

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN CHRISTIAN HOMES AND THE GROWTH OF  
CHRISTIANITY IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA**

By

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### Abstract

*Conflict resolution is a vital aspect of the church's responsibilities, increasingly critical in an era where complex social, economic and religious dynamics present unprecedented challenges. This study explores the intricate connection between conflict resolution in Christian homes and the growth of Christianity in contemporary Nigeria. Adopting a theological framework, the research combines an extensive bibliographical review with insights drawn from nearly four decades of personal experience in domestic conflict resolution within the Christian ministry. The study reveals that effective conflict resolution within Christian households creates an environment of peace and stability, which is essential for fostering the broader growth of Christianity. By addressing and resolving conflicts, Christian families can maintain unity and strengthen their commitment to the faith. This, in turn, contributes to a more vibrant and expansive Christian community. The findings underscore that the health of Christian homes is intrinsically linked to the vitality and expansion of the Christian faith, suggesting that prioritising conflict resolution can significantly enhance both individual and collective spiritual growth.*

**Keywords:** Conflict resolution, Christian home, growth, Pentecostal, Christianity

### INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a fundamental aspect of human interaction, manifesting in various forms such as quarrels, fighting, severe anger, aggression, and violence. These dynamics, which generate tensions, threats, fears, anxieties, and uncertainties, can lead to significant disruptions in social cohesion. Dzurgha categorises conflict into several types, including domestic, industrial, social, political, religious, environmental, economic and international. Conflict pervades all levels of human relationships, for example, tensions between neighbours over minor disputes or more severe forms of discord such as international conflict, highlighting the broad nature of conflict. Ward notes that in today's rapidly evolving technological age, children mature more quickly and seek independence earlier than previous generations, leading to conflicts with their parents. These conflicts often manifest as teenagers challenging parental authority and questioning established rules. Furthermore, communication barriers, particularly around sensitive issues like

sexual health and mental changes, exacerbate these conflicts and deepen the divide between parents and their children.

Despite the negative aspects of conflict, some theorists argue that disorder and instability are essential for social change, transformation and development. Properly managed conflict can act as a catalyst for progress and societal growth. Conversely, conflict mismanagement can escalate into violence or a broader societal crisis, highlighting the necessity for effective conflict resolution strategies. The urgency for conflict resolution is particularly pressing in contemporary society as noted by Mickey and Wilson, Ijioma and Dzurgba. This urgency is critical for Christian homes and churches, where unresolved conflicts can significantly impede both individual and communal growth.

In contemporary Nigeria, the intersection of domestic conflict and the growth of Christianity has gained increasing relevance due to the complexities introduced by modern life. The rising social, economic and familial pressures have created new challenges for Christian families, impacting their stability and, consequently, the vitality of the Church. Addressing these conflicts within Christian homes is essential not only for the well-being of individual families but also for the broader effectiveness and growth of the Christian community. Thus, understanding how domestic conflicts are managed and resolved offers valuable insights into fostering a healthier and more dynamic Church environment. This present study explores the impact of unresolved domestic conflict on Christian homes and the broader church community. The study aims to investigate how these conflicts affect personal relationships and church dynamics, assessing their repercussions for spiritual health and church growth. Additionally, the study seeks to analyse how effective conflict resolution within Christian households can contribute to the overall vitality and expansion of the church. This involves examining practical strategies for managing conflicts and evaluating theological perspectives that can support resolution efforts. The findings will provide insights into how Christian families can enhance their spiritual and communal contributions through improved conflict management, ultimately fostering a more robust and dynamic church environment.

## Literature Review

Domestic conflict is a complex phenomenon that arises from interactions within the family unit, encompassing disputes between spouses, parents and children, siblings, and extended family members. It can be defined as any disagreement or clash that disrupts family harmony and impacts the overall functioning of the household. According to Kimmel, domestic conflict involves power struggles, resource disputes and communication breakdowns that can lead to ongoing tension and instability within the family. Theories on conflict offer a nuanced understanding of its nature and impact. Classic conflict theory, as articulated by Karl Marx, posits that conflict is an inevitable part of social interactions due to competing interests and power imbalances. Although Marx's perspective primarily addresses economic and social conflict, it provides foundational insights into how power dynamics and resource competition can manifest in domestic settings. Therefore, building on Marx, contemporary scholars such as Coser argue that conflict is not inherently destructive but can be a catalyst for social change and development. Coser's view, which emphasises that conflict can serve as a mechanism for adjusting and improving social structures, is relevant for understanding how domestic conflicts, when managed constructively, can lead to personal and relational growth.

