and remarriage
- Attitude and support of the church towards divorcees
- Views on divorce and remarriage
- Conditions under which the church allows divorce and remarriage

4.2.1. Background

This section presents the results of the personal data of the respondents. The personal data presented in this section are number of years married and type of marriage contracted. The respondents were asked to indicate whether they are married and the number of years they were married. This question was asked in order to investigate whether they are married or not, and the number of years the respondents were married.

All the respondents indicated that they were married. Majority (60%) of the respondents have been married between 10-20 years, (20%) have been married between 21-30 years while the other (20%) were married for 45 years and above. The results showed that none of the respondents were married below 10 years. Respondents therefore have some levels of experience in marriage and could contribute appropriately to the study.

A follow up question was asked to determine the type of marriage they have contracted. The responses showed that all of the respondents had a church wedding after fulfilling the traditional marriage requirements. These are some illustrations of

their responses “We started with customary rites then when I became born again we went and blessed the marriage in church”.¹⁵⁰

Another respondent stated “We put three marriage formats together. I secured the woman’s hand from her family, got the state’s consent by meeting all the requirements that grants one the permission to marry by the state and finally sought the ultimate blessings from God through a church wedding.”

The result was an indication that church wedding was popular in churches especially among the charismatics as they viewed it as a means of securing God’s blessing on their marriages. These findings agreed with Laryea. According to Laryea, a Ghanaian theologian, “the institution of marriage has a divine origin”, in that, “God planned, initiated superintended and inaugurated the institution of marriage”. As a Ghanaian, his view underscores the fact that the African Christian upholds the divine nature of the institution of marriage.¹⁵¹

The pastors and church leaders were also asked to give reasons why they got married and why they have remained married and have not considered divorce. This question attracted varied responses from the respondents. A church elder in Harvest Chapel International responded by submitting that the will of God for some people is that they should marry and for some the understanding is that because of the work of God they will not have that desire to marry but he had the will to marry.

... but for me knowing myself, I knew that I was one of those who have to marry and so I then strengthened my understanding of marriage for four reasons; companionship, procreation, appropriating the grace of God together, and so avoiding fornication and adultery. Why I am still married

¹⁵⁰ Interview with a Church leader, 10 March 2015.

¹⁵¹ Laryea L, 2002, 33-37.

is because these reasons for which am married have continued to be relevant that is why am still married.¹⁵²

Another respondent from Light House International responded “I have remained married because marriage is God’s own institution and he wants her to marry and multiply, thus her reasons for being married”.¹⁵³

A pastor from Manna Mission Church shared that he married because he wanted to break the cycle of polygamy in his family because of the challenges he went through as a child from a polygamous family. He therefore decided to marry one woman to serve as a role model to his children and other siblings.¹⁵⁴

The pastor’s submission affirms the fact that our experiences in our families of origin play an important role in shaping our sense of who we are and shaping our first formulations about what it means to be in a family.¹⁵⁵

The General overseer of Harvest Chapel International gave this response when he was asked why he married and has remained married: “I enjoy my marriage and I see marriage as one of the great institutions that God has given not only for procreation but for the increase of the kingdom of God and so it is a great privilege and it is also a joy to be married”.¹⁵⁶

Another pastor who has been married for the 45 years and still counting responded “Because I believe marriage is permanent and as ordained by God, that is why I am

¹⁵² Interview with an Elder, 15 March 2015.

¹⁵³ Interview with a church leader, 11 March, 2015.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with a pastor, 19 March, 2015.

¹⁵⁵ L.P. M Laurene And Natalie K.W. Law, “Discovering the Spouse's Other-ness Through Family-of-origin Explorations and Re-inventing Partnerships in Marriage” in *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage* ed. Katherine P.H. Young and Anita Y. L. Fok (Aberdeen: Hong Kong University Press 2005), 40.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with General Overseer, March 25, 2015.

married and I do not intend at any point in time to go through a divorce and I believe God will be my help”¹⁵⁷

The various responses given by the pastors and church leaders affirmed that some charismatic pastors and leaders accept the fact that marriage is a lifelong covenant¹⁵⁸ so they have tried not to break the covenant but keep it to express their acceptance and also serve as role models for others to emulate. One respondent who is a pastor is of the opinion that married couples who wish to uphold their marriage covenant must have a positive mind-set that marriage is for life. His reason for saying so is that couples seek divorce because of the hardness of their heart. De Hann observes that while God desires that a husband and wife stay together until death, he permits divorce in some circumstances. He based his arguments on matt 19: 1-10, Duet 24: 1-4 and 1Cor 7: 1-16.¹⁵⁹ He argued that God allowed divorce because of the hardness of the heart of men. He believed it was God’s tender concern for women that he allowed divorce.¹⁶⁰

This viewpoint is also consistent with the divorcee’s views on divorce and remarriage. Another church leader responded that: “It is by the grace of God that she is still married and he may not have experienced what has led others to divorce or she may have gone through but has survived it.”¹⁶¹

4.2.2 Policy of the Church on Divorce and Remarriage.

Policy plays an important role to guide organisations and companies to achieve goals and objectives. The church like all organisations has goals and objectives and it needs to have policies to guide it and to help it attain those goals and objectives. To this

¹⁵⁷ Interview, Pastor March 21, 2015.

¹⁵⁸ Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 291.

¹⁵⁹ Martin R. De Hann, *Divorce and Remarriage: What does the Bible Teach?* (Grand Rapids: Nelson Inc. Publishers, 2001), 4.

¹⁶⁰ De Hann., *Divorce and Remarriage*, 8.

