

NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES PROGRAMME

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION II

PRESENT A LESSON TO ADULTS CHURCH LEADERS: DESTROYING THE WALLS OF TRIBALISM
IN THE CHURCH

GROUP: INTERDENOMINATIONAL PASTORS FELLOWSHIP (5-8) ED 223

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Title: Destroying the Walls of tribalism

Aim:

Help audience understand God's ideal for human relationships Encourage audience to embrace the larger identity in Christ Help audience relate well with those who are different

Introduction

Africa is infected by a deadly virus that has not spared the church of Christ. Victims and casualties are everywhere to be seen. It is more subtle, looks less inoffensive, takes many forms, disguises behind apparently candid jokes. That is tribalism. Its presence in the church is unwanted by outstandingly in control. We will look at the causes, the manifestations and the consequences. Together we will come up with practical suggestions to eradicate tribalism based on Biblical truth. This lesson will discuss the issue within the boundaries and realities of the church.

Body

Cause of tribalism

Myths:

In our country, a certain clan is well known for its beautiful girls but no man from another clan takes them in marriage. It is considered as Bible truth that if you date them, you die even before marriage. As we were doing research, an old man of the clan told us that lie has been forged out of Jealousy. Other clans were loosing all their men who preferred to marry from the Bashingwe instead of their own clan, they created the lie to dissuade their young man. 'Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set

you free (John 8: 36), says Jesus. Even if the curse is real, Jesus was hang on the tree to take away our curse (Galatians 3: 13). Even if the 'Bashingwe' girls bring curse, which I don't believe at all, those of them who come to the Lord are purified and delivered. Let's be careful about all those legends we hear about the other tribes and test them, do research but mainly seek to know the truth that will help us see others as God sees them.

Unresolved conflicts

In Rwanda, the Hutu and Tutsi have lived with strong prejudices which have been aggravated by the genocide. When one young militia was asked why he was so committed to kill the Tutsi, he replied:

‘Their grandfathers have mistreated our parents’. The Bible says: ‘See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many’ (Heb 12: 15). Most of the parents who have experienced hurts from other tribes through wars or betrayal poison the next generation which leads to the sin of the fathers passed on to the sons (Lam 5: 7). Parents, teachers, pastors should continually look into themselves and deal with all the hurts related to different tribes.

Lack of understanding of God’s ideal

Jesus said: ‘that they may be one as we are one’ (John 17: 22). In the book of Ephesians 2: 14, Paul says ‘For He (Jesus) himself is our peace who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations’. Though this applies to Jews and Gentiles, it has implication for those who have come to the family of God. In his epistle to Corinthians (II Corinthians 5: 16) Paul tells the Corinthians that he will consider nobody according to the flesh (genealogies, flesh, tribe, religion). A wise man said that if someone denies the fraternity with the people of God, he also denies the paternity of God Himself.

God is drawing from all tribes, nations, people, a new nation which transcends all the natural identities. It is time the church understands that God created the cultural differences (Acts 17: 26). God enjoys diversity (Revel 5: 9). God is diversity in the Trinity.

It is time we start to value the differences, to love them, to worship the God of diversity and stop rejecting others in the name of God or the Bible.

How does it manifest

Jokes, talk: In Rwanda, young children could make jokes about Tutsi, saying they are serpent, laughing, thinking there was nothing wrong with it. What do people say about other groups and believe with whole their heart that nobody should be offended. The Bible talks about the power of the tongues to affect someone’s behavior or life (James 3: 8-9). What do we pray about the other groups. Do we bless them?

Discrimination in choices: How many people have suffered injustices, denied promotion or simply repulsed when seeking a job in churches or church organizations because they were from the ‘wrong tribe’. There is no surprise that some of the churches ended up mono ethnic.

Mono ethnic churches: In Nairobi, people will go a long distance to find a church of their tribe. We need to check our motives in choosing a particular church. In Congo, a pastor refused that Banyamulenge members partake to the Holy Communion. Why should they come back?

Interrupted dating and marriages: Paul wrote in Corinthians (II Cor 6: 14-16) about not be yoked together with the unbelievers. The main principle about choice of partner should be the faith in Christ and the Christian character of the potential partner and let the Holy Spirit lead the person to the right individual. A colleague has suffered when her fiancé told her he

has changed his mind because of the pressure of his family not to marry her. She was from a different tribe.

Pastors have dissuaded young man and woman to marry those of a different tribe. Which Bible scripture do they base their counsel?

What are the consequences?

Lack of credibility: The church which is supposed to be light and salt (Mat 5: 13-16), the model in terms of harmonious living has failed the world. All the conflicts along tribal lines have put the church on the same bench of the accused as the politicians who play tribalism to access power.

Lack of power: With the loss of testimony, it is difficult for us to change the world (Matt 28: 19- 20). We are not attractive. Jesus said when three are united, whatever they ask will be given. We have messed and become ineffective.

We have missed the blessings that go with unity: God promises all kind of blessing upon those who are united (Ps 133), including the Holy Spirit to those who live in unity. No wonder that the church resembles a desert despite all the fasting and prayers around.

Internal unrest: Casualties from the virus of tribalism move from one church to another. It is God's idea that believers will belong to a local church (Acts 2: 42-45) and be nurtured by the fivefold ministries (Ephes 4: 11). Not only resentment hatred, strife, bitterness, grumbling infest the fellowship of the brethren but a big waste of gifted, mature believers leave the church in an uneasy place.

Application

What to do?

Personal: It is time to assess or evaluate our own beliefs and behavior. Is there anything the Holy Spirit wants us to repent or renounce? Is there any behavior I need to change?

Is there any forgiveness that needs to take place? Is there any individual or a group I need to start blessing?

Church: What are 3 specific goals each church leader is going to include in the Educational ministries of his church to promote reconciliation and harmony between the tribes? What are the changes in the format of the service, in the structure, in the staff will the church undertake to bring harmony and promote genuine, Bible based interaction between the tribes?

Outside church: Plan and organize an event that will promote reconciliation between the tribes in the community.

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