

Christian Family Values in a Plural Society: A Study in Mbaise, Imo Sstate , Nigeria



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Abstract

Values are standards or principles considered to be important to a people. Some of these values are fairness, justice, truth, honesty, prayerfulness, generosity, selfless service, dedication, hard work, affection, agility, calmness, innovation and community service. Though values are not limited to the above mentioned. Forgiveness is also an essential value that must be mentioned in family values. Sources of data for this is via primary sources such as oral interviews, and questionnaires. While the secondary sources adopted are information that already exist through journal, books, internet materials, family association books, Union official records, administrative proceedings such as minutes, newspapers and periodicals. Another approach adopted by the researcher in this work is the sociological approach which deals with the major issues in the family values in Mbaise. The traditional family values and the Christian family values in Mbaise have no conflict, however most traditional values have been eroded in recent times hence vices such as street begging as a means of survival in our society, stealing, armed robbery, kidnapping, Gender based violence, Human trafficking, Divorce, drug abuse, prostitution etc., are now rampant in our society. With the decline of traditional family values which gave rise to the various vices listed above, the researcher is presenting Christian Family values to Mbaise to help solve the numerous problems mentioned above. The adoption of Christian family values in Mbaise area will help promote love among the people. Sincerity, prudence, hard-work, togetherness, forgiveness, empathy, community life, etc., when put together will promote development and peaceful coexistence among contemporary Mbaise people.

Keywords: Christian Family, Values, Traditional Family, Mbaise, Love.

Introduction

Christian families in Mbaïse area are patriarchal with extended families having more to do in the decision of the family. The traditional family system must be compared with other families in the western world. Children are very important to Christian families because parents hold that their children will provide support for them in their old age, family relationships are mostly guided by strict system of seniority in Mbaïse area and such leadership is known as gerontocracy

Importance has always been placed on the male members of the family more because of their rights to both family inheritance and extension of family lineage and name. Social norms permeate beyond age, educational achievement, religion, marital status and so on.

Christian family values are important in life, values define what we stand for and how we make meaning out of life and they attract people of our likes to us. A valueless life is a directionless life; it simply means that for you as a person anything goes. We make values to help us achieve our set goals consistent with our purpose in life.

Every government, institutions, forms as well as persons have got set of values that enable them achieve their set goals in life, mission and purpose either as a company or an institution. To achieve this, they must make every effort possible to enable them live out these values. Values such as love, brotherhood, calmness, innovation and community spirit involvement and a host of other values that people embrace are necessary to help steer the ship of their world to safe harbor. The above mentioned Christian family values are limitless. Christian Family values in Mbaïse area will be reviewed of the letter of Apostle Paul to the Galatians 5 v 22 that is the summary of Christian values such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These Christian values, are the make-up of the family values in Mbaïse and should be seen in the same mirror as written to the Galatian brethren.

Development thrives in an environment surrounded with peace, unity, order, wisdom, etc., when a society fails to develop it becomes a breeding ground for barbarism, insecurity, callosity, treachery, thereby relegating man's quest for peace order, advancement and happiness to the background. Such bad attitudes such as hypocrisy, intolerance, lies, hatred, greed etc. deter development.

Purpose of the Study

This academic work on Christian family values in Mbaïse area is trying to find out if the Mbaïse people have fully accepted the Christian family values of love, peace, etc. The

extent to which these Christian family values have being enshrined in the daily lives of Mbaise families calls for attention. Also the impact Christian family values have made in Mbaise area is another issues is divorce the order of the day in Mbaise area and how can Christian family values helps to solve the problem of divorce in Mbaise area of Imo State?

Purpose of the Study

This paper tends to showcase the aims, objective and intentions of the achievements of the Christian family values in Mbaise area. The aim is to ensure that Christian family values have made sincere impact in the life of the people under review. The objective is to bring out the extent of assimilation of these various values to make family life easy and safe for the people.

The essence of this research work is to bring out the success of the family values among the Mbaise people. The people of Mbaise area are they predominantly Christians? What Christian denomination is predominant among the people of Mbaise? The motive behind this research work is to gather information as regards the extent of success and failure of this Christian family values in Mbaise. The problems enumerated can be solved through the teaching of Christian values in families, churches, schools and the communities in Mbaise. The social vices inherent in the Mbaise area today can be handled through constant teaching and training via the family, church, school and the society itself.

Conceptual Framework

Moral: The Longmans dictionary of contemporary English defines moral as “concerning character, behavior, or action considered or judged as being good or evil, right or wrong”

Uche (2011) insists that

“it has to do with doing good and avoiding evil, behaving right and shunning wrong behavior”. Therefore, there is moral degeneracy where the known good is not done while evil is being perpetrated or where one instead of behaving right chooses to behave wrongly.

Christian Ethics: Christian ethics is therefore described in this chapter as the pursuit of Gods goodness and the cultivation of practical wisdom that comes directly from the natural law and from the culture of the people.

The natural desire for marriage and a home is threatened with disruption by widespread divorce, desertion and almost childless marriages, everywhere youth turns, and he runs headlong into values and practices that grow less satisfactory day by day in a world of bewildering change and complexity.