¹⁶¹ Interview with church leader, 21 March, 2015.

end, the respondents were asked whether their churches have an official policy document on divorce and remarriage. A member of the committee for family life at Manna Mission responded:

That is a very difficult question because as a Pastor and a member of the family life committee, I know the church has not got a laid down policy on divorce and remarriage. Rather the committee in charge of family life, when issues occur, try to encourage people not to divorce. I must also confess that I was personally involved in some remarriage cases involving divorced couples just because there was no strong policy on that.¹⁶²

The implication of the above quote suggests that Manna Mission does not have a laid down policy document but depends on the views of members of the family life committee to address marital issues that come up. This observation on the response of the pastor confirms what the minister in charge of family life at Manna Mission submitted earlier in an interview with the researcher. He indicated that the church does not have an official policy document on divorce and remarriage but there is a marriage committee that attends to marital issues including divorce.

Majority of the respondents said their churches do not have an official document stipulating their policy on divorce and remarriage. While a few said their church has an official policy on divorce and remarriage.

Another pastor in charge of marriage and family issues at Light House International also indicated that although the church does not have an official marriage policy in place, the position of the church on divorce and remarriage is stipulated in Bishop Dag Heward Mills' book on *Model Marriage*.¹⁶³ Thus affirming the data gathered by the researcher regarding the policy of the church on divorce and remarriage.

¹⁶² Pastor in charge of family life, Interview, March 19th, 2015

¹⁶³ Pastor at Light House chapel.

The results of the study shows that some churches do not have an official policy document but have marriage committees that oversee marital issues and provide relevant services to members by organizing pre-marital counselling and marriage seminars. Respondents who responded in affirmative stated that the church position on divorce is that God hates divorce and it is spelt out clearly in the book of Mal. 2:16 but in Matt. 19:9, Jesus Christ said under extreme conditions divorce may be allowed. Beyond that condition and based on the position that God hates divorce, the couple should endeavour to live until death separates them. The following represents some of their responses on the policy of the church on divorce and remarriage:

The church's stance with regard to divorce is that there must be a certificate to show that one has actually divorced. The divorce will only be permitted after the church has done its best to reconcile. Anytime there is a problem between couples the church comes in to try and find a solution before family members are involved. So it is the church first, then the family. Therefore church and the family and the couple work together to try to find a solution to the problem but if the couple still insist on divorce it is their choice. However, the divorce must be done legally and a copy of the certificate must be presented to the church. Life after the divorce is another controversial issue because most people would not want to stay single, particularly if they are young, so when the need to remarry arises, the church will not easily permit remarriage.¹⁶⁴

Yes, and our policy is basically the biblical policy, once you get married in the church, the only condition under which you may remarry is if your partner commits adultery or if your partner dies. Otherwise we do not allow remarriage. In extreme cases where there is abuse in the marriage, we recommend separation and counselling until the problem is resolved when the partners can come together again but to divorce without adultery is not church policy.¹⁶⁵

Yes we do and our policy in the church is basically the biblical policy that we know of, that once you get married in our church the only condition under which you will be permitted to remarry is if your partner commits adultery or your partner is dead other than that we don't think the bible allows us to remarry you in the church. That has been the church's policy, extreme cases where there is battering in the marriage, beating and threat in the marriage, we recommend separation. There is nowhere in the Bible where it is mentioned that in such a case you can be permitted to divorce, in such a case we recommend separation¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Interview on 21 March, 2015.

¹⁶⁵ Interview on 20 March, 2015.

¹⁶⁶ Interview on 21 March, 2015.

From the response of the pastors and church leader in the quote above, it is clear that some pastors and church leaders are aware of the policies of their churches on the subject matter; however some could not tell if their churches have an official policy on divorce and remarriage. One pastor indicated in an interview that she believes that the church might have a policy but she did not really know what it is because she has not found out.¹⁶⁷

A follow up question was asked to determine the position of the church on remarriage. All the respondents asserted that the church did not encourage remarriage but rather encouraged couples to stay together until death separates them and also the couples are encouraged to seek the assistance of the church when couples are facing marital problems.

Light House Chapel International also holds the view that marriage is not initiated by man because it is not his idea. It is God himself who realized man's need and addressed it. It is the only institution that was established before sin came into the world. According to the founder and Bishop of the church there are three ways of getting married; the civil marriage, customary marriage and spiritual marriage.¹⁶⁸ The civil marriage is done in accordance with civil laws where the marriage ordinance prescribes that a certificate must be acquired from the local or municipal authority granting a three months period within which the marriage may be celebrated if no one opposes. According to this civil law marriage may be broken only by a legal divorce. It is therefore a crime to marry again while still married under the marriage ordinance. The customary marriage is one that involves families. The family of the man and

¹⁶⁷ Interview on 03 March, 2015.

¹⁶⁸ Heward- Mills, *Model Marriage*, 100

woman meets and the woman is traditionally handed over to the man after the required rites are performed. Some families consider the ceremony to be a full and proper marriage and expect the couples to live together afterwards while others consider it as an agreement to marry. The church does not recognize customary marriage as complete marriage unless it is blessed by the pastors. The spiritual marriage is the one that gives an opportunity to the couple to vow to obey God's law in relation to marriage and also have the marriage sealed and blessed by God.

The official position of the Light House International regarding Divorce and Remarriage is clearly indicated in Bishop Dag Heward- Mills Book on Model Marriage. The church does not encourage divorce and remarriage. This is because marriage to them is not man's idea, and neither was it initiated by him. It was God himself who realized man's need and addressed it. "The Creator made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'" (Matt. 19:4,5). God's design for marriage goes back to mankind's beginning. The family, as God's means of propagating His creation, grows out of this primary human relationship. The marriage relationship encompasses the deepest unity of man and woman in its social and physical expressions. The first woman was declared to be a suitable helper for the man, this can be read from (Gen 2:18), the perfect complement (Gen 2:23).

