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BIVOCATIONAL MINISTRY A TOOL FOR CHURCH GROWTH: A CASE  
STUDY OF ASSOCIATION

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BY

AGBOOLA KEHINDE THOMAS

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## ABSTRACT

This research work is based on the study of Bivocational Ministry as a Tool for Church Growth. It seeks to examine critical issues involved in Bivocational Ministry in our denomination as Baptists. Hitherto, the understanding was that anyone called by God should relinquish whatever vocation he was involved in and go for training in order to become a Baptist Pastor. Bivocationalism has to do with dual-stewardship of a called person into ministry whereas he is equally involved in his secular work. This research therefore examines in broad terms the problems and challenges associated with bivocationalism and various opinions of parishioners and ministers alike on the issue. The writer in carrying out this research adopted the method of data collections from questionnaires administered to respondents and the data analysed. The findings revealed that bivocationalism aids financial assistance to the church and it helps in church growth due largely to financial independence that Bivocational ministers are privileged to enjoy. In addition, bivocationalism also helps a minister to be better exposed to contemporary issues outside the church and this also affords him the opportunity of knowing people in various industries that could be evangelized and ministered to. Apparent problems like inadequate time and physical unavailability at programmes were considered by this research. These problems could however, be solved if one is a good manager of time and he is able to realize that ministry work takes precedence over every other assignment that he may have. It is thereby recommended that Bivocational Ministry should be encouraged and sustained by all the authority concerned within the Baptist denomination. Also, Bivocational Pastors should be helped to know the exact area of their calling so that they will not drift and labour in vain for the common good of ministry.

### 5.3 CONCLUSION

Exploiting Bivocational Ministry will not be difficult to embrace in the Nigerian Baptist Convention if one will assiduously work to ensure that the concept of multi-staff ministry is functional and we determine to allow it succeed. Frankly speaking, no reason why it cannot work in Nigeria after all, it works well in Southern Baptist Convention that facilitated the birth of the Baptist denomination in Nigeria. And to do this is simple – Our Seminaries and Colleges of Theology must sustain the Sandwich and Weekend M.Div. and B.Th. Courses on a part-time and weekend basis where these programmes are being run currently irrespective of the inclement and hostile disposition being displayed by some Ministers and Parishioners towards these programmes on a daily basis.

The major “snag” that one honestly thinks is and may make it difficult for Bivocational Ministry to thrive in Nigeria is that many Resident Pastors erroneously feel threatened that their jobs may be on the line if the practice is allowed to stay. This supposition made above clearly shown in the questionnaires distributed among the

twenty (20) pastors-three (3) bivocational pastors and to other Resident Pastors within the association.

However, it is not so because the field is very wide, the harvest is ripe but the labourers are few and everyone must be charged and encouraged to go out there and plant Churches rather than going around and looking for greener pastures, even in Ministry! Also, they should realise that the One Who commissioned us is able and always capable of meeting all our needs if indeed we were called into Ministry *abinitio*. When the Lord calls, He equips so that we can function optimally in ministry irrespective of the format that it takes whether Bivocational or *Resident*. It is good to end this write-up by stating for the umpteenth time that the calling of God is without prejudice to challenges and obstacles. A person may be a Resident Pastor and still not be as effective as a Bivocational Pastor and vice-versa.

Justice would only be seen to have been done to this project by examining the contribution of a Bivocational Pastor to Christianity as it gives us the privilege of knowing this man of God and his contributions to the Body of Christ in spite of his very busy schedule as an Insurance Officer: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ." Ephesians 1:3.

It is noted from history that bivocational ministry has indeed turned out to be a catalyst to the growth of the church universal. Williams in his disposition says "the growth of the church can never be handled only by the full time pastors alone in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. The work is so enormous that if the work is limited to the full time pastors, the work may suffer set back." Besides, the church of God has reached a stage at which stewardship of money, influence; gifts, possessions and time are needed to advance the Kingdom of God. For instance, Johnson Oatman who wrote



“Count Your Blessings” and other many hymns has been a lot of tremendous help to the body of Christ.

From the above, it is clear that the issue is not whether Bivocational Ministry should be allowed to survive or not or whether one is better than the other. The humble submission is that forms of ministry should be complementary of one another irrespective of their diverse nature. (An interesting part of the concept is that it is still a new and ‘foreign’ concept to the Baptist denomination in Nigeria. To this end, a lot of people ministers and parishioners alike find it difficult to embrace the system. Many Baptist have come to the reality of the fact that bivocational ministry plays a major role in church growth).

## **5.2 RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the findings of the research work I would like to make the following recommendations on Bivocational Ministry:

Firstly, churches searching for pastors should be encouraged to call bivocational minister to their pastorate. Such churches would experience growth in all its ramifications through the ministry of bivocational pastors.

Secondly; churches that are poor financially can have some respite if they call bivocational ministers to their pastorate. This would definitely assist the church financially.

Thirdly, since one of the tasks of the universal church is evangelism and church planting, hence bivocational pastors can be veritable tools for breaking new grounds and to plant new churches. Since their careers can take them to any part of the world through transfer, they are then better position to break new grounds for Christ.

Fourthly, the Nigerian Baptist Convention can give bivocationalism a wider consideration as a means of reaching the unreached nations. The bivocational ministers may eventually gain access to other countries through their secular vocations such as nursing, teaching and the likes. The countries that will not accept gospel will be the best target for most bivocational ministers.

Lastly, Bivocational Pastors should know that they are called into ministry to use their career and jobs as a means to an end. Therefore, their focus should be ministry and enhancing church growth for the common good of ministry.