In Christian homes, unresolved domestic conflict can significantly impact family dynamics and church participation. According to Bowen's Family Systems Theory, unresolved conflicts within family systems create patterns of dysfunction that extend beyond the home, affecting broader social and communal interactions. This theory highlights how entrenched conflict patterns influence individual behaviour and family relationships, ultimately affecting church involvement and community cohesion.

Research by Obrenovic *et al.* demonstrates that domestic conflict, if left unresolved, can lead to psychological distress and relational strain, affecting family members' well-being and their ability to engage positively within the church community. For example, conflict-related

emotional and behavioural issues can result in decreased participation in church activities and a weakened sense of community.

Effective conflict resolution is crucial for maintaining family harmony and fostering church growth. The work of Thomas and Kilmann on conflict resolution styles provides a framework for understanding how different approaches - competing, accommodating, avoiding, collaborating and compromising can influence conflict outcomes. Their research highlights collaborative approaches, which involve open communication and mutual problem-solving, as most effective in resolving conflicts and enhancing relational dynamics.

In the context of Christian teachings, the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation is emphasised. Biblical principles, such as those found in Matthew 18:15 and Ephesians 4:31-32, advocate for a resolution process grounded in love, humility, and forgiveness. These principles are supported by contemporary studies, such as those by Enright and Fitzgibbons, which highlight the therapeutic benefits of forgiveness in resolving interpersonal conflicts and promoting emotional healing.

The implications of unresolved domestic conflict for church growth are significant. Studies such as Michaelson *et al.* suggest that unresolved conflicts within families can lead to fragmentation within church communities, with members experiencing decreased engagement and participation. Furthermore, a lack of effective conflict resolution can undermine the church's mission and outreach efforts, as unresolved internal issues detract from its ability to minister and support its congregation effectively. To address these challenges, churches need to implement comprehensive conflict resolution programmes that integrate theological principles with practical strategies. This includes offering counselling services, fostering open communication, and promoting forgiveness and reconciliation within the church community. All of these are central to effective conflict resolution within Christian homes, ultimately promoting family well-being and church growth. Understanding the nature of domestic conflict, employing effective

resolution strategies and integrating theological principles are key to fostering a healthy and dynamic church environment.

### **Christian Home and Church Growth**

The role of the Christian home in church growth cannot be overstated, especially within the context of traditional African society, where the family is the foundational unit of the community. Historically, the family has been the bedrock upon which the values and cohesion of society rest. With the advent of modern civilisation, the family has retained its significance as the central pillar of both society and the Church. This enduring role underscores the vital connection between the health of Christian homes and the overall growth and stability of the Church.

In traditional African societies, the family is the basic social unit and the primary vehicle for transmitting cultural, moral and religious values. Even as these societies have modernised, the family continues to be the cohesive force that binds the community together. The implications for the Church are profound: a society made up of godly families is less likely to be plagued by corruption, violence and division. In this context, the Church can only thrive and fulfil its mission when the families that comprise it are spiritually healthy and free from major distractions or conflicts. As Audi aptly notes, "The problem of the family is the problem of the Church." When families are in turmoil, the ripple effects are felt across society, the Church and individual life.

This understanding highlights the necessity of maintaining order and peace within Christian homes. A breakdown in family harmony can lead to broader societal and ecclesiastical disruptions, making it imperative for the Church to actively support conflict resolution within families. A peaceful Christian family is not just desirable; it is essential for the growth and stability of the Church. Without this peace, the Church's mission and the spiritual well-being of its members are at risk.

Audi further explains that children of Christian parents are integral to the future of the Church, referred to as the "Church expectant." In a harmonious family environment, these children are more likely to embrace the Christian faith and continue the legacy of their parents. However, when a family is in crisis, the likelihood of these children coming to faith can diminish significantly. The state of the family, whether harmonious or strained, thus has a direct impact on the Church's growth and its ability to nurture future generations of believers.