God intended them to share both blessings and responsibilities. Mutual esteem and self-giving love strengthens the marriage relationship. God intended this physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual union to be focused on one partner only. Light House International shares the view that marriage is to be an exclusive relationship, a lifelong faithful union with one's spouse. "What God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matt. 19:6). The Old Testament recognized the existence of polygamy

(marriage to multiple partners), but still declared that monogamy (marriage to one partner) was the ideal (Psalms 128:3, Prov. 5:18; 31:10-29; Eccl.9:9).

“Lifelong” means monogamy and sexual fidelity until the death of one partner. Sexual expression with more than one partner violates the holiness of biblical marriage and thus is sin in God's sight. Marriage is considered as a covenant, a solemn binding agreement made before God and man. Man therefore has responsibility to cleave to his wife and keep the covenant established by God through marriage. A wife is not expected to depart from her husband, but if she does she must remain unmarried or get reconciled to her husband. Her husband must not put her away. (Mal. 2: 14-16). The position of the church is that God does not like a broken fellowship of any sort. Thus the concept of broken homes or life hurts God.¹⁶⁹

The Reverend Minister in charge of marriage in the church also gave a submission on the debate on divorce and remarriage by reiterating that, no matter what view one takes on the issue of divorce, it is important to remember Mal 2:16: “I hate divorce, says the LORD God of Israel.” According to the minister, the Bible clearly indicates that, marriage is a lifetime commitment. “So they are no longer two, but one.”¹⁷⁰ Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate” (Matt. 19:6). God realizes, though, that since marriages involve two sinful human beings, divorces are going to occur. In the Old Testament, He laid down some laws in order to protect the rights of divorcees, especially women (Deut. 24:1-4). Jesus pointed out that these laws were given because of the hardness of people’s hearts, not because they were God’s desire (Matt. 19:8).

¹⁶⁹ Heward-Mills, *Model Marriage*, 100.

¹⁷⁰ Isaac Koranteng, Interview, 12 October, 2014, Accra.

Without a clearly documented policy there will be inconsistencies in the approach towards the issue of divorce and remarriage. This is supported by the statement of one of the respondents. “There are instances I officiated a remarriage ceremony for a couple because the church have no laid down policy regarding remarriage”.¹⁷¹

4.2.3. Attitudes and Support of the Church towards Divorcees

One of the aims of the study was to determine the attitudes of the charismatic churches towards divorcees. To this end, the respondents were asked to state how the church should relate with divorcees. All respondents expressed the view that divorcees should be accepted and supported. Some respondents explained that the church must encourage divorcees to forgive themselves from the guilt and anger as a result of the divorce and ask for forgiveness from God. The church should accept them and also encourage their members to show compassion to divorcees, share experiences with them, and involve them in church activities and above all use the word of God to encourage them. This views as shared by the pastors and church leaders appears not to be the practice in the churches. Divorcees interviewed submitted that the church does not encourage them, they are rather stigmatised.

Also the church in addressing the ideal nature of marriages must recognise that among its most needy and yet most potentially faithful congregants are many who are already divorced, possibly remarried and who struggle from guilt in earlier marital relationship and must not be viewed as second class saints. Instead they are to be instructed in the spirit’s work of preparation. The study revealed that majority of those divorced had not been through strong or sufficient premarital counselling. Therefore there is the need to strengthen premarital counselling for couples intending to get

¹⁷¹ Personal communication.

married. The following are some of the responses from pastors and some church leaders;

I think that the church has no option than to take divorcees as children of God. I mean the church, all things been equal is supposed to be a melting pot of all sorts. The drug addicts, the prostitutes, armed robbers, those who are standing and those who are falling. So the church's attitude should be to work out those things." We have to put them together thus getting to them and then ensuring that they do not run into similar challenges again.¹⁷²

I think being a counsellor, I have discussed certain topics at our family life meetings with church members but I have not added divorce, but after this interview I think I will consider that. The church as a whole should see divorcees just like any other person. Circumstances may lead one into a situation, nobody prays to be a divorcee but because we don't know what the future holds, it can happen to anybody, you understand. So we as Christians, we in the ministry should see them just like other people and rather give them teachings and encourage them in such a way that if they should remarry, they will know how to manage their relationship and will also feel accepted in the church.¹⁷³

We believe that divorcees are also children of God and they also deserve the support and the covering of the church and sometimes, that is why I said earlier on that sometimes when you look at specific cases you may find out that we shouldn't be too judgemental so we give them the support that is needed especially most of them who have been through some difficult divorces, yes, so that the church would be there for them and pray for them and then entrust them into God's hand concerning the future.¹⁷⁴

From the responses above, it is obvious that the respondents do not subscribe to divorce due to their position as pastors and church leaders; however, they are of the view that divorcees should be given the needed support as every other member of the church. If the suggestions of the pastors and church leaders are enforced, divorcees would appreciate and be excited because the researcher observed from the responses of the divorcees that they did not receive any support from the church as divorcees. They are rather considered as sinners and stigmatized. That is the reason why they do not make their pastors and church leaders aware of their divorce.

¹⁷² Interview with a Church Leader, 12th March, 2015.

¹⁷³ Interview with Family Life Counsellor, 12th March, 2015.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Rev. Odonkor, 20th March, 2015.

We encourage divorcees, in the first place to forgive themselves and then the one who has left. Because listening to divorced situations we realise that it is not an easy issue for people to handle when a loved one for some reason leaves you. Secondly, the children also suffer in that situation, so it is not an easy situation at all. So we still accept them and still live with them just the way they have been with us. We don't look down on them; rather we encourage them and live with them as normal.¹⁷⁵

This affirms the assertion by Cheung that: “Forgiveness is needed when moral standards in an interpersonal relationship are violated and the parties involved experience a sense of moral injury.”¹⁷⁶ From this perspective, a wounded relationship can be rebuilt only when the moral dimensions of the relationship are restored.

