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Pastoral Counseling for Servants of God Families in Manado Who Experiencing Emotional Divorce

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ABSTRACT

The family is an institution that cannot be separated from problems. The problems faced by the family can lead the family to an emotional divorce. This emotional divorce is a much more severe condition than a physical or legal divorce. This condition is even more severe if it occurs in a family of God's servants, because they bear a double burden related to their status. For this reason, it is necessary to think about pastoral counselling for family who experience emotional divorce. This research was conducted using a qualitative method through a case study approach. It is hoped that the findings in this study can provide an understanding of family pastoral counselling for those who experience emotional divorce so that the impact of emotional divorce on family members can be minimized.

Keywords : family pastoral counselling, pastoral counselling, emotional divorce

A. INTRODUCTION

The hope of being able to live happily ever after in marriage and family is everyone's dream. Although, of course, this is not something that is possible, it definitely can be done. In fact, family life is always faced with various circumstances and conditions that are sometimes beyond human expectations.

One important factor in family harmony is the ability to manage conflict.

However, not all families are able to do that. The inability to manage conflict in the family can lead to various forms of negative reactions, such as disappointment, accusing each other, putting each other down, and hurting each other. When the various efforts and efforts made by both parties tend to reach a stalemate, there are couples who finally choose to remain silent and survive in the status quo as long as there are no more fights. They become discouraged and choose not to get involved in trying to save their marriage. Each of them chose silence and hoped that it would create family harmony.

The impact of this situation is that one or both of them withdraw from the husband and wife relationship and do not want to involve each other emotionally so they don't get hurt. This condition is known as the emotional divorce condition, where a person no longer has intimacy with their partner. Physically, families who experience emotional divorce survive and are intact, but they no longer have emotional relationships that mutually support and build one another. People who go through an emotional divorce are not necessarily going to end up in a legal divorce.

Based on existing data, the divorce rate in Indonesia continues to increase. Lokadata stated that the divorce rate in Indonesia in 2015 was 5.89 percent of divorced (alive) married couples. The number is around 3.9 million out of a total of 67.2 million households. In 2020, the percentage of divorces will increase to 6.4 percent from 72.9 million households, or around 4.7 million couples. What is recorded in the data is a legal divorce. There is far more emotional divorce in our society than statistics fail to capture.

Some are afraid to get a divorce because of religious and social factors. The religious teachings that they believe state that marriage is something sacred that can only be done once in a lifetime, and therefore divorce is a sin. Socially, divorce is considered a failure of the couple to maintain the family. Another reason put forward was that there were children in the marriage, so the couple chose to stay on the grounds that they wanted to give the best to their children while still being a complete family.

This article examines the emotional divorce that occurs in a family of God's servants¹ in the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa (GMIM) in Manado. With this study, it is hoped that the church will be more sensitive to paying attention to families in its closest circle who are experiencing the problem of emotional divorce. In this study, pastoral counseling can be an effective tool for accompanying the families of God's servants who are emotionally divorced.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This article qualitatively examines the need for pastoral assistance for the families of special servants who experience emotional divorce. This phenomenon is like an iceberg phenomenon that occurs in the environment of church ministers and activists. This research was conducted using a case study approach that specifically captures the lives of five families known as special service families, in the GMIM area, especially those in Manado.

The criteria for the informants were: (1) women who were special servants; (2) the husband works outside the home; and (3) the age of marriage is more than 20 years. The data collection process was carried out through interviews with informants, in which the researcher asked semi-structured questions related to the family life relationships of the

informants, what was the reason for their decision to be in such conditions, and to what extent and how their hopes for the church would assist them in dealing with the emotional divorce conditions.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Family

The family is theologically marked by the presence of agreement (commitment), grace, empowerment, and intimacy. These four things do not stand alone; in practice, they overlap one another.