Kindness: “Therefore as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” Colossians 3:12 (NIV). Put on them, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience.

In a family culture that emphasizes self, it is easy to loose sight of the important role that kindness plays. Along with loving others comes the Christian principle of caring for them and of being compassionate.

From helping the poor and those in need to holding the door for someone; kindness is simple. It is one of the hallmarks of a Christ filled heart.

Seek Peace: Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Colossians 3:15 (NIV) the Holy Spirit holds the ability to usher in peace in a person’s heart. This in fact is one of the Christian values at the center of the biblical narrative. Peace in ones heart and peace with others are just two Christian principles worthy of embracing, seeking God and letting His plan for our lives unfold.

Be Patient: You say, I choose the appointed time; it is I who judge with equity –Psalm 75:2 (NIV) forbearance is yet another quality on the Christian family values in Mbaïse area that is in the list worthy of further exploration. Being in control of oneself and having patience when provoked is important. This is especially essential in a culture that is dominated by divisive debates and anger.

Theoretical Framework

Conflicts are inevitable. Once desires and acceptances differ from one group to another, difference is a common factor of human existence, therefore conflicts whether social, political, economic, religious or cultural, must be a resurgent discussion in our daily individual or collective activities.

Ughamadu (2009) agrees that in theories of social conflict, social theorists such as Karl Max, Sorel, Simmel or Comte at various points give intellectual discussions. In the family appear the social theorists because the Christian family values are mostly internalize through socialization.

Social theories go a long way to explain certain factors that might give rise to conflicting situations in our various societies from individual to family, to village, community, nation or international differences, conflicts abound over disagreements on how to apportion the limited supplies to man.

Ughamadu (2009) further writes most of the time people view conflicts from negative perspectives, but that is not always correct, because conflicts can as well be positive. In some cases, conflicts lead to peace.

In this theory, value is an integral part of the society's structure and organization. The place of the society defines its problems, the family and the society is not different from its economic and political structures. A society where there are such vices as corruption, injustice, diseases, exploitation, in equality and exploitation, structural conflicts derive their sources from such societal arrangement.

In structural conflict theory, all major institutions, laws and traditions in the society are created to support those who have gradually been in power, or groups that perceived to be superior in the society, anything that resist the control of the elite will likely be considered 'deviant' or morally reprehensive such radical scholars as Mao Tse Tung, Joseph Lenin, Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, drew their propagation of this theory on the class domination perspective to be as the negative impact of capitalism regarded as a catalyst for exploitation of the masses. Relational theory comes to light in this work.

Also according to Ughamadu (2009), cultural and value differences on that of interest groups affect relationships between individuals and groups differently, for instance, sociological explanations explore the conflict situation from the cultural values perspective while historical relationship examines conflict from the past historical skirmishes which can lead to negative stereotypes, racial intolerance and discrimination.

Another theory here is "the theory of interpersonal Relationship Interpersonal relationship refers to a strong association amongst individuals with similar tastes, aspirations and interest in life.

Uzuegbunam (2019) asserts that “In a relationship every individual has expectation from his/her colleague or partner. On this note, we can assert that a relationship without expectation is meaningless.

Traditional Family Values in Mbaise

The genuine spirit of traditional family values in Mbaise promotes peace, love, unity, wisdom, sound knowledge, brotherhood “Onyeaghalanwanneya” etc. The said African values that are prevalent in the African indigenous community have been proved to be accommodating. It has accommodated Christianity and Islam on African continent and by extension in Mbaise area of Imo State, Eastern Nigeria.

The presence of western religion is not evil but the wrong views of some scholars like Robert Moffat and Emil have been proven otherwise that the indigenous African man has no intellectual capacity to conceptualize theologically.

Apart from the projection of the infinite mysteriousness, wisdom and purity and society values of accommodation, brotherhood, kindness etc., human life highlights man’s supremacy over the primates. The gruesome destruction of the lives of some Nigerians today under the guise of religion and politics by certain extremists and political thugs is really worrisome, the government should put up effort to counter the nefarious activities of miscreants in the country else the unity and development of our country may be jeopardized. Contemporary Mbaise people need sincerity, prudence, togetherness, tolerance, empathy etc buried in African traditional community life to experience real sustainable development.

Community life in African traditional set up projects brotherhood, altruism, mutual, understanding, respect, the sanctity of human life, it does not in any way suppress an individual freedom, his self- determination and actualization. Mutual relationship and assistance are necessary conditions for a successful living in the society, since a prosperous society is the product of successful people, the success of every member of the society is of great importance. In African (Mbaise) indigenous setting greed, selfishness, deceit intolerance are not welcomed by the divinities and the ancestors. They are reject them because they breed frustration, conflict, etc which deter peace and harmony needed for the successful development of the society. Religion and politics are veritable social institutions though not perfect because of the human element in them.

Religion and politics can facilitate social- economic development at the highest level if properly managed by experts with good intentions and if mismanaged can breed poverty, terrorism, banditry, money laundering such that can have destructive effect on society.

We must protect the honest spirit of our tradition, for the sake of posterity. The traditional African man is settled. The welfare of the society remains his preoccupation, little wonder peace and harmony reign supreme in Nigerian indigenous communities.

