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PLANTING OF CHURCHES IN A MUSLIM COMMUNITY: A CASE
STUDY OF IWO, OSUN STATE.

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ABSTRACT

The Research work *Planting of Churches in the Muslim Community: A Case Study of Iwo, Osun State* is an attempt to explain what church planting is, how to plant viable churches in Muslim communities in Nigeria, the strategies of reaching the Muslims for Christ and the response of Muslims in Iwo to the gospel of Christ. Religious crisis between Christians and Muslims has become a recurring event in Nigeria. Many people have lost their lives and material wealth they accumulated through dint of hard work to these religious riots. The Muslim fanatics behind these riots seem not to have consideration for human lives in their bid to obey Allah's injunction. Murder is a gruesome crime before God. He wants everyone to live in peace. No one should attempt to force his own religious ideals on another; rather, everyone should be allowed to serve God his/her own way. The methodology used in this work is both descriptive and phenomenological. Interview guide, which contains questions related to the subject matter, was provided and interview was conducted to know the view of people. Those views are collated and used as findings in this work. The findings showed that when there is cordial relationship between Christians and Muslim in a certain community, religious crises would be minimized. Crisis thrives where there is disparity and segregation between people. Besides, Christianity came to Iwo through education. This is evident today through establishment of Mission schools. In addition, those who are involved in killing other innocent souls in the name of religion do not know the truth about God's love expressed in His creative work. They need to be told that those who are involved will not go unpunished. Christians should embark on aggressive evangelism throughout Iwo and Osun state generally. The writer observed that there are majority of Muslims in some towns in Osun state that should be reached with the gospel of Christ. Mass evangelism and crusades should be organized from time to time for reaching Muslims for Christ. However, witness must know that such evangelism should be done strategically and cautiously amidst them to have better result. All Christians in Iwo and elsewhere should make every effort to understand Islam in order to witness to its adherents efficiently. Christians with prior understanding of Islam as a religion will do well in bringing them to Christ than those without the knowledge. It is the responsibility of everyone in this country to be his or her brother's keeper. The killings of innocent souls because of politics and religion should stop. Those that are involved in these senseless killings are mostly Muslims who are doing so in order to be rewarded by Allah. Every church therefore should have a programme for reaching Muslims for Christ. Members of our churches today should be well informed on the teachings of Islam and the culture of Muslims. They should be effectively trained in evangelism and be prepared for cross-cultural witnessing. If Muslims come to Christ in our neighbourhood, the church should be able to welcome them into the congregation and efficiently disciple them.

5.1 SUMMARY

Planting of churches in a Muslim community is possible, although there are strategies to follow both in planting churches and in relating with Muslims.

The history of Islam was traced to its founder, Muhammad, whose life was studied to the time of his death. In addition, the factors that brought about the development of Islam, was examined. Church planting methods in the contemporary world is another issue discussed where principle of church planting and growth are analyzed. Then, the best strategy to use in reaching Muslims for Christ at this contemporary time is treated. Muslims are being guided by what they believe and they guard themselves with this jealousy. This constitutes their religion, culture and general ways of life. Church planting models in some Muslim communities in Nigeria was discussed.

The history of how Iwo as a community was founded and how Islam penetrated to the community was revealed. Then the issue of inter-personal relationship between Christians and Muslims in Iwo was considered. Also, Muslims' response to evangelism in the community was treated. Problems and prospects of church planting in Iwo community and the peculiar challenges Christians face in the community were considered.

5.2 CONCLUSION

I wish to conclude this work with the saying of Kraemer in his book, *Why Christianity of All Religion*; "Islam is not a religion of redemption and knows nothing of the central biblical idea of the kingdom of God" (106).

The writer quite agrees with him. This is the reason why Christians should be prepared and ready to preach the gospel to them. It might be that that Missionaries and Christians in general did not use the relevant strategies to win Muslims in the past. Islam now has developed to be a fastest growing religion in the world and it has become threat. Evangelism and Christian witness should therefore be focused and effective.

Christians should go beyond their culture and preach cross-culturally to the Muslims wherever they may be found. It is also observed that there are many secret believers in Christ among the Muslims in Nigeria. More witnessing should be done and viable churches should be planted. By planting churches in a Muslim dominated town, there will be mass conversion as a result of discipleship and evangelistic work. By the time they know the truth; they will in turn be set free from the cloak of religious duty and live their lives towards obeying Jesus Christ. All sincere Christians should share this responsibility.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings of this work, the writer recommends the following:

1. Churches in Iwo should be led by mission-minded pastors who will assist in planting more churches in strategic areas where large percentage of Muslims may be reached. Majority of Iwo people are still Muslims, who need to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. If more churches are planted where large percentage of Muslims live, the church will not be far to their residence, and therefore, it will be easier to reach them for Christ.
2. Discipleship should be taken more seriously among these Muslims. This will strengthen their Christian lives and directs them how to live a balanced Christian