I think we should pay more attention to them. More attention in the sense that for someone who has gone through such a situation, there might be some hurts or sometimes some weakness and these people require our attention, our encouragement with the word so that they can strengthen themselves in the area of weakness. For those who are offended or hurt and grieving within they also need our help to recover. Apart from the spiritual and emotional support they may also need our financial support. For instance if a woman has been divorced and has young children and the spouse is not being responsible enough to take care of his children because he has divorced their mother, there will be the need for the church to offer financial support. Sometimes also physical support is required, because when couples live together they support each other with household chores, care of the children etc. so when one leaves, it is hard for the other to cope without help so the church also comes in to support. Individuals who are able to offer help in terms of household chores, care of the children and other roles.¹⁷⁷

The fact that they are divorced without knowing the details, you shouldn't be judgemental. Accept them as still children of God, mistakes happen in people's lives, it could be their fault that they were divorce maybe they didn't know better so encouragement, the word of God, let them have value, place value in themselves, be confident and let them know that even though they are divorced it doesn't take away the God factor in their life and by God's grace even something better could come out of it.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Pastor Manna Mission, 16th March, 2015.

¹⁷⁶ Wong Lai Cheung, “Forgiveness in Marriage” in *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage* ed. Katherine P.H. Young and Anita Y. L. Fok (Aberdeen: Hong Kong University Press 2005), 93.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with a Marriage Counsellor, 15th March, 2015.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Rev. Torkonu, 20th March, 2015.

It can be deduced from the above responses that the debate on divorce is complex and troubling. As shown in the discussions above the issues involve include the meaning of human sexuality, the interpretation of scripture, the use of empirical data and the criteria for evaluation of moral action.

One's position on whether some people are bound to divorce by nature or choice will affect one's response to the psychological, social and biological arguments regarding divorce, so will one's view of science particularly when it comes to weight that should be given to empirical data when making judgements about human conduct. Those who have a relativistic view of ethics will tend to view divorce as a purely subjective and personal matter. Christians need to give due weight to empirical and scientific arguments, but should never compromise their basic submission to the teaching of scriptures. From a Biblical point of view, divorce is a manifestation of our sinful nature and is contrary to the clear teachings of scripture.

A follow up question was asked to determine whether divorcees were allowed to fully participate in every ritual in the church. All the respondents asserted that divorcees were allowed to fully participate in all rituals of the church and mentioned participation in communion, fasting, offering, paying of tithes, affiliation to a department or group in the church among others. However with the exception of three respondents all explained further that the church did not allow divorcees to occupy leadership positions.

Some of those who do not allow divorcees to hold leadership roles advanced the following reasons:

Sure, they go for communion. We believe that it is about your relationship with God, so if you as an individual have gone through this and the fault is from you and you have repented and you want to go for

communion, that is fine, they are allowed to participate in all rituals. There is a question mark sometimes when it comes to certain positions. For instance when we are assigning marriage counsellors, we always assign people whose marriages are working. Nobody would want to assign someone who is not yet married to go for counselling from someone who is divorced because, if yours could not work what are the lessons for me? So with assignments we are very careful but when it comes to rituals they are free to participate fully.¹⁷⁹

Yes, they are allowed to participate fully in all church activities. Because they are also children of God, they have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and it is up to God to decide what to allow them to do or not to do. The only thing we do not allow them to do is to hold leadership positions because it will set an example to the youth that you can divorce and remarry and still hold leadership positions but they are allowed to participate in communion and all other church activities¹⁸⁰.

I share the views expressed by some of the pastors and church leaders on whether divorcees are allowed to participate in church rituals but I share a divergent opinion when it comes to the views on whether divorcees should be allowed to hold positions in the church. In my opinion they should be allowed to hold leadership positions in the church if they have truly repented and is well expressed in their conduct. This is because they can serve as resource persons who would bring their experiences to bear and educate the youth and the entire church members on the challenges of divorce and remarriage. It will also help alleviate the stigmatization of divorcees.

The General Overseer of Harvest Chapel International explained that his church's policy was in transition. He indicated that the current position is that divorcees are allowed to participate in rituals but cannot serve in leadership positions; however his church was considering a change in this policy and in fact had one divorcee in a leadership position. His reasons were as follows:

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Dr. Koranteng, 20th March, 2015.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Marriage Counsellor, 12th March, 2015.

Well that's another area where we, I would say that our policy is undergoing change. Our position now is that the divorcees are not given leadership positions but they are active in church and we consider them as brothers and sisters but they are not given leadership positions. The challenge however is then we ask ourselves for how long then is it right for us to deprive them of a chance to serve the Lord in a leadership position since we are not taking the position of judges. So currently I can say that we have at least one of them who I would say that is in a leadership position, of course we also think that it is not very right for us to prevent them from also serving God yes.¹⁸¹

Some of the respondents who allowed divorcees to hold leadership positions expressed these views: "If such a person is committed and dedicated and can teach why not allow them to teach, I mean Sunday school or whatever. So personally, to me, nothing hinders them from taking part in activities of the church."¹⁸² Another respondent submits: 'they sing in the choir, they preach, lead prayer meetings all night, prophesy, they do all those things. Yes because they are children of God'.

Again, the respondents were asked whether the church provides counselling for couples considering divorce or who are seeking remarriage. All the respondents were of the view that the church offers some sort of counselling services to couple who are considering divorce and also to couples who are divorced but explained that the counselling is offered when the issue is brought to their notice. They further explained that there had been several instances where members had divorced without the notice of the church and so in such cases there was no opportunity to offer counselling of any sort. This comment from the pastors and church leaders confirm the researcher's observation from her interactions with divorcees that most of them have not disclosed their status as divorcees to their pastors and church leaders but continue to wear their wedding rings and pretend to be married when they are not.