Most Mbaise communities cannot boast of good roads, some have no electricity, some still get their drinking water from the village streams. Few health centers in contemporary Mbaise communities have no adequate manpower due to shortage of trained medical personnel. It is not surprising to prove that some schools in Mbaise today bear in a pitiable state, yet certain Mbaise leaders are not perturbed. Our traditional family in Mbaise that adopts of the extended family system has been eroded by selfishness and greed. The Decalogue speaks about honor to parents and elders and guidance. This is simply a family morality in its extended sense.

In Mbaise society today you hear of parents being abandoned by their children. Some kill their parents for rituals and for money. The traditional African society believes that one is progressive when he is his brother's keeper. Julius Nyerere who popularized the aphorism "African socialism" according to which the community is basically the determinant factor of all economic arrangement. In this case, a man is as rich or poor as his community. This is the practice of the extended family system. Mbaise must return to those great values of our ancestors.

Mbaise culture is rich in music and Igbo dance. Music is played on the wood, xylophone, hand piano, long, short and slit drums, pots, gongs, bamboo horn and calabash. There are dances for child birth, marriage, funerals, communal labor and other social occasions.

Christian Family Values and Advent of Christianity in Mbaise

Christian Families today have values that define them and set their generations in the right perspective. They make sure generations to come fit into those set of families values. They are always careful with those they mingle with so as to ensure that these values are not adulterated with levity, this is why they go to any extent to see that these values are safeguarded.

The family is the bed rock of society and so we must make efforts to train our children in the right way and in the fear of God. Training of a child is not just a family thing, it is a community thing like our forefathers did in times past where everyone was concerned

about the welfare of the other. This act of concern for others is the only way we can break the idea of individualism. Values stand against selfishness in our society which seems to separate us from others and isolate us from the greater good of the society.

Nigeria as a British protectorate in 1901 followed with independence in 1st October 1960. Despite the myriad of rich natural resources that abound in Nigeria. The nation still remained a developing nation which shows it has not harnessed the abundant natural resources with its attendant blessings to become a developed nation. It has introduced poverty instead of surplus among Nigerians such

that for someone to survive they must beg on the street and such questions the dignity of man.

Despite the abundant resources, our society is bedeviled with unimaginable social vices such as cattle rustling, unwholesome activities of the dreaded herdsmen, banditry, kidnapping, ransom taking and so many other vices, which is a product of the self-centeredness of some contemporary political, traditional and religious leaders. Some leaders have denied the genuine spirit of the African community life which promote empathy, altruism, togetherness, love for one another, sincere and selfless leadership, which is a great threat to the development and sustenance of our society and by extension the Mbaise society will remain without sustainable development until the sincere spirit of African community life which has been thrown to the mold is rekindled via adoption of Christian values.

Evaluation

Mutual relationship and assistance are necessary conditions for a successful living in the society such is taught through informal Christian family value. Since a prosperous society is the product of a successful people, the success of every member of community or society is paramount.

Truth, justice, disciplines, wisdom, vision, love etc highlight African indigenous setting while greed, selfishness, indecency, intolerance are not welcomed by God, the divinities and the ancestors. They are rejected because, they breed frustration, conflict, restiveness etc which deter peace and harmony needed for the successful development of the society. Religion and politics are veritable social institutions though not perfect because of the human elements in them.

Religion and Politics can facilitate socio-economic development at the highest level if properly managed by experts with good intentions. Mismanagement of religion can breed

poverty, terrorism, banditry, money laundering which can have destructive affect on the society.

We must protect the honest spirit of our tradition, for the sake of posterity. The traditional Mbaïse man is selfless. The welfare of the Mbaïse society remains his preoccupation, little wonder peace and harmony reign supreme in Mbaïse indigenous communities. Ritual killing of some persons for “quick wealth”, kidnapping, drug abuse, prostitution, bribery etc which are common among some contemporary Mbaïse men and women especially the political and the religions leaders are strange to our traditional family values .

Recommendation

Development strives in an environment saturated with peace, unity, order, wisdom etc. Any society that fails to develop, it becomes a breeding ground for barbarism, insensitivity, callosity, treachery, thereby relegating man’s quest for peace and order, advancement and happiness to the background. Vices like hypocrisy, intolerance, lies, hatred, greed will become their second nature. Jesus makes it clear in the Bible that the two most essential commandments are to love God and love others that is love for one another. But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness self-control (RSV). Galatians 5:22-26 breaks down the most essential and core Christian values in detail. The verses read: “But the fruit of the spirit is love joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the spirit let us keep in step with the spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other”. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is the result of the Holy Spirit’s presence in the life of a Christian. Having Christ in one’s life and heart should in turn yield noticeable changes, with these sentiments having a presence in the lives of believers.

Jesus teaching of the Christian core values of self-restraint and forbearance are absolutely attainable

Conclusion

It is obvious that development cannot strive in a society bedeviled with crises and crime as the order of the day. The various Christian values should be internalized to promote peace that supports development in the Mbaïse area of Imo state, Nigeria.

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