- 1) Covenant : In the understanding of the Christian faith, the family is God's initiative, a covenant (covenant) of God with humans to love and be loved. Covenant bonds are built on the basis of unconditional love through unilateral and bilateral ties.
- 2) Grace. Family relationships are relationships that forgive and are forgiven. God designed family relationships to live by grace and not law. Based on the agreement, the family will receive structure, form, pattern, order, and responsibility in the relationship. Law is accepted not as something that suppresses but as something that regulates for the sake of order and common order.
- 3) Empowerment. A person can get to know his own strengths and potential and be able to develop them because there is encouragement and support from other family members. This is also what Jesus did in the lives of His people, as explained in John 10:10b: "I have come that they may have life, and have it in all abundance".⁶ The family as a reality of communion (husband, wife, and children) has a relationship of serving one another, giving each other, forgiving one another, and supporting one another. The goal is for all members to experience positive growth.
- 4) Intimacy: The emphasis in this section is on an important dimension of communication because communication is at the heart of family life, namely communication as an expression of affection and at the same time as an effort to resolve conflicts in the family.

Emotional Divorce

The Cause for Emotional Divorce

Conflicts that occur continuously and are not resolved in the family cause husband and wife to become depressed, feel failed and worthless, have uncertain expectations, and drink alcohol, which can lead to divorce, which also has a very complex impact on adults and children, namely: low academic or school achievement, high delinquency and aggressiveness, maladaptive behavior, depression and anxiety, low interpersonal skills, and problems in heterosexual relationships, which can damage the joints in the family.

From the interviews with informants, it was found that the beginning of their marriage was a happy one. But over time, the differences between one and another led to disputes. Existing couples choose to withdraw from each other due to small disputes that continue to occur and cannot be resolved. There were two informants who later stated that the condition was getting worse when her husband repeatedly cheated on her.

Conflicts that partners cannot resolve cause them to withdraw from each other, making them no longer emotionally attached (emotional divorce). Partners who separate emotionally from marriage are engaging in a form of escapism and avoidance. Emotional divorce is a form of psychological mechanism used by couples to separate their emotions from the marriage, especially when the marriage becomes something that they feel threatens their well-being.

Even though the spouses have mutually withdrawn from one another, this will not necessarily lead to a legal separation or divorce. Regarding divorce, there are two different understandings. The first group understands that intact families can be maintained because of commitment and self-sacrificing (self-sacrificing) from parents, while those who choose to divorce or raise children outside of marriage are a self-serving group. In other words, this group values them as individuals. Another group thinks that divorce is necessary to create better conditions for family members, including their children.

The burden of responsibility as a special God's servant who must be an example for the congregation they serve makes them tend to keep their domestic conditions tightly closed while still getting used to showing the opposite situation when in public. Their sense of responsibility to set an example in family life makes them reluctant to seek help, especially with their background as special servants.

Ineke Agatha, in her research on husband-wife conflict in Empty Membrane families, provides another term for emotional divorce. He uses Erving Goffman's concept of dramaturgy. Couples are likened to actors who are temporarily playing a role. When they are on stage (front stage), they present themselves well and as they should. Behind the scenes (backstage), namely in family life, their role is not carried out as it should.

Whatever the causes of divorce must be seen in terms of causal relationships that are circular and not linear. Emphasis on circular causes will prevent the partner or one of the partners from appearing innocent, innocent and victimized. Because divorce, including emotional divorce, is a joint decision taken in maturity of thought as it was before when deciding to get married.

Patton saw divorce as a failure in generational care and as a form of lost relationship. Actually, there are other things that are also related to the loss of relationships, namely death. However, death is a natural process in life. Meanwhile, divorce is a conscious choice made by adults to withdraw from each other in a relationship. Divorce is considered a failure of commitment to the family. Divorce is generally seen by the church as something to be prevented or even rejected.