The following are quotes of some respondents from the selected churches:

¹⁸¹ Interview with Rev. Odonkor, 12th March, 2015.

¹⁸² Interview with a Pastor, 21st March, 2015.

The structure that we run, if it works there is no way a couple could divorce and the church would not have really supported them because once you are assigned to counsellors it is forever. You should be able to get in touch with your counsellors all the time so that when there are issues they can support you. But sometimes when the foundation is not good in the course of married life, there are disagreement between the couples and their counsellors so when there are issues they don't go there anymore and so then they don't get all the support.¹⁸³

Yes the church provides counselling wholeheartedly for couples who are considering divorce. We do our very best to manage the individuals; get their families involved if need be, to patch them up. We have retreats, prayer times with them, sometimes the church leaders spend so much time with them.¹⁸⁴

Yes the church provides counselling wholeheartedly for couples who are considering divorce. We do our very best to manage the individuals; get their families involved if need be, to patch them up. We have retreats, prayer times with them, sometimes the church leaders spend so much time with them. There's been an occasion where the counselling session went deep into the night, by the time they realised it was morning because the counsellors wanted to resolve the issue, once and for all.¹⁸⁵

The above responses suggest that the church provides some counselling services to members who share their marital challenges but the majority who do not share are not supported. The church must be proactive by putting in place a mechanism or structure that will assist in identifying members who have challenges in their marriages.

4.2.4. Views on Divorce and Remarriage

People hold different views about remarriage. The researcher investigated the views of the Pastors and Church Leaders on their position on divorce and remarriage. Interestingly, while some of the respondents hold views similar to that of the churches position, others had divergent views. A pastor from Light House Chapel asserted that divorce and remarriage is not accepted in the church but some can be allowed on certain grounds. He said:

¹⁸³ Interview with a Pastor, 21st March, 2015.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with a Pastor, 21st March, 2015.

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Marriage Counsellor, 15th March, 2015.

If two Christians get married and one partner decides to divorce the other, what can the divorced Christian do? But in some instances, there are some practical issues about divorce or marital problems that the Bible did not clearly define. Paul stated that “if an unbelieving partner decides to go, let him go”. For the believer is not under bondage. So the Christian is not bound. He argued that if a Christian decides to divorce his or her partner, he or she could be considered an unbeliever, so that the divorced Christian can remarry.¹⁸⁶

Similarly, a Pastor from Manna Mission also expressed the view that: “Although Christians disagree about whether the Bible permits remarriage of divorced persons, Matt 5:32 and Matt 19:9 appear to indicate that when a spouse has been sexually unfaithful and divorce occurs, the faithful partner has the right to remarry because the immorality has dissolved the marriage.”¹⁸⁷

An elder from Harvest Chapel though agreed on the Bible’s position on divorce and remarriage, argued that:

Divorce is neither commanded in scripture nor is it encouraged. God hates divorce but he does permit it, for example when one’s partner is guilty of sexual immorality and unwilling to repent and live faithfully with the marriage partner. Again when one partner is an unbeliever who wilfully and permanently deserts the believing partner then divorce is allowed and the divorced person can remarry.¹⁸⁸

His position is in fact not different from another leader in Manna Mission who observes that ‘if the unbelieving partner decides to leave the marriage since it is not the fault of the believer; I agree the innocent partner can remarry’. In addition, another Pastor shared his opinion on the issue of remarriage by asserting that;

Decisions made with reference to divorce should be based on the background of the divorcee in question. Therefore one cannot make an absolute interpretation in this direction. He stated categorically that divorce is not the best solution to marital problems. But in some instances, divorce is permissible e.g. in the case of a Christian being maltreated or

¹⁸⁶ Interview with a Pastor, 21st March 2015.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with a Pastor, 27th March, 2015.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Church Leader, on 11th March, 2015.

deserted by his unbelieving partner, he or she should be allowed to remarry.¹⁸⁹

From the above responses, it can be construed that though some of the respondents were against divorce and remarriage, they were liberal with their position considering the factors that may account for the divorce. Here the researcher agrees with Kinhiyoup's assertion that though divorce and remarriage are not as common as in the west, there is the need to face up to the realities of marriage and divorce, and all their related problems. Christian leaders need to have a biblical theological and pastoral perspective on marriage so that they can offer humane teaching and counselling to those in their congregations who are dealing with marital problems.

However, some other respondents were of the view that the bible discourages divorce to the extent that it says that the one who marries a divorcee has committed adultery so if somebody divorces and the person is remarried by another person even that other new person who is marrying the divorcee has committed adultery so it is one thing that the Bible frowns on. They quoted Deut. 24:1-4 and Matt. 19:9 to support their assertion. For instance in an interview with a Pastor of Harvest Chapel International, he said:

The Bible does not allow divorce except on the basis of immorality. As a pastor when a couple is experiencing severe marital crisis you cannot advise them to divorce. You may allow them to separate for a while so as to apply the principle of "relieving the stressor". This may bring healing which could foster a better reunion. Jesus did not approve of divorce, neither did he sanction it. Moses allowed divorce but Jesus discourages it. Remarriage after divorce should not be permitted because it constitutes adultery.¹⁹⁰

Another Pastor from Harvest Chapel also expressed a similar version for the issue of remarriage when he argued that

¹⁸⁹ Interview with a Pastor, 15th March, 2015.

¹⁹⁰ Interview with a Pastor, 20th March, 2015.

Christians should not be allowed to divorce their partners, since God hates divorce. The exception clause in Matthew 19: 9 is not meant to encourage divorce. A believer experiencing severe marital conflicts with his/her unbelieving spouse should not divorce him or her, especially if they have children. The issue of remarriage does not even come into consideration.¹⁹¹

These views to a very large extent are in congruence with the positions of their churches as indicated in the policies of those who have marriage policy documents, and the teachings of those who dwell solely on the Bible for instruction on all marriage issues.

