

THE MINISTRY OF AN EVANGELIST AND ITS IMPACT ON CHURCH GROWTH
IN OGBOMOSO BAPTIST CONFERENCE

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By

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ABSTRACT

There is no gainsaying the fact that the ministry of evangelist is underutilised in the Baptist setting. This constitutes a syndrome which has adversely affected church growth and development as far as the Baptist denomination is concerned. The purpose of this research work therefore is to explore the ministry of the evangelist and its impact on church growth using Ogbomoso Baptist Conference as a case study. The essay attempted to clarify the gift and ministry of the evangelist, establish the biblical functions of the contemporary evangelists in the Baptist denomination and recommend how evangelists can have outstanding impact on church growth in the Baptist churches. A proper employment of this gift would bring about sustainable evangelism which is the bedrock for church growth without which the church of God is in a state of decay, and consequently on the verge of extinction. The project work provided a brief history and church growth activities of Ogbomoso Baptist Conference. The instrument of survey questionnaire for the pastors and the congregants of some selected local Baptist churches in all the seven metropolitan associations of Ogbomoso Baptist Conference were used to carry out this research work. Alongside, this project work recommended how the pastors could maximize their calling for the growth of the body of Christ and how the body – the Church, could become spiritually mature through the gift and ministry of evangelist. The optimal use of this gift would definitely enhance church growth in our denomination.

5.2 CONCLUSION

Based on this study, it is evident that many local churches and their pastors agreed with the ministry of an evangelist. They have also in one way or the other experienced both the spiritual and the numerical growth of their congregations through the ministry of evangelist. Notwithstanding, there are still few among them who have not maximized the gift, those who have not benefited from this ministry or grace for their growth because they believe that everything about this ministry is to cause chaos and division in the church. Such pastors and the local churches avoid inviting and supporting the ministry in review.

The ministry of an evangelist will definitely have a greater impact on church growth if every church will come to term with Christ's purpose for giving the church this gift. There is bound to be an unprecedented explosion of church growth in terms of spirituality and numerical progression if the evangelists will widen their sense of responsibility beyond holding indoor revivals and become more active in cross-cultural and church planting activities. This could only be achieved when local churches begin to consider it as part of their own responsibility to embrace this ministry and give a supportive hand in more practical ways than what this study claimed.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this research work, the following are the researcher's recommendations:

To the Pastors and the Local Baptist Churches

This research has shown that the local churches will be underdeveloped and spiritually immature without the ministry of the evangelist. That is, whenever and wherever the roles of the ministry of evangelist in the local churches are downplayed church growth is at stake. Therefore, it is expedient that the ministry of the evangelist should be encouraged in the local Baptist churches. Evangelists should be invited on regular basis for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission and of building up the body of believers. More so, the local churches must not shy away from identifying with the needs of evangelists and giving practical support to them especially financial support.

To the Evangelists in the Baptist Denomination

An aspect of the research questions indicted the ministry of an evangelist in the body of Christ to some extent. It is believed by some respondents that this ministry engenders chaos, confusion and division in the body of Christ. Therefore, it is the researcher's recommendation that, the evangelists in the Baptist denomination should strive not to use the grace and calling of God upon their lives to tear down the church of which Christ purchased with His own blood. The ministry of an evangelist is not to cause division in the church but to build her up in unity for the work of ministry. More so, evangelists in the Baptist denomination should not perceive the calling of God upon their lives as being one sided. This simply means that they have more responsibilities in the body of Christ than preaching only in the local churches for revival meetings. They are also called to pioneer new works among the unreached so as to support the traditional

missionaries. They have the grace to get involved in the enterprise of cross-cultural ministry of the local church and of the church planting.

To the Nigerian Baptist Convention

The ministry of evangelist should be given recognition and evangelist accorded the opportunity of ordination in the church like the pastoral ministry. That is, evangelists should be openly recognized and ordained into the ministry.

To the Researchers/ Scholars

This study is not exhaustive. This researcher is using this medium to challenge upcoming scholars in the field of Mission and Evangelism, Church Growth and Christian Preaching to critically study the concepts of Evangelism, Church Growth and Christian Preaching. This research has largely been restricted to the ministry of evangelist and church growth as contained in the New Testament. Thus, there is the need for the study of evangelistic preaching and church growth. This will help to address this area of concern to the researcher. Thus, we would have a balanced New Testament view of the impact of evangelistic preaching on church growth.

To the School

This kind of research is a right step in the right direction. It is practical and stands the chance of turning around the local churches. Thus, more time should be allocated for the field work. This researcher discovered that the time he had wasn't sufficient for the volume of work required for the work. So it is strongly recommended that a minimum of one semester should be set aside in the Master of Divinity degree programme for the project work.