

**AN APPRAISAL OF RECONCILIATION IN MATT 5:21-26 TO THE  
UNDERSTANDING OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE BAPTIST CHURCHES IN  
OSOGBO**

**BY**

**ISAAC ADEYEMI ISHOLA**

**B.A.; (ADO-EKITI)**

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## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research was carried out by ISHOLA Isaac Adeyemi (Registration Number ARP09/10/H/2259) in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Masters degree (M.A.) in Religious Studies under my supervision.

.....  
Dr. S.O. Olanisebe

Supervisor

.....  
Dr. S.A. Owoeye

Head of Department

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## ABSTRACT

The study identified and characterized Matt 5:21-26 in its original context. It addressed the impact of biblical principles of reconciliation highlighted in Matt 5:21- 26 on the teaching of Baptist Churches in Osogbo. It also examined the application of the teachings in Matt 5:21-26 to conflict resolution among the members of Baptist Churches in Osogbo. This was with a view to evaluating the success or otherwise of the application of the teaching to conflict resolution.

The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary source included interviews which were conducted with 100 purposively selected church members; 10 each from 10 purposively selected Baptist Churches in Osogbo. Secondary source included books, journal articles, and the internet. The data collected were analyzed using exegetical and hermeneutical approaches.

The result showed that the text of Matt 5:21-26 addressed five principles of reconciliation which involved taking the initiative by the offender, asking for clarification, asking for forgiveness, resolving not to repeat the offence and forgiveness.

The study also found out that while the Baptist Churches in Osogbo usually applied the principles of reconciliation highlighted in Matt 5:21-26, they usually went an extra mile by referring cases of conflict either between individuals or between the Pastor or leaders

and members to the Baptist Association, Conference and Convention. However, if the case could not be settled by any of these bodies, the Baptist Convention was empowered to dissociate or excommunicate such an erring member or local Baptist Church. The study further revealed that conflicts existed in Baptist Churches in Osogbo both among individuals and groups. It also discovered that causes of conflicts varied but power tussle, doctrinal disagreement, personality clashes, management/administration style and lack of trust were prominent causes of conflict in Baptist Churches in Osogbo. The study revealed that in 2012, 90% of conflict in the church, based on the application of the teachings of Matt 5:21-26 on conflict resolution, were resolved amicably.

The study concluded that conflicts did occur in any human gathering and relationship and the church was not exempted. However, the application of the reconciliation principles as exemplified in Matt 5:21-26 could assist in their amicable resolution.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

It is a common fact that conflict occurs at any time or season of the year in Christian organizations, denominations, local churches, nations, families and individuals. While some conflicts are resolved without thinking about moral issues surrounding them, some are left unresolved. In most Baptist churches in Osogbo, some of the conflicts being experienced have to do with relationship between Pastors and church members. Some pastors have been accused of being autocratic for acting as if they are the owners of the church, while some pastors have alleged the deacons and some church members with arrogance for usurping their authority as if they were managing directors of companies.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the symptoms of the problems are internal division, cliques and factions, sharply increased attendance at certain meetings, increased use of hostile language, misconception of other members as enemies, fear of insecurity, conspiracies, increased discussion about the goal of the church indicating a breakdown of consensus, incongruity between what people say at meetings and what they say outside after the meeting concerning the church matters, unfocused anxiety and anger, friendship patterns change, communication patterns change, mistrust, misuse of pulpit, blackmailing, members transferring membership from one church to another and many

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<sup>1</sup> Osadolor Imasogie, Church Administration (Ibadan: Publication Department, Nigerian Baptist Convention, 1950), II.

<sup>2</sup> Leas Speed and Paul Kittlaus, Church Fight: Managing Conflict in the Local Church (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973), 65-67.

more.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, the church is not achieving her main purpose of existence due to these reasons.

In actual fact, these symptoms may be indications of other problems in the church; such as poor management of conflict which is producing one or more of these reactions. Sometimes, it could be realized that the conflict has been generated and dealt with overtly. But more often than not strategies are ingeniously invented to avoid such conflict. Resultantly, the postponed conflict becomes more volatile and even more destructive.<sup>3</sup> All these raise some moral issues in the affairs of the church and her members, therefore this thesis affords the researcher an opportunity to look at the reconciliation process emanating from conflict over power between pastors and laity in Baptist churches in Osogbo.

## 1.2 **Background to the Study**

Conflict is a serious problem within the church. Wishing it away cannot resolve it and delaying its management, or managing it haphazardly will only make it worse. Differences occur among people, but conflict develops when individuals do not resolve their disagreements peaceably. The study will strive to investigate and analyze the sources of conflicts generally and the specific cases of the churches in view with the effects on the churches and the pastors themselves.

The biblical pattern of relationship that should operate between the pastors and their church members according to the teaching of Jesus Christ in Matt. 5:21-26. And the reconciliatory process base on the text.

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<sup>3</sup> Leas, 10-17.



### 1.3 **Statement of Research Problem**

The motivation for the study is derived from the observation by the researcher of incessant conflict in the church, the manner in which such conflict is managed which often time resulted in the breakdown of relationship within the church. Another observation of the researcher is that most Baptist Pastors in Osogbo are facing church conflicts. Some resulted into the pastors being asked to resign from their churches because their responses to the conflicts aggravated the problems rather than solving it.

The need for proper understanding of conflict amongst the Baptist Pastors/Church members becomes imperative. This work focused on an appraisal of reconciliation in Matt.5: 21-26 to the understanding of conflict resolution in the Baptist Churches in Osogbo, Osun State.

### 1.4 **Objective of the Study**

This study identified and characterized Matt 5:21-26 in its original context. It is also aimed to assess the biblical principles of reconciliation highlighted in Matt. 5:21-26 on the teachings of Baptist Churches in Osogbo. The application of the teachings in Matt 5:21-26 to conflict resolution among the members of Baptist Churches in Osogbo would be examined. Finally, there will be evaluation on the success or otherwise of this application of the teaching to conflict resolution among Baptist Churches in Osogbo.

### 1.5 **Significance of the Study**

For more information, please contact [ir-help@oauife.edu.ng](mailto:ir-help@oauife.edu.ng)