The respondents were asked if their church teaches on divorce and remarriage.

Most of the respondents indicated that their churches do not teach on divorce and remarriage and did not deem it necessary to teach on divorce and remarriage. A response from the Reverend Minister in charge of marriage in Harvest Chapel International submitted that:

With regard to the teaching on divorce and remarriage, we normally do that during the premarital counselling which spans averagely about six months so after the marriage we don't go back and teach them about divorce I mean we know, we have made you aware that it is permanent so after the marriage we don't normally teach about divorce until it crops up that one party wants a divorce then that party needs to be taught or re-taught as to the permanent nature of marriage covenant so that is what we do.¹⁹²

An interview with a leader of the Harvest Chapel International also revealed that:

Though divorce and remarriage are mentioned occasionally, they are not the focus of our teachings because they are not desired outcomes of any marriage. Our focus is on nurturing and building strong godly marriages that can weather all challenges. We seek to achieve these through scriptural teachings on personal Christian growth, marriage and family life.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ Interview with a Church Leader, on 10th March, 2015.

¹⁹² Interview with Dr. Koranteng, 20th March, 2015.

¹⁹³ Interview with a leader of the Harvest Chapel International, 10th March, 2015.

Pastors and church leaders interviewed from Manna Mission, submits that their church teach on divorce and remarriage and this is in the form of pre-marital counselling and seminars which are organised once a year in the church even though divorcees from Manna Mission interviewed created an impression that the church does not teach on divorce and remarriage.

The discussions above affirm that some charismatic churches do not teach on divorce and remarriage because divorce is not encouraged. Interactions with the divorcees confirm the views of the pastors and church leaders on the subject matter. They stated that their churches do not teach on divorce and remarriage and so they cannot tell what the policies of their churches are on divorce and remarriage.

In order to ascertain whether there were divorcees in the churches, the researcher asked a follow up question to the respondents to indicate whether they have divorcees in the church. All the respondents responded in the affirmative and said they even know some of them and estimate the number of divorcees in the church between three to five divorcees instead of six as observed by the researcher. This observations buttress the fact that it is difficult to provide accurate figures on divorcees in Charismatic Churches. Again, the respondents were asked how many divorcees in the church have remarried. All the respondents estimated the number of divorcees who have remarried between two and three.

Divorce is a staggering issue of concern for civil society, married couples, pastors, government among others. To this end, the respondents were asked to determine whether divorce is an issue in the church. All the respondents from Harvest Chapel International, Light House Chapel and Manna Mission were of the view that divorce

is a critical issue in the church even though it is a difficult subject to tackle because it is an emotional issue and carries significant social and ecclesiastical implications.¹⁹⁴

They again explained that the bible frowns on divorce and also cases of divorce affect the church in diverse ways because families are disintegrating and can adversely affect church attendance.

4.2.5. Conditions under which Church Allows Divorce and Remarriage

Pastors and church leaders from harvest chapel, Light House and Manna Mission indicated the conditions or circumstances under which the church allows divorce. The positions of the churches were varied. Some were of the view that divorce should not be allowed on any condition, others said it can only be resorted to on the basis of adultery while others were more lenient in allowing for divorce where there is a threat to life or when one of the parties is adamant in their desire for divorce. The statements below are representative of these views: “We do not allow divorce because God hates divorce. We do not allow, I mean no matter what the situation we do not allow it. We teach people to stay together, resolve their issues and their conflicts to be able to live together”¹⁹⁵

As I said earlier on, the only condition is when one partner commits adultery or your partner is dead then you are not bound by any law¹⁹⁶

When we have situations when one’s life is at risk then the church will support it, for instance if we have a couple where the man is brutalising the wife or the man has gone in for another woman, divorce may be allowed. Sometimes a partner may just leave the house, pack his or her things and leave, and leave the children in the care of the other person and after all the church has done to bring them together they still may decide that they do not want to or one may decide to divorce, in such a situation there is nothing the church can do.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴Johnson Lim, “Divorce and Remarriage in Theological and Contemporary Perspectives” *Asia Journal of Theology* (): 272.

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Rev. Torkonu, 20th March, 2015.

¹⁹⁶ Interview with a Church Leader, 12th March, 2015.

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Church Leader, 12th March, 2015.

The conditions presented by the Pastors and leaders reflect the data the researcher received from the selected churches on their policy on remarriage.

The researcher further asked the respondents to indicate the conditions or circumstances under which the church allows remarriage. The respondents stated that when one of the spouses is dead, when one of the spouses remarried and also when divorce is formally finalised at the law court the church may consider the option of an ex-spouse request for remarriage. This showed that when a divorcee meets any of these conditions an ex-spouse will be considered for remarriage. The following is a quote from a respondent:

An example is one of the cases that I just mentioned where the man just went off and is remarried. In such a case if the woman wants to remarry we believe that if she has made a peace with God in terms of seeking God's forgiveness and then for the sake of legality if there is an official document indicating that the divorce has been formalised so that we are not going to have problem with the law." Then in such a case if the individual has prayerfully considered it and has somebody who has come in, we make sure the counselling is done properly ... in that case yes the remarriage will take place¹⁹⁸

The findings supported the view of the Bible in 1 Corin. 7. Jesus explicitly teaches that those who are involved in a remarriage after an improper divorce commit adultery. Although members may come under discipline for remarrying after an unbiblical divorce, there is always the prospect of restoration of that member if he or she demonstrates true repentance. The blood of Christ is sufficient for the sins of all true believers. The leaders should actively work towards this end. However, when one of the spouses in a former union remarries, we may conclude that the other is free to remarry because the former marriage relationship has been permanently broken by the remarriage. The Church must be careful not to sanction unbiblical marriages; but, as

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Rev. Odonkor, 20th March, 2015.

noted above, when a former spouse has remarried, or refuses reconciliation in such a way as to reveal himself or herself to be, in effect, an unbeliever, remarriage to another person becomes a valid option for the other party in the light of 1 Cor. 7. Before anyone remarries, even under these conditions, that person should demonstrate sufficient penitence for sin and failure, and manifest a firm purpose of an endeavour after Christian marriage. In addition, they should be encouraged to prayerfully consider if God may be calling them to remain unmarried, as Paul encourages in 1 Cor. 7:8, and in view of that fact that one failure in this realm raises serious questions as to the rightness and wisdom of undertaking another union.

The research showed that the churches would not easily allow a remarriage and where it was allowed, the counselling was more extensive than a first marriage and the celebration was kept low key.

We make sure the counselling is done properly, you know, all the challenges are addressed as much as possible. In that case, yes, the remarriage will take place but normally it will not be a ceremony like normal marriage ceremony, just small ...¹⁹⁹

If the individual is allowed to remarry, it will not be done publicly in the sense that in our church if you are going to marry, we have to publish the bans, if you are a divorcee you will go through the AMA notification but the church will not announce your marriage. Because the bible says we should deal with people according to their faith so somebody who is weak in the faith or who is not strong in the word will not understand why someone who is divorced should be encouraged or allowed to remarry in the same church when the bible says that someone who marries a divorcee is committing adultery. So because of the interpretation of this scripture we are very careful about remarrying divorcees.²⁰⁰

4.3 Conclusion

The main objective of this chapter was to find out from the Pastors and church Leaders of the selected churches their views, policies and attitudes towards divorcees

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Rev. Odonkor, 20th March, 2015.

²⁰⁰ Interview with a Church Leader, 12th March, 2015.

and the conditions under which divorce and remarriage would be allowed. There is a general consensus among the Pastors and church leaders against divorce but there is also agreement that divorcees should be accepted and supported within the church. With the exception of one, all churches surveyed had no official documented policy on divorce and remarriage. Divorce and remarriage are generally allowed under strict conditions and there is more attention on keeping marriages together, although there seems to be more of a fire fighting approach rather than a deliberate and cohesive approach to achieve this.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The study was conducted to explore the perspectives of Christian divorcees on divorce and remarriage in selected charismatic churches in Adenta.

Although God intended marriage to be a lifelong relationship, unfortunately, divorce has become common occurrence in our society. Sadly, the dramatic rise in divorce rates in recent years has also affected the Christian Community. Pastors and others providing counsel have become increasingly burdened with problems of divorce and remarriage, even among those regarded as active members of their congregations. This study does not seek to complicate the task of pastoral care and the exercise of Christian discipline within the subject matter of divorce and remarriage. The focus of the study was to highlight not only the ease with which divorce can be obtained and remarriage arranged within the Christian Community, but to also investigate the perspectives of divorcees, the attitude of the church towards divorcees, and also to identify conditions under which the church grants divorce and remarriage.

The study revealed that all the respondents had been Christians for 10 or more years with the majority of the divorcees have been married by ordinance either in the church or in court. Interestingly, two of the divorcees' ex-spouses were pastors. The divorcees gave varied reasons why they divorced. Some cited incompatibility, lack of trust, selfishness, low self-esteem, irresponsibility and inability of spouses to get along with in-laws. Interestingly only a few of the respondents were divorced because of marital unfaithfulness which is the only grounds on which the New Testament allows divorce.

The study indicated that 12 out of the fifteen divorcee respondents did not engage in any premarital counselling. Which confirms the notion that lack of pre-marital counselling can have negative impact on marriages and can lead to divorce in most cases.

The research further showed that some of the churches did not have a policy on divorce and remarriage; perhaps because of the strong position against divorce and remarriage. The church did not have any support for members who divorce because of their position. In the light of this, all of the divorcee respondents claimed they divorced without involving their churches and only two informed the church after their divorce. This is in contrast to the view of the Pastors and leaders who acknowledged that the church did not have a policy regarding divorce and remarriage but added that the church supported divorcees in diverse ways to readjust in life. The pastors and leaders admittedly indicated that the church did not teach on divorce and remarriage although they affirmed that divorce is a serious issue in the Church.

All the pastors and leaders interviewed asserted that divorcees were allowed to fully participate in all rituals of the church and mentioned participation in communion, fasting, offering, paying of tithes, affiliation to a department or group in the church among others. However, three respondents explained further that the church did not allow divorcees to occupy leadership positions.

The results of this study have again revealed that many of the divorcee respondents have not made known their true and real marital status to either their church leaders or their pastors because of perceived stigmatization. Pastors and church leaders again had presumed that members of their churches do not seek divorce but follow up biblical principles and stay in their marriages. This study has highlighted the

importance of revisiting the entire charismatic notion that divorce and remarriages are almost non-existent among their members.

5.2 Conclusion

This study has shown that divorce rate is on the increase in the church but it is not being adequately addressed by The Churches. Factors that often lead to divorce within the church are many and varied but issues that can be addressed to reduce the divorce rate are premarital and post marital counselling, seminars and retreats on marriage and teaching on marriage and divorce.

The churches under study had different positions on the issue of remarriage. While Harvest Chapel would not permit remarriage as long as the ex-spouse is still alive and have not moved on, Manna Mission permits remarriage when the partners repent and forgive each other. Light House Chapel, on the other hand, addresses the issue of remarriage on a case by case basis.

Generally, the respondents asserted that divorce is not a solution to marital challenges. Varied reasons were given for the reasons for divorce. However, they all admitted that incompatibility, selfishness, low self-esteem, irresponsibility and unfaithfulness were the prominent ones. With regard to attitude and support of the church towards divorcees, majority of the divorcees asserted that they did not received any form of support from the church during and after their divorce while the minority said they received a kind of support from some leaders in the church in the form of counselling material and financial assistance. The result therefore shows that the churches hardly give support to their divorcee members. They all suggested that divorcees should be accepted and supported within the church.