Moreover, the involvement of families in church life is crucial for the Church's vibrancy and growth. Families that are consistent in their church attendance and participation provide stability and inspiration to the entire congregation. While church growth campaigns, pastoral encouragement and various programmes can promote church attendance, the most effective motivation comes from within the home. When conflicts within the family are resolved, attending church becomes a natural and enjoyable part of family life, reinforcing the Church's growth.

The health and stability of a Christian home are directly linked to the growth and vitality of the Church. As the fundamental building blocks of both society and the Church, families must be supported and nurtured to ensure that they can fulfil their role in the spiritual and communal life of the Church. Conflict resolution within families is not just beneficial, the Church needs to thrive and continue its mission in the world.

### **Characteristics of Church Growth**

A defining characteristic of a growing church is its commitment to caring for each member. According to Kraus, churches experience growth when they address the needs of all members, reflecting the principle from John 13:35, which emphasises that genuine love among members signifies discipleship. This includes ministering to broken or struggling families, a need that the church must address to effectively support and grow its community. The church's ability to meet these needs fosters a sense of belonging and care, which is crucial for both retention and growth. Churches that grow tend to actively engage with the unsaved in their communities. As noted by

various scholars, a church's relevance is often measured by its ability to address and connect with broader societal needs. The Early Church is a model of this as it engaged with both appreciation and criticism from the wider world. Effective outreach and addressing social issues are essential for a church's growth, ensuring that the gospel reaches those beyond the church walls and resonates with their immediate needs.

Enthusiasm and joy among members are key indicators of church growth. Kraus highlights that a vibrant congregation often exhibits signs of happiness such as frequent singing and mutual encouragement. This positive atmosphere not only strengthens the existing community but also attracts new members. Churches that maintain a joyful and welcoming environment are more likely to foster growth, creating an inviting space for individuals seeking spiritual connection and support.

Effective pastoral leadership is crucial for fostering church growth. A strong pastor, who can handle conflict constructively, preach powerfully, lead meaningful worship and address spiritual needs significantly contributes to the health and stability of the congregation. Without such leadership, a church may suffer from instability and unresolved conflicts which can impede its growth and effectiveness. As noted by Dever, strong pastoral leadership helps navigate and resolve internal challenges, thereby supporting the church's overall mission and growth.

A growing church effectively utilises the diverse gifts of its members. Encouraging the participation and involvement of everyone within the congregation helps sustain and enhance growth. According to Henrickson, the diverse gifts and talents of church members are essential for a well-rounded and dynamic church life. Each member's unique contributions support various aspects of church ministry, ensuring that the church remains vibrant and functional. This inclusivity strengthens the church's ability to grow and adapt to the needs of its community.

### **Causes of Conflict in Christian Home**

Conflicts within Christian homes are often multifaceted, rooted in both personal and societal factors. According to Folarin, several elements contribute to marital instability and conflict within the home, including a lack of love, sexual incompatibility, violence, disparities in education levels between spouses and differing religious affiliations. These factors can create tensions that undermine the foundation of a Christian home, leading to discord and even divorce.

From a Biblical perspective, the primary responsibility of a woman as emphasised in Proverbs 31 is towards her home. Any factor that hinders a woman from fulfilling her domestic duties can lead to instability within the family. Divorce is strongly condemned in the Scripture as evidenced by God's declaration of His hatred for divorce in Malachi 2:16 and Jesus' teachings in Matthew 5:31 and 19:3-12. Consequently, when women become excessively involved in Church activities at the expense of their familial responsibilities, it can create significant strain and conflict at home. Folarin highlights the cases of women like Kathy Kuhlman, Aimee Semple McPherson, and Bishop M. B. Odeleke-Salau, who, despite their significant contributions to the Church, experienced severe personal costs, including broken homes and strained relationships with their children.

Another major source of conflict is the attitude towards sexual relations within marriage. Some ministers, for instance, may become so engrossed in their spiritual duties that they neglect their spouses' sexual needs, leading to frustration and resentment. The Bible addresses this issue directly, advising couples not to deprive each other of physical intimacy except by mutual consent for short periods as stated in 1 Corinthians 7:5-6. Failure to adhere to this teaching can lead to marital discord and temptations that threaten the stability of a Christian home.

Financial mismanagement is another significant cause of conflict in Christian homes. Ojebode notes that financial strain often arises when one or both spouses fail to manage their resources wisely. In many cases, this results in the wife engaging in gainful employment to supplement the family income. However, the demands of modern life, where both spouses may work long hours, can exacerbate this problem, leading to fatigue and a lack of meaningful

communication within the home. The absence of effective financial planning can strain relationships and diminish the family's overall well-being.

The sex of a child can also be a source of conflict, particularly in traditional African settings. Fred-Adegbulugbe recounts the story of one Angela whose marital crisis stemmed from the fact that she had only female children. Her husband's preference for a male child led him to take another wife, resulting in a polygynous situation that brought further complications and challenges to the family. The Bible advocates for monogamy with no provision for divorce, adultery or polygamy (either polygyny or polyandry) in God's original design for marriage. Polygamy, therefore, is discouraged due to its potentially destructive effects on the family structure.

Childlessness or infertility is another critical issue that can cause strife in Christian homes. The inability to bear children can lead to feelings of inadequacy, and frustration and often drive one or both spouses to seek extramarital relationships. This can result in severe conflicts, and in extreme cases, divorce. The societal pressure to produce offspring, particularly in traditional African contexts, can exacerbate these tensions and lead to marital breakdown.

Urbanisation has also played a significant role in altering family dynamics, contributing to the breakdown of traditional family structures. The move from rural areas to crowded urban centres has introduced new economic, social and psychological stresses that can weaken family bonds. The lack of personal space and the hectic pace of urban life often make family members strangers to one another, leading to increased isolation and conflicts within the home.

Neglect of matrimonial obligations, including communication and care, is another common cause of conflict. Many individuals prioritise their professional or social responsibilities over their family, leading to neglect and dissatisfaction within the home. For instance, pastors who spend excessive time in Church meetings may inadvertently neglect their families, causing long-term damage to their relationships and, by extension, the Church community.

Ethnic prejudice is another factor that can disrupt the peace of Christian homes. In Nigeria, where ethnic identities such as Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa play a significant role, these differences can become sources of contention within marriages. Turaki argues that Christian values should transcend ethnic differences, promoting unity and brotherliness among believers. Ethnocentrism and tribalism, if left unchecked, can become significant barriers to both family harmony and the broader growth of the Church.

Poverty is another factor that can shatter the peace of a Christian home. Financial strain often leads to stress, frustration and conflict particularly when one or both spouses are unable to manage their resources effectively. Dali notes that poor financial management, coupled with a lack of understanding of the balance between spiritual and material wealth can lead to poverty and consequently, conflict within the family.

The changing nature of availability or non-availability of employment is also a contributing factor to domestic conflict. Unlike in traditional times when family members lived and worked close to home, modern work arrangements often require both parents to work long hours away from home, leading to a breakdown in communication and a weakening of family ties. This separation can create feelings of isolation and neglect, further exacerbating tensions within the home.

### **Essence of Conflict in Church Growth**

Conflict is a dynamic process that serves as a bridge between the disruption of established norms (chaos) and the achievement of new reconciled states (harmony). While the notion of conflict may evoke suspicion and a desire for alternative paths, it remains an inescapable and essential element within Christian experience and doctrine. The tension and challenges presented by conflict play a crucial role in the spiritual and organisational growth of the Church. Within Christian ministry, the burdens are considerable, and when compounded by the strain of household division, these burdens can be overwhelming. Marriage, often regarded as the testing ground for true spirituality, reveals the authentic character of individuals. The ability of couples

to navigate through conflict, overcome hatred, eschew malice and lead by example, directly influences the health and growth of the Church.

The Church, while ultimately focused on reconciliation, must first engage with conflict as a necessary step towards that end. Conflict is intricately connected to power dynamics and negotiation within the Church, catalysing movement away from apathy, complacency, and powerlessness. It provides clarity on specific issues, fosters negotiation, and ultimately leads to resolution and reconciliation. As noted by Mickey and Wilson, conflict is not only a hallmark of the Church but also its birthmark, an integral aspect of its theology and ministry. Jesus himself employed conflict as a means in his ministry, establishing both the principle and practice of conflict as essential components of Christian ministry.

Conflict is also necessary for the Church's ongoing mission to revitalise itself, its ministry, and mankind. Effective ministers are called upon to guide individuals through grief and conflict in ways that promote both personal and ecclesial growth. Ingram *et al.* observe that the forms of conflict and the accompanying grief are unique to each individual, shaped by their education, personality, culture, and social support. Henrickson further adds that each person embodies a complex interplay of interests, abilities, experiences, and education that often conflict with one another. Maturity and spiritual growth, therefore, are achieved through continuous engagement with conflicting ideas and behaviours, prompting personal reflection and deeper understanding within the body of Christ.

Moreover, the resolution of conflict is vital for preserving the unity and purity of the Church. The Apostle Paul exhorts the Ephesians to maintain unity within the Church, highlighting the significance of this unity as a reflection of being equally made in the image of God. This call to unity is followed by discussions on the oneness of the body of Christ, underscoring the importance of conflict resolution in maintaining the Church's integrity. The Bible consistently underscores the necessity of removing evil from the midst of God's people to maintain the Church's purity (Deut. 19:19; 21:9; 24:7; Judges 20:13; Ezek. 20:38; I Cor. 5:13).

Additionally, resolving conflict is essential for preserving sound doctrine within the Church. As Dever points out, the local Church bears the responsibility of upholding orthodox theology that aligns with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **Biblical Strategy for Conflict Resolution**

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human relationships, including those within Christian homes and churches. The Bible provides numerous strategies for managing and resolving conflict, emphasising virtues such as patience, forgiveness, effective communication, and prayer. These strategies are vital for maintaining harmony in the home and promoting the growth of the church.

### **Prayer as a Tool for Peace**

Prayer is a fundamental strategy for resolving domestic conflict and ensuring the growth of the church. Couples who understand the spiritual significance of marriage often resort to prayer, especially during crises. This spiritual commitment fosters unity and strengthens the marital bond, enabling couples to navigate financial crises, misunderstandings, and other challenges. The Bible underscores the power of prayer in conflict resolution, as seen in James 5:16, which emphasises the efficacy of fervent prayer by the righteous. The role of prayer in conflict resolution is not limited to individual families but extends to the entire church community, where collective prayers can bring peace and unity.

### **Effective Communication**

Effective communication is essential for resolving conflicts within Christian homes, acting as a crucial tool for addressing misunderstandings and fostering harmonious relationships among family members. Communication serves as the foundation of any successful marriage, enabling mutual understanding, cooperation, and emotional connection. Olatunde emphasises the importance of dialogue in maintaining a stable and peaceful home, stating, "If you talk together,

you stay together." This insight emphasises how open and honest communication is pivotal in sustaining healthy relationships and preventing conflicts from escalating. The Apostle Paul reinforces this principle in Ephesians 4:15 (NIV), where he instructs believers to "speak the truth in love". This directive highlights the need for clarity and compassion in communication, encouraging family members to express their thoughts and feelings in a manner that fosters understanding and resolution. By prioritising effective communication, Christian families can address conflicts constructively and build stronger, more resilient relationships grounded in biblical values. This approach not only helps in resolving immediate issues but also contributes to long-term relational harmony and growth.

### **The Role of Forgiveness**

Forgiveness is central to conflict resolution in Christian homes. The Bible repeatedly calls on believers to forgive one another as God has forgiven them (Colossians 3:13). Forgiveness alleviates bitterness and resentment, creating an atmosphere conducive to reconciliation and peace. The teachings of Jesus in Matthew 18:21-22, where He instructs Peter to forgive "seventy times seven" times, underscore the importance of an unlimited willingness to forgive. This principle is crucial for maintaining unity in the home and church, as unresolved grievances can lead to long-term discord and hinder spiritual growth.

### **The Power of Forgiveness and Reconciliation**

The Bible places a significant emphasis on reconciliation as a crucial method for resolving conflicts within the Christian community. Matthew 18:15-17 outlines a systematic approach for addressing grievances, which begins with private discussions between the parties involved. If resolution is not achieved through this initial step, the process involves bringing the matter before one or two others to mediate and if necessary, escalating the issue to the entire church community (Matthew 18:15-17, NIV). This method depicts the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation, aiming to prevent conflicts from escalating and disrupting the unity of the church.

By following this biblical procedure, the church promotes a culture of peace and accountability, reinforcing its collective harmony and spiritual health.

### **Balancing Church Involvement with Family Unity**

A local church may organise a marriage enrichment seminar to support and strengthen families within the congregation. However, if the pastor is overly occupied with his family responsibilities or if the church's programme requires extensive involvement from family members on a nightly basis, it can inadvertently disrupt family unity. When church activities interfere with family time and contribute to the stress or fragmentation of family life, it can lead to decreased engagement and participation among members. As noted by some scholars, the effectiveness of such programmes hinges on maintaining a balance between church involvement and family responsibilities. If the church's schedule and demands place undue strain on family relationships, the intended benefits of enrichment seminars may be undermined, leading to diminished commitment and involvement from the congregation. Therefore, churches must consider the impact of their programmes on family dynamics and strive to create a supportive environment that fosters both spiritual growth and family well-being. This balanced approach helps ensure that church initiatives strengthen rather than strain family relationships, ultimately contributing to the overall health and vitality of the congregation.

### **The Impact of Love and Communalism**

The early Christian church exemplified a spirit of love, sharing, and communalism, which is essential for conflict resolution. Acts 2:44-47 describes how the early Christians lived in unity, sharing their possessions and caring for one another's needs. This model of communal living can be applied to modern Christian homes, where love and mutual care should prevail. Fatokun observes that the contemporary church has drifted towards capitalism, where the rich often neglect the poor. This shift has weakened the communal bonds that once characterised Christian communities, making it imperative for Christians to revive the spirit of brotherhood and mutual support.

### **Consultation and Spiritual Leadership**

Seeking counsel from spiritual leaders is a vital biblical strategy for resolving conflicts within Christian homes. Proverbs 11:14 (NKJV) emphasises the importance of seeking guidance: "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counsellors, there is safety". This verse points at the value of wisdom and collective advice in maintaining stability and harmony. Consulting spiritual leaders provides families with valuable guidance rooted in biblical principles, helping them address conflicts in a manner that reflects their faith and values. Spiritual leaders offer not only practical advice but also spiritual insights that align with scriptural teachings, fostering a resolution that supports both emotional and spiritual well-being. This practice strengthens the family's connection to their faith community and reinforces the role of accountability and mutual support in overcoming domestic challenges. By involving spiritual leaders, families benefit from the wisdom and experience of those who are deeply rooted in biblical teachings, thereby promoting a more harmonious and supportive family environment. This approach aligns with the broader biblical principle of seeking counsel and support from the community to navigate complex and challenging situations effectively.

### **Family Planning**

From a biblical perspective, family planning can play a crucial role in resolving conflicts within Christian homes by enabling couples to manage their sexual and reproductive lives in a way that minimises unnecessary stress and strain. Effective family planning allows couples to maintain a healthy sexual relationship and avoid the financial and emotional burdens associated with unplanned pregnancies, which can exacerbate domestic conflicts. Traditional family planning methods may sometimes be seen as conflicting with biblical teachings. However, modern approaches that adhere to scriptural principles can provide a balanced solution. For instance, methods that respect the natural rhythms of the body and avoid the use of artificial contraception are often considered more consistent with biblical values. By preventing unplanned pregnancies and allowing for better family planning, couples can reduce the likelihood of conflicts arising

from financial strain or emotional stress, thereby fostering a more harmonious and supportive home environment. This approach aligns with the biblical call for responsible stewardship and care within the family unit, as outlined in scriptures that emphasise planning and provision (Proverbs 31:21-22). By integrating family planning within a framework of faith, couples can address potential sources of conflict proactively and maintain a healthier, more stable family life.

### **Effective Teaching on Conflict Resolution**

According to Moronkola, the Church must prioritise teaching its members about conflict resolution, effective communication and fostering good neighbourliness within the family. This emphasis is grounded in the understanding that many issues within church administration are rooted in the individual families that make up the congregation. For instance, the negative influence of a father with a laissez-faire attitude, who heads a department in the church can ripple through the organisation. Similarly, an aggressive older child tasked with coordinating younger children in the church, or an adolescent who steals serving as an usher can significantly impact the church's integrity and operations. Additionally, a wife suffering from emotional abuse who participates in the choir or a mother frequently involved in family quarrels who leads the women's fellowship can introduce discord into these ministries. Finally, a disorganised individual serving as the church secretary can result in administrative inefficiencies. Such scenarios highlight how personal and family issues can detrimentally affect the broader church community, underscoring the importance of addressing these foundational concerns. No doubt, biblical strategies for conflict resolution, such as prayer, effective communication, forgiveness, love, consultation, and family planning, are essential for maintaining harmony in Christian homes and fostering church growth. These strategies align with the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, offering a framework for resolving conflicts in a manner that promotes spiritual growth and unity. As Christians apply these principles in their daily lives, they contribute to the overall health and vitality of the church, ensuring that it remains a strong and unified body.

## **Impact of Conflict Resolution Strategies Employed in Christian Homes on Church Growth in Nigeria**

Conflict resolution strategies within Christian homes have a profound impact on the growth and development of churches in Nigeria. The health of family relationships and the effectiveness of conflict management in Christian households directly influence the overall vitality and expansion of the church. Below is an examination of how various conflict resolution strategies impact church growth in Nigeria.

### **Strengthening Family Unity and Church Engagement**

Effective conflict resolution within a Christian home fosters unity and stability, which are crucial for active church participation. Families that practice healthy communication and forgiveness tend to be more engaged in church activities and ministries. As already noted by Olatunde, if you talk together, you stay together, emphasising that open and constructive communication within families enhances their commitment to church life. This increased engagement can lead to more vibrant and active church communities.

### **Enhancing Spiritual Growth and Leadership**

Conflict resolution strategies that align with biblical teachings contribute to the spiritual growth of individuals and families. For instance, Proverbs 11:14 mentions the importance of seeking counsel from spiritual leaders, which helps families navigate conflicts in a manner consistent with Christian values. This spiritual guidance strengthens the leadership within the church, as individuals who manage their conflicts well are better equipped to lead and serve in church roles. Effective leaders who model conflict resolution strategies can inspire and guide their congregations, fostering overall church growth.

### **Promoting Healthy Church Dynamics**

When Christian home effectively manages conflicts, they contribute to healthier church dynamics. Families that resolve conflicts constructively are less likely to bring unresolved issues into the church environment, reducing the likelihood of divisions and factionalism within the congregation. This positive dynamic is essential for creating a cohesive and supportive church community. As Kraus notes, churches that care for their members and address their needs experience growth, which is facilitated by the healthy relational dynamics stemming from effective conflict resolution at home.

### **Addressing Social and Economic Challenges**

In Nigeria, where social and economic challenges can strain family relationships, effective conflict resolution strategies play a critical role in maintaining family stability. Financial strains as already noted, for instance, can lead to domestic conflicts that, if left unresolved, affect the family's ability to participate in church activities. By addressing these conflicts through biblical principles and practical strategies, families can maintain their stability and continue contributing to the church's mission. This stability enhances the church's ability to reach out to the community and address social needs effectively.

### **Influencing Community Outreach and Evangelism**

Churches with strong and conflict-resilient families are better positioned to engage in community outreach and evangelism. Families that experience and manage conflict effectively are often more committed to the church's mission of reaching out to non-churched individuals. The church's ability to touch the lives of those in the community is amplified by the positive influence of stable, well-functioning families within its congregation. As noted by Kraus, addressing the needs of the unsaved and engaging with the community are key aspects of church growth, which are supported by healthy family dynamics.

### **Conclusion**

Conflict resolution in Christian homes plays a pivotal role in shaping the health and growth of churches, particularly within the context of Christianity in Nigeria. The strategies employed to manage and resolve conflicts within families have far-reaching implications for both individual spiritual development and the overall vitality of church communities. Effective conflict resolution fosters family unity, which is crucial for active and meaningful church participation. Families that practice open communication and forgiveness, and seek spiritual guidance contribute positively to their church environments, enhancing both personal and collective engagement. This, in turn, supports the church's mission and strengthens its ability to reach and impact the community.

Furthermore, resolving conflicts according to biblical principles not only aids in personal spiritual growth but also strengthens church leadership and promotes healthier church dynamics. Strong, conflict-resilient families are better equipped to lead and serve, creating a more cohesive and supportive church community. This positive environment facilitates the church's outreach efforts and its ability to address social and economic challenges faced by its members and the broader community. Ultimately, unresolved domestic conflicts can undermine church growth by fostering division, distracting from the church's mission, and diminishing spiritual vitality. Therefore, proactive conflict management within Christian homes is essential for sustaining the health and growth of churches. By embracing effective conflict resolution strategies, churches can ensure that they remain vibrant, engaged and capable of fulfilling their spiritual and community-oriented goals.

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