

THE LOCAL BAPTIST CHURCH AS GOD'S AGENCY FOR EVANGELISM: A
CASE STUDY OF VICTORY BAPTIST CHURCH, OGBOMOSO

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ABSTRACT

The topic of this research work is The Local Baptist Church as God's Agency for Evangelism: A Case Study of Victory Baptist Church, Ogbomoso. If a local church fails to evangelize, the purpose of evangelism is thwarted and the redemptive work of Christ is of no use. Therefore the church has not only failed in her duty but a great number of people are lost for eternity. It is in this regard that this research work was initiated. The main focus of this work is to research into the local Baptist church as God's agency for evangelism. This research has examined the nature of the church; the concept, the reason, the practice, the message, the scope, and the notion of evangelism; the factors responsible for ineffectiveness in evangelism in the local churches; and the role of the Holy Spirit, the pastor, church members, finance, and logistics in evangelism in the local Baptist church. Thematic approach was utilized in consulting books, journals, internet sources, dictionaries, encyclopedias, