

THE ROLE OF PASTORS' IN EVANGELISM AND ITS IMPACTS ON CHURCH
GROWTH IN SELECTED BAPTIST CHURCHES IN ZION BAPTIST
ASSOCIATION OF OGUN CONFERENCE IN OTA

An Essay Submitted to the Department of Theology, Faculty of
Theological Studies, The Nigerian Baptist Theological
Seminary, Ogbomoso in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Award of
the Degree of Master of
Divinity of Theology

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(Matric No. 11/0016)

JUNE, 2016

ABSTRACT

The Pastor's role in evangelism and its impact on Church Growth in Zion Baptist Association in Ota is a mission which Jesus Christ summarizes in the Great Commission as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20. Discipleship, Biblical training, Soul winning, and Baptism of new converts are basic truth that must be taken seriously if our Church must grow. The essential aspect of the research centers on evangelism which must be the vision and mission of the pastor with the support of all other church worker especially the deacons and evangelist in furtherance of the expansion work and nourishing the members to maturity. Christian faith is planted, established and spread out to reach out to lost souls and to bring the new converts from infancy stage to level of maturity. Vergie Gerber says, evangelistic goal is not fulfilled until the new converts become reproducing Christians who complete the cycle and guarantee the continuous process of evangelism. The survival of any church depends solely on the Lord Jesus- the head of the church. The researcher established a fact that evangelism and church growth are inseparable and must be pursue rigorously by the pastor to achieve the goal embedded in the Great commission. The church should be an agent of change, transformation and redemption in order to accomplish her responsibilities, ensure the message of goodwill is minister to both the save, and unchurch people all over the world but in our contemporary time, discipleship, mission and evangelism, church planting are neglected and some pastors handle heavenly assignment with levity. Building of big worship centres, musical instruments, choice chairs and other things occupy the mind of members. The research encourage church leaders to lead and digest the basic truth in the Bible regularly to be guided by the Holy spirit and to equip them for the Master's business. Pastors are not to focus on personal gains but to look forward to eternal reward that is worthy and valuable to launch them into their heavenly kingdom. The researcher goal is to ensure effective evangelistic programme that will bring about real church growth. It is imperative that the pastor require setting up an effective mission and evangelism committee. The committee members should be trainable; they should be expose to worships, conferences, seminars in church growth, discipleship training at the convention level. Local churches could organize home cells/ fellowship centers, which will metamorphous into planting of churches in the community.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The call to evangelize is a goal that must be accomplished by the Pastor and all Christian fold. God is depending on us to reach out to the lost soul in our community and we must not disappoint Him. According to Vergil Gerber, “evangelistic goal is not fulfilled until the new converts become reproducing Christians who complete the cycle and guarantee the continuous process of evangelism.”¹⁰⁷

This is evident in the Great Commission of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to the Church and the survival of any church depends on Him. This project has revealed that evangelism and church growth are inseparable and must be effectively

¹⁰⁷ Vergil Gerber, *God's Way to keep a Church Going: A Manual for Evangelism and Church Growth*, South Pasadena: William Covey, 1973.

put together by the pastor to achieve this singular goal of the Head of the church-Jesus. Often times some pastoral role priorities are mainly centers on things like modern church building with air conditioners, gigantic musical instruments, church committees, pastor's residence well furnished, church library, church buses, sound proof generators, schools and other church investment rather than on the Great Commission which can enhance church growth. All the internal or physical growth are equally important but these are secondary, the primary goal of a pastor should be anchor on the "GREAT COMMISSION". Things of the spirit are more enduring, it last longer and brings about eternal reward.

The leadership qualities mentioned in this project is necessary for every pastor to read and digest, allows the Spirit of God to lead, guide and direct us so that we can remain relevant in the Master's business. We need to balance our church evangelism approaches and types with church growth mission statement in a way that glorifies God. The work is not for the pastor personal gain but to His Master that count him worthy to be an instrument in His vineyard to become fishers of men.

In Nigeria today, we are bless with so many Christian ministries and proliferation of churches, we need to be careful not to go into wrong assembly that will kill our goal of making heaven. Some de-emphasize on sound biblical teachings and concentrates on prosperity message, and how to become highly placed in the society. Some don't have mid-week programme to engage their members on Bible study, Prayer meetings and other life changing activities which should be a goal of the church as commanded by Jesus.

In the Baptist denomination, we have three tiers that is the Association, Conferences and the Convention and our emphasis is to ensure that our members are mission minded, having the aspiration of making heaven and we have a lot of

Christian literatures such as Sunday School Manuals for Teenagers, Youth and Adult, Discipleship Life Style Booklet, Material for Women, Men and all these put together are pointing us to the Master. We have discipleship programmes (Serve the Master, Follow the Master, Master Life, Experiencing God and so on) too that are very rich in allowing new converts to understand the basic teaching to groom them to maturity stage in Christendom.

The future of Nigeria is bright as new churches are springing up and many are having personal ministry to propagate the gospel, despite all these churches activities, experience has shown that social vices are increasing by day and it is the responsibilities of the church to win these lost soul back to expand the kingdom of God and depopulate the kingdom of Satan. Therefore, prayer for all pastor's should be that God of mercy visit and locate the lost soul to fulfill God's mandate through Pastor's role in this country and the various evangelism strategies and church growth mechanism.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Pastor's role is very vital in any church setting and through the leading of the Holy Spirit, an effective evangelism team, well-structured and manage with all the church growth drivers' will ensure that we are doing the Master's will in a way that pleases Him. The objective of the researcher is to ensure that all plans lead to church growth in its real sense.

The following recommendations are proffered for accelerated Church growth

1. All local church pastors' must have plan that will give priority to evangelism and church growth initiatives far above all other activities in the church. Physical church development is equally important but the budget for evangelism and church growth mission should be bigger to accommodate all soul winning activities.

