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Pastoral Guidance for Divorced Couples in GMIM Zaitun Motoling Church

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Abstract---Understanding love as a gift from the divine power, feeling the sensation of being in love, one desires to possess their beloved. If likened, it feels like the world belongs only to the two. This metaphor holds when the person we love also loves us in return. The commitment to marriage and building a family emerges from this feeling of love. In essence, marriage is the union of two individuals, only to be separated by death. It is love that sustains a marriage. However, some marriages fail to endure and result in divorce. In truth, no one desires a divorce, especially when the marriage is built upon love. Far from anyone's hope, a household may break apart. Divorce undoubtedly impacts the divorcing couple, the children affected, their families, and the church/community. The church has indeed provided guidance for couples before marriage and even support for families facing issues to prevent divorce. However, there needs to be more pastoral guidance for divorced couples post-divorce. This study examines how pastoral guidance can be offered to divorced couples to mitigate the effects on those in pre-divorce or post-divorce situations. The methodology includes a literature review and interviews with several divorced couples from GMIM Zaitun Motoling Church. The conclusion drawn emphasizes the crucial role of the church in offering pastoral guidance to divorced couples, enabling them to continue their daily lives and spiritual growth. This helps prevent the consequences of unfulfilled biological needs, which could arise as logical aftermath of divorce.

Keywords---counseling, divorce, marriage, pastoral guidance.

Introduction

When love enters a person's life, and they understand the joy of being loved and loving in return, they are willing to go to great lengths to maintain the love they have, regardless of the amount of time, effort, or even material resources spent, as long as it is for the sake of love and the happiness of the beloved. Love founded on honesty, loyalty, trust, and mutual respect sustains a relationship. Conversely, lies, betrayal, distrust, and disrespect can destroy a relationship. Love, in its true essence, does not inflict harm. The wounds caused by lies and betrayal are not quickly healed; some may persist for years or even a lifetime, with individuals unwilling to forgive those who hurt them. This is why pastoral guidance is necessary to heal these emotional wounds (Sele & Dwikoryanto, 2021).

Pastoral guidance combines two words that signify service: "counseling" and "pastoral." Counseling refers to the interaction between two individuals, where one seeks assistance and the other, an authorized and capable figure, provides aid. The evolution of counseling is not limited to just two individuals; it can also involve a group of people who need help, with one or more individuals capable of offering problem-solving assistance. The earlier form of counseling was individual counseling, and the latter was group counseling (Jacob, 2018). The guidance process should continue before or after divorce to better understand marriage's true meaning.

Marriage, commonly called matrimony, essentially legitimizes the creation of the smallest social unit in society – the family. Marriage recognizes and declares the union between a man and a woman before society (Markes, 2023). Ngelow (2018) states, "Marriage serves to unite two individuals in a bond of love, complete loyalty, and trust, with the responsibility and commitment to create happiness mutually." The definition of marriage in the KBBI (Indonesian Language Center) is: marriage itself is derived from the root word "nikah." In the KBBI, marriage refers to a marriage union that follows legal and religious regulations. Meanwhile, "pernikahan" (marriage) refers to an active noun that signifies the action taken to establish a marital bond based on legal and religious regulations,

encompassing the marriage ceremony. The term "perkawinan" is derived from the root word "kawin," a verb that means forming a family with the opposite sex, being a husband or wife, engaging in sexual relations, and copulation.

In essence, "pernikahan" and "perkawinan" refer to the active noun related to marriage, involving actions to establish a marital bond according to legal and religious regulations. The fundamental similarity between these terms lies in the unification of a man and a woman, following prevailing laws and religious beliefs, to build a family life together (Aditya & Hariadi, 2022). Essentially, marriage is an event in human life that is considered significant and, thus, preserved continuously until today. Marriage is also often viewed as an achievement. This is the general understanding of marriage in Indonesia, both socially and theologically. However, in reality, the ideal concept of marriage only sometimes correlates with success in maintaining it. Many people get married but eventually decide to divorce (DeLongis & Zwicker, 2017; Buckle et al., 1996).

Divorce is a serious issue within marriages. Typically, divorces occur among young married couples (Nianda, 2021). Several factors can lead to divorce, including incompatibility between spouses, backgrounds, thoughts, actions, and opinions. According to data from the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS), from 2017 to 2021, there were 447,743 divorce cases, marking a 53.50% increase from the 291,677 cases reported in 2020. The primary reason for divorces is quarrels (Cindy et al., 2022). Specifically, there were 1,696 divorce cases in North Sulawesi in 2022 (with Minahasa Selatan accounting for 52 cases) (Central Statistics Agency of North Sulawesi Province, 2022). Based on the researcher's data collection from the Motoring Village census 2020, there were 1,482 individuals, with 587 married, seven divorced and living, and 55 divorced due to death. These statistics encompass divorce cases across various religious groups in Indonesia, including Christian couples.