Impact of Emotional Divorce

In a study by Florence Kaslow, it was found that divorce was rated as a higher cause of stress compared to other life events. That stress can be seen in feelings of disappointment, dissatisfaction with life, and alienation from others. Often there are also feelings of fear regarding the future, pain, sadness, personal inadequacy, feelings of abandonment, anger, self-pity, confusion, and intense loneliness. These emotions can be expressed by shouting, threatening, suicide attempts, and the appearance of physical illness. Pastoral ministers need to pay attention to this matter, especially when dealing with the issue of divorce.

The findings of this study do not support their expectations, concerns, or justifications. Several studies (i.e., Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994) find that children in high-conflict marriage situations (persistent and severe abuse) generally do better on average if their parents decide to divorce than children whose parents remain married and continue to experience high levels of conflict (i.e., emotional divorce). So it can be said that emotional divorce is more dangerous and damaging than legal divorce.

Several studies have shown that emotional divorce is even more dangerous than legal divorce. In another study, it was found that divorce has an impact on adults. A study in Iran showed that children of parents who experienced emotional divorce had higher rates of emotional and behavioral problems than children from families who experienced legal divorce. Furthermore, emotional divorce can impact not only the divorcing spouse, children, and community but can also affect previous generations, even if that generation was not born at the time of the divorce.

By definition, emotionally divorced couples, in many ways, behave like couples with high, unresolved, and enduring conflicts. Their conflict never seems to be resolved. The same pattern of repeated angry encounters with only temporary, or often no, resolution or change occurs between partners. Their conflicts can range from yelling, criticizing, blaming, belittling, ridiculing, satirizing, ignoring, withdrawing, and giving silent treatment on one side of the range, through intimidation and threats of harm, to actual physical violence, such as throwing or breaking things, hitting, or any other type of physical attack on the other side of the range.

Interview with informants shows that their children affected by their emotional divorce. They have trouble with their mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, and bipolar. This situation makes them have another problem in relationship with their friends and their environment.

That is why these children almost wish, or sometimes even wish, that their parents would decide to separate. They may be aware of their problems and unhappiness, especially if they are older; they may better understand that divorce is necessary to make life better for them and their parents. However, children in low-conflict marital situations generally did worse when their parents divorced than children whose parents stayed married and kept trying to work things out. Therefore, if an unhappy marriage can be repaired over time so that both partners can be reasonably happy, this will probably be the best situation for children (Emery, 2004). Otherwise, even if a divorced family is not in the children's best interest, in such a family, divorce is the best course of action, at least for them.

Stages of Divorce

Kessler's idea on the seven stages of divorce is cited by Joseph Guttman. These are the stages: (1) The stage of disappointment. At the conclusion of the honeymoon phase, this stage starts. The couple advances to the next phase because they are unwilling and immature to deal with this circumstance. (2) Stage of erosion All of the negative emotions are now coming to the surface. However, the pair still speaks to one another and shows affection at this point. Release phase Mutual concern for one another started to fade. Each of them started to mentally withdraw. (4) The stage of actual separation A couple goes

through this stage most traumatizingly. Couples must deal with loneliness, worry, and confusion. (5) Grief Even after a marriage physically separates, the ex-spouse's psychological influence makes it difficult for the couple to move on. (6) The second stage of adolescence One can recall the past during this stage without feeling resentful, depressed, or unhappy. (7) The challenging phase At this point, a person can already draw lessons from his experience and start learning how to forge connections (not just romantic ones).

In Kessler's theory, the seeds of emotional divorce begin to emerge in the early stages, when the honeymoon ends and the couple is confronted with their true reality. A person who is unable to accept the real situation of his partner and hopes that his marriage will be like a fairytale situation will experience disappointment. This, if left unchecked, will accumulate continuously until the two of them are finally involved in an endless conflict.

Patton presents the five phases of a divorce. First, divorce occurs indirectly; it occurs intermittently over a long period of time. During this time, in all three generations, there was anxiety and denial of this process in an attempt to overcome anxiety. The second phase occurs when the initial fear is conceptualized verbally or behaviorally by one or both partners. The third phase occurs when there are things that are done related to the marriage itself, such as separating beds, visiting a marriage counselor, or having an affair. The fourth phase occurs when there has been talk or action regarding divorce. The fifth phase involves the actual legal divorce and the immediate adjustments to it.