With the exception of Harvest Chapel, the other two churches had no official policy document on divorce and remarriage. The study indicates that all the churches were directed towards making efforts to resolve marital problems but would permit divorce and remarriage under straight conditions.

The study also shows that divorcees generally are not well supported within the church setting, an issue that needs to be addressed. Although its generalization and applicability is limited, the study has provided insights into the problem of rising divorce in the church and provides a basis for further study.

5.3 Recommendations

After going through the study, the researcher is of the view that the following recommendations may be for further studies on the subject of divorce and remarriage and also help to solve, if not reduce the increasing rate of divorce in Charismatic Churches.

The study revealed that the divorcees did not go through sufficient post-marital counselling and teaching in the church on marriage and divorce. It is therefore recommended that a study be conducted on the impact of post-marital counselling on marriage. This study would help to ascertain how effective post-marital counselling can help sustain Christian marriages.

In addition, some respondents indicated they went through pre-marital counselling before getting married, yet they have divorced. It would be interesting to carry out a comparative study on pre-marital counselling and post-marital counselling to underscore which type of counselling contributes more effectively to the sustenance of Christian marriages.

Considering the effects of divorce on divorcees and children as well as the church and the state at large as revealed in the study on these charismatic Churches, a similar study can be conducted in other church traditions such as the Mission churches, Pentecostal and other charismatic churches. This is in order to investigate the perspective of divorcees in those churches as well as the policy and support system offered to divorcees.

In the light of the increasing rate of divorce, which is becoming a social issue for both the church and the state due to its effects, the state should support researchers in the area of divorce and remarriage to bring ideas that will help alleviate the issue of divorce.

Pastors and church leaders should undertake continual professional development in pre-marital and post-marital counselling to equip them give relevant support and counselling to their members. It is also recommended that Pastors and church leaders should take continual interest in married couples within their churches and fellowships and create an atmosphere that allows couples to share and discuss issues affecting their marriage. Couples should be encouraged to make use of post marital counselling on regular basis even if there are no issues in their marriage.

The study also revealed that most churches do not have a policy on divorce and remarriage and some of the few who had did not have it documented. It is recommended that churches should have clear and documented policies on divorce and remarriage and such policies should be made known to the church members. While most churches were totally against remarriage, it is clear that it is unavoidable as long as divorce continues to exist within the church. The churches need to have a clear policy on the conditions under which remarriage will be allowed. If the Church

is satisfied that remarriage is justifiable, the couple should be offered participation in a divorce recovery program in which past failure in marital relationships is honestly confronted. By so doing such realities as guilt, resentment, bitterness, frustration, fear and anger resulting from the previous marriage are not carried over into the next marriage.

Mature Christians who have been through divorce and have reconsidered the causes of the divorce in their previous marriages and have reconciled themselves with biblical teaching should be used as resource persons in premarital counselling rather than the church closing its doors on them in the area of leadership roles. In this way, the church can make use of their experiences and God given talents and gifts to help develop others within the church. They are possibly and invaluable resource to help stem the tide of divorce.

The research also revealed that there was no effective support system for divorcees in most churches. It is recommended that congregations should have a support group for those who have gone through divorce and are seeking to redefine and re-establish their life within the fellowship of the church.



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APPENDIX A

**INTERVIEW GUIDE ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE FOR
DIVORCEE DISCUSSIONS.**

1. How long have you been a Christian?
2. Was your former spouse a Christian – for how long has s/he been a Christian?
3. What type of marriage did you engage in? (customary/ Ordinance /church wedding)
4. If you did not have a Christian marriage was your church involved?
5. How long were you married to your former spouse?
6. Did you go through marriage counselling at any point before or during your marriage or divorce?
7. What two or more qualities do you like about your ex-spouse?
8. What were the major reasons for the divorce? Give two or three
9. In your view what is the position of your church on divorce?
10. Does your church teach on divorce and remarriage?
11. What do you think is your church's position on remarriage?
12. What is your own view on divorce?
13. What is your own view on remarriage?
14. In what way(s) did your church's policy/teaching on divorce influence your decision to seek divorce?
15. Was the church supportive of you during and after your divorce? If yes how?
If no, why do you think so?
16. Did you feel that you had the support of the church regarding your decision to remarry? If yes how?, if no why do you say so?

17. Apart from your Church's /bible position on divorce and remarriage what other factors influenced your decision to proceed with divorce
18. Was it easy or difficult to get the Church's consent to remarry? If yes why do you say so, if no why do you say so?
19. Did you intend to remarry after the divorce? (If no, what changed your mind? If yes why?
20. What church were you attending before the divorce?
21. What church are you attending now? (If there's been a change ask why)



APPENDIX B

**INTERVIEW GUIDE ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE FOR
PASTORS AND CHURCH LEADERS**

1. Are you married? why and how long
2. What type of marriage did you engage in? (customary/ ordinance/ church wedding)
3. Do you have a policy on divorce and remarriage in your church? Please provide details.
4. How does your church view remarriage?
5. Does your church teach on divorce and remarriage? How often
6. How do you think the church should relate to divorcees?
7. Are divorcees allowed to fully participate in every ritual in the church? (communion)
8. If yes why? And if no why?
9. Does your church provide counselling for couples considering divorce or who are divorced?
10. In your view, what is the Bible's position on divorce and remarriage?
11. Is divorce an issue in the church? If yes why? And if no why?
12. Do you have any divorcees in your church? If yes how many?
13. If there are divorcees in your church, how many have remarried?
14. Under what circumstances/conditions does your church allow divorce.
15. Under what circumstances/conditions does your church allow remarriage?