When couples decide to divorce, they experience significant impacts, including psychological and social consequences. Psychological impacts include fear of failure, which can hinder their progress. Social impacts involve a change in status from being the head of a family or a homemaker to being a widow or widower, affecting their self-esteem. This status change can limit their interactions and socialization within society. Many communities still stigmatize widows and widowers. As a result, divorced couples often experience profound inner conflicts and may feel isolated due to this change in status (Setiawan et al., 2022).

Although most Christian communities uphold strong religious values regarding marriage, divorce is not absent. The effects of divorce include losing confidence in love again, deep trauma, responses to low self-esteem, depression, sadness, loss, and despair. Children often suffer due to the lack of affection from their parents after the divorce (Weiss, 1997). For instance, a mother may have to work hard to provide for her children after being left by her husband due to the involvement of a third party.

In the context of the GMIM Zaitun Motoling Satu church, religiosity and understanding of marriage are still maintained and highly valued, as evidenced by the relatively low divorce rate of only five married couples who have divorced (Kelly, 2000; Stutzer & Frey, 2006). However, pastoral support remains crucial. The psychological and social impacts divorced couples face indicate the need for the church's attention to this issue. Pastors play a significant role in guiding and supporting couples experiencing divorce. While the pastor's responsibility does not fully encompass the members' lives, they must shepherd the spiritual journey of families in faith, as one of the pastor's tasks is to nurture spiritual life and serve the congregation facing problems (Abineno, 2016).

In conclusion, divorce is an issue that warrants attention, even if it is not always formally approved by the church. The role of pastors in providing pastoral support is essential, especially in dealing with changes in status and the psychological impacts experienced by divorced couples. The church should also be sensitive to the social and psychological changes experienced by divorced couples. The church can help divorced couples recover and start anew through practical pastoral approaches (Harsoyo & Darmawan, 2023).

Research Method

The research approach used in this study is qualitative. Qualitative research uses various scientific methods to understand phenomena holistically and in-depth, describing them through words and language within a specific natural context. The research design employed is descriptive. This qualitative descriptive study seeks to gather information about divorced couples within the GMIM "Zaitun" Motoling one congregation and to comprehensively explore the application of pastoral guidance. The study incorporates a literature review approach and interviews with one of the divorced couples (Gloria, Interview about Divorce, 2023). The researcher collects data related to the research topic from published journals, literature, and the Bible. The study delves into and compares various references concerning divorce and the biblical perspective, aiming to provide an objective and thorough discussion that can be justified. Ultimately, this will lead to a conclusion that addresses the research questions.

Result and Discussion

Understanding the meaning of marriage and the theological basis of Christian marriage

Marriage unites two individuals with evident human weaknesses. It is designed to be a partnership where we give, receive, and commit to our partners. Many of our actions are influenced by patterns from our past (Antonius, 2020). We now realize that we faithfully follow these patterns, and our actions are strongly tied to our past patterns. These patterns also influence how we give and receive love. One purpose of marriage is to "avoid sexual immorality." I Corinthians 7:2 explains that God does not endorse marriages with multiple wives (polygamy) or same-sex unions (homosexuality/lesbianism). The first pattern of marriage established by God is a man marrying a woman. However, marital privileges must not be abused, and sexual affection, a normal part of marriage, should be approached with respect. A wife's body belongs to her husband, and a husband's body belongs to his wife; both should care for each other.

Marriage is part of God's plan for humanity, where God initiates and brings individuals together as life partners. Marriage is a holy and sacred institution ordained by God Himself, providing a unique partnership between husband and wife for mutual happiness (Setiawan et al., 2021). Marriage is God's idea and creation, and therefore, He has established regulations for it: First, Monogamy – a man is only allowed to marry one woman (Genesis 1:27-28, 2:22). This principle opposes the sin of polygamy and polyandry. Second, Heterosexuality – a man should marry a woman (Genesis 1:26-28, 2:21-25). This principle opposes the sin of homosexuality, as same-sex marriage deviates fundamentally from marriage's nature. "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination" (Leviticus 18:22). Third, Purity – a man and woman should only be united with their spouse (Genesis 2:24). This principle rejects the sins of adultery and fornication (I Corinthians 7:1-5). Fourth, Lifelong commitment – marriage is only dissolved by death (Romans 7:2, 3). This principle opposes the sin of divorce (Malachi 2:16, Matthew 19:6). The Bible is clear about the lifelong nature of marriage until death separates. Fifth, Shared Faith – both should love Jesus and share the same vision (2 Corinthians 6:14). This principle rejects interfaith marriages. Sixth, Leaving and Cleaving – in marriage, a man and woman should leave their dependence on their parents and cleave to their lawful spouse, becoming one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

Views on divorce

Martin Luther allowed divorce if it could be justified based on biblical grounds and permitted remarriage if the divorce was legally recognized (Widjaja, 2018). John Feinberg and Paul Feinberg do not recognize divorce and remarriage (Gushee, 2008). Geisler (2018), believes that divorce cannot be morally justified, but remarriage is allowed if there is genuine repentance and recognition. William Heth and Gordon Wenham morally allow separation or divorce based on adultery for the innocent party, but they do not morally permit remarriage (News.detik.com, 2018). Joe Trull allows divorce and remarriage based on adultery, including when the believer is abandoned by an unbelieving spouse (Kent-Jr, 2008). Keener (1993), allows divorce and remarriage based on adultery, desertion, physical abuse, and severe immorality (Trull, 2019). Stanley Grenz permits divorce and remarriage when God's intended purpose for marriage has been marred by sin and failure (Feinberg & Feinberg, 2010). Smedes (1983), asserts that divorce is legally and morally permissible when a marriage has died and cannot be sustained. The words of Scripture are clear in Matthew 5:32; Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18, stating that divorcing one's spouse leads to adultery, and marrying a divorced person results in adultery. Divorcing and marrying another while a former spouse is still alive constitutes living in adultery.

Divorce and its juridical causes

According to Subekti (1978), divorce is the termination of a marriage through a court decision or upon the request of one party within the marriage. On the other hand, Prawiroharmidjojo & Saefuddin (2015), argue that divorce is different from the dissolution of marriage after the separation of bed and board, where there is no dispute, and both spouses mutually agree to end the marriage. Divorce always stems from conflicts between husband and wife.

According to P.N.H. Simanjuntak, divorce is the termination of a marriage due to specific reasons, as decided by a court upon the request of one or both parties within the marriage. According to Civil Code article 207, divorce is the annulment of a marriage based on a court decision at the request of one party within the marriage and based on reasons stated in the law. While the definition of divorce is not explicitly found in the Marriage Law, its regulations are extensive. The issue of divorce is well-regulated within the Marriage Law. To prevent hasty divorce, the

Marriage Law dictates that there must be valid reasons for the couple to be unable to live harmoniously as husband and wife (Sudarsono, 2015).

The dissolution of marriage through divorce is regulated in Article 39 to Article 41 of Law No. 1 of 1974. According to Article 14 to Article 36 of Government Regulation No. 9 of 1975, divorce can only be performed in court after failed attempts to reconcile the parties. Adequate reasons must be present to proceed with a divorce, demonstrating that the spouses cannot live harmoniously. The divorce procedure in court is regulated separately.

Article 38 of Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage states that marriage can be terminated due to one party's death, divorce, or court decisions. Article 39 (2) specifies that there must be sufficient reason to divorce, indicating that the spouses cannot live harmoniously. Following the guidelines in Article 19 of Government Regulation No. 9 of 1975, divorce can only be pursued if it meets the criteria outlined in that article. The substance of Article 39 (1) of the Marriage Law states that divorce can only be carried out in court after failed attempts to reconcile the parties. Furthermore, Article 39 (2) explains that divorce can only proceed with substantial reasons showing that the spouses can no longer live harmoniously.

Consequences of divorce

The dissolution of love, trust, loyalty, honesty, and appreciation within a marriage renders it unsustainable. As a result, the breakdown of the relationship between two families due to divorce also impacts the children's social lives. Divorce also affects those undergoing the process itself. One consequence is that their biological needs are left unmet and unfulfilled, which can lead to adultery and falling into sin. As shared by an interviewee, the experience brought them to a state of despair, negatively impacting their spiritual life. This eventually led them to cohabit without marriage.

Legal aspects also address the consequences of divorce between a husband and wife, not just the dissolution of the marital bond. Further repercussions include the division of joint property and child custody.

Division of Joint Property: Divorce between spouses gives rise to consequences, such as the division of joint property or "gemeinschaft" in Dutch. In Indonesia, the recognition of joint property after divorce has been solidified by societal customs and is legally binding, as outlined in Article 35, paragraphs (1) and (2) of Law No. 1 of 1974. Article 35 states that property acquired during the marriage becomes joint property. The separate property of each spouse and any property obtained as a gift or inheritance remain under their ownership unless otherwise agreed (Effendi, 2015).

Child Custody: Apart from property division, divorce also poses issues regarding child custody, as stated in Article 41: (a) Both parents remain responsible for the care and upbringing of their children, solely in the best interests of the children. In case of disputes over child custody, the court makes a decision. (b) The father is responsible for all necessary expenses for the care and education of the child. If the father cannot fulfil this obligation, the court may determine that the mother shares these costs. (c) The court may oblige the former husband to provide financial support and determine certain obligations for the former wife.

Based on the findings of interviews conducted with divorced couples and the legal consequences of divorce, it becomes evident that pastoral counseling for divorced couples is crucial. Pastoral counseling is essential due to the increasing accumulation of challenges in today's life, including spiritual, economic, physical, mental, and social issues congregants face. Pastors must equip themselves to offer support that empowers divorced couples to rediscover their wholeness, develop themselves, and maintain a more vital spiritual life in line with the teachings of the Bible (Tulloch et al., 2006; Whitlock et al., 2002).

Understanding pastoral counseling

Pastoral counseling is a practical approach to serving those who are suffering. The term "Pastoral Counseling" is a combination of two words that imply service – "pastoral" and "counseling." The term "counseling" is derived from the verb "to counsel," which involves aiding someone who, for some reason, needs to be accompanied. The person engaging in the act of "counseling" is referred to as a "counselor." Interaction, reciprocity, and partnership occur between the "counseled" and the "counselor." Thus, "counseling" suggests cooperative activities, mutual support, companionship, and sharing, with the goal of mutual growth and strengthening. On the other hand, the term "pastoral" originates from the Latin word "pasture" (verb), meaning "to shepherd," and "pastor" (noun), meaning "shepherd." In Greek, "poimen" means "shepherd." Hence, "pastoral" is associated with shepherding. It can be concluded that "pastoral" involves the work carried out by pastors in the process of optimal guidance toward spiritual

growth or maturity. In general, "pastoral" can be performed by anyone. However, to do so effectively, one needs skills and techniques (Jacob, 2018).

Requirements to become a pastor:

- 1) Wholehearted dedication.
- 2) Characteristics: openness, gentleness, firmness, unconditional acceptance of others, wisdom, responsibility, patience, and humility (cf. Psalm 23:1-6 and John 10:1-21)
- 3) The spiritual dimension of the pastor as a counselor: Apart from acquiring psychological knowledge, a pastor's spirituality is crucial. This involves being in tune with the Word of God, as it is a source of inspiration and strength. It requires communion with God through prayer and consistent meditation, fostering a mature spiritual state, and being sensitive to various situations (both critical and non-critical).

Factors to be learned for successful pastoral counseling:

- 1) Types and categories of qualified issues:
 - a) Personal issues: Emotional problems that disturb the individual's sense of self. This often requires significant time and attention to address. It is rooted in personal factors, both internal (within the individual) and external (environmental).
 - b) Group issues: Non-emotional issues may evolve into emotional ones if left unattended. These stem from external factors like groups, organizations, or academia (Jacob Yessy, 2018).

Purpose of pastoral counseling

Pastoral counseling succeeds when pastoral functions of nurturing, guiding, supporting, accompanying, and healing are effectively executed. A counselor's effectiveness in shepherding lies in paying attention to pastoral techniques, including visitation, attending behavior, inviting open conversation, opening communication, minimal encouragement, paraphrasing, identifying feelings, reflecting emotions, confrontation, summarization, and closure skills. Alongside these functions and techniques, awareness of potential hindrances is also essential, such as biased information, premature conclusions, overemphasis on confrontation, excessive interference, inappropriate familiarity, inability to maintain confidentiality, and imbalanced service.

Assisting those undergoing counseling to overcome and heal disruptive symptoms resulting from crises is a noble task. Pastoral counseling requires ethics and a code of conduct, as it is a comprehensive service that helps eliminate feelings of distress, anger, shock, fear, confusion, restlessness, and despair, ultimately aiding the individual in becoming their supporter for the future (Onsy & Amer, 2014).

Churches should not isolate divorced couples; instead, they should provide guidance, counseling, and support to help them adjust and face the reality of their broken marriage, enabling them to rebuild their lives post-divorce. Pastoral counseling can help address feelings of social isolation, loss of self-esteem, loneliness, and rejection. Through pastoral counseling, individuals can rise above these challenges and move forward.

Conclusion

Pastoral counseling appropriately responds to human needs, especially when dealing with life's issues. Specialized pastoral counseling for divorced couples enables them to address and resolve their problems while remaining grounded in faith and the Word of God, which can handle even the most challenging issues. Pastoral counseling is distinct from secular guidance often provided by psychologists; it involves spiritual guidance from a servant of God (counselor) and emphasizes Christian values. The person receiving counseling can connect with Jesus Christ and His Word, which has the power to address all problems. Thus, successful counseling is accomplished. Churches should not shun those who divorce; instead, they should assist them in rising and rebuilding themselves. Pastoral counseling reduces the likelihood of adultery resulting from unmet biological needs post-divorce. Couples should accept the consequences of divorce and not fall into the sin of adultery, and through pastoral counseling, they can navigate this path and rebuild their lives even better.

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