In the classic book from Bohannon, as quoted by Mark A. Fine, it is explained that there are at least six stages of the divorce experience, namely: (1) Emotional divorce (pre-divorce period of seclusion); (2) Legal divorce (grounds for divorce and legal proceedings); (3) Economic divorce (separation of financial and other property rights); (4) Parental divorce (related to custody, parent and child visits, and single-parent homes and families); (5) Community divorce (the emergence of reactions from friends and extended family who also began to distance themselves); (6) physical divorce.

According to Bohannon's explanation, emotional divorce is the initial stage of the next divorce. Emotional divorce is something every couple needs to be aware of. This is usually one of the stages before a legal divorce takes place, even though not all of them end in a legal divorce. Emotional divorce is a stage that gives a strong warning sign to a family about the existence of a danger that will threaten the survival of the family as an institution or the community as a whole.

The theories of Kessler, John Patton, and Bohannon both explain that divorce always takes place in stages. For this reason, when a couple has entered the early stages of divorce, it is important for them to realize and openly improve themselves together and seek professional help so that it is still possible for their marriage to be saved.

Ali Jarwan and Basem Alfrehat, in their research, put forward six stages of emotional divorce. Those stages are: 1. Destabilization and loss of trust; 2. Cold and loss of love; 3. Selfish; 4. Silence in marriage; 5. Emotionally divorce. Emotional divorce is a condition that is not easy for spouses and other family members. After all, all family members involved in it feel the impact of this, be it husband and wife or their children. Divorce, including emotional divorce, is the greatest threat to the family and to the happiness of its

members. Divorce opens the way to unfaithfulness and selfishness and, step by step, destroys the marriage bond that has been sealed by God himself, who created man and woman in his image and likeness.

Pastoral Counseling for Servants of God whose Families are Experiencing Emotional Divorce

Almost no couple chooses to marry to end in divorce; neither family expected their marriage to be in disharmony. Marriage can indeed be happy. But on the other hand, it can also be something wrong. For this reason, Anderson emphasized that marriage is a covenant bond between husband and wife that was first initiated by God himself and humans have a responsibility to maintain it.

However, efforts made by humans to maintain their families and marriages often experience deadlocks, as explained in the previous section. The stagnation experienced by families in conditions of emotional divorce and the various negative impacts that follow have encouraged the church or pastoral counselors to make this phenomenon an important point in family pastoral counseling services.

Integration between theology, psychology, and other related sciences is urgently needed in efforts to help families who are facing difficult situations like this. The church needs to prepare itself to deal with this phenomenon of emotional divorce by training other professionals who focus on this matter. The professionals in question can come from clergy or non-clergy circles who are willing to be trained and give themselves up for this helping task.

The church needs to start approaching ministers of God who are experiencing emotional divorce by becoming friends with them so they find the right place to share. The church needs to be a friend to everyone, but first to those who are in the church's closest circle, which are the servants of God and their families.

According to Corey, the purpose of family counseling is so that every married couple or family member can experience growth, which is characterized by the ability to be able to trust each other, to develop uniqueness, to develop togetherness without neglecting individual aspects, to increase self-acceptance, self-confidence, and self-respect, so that one can achieve new views and understandings about oneself and be able to find alternatives to overcoming developmental problems and solving conflicts.

Pastoral family counseling is always and cannot be separated from anything related to care based on love. For this reason, Milton Mayeroff understands family pastoral counseling as an attempt to help others grow. In family pastoral counseling, sincerity and presence are important aspects. Caring in pastoral counseling for families and their members rests on the theological belief that humans are God's creatures who are entrusted with caring for the earth. This means that the responsibility of a believer has a bigger aspect far beyond the relationship between individuals but relates to relationships that involve various aspects of human life itself in the family, whether he chooses to live single or to have a family. The Christian tradition affirms human rationality and the kind of commitment, loyalty, and care that unites the family. At the same time, he opposes all forms of family idealization in relation to other human beings, as written in Matthew 12:46–49.

With pastoral counseling for families experiencing emotional divorce, it is hoped that it can improve family functions that are lacking or even not functioning. This is in line with Anderson's criticism of how marriage is often focused on structure rather than function. Consequently, the church often grieves more over the failure of the first marriage and seeks to find fault with the failure than it does for the people who prepared and fought for the second marriage.

To avoid this, family pastoral counseling is needed in connection with marriage because it is related to the system in the family, that is, with each member of the family and not just with one of them. In the couples intervention, Patton divides it into two stages: (1) entering the system and taking on the pastoral responsibilities of those within it; and (2) being "in between" and "sharing the pain". Pastoral family counseling is in between to respond to the feelings experienced by both parties regarding the conflict that is currently being faced. After that phase, when the client feels accepted and cared for, the pastoral counselor can move on to the next stage, namely the various pains experienced. Here, the pastoral counselor can be affiliated with either party, remain in the middle, or even be "outside" of the family system. The pastoral counselor's ability to join the family is an important technique that cannot be neglected. However, whatever the position of the pastoral counselor, it is important to remember that the counselor must still provide space so that the family does not become dependent on their presence.

In pastoral counseling for families experiencing emotional divorce, pastoral counselors can start by gathering information from or assessing identified patients to find major problems in dysfunctional relationships in the family. After that, the pastoral counselor observes homeostasis in the family that is influenced by key family members. In the end, the pastoral counselor will design a new scenario to change the family transaction system and provide opportunities for families to respond freely in order to intervene in the homeostasis that has existed so far and to take advantage of the potential power possessed by the family in order to repair the relationships of family members damaged by emotional divorce earlier.

Families who are intervened by pastoral counselors are allowed to freely express their expressions and reactions to one another in the counseling room. The interventions carried out by pastoral counselors help families to be able to reframe the problems they face so that they will be able to reconnect their relationships that had problems by optimizing the various potentials they have.

Pastoral counseling for families experiencing emotional divorce is carried out within the framework of fulfilling the pastoral function as presented by William A. Clebsh and Charles R. Jaekle, which consists of four functions, namely healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling. reconciliation. By Clinebell, this function was added by nurturing³⁴ and complemented by Lartey, who added the function of liberating and empowering the pastoral function.

Pastoral counseling helps family especially spouse to realise when a husband and wife enter into marriage, the journey of family life that they go through is not always smooth. There are gravel and walls blocking the growth. This implies the importance of husband and wife seeing the family as a "joint project," which is built with great difficulty for the sake of mutual success. This project will be successful if the family

rests their lives in faith in the Lord Jesus. The success of this joint project can be achieved because husband and wife understand their relationship as equal partners in God. In the partnership task, both strive to mutually empower each other so that God's plan is fulfilled through the family. Therefore, family pastoral counseling helps spouse to understand that family is a collective vocation, not as an effort to live according to one's own ideals but as a commitment to be intimate in the real world. Intimacy in a marriage does not only focus on the marital relationship but also on the care of the future and previous generations.

D. CONCLUSION

A healthy family will create a healthy church because the church is actually a collection of families. Therefore, when families experience problems, the church needs to be present and together with families to deal with problems that arise in the family.

One form of church presence is through the church's concern for families of God's servants and the problems they face. One of the problems faced is emotional divorce. Under these circumstances ministers of God really need support, which can be expressed through pastoral counseling services.

It is hoped that with pastoral counseling services, ministers of God whose families have experienced divorce will be able to overcome the various impacts of the emotional divorce and furthermore they may experience recovery in family relationships so that they can set true examples for the congregation they serve, including in including the children in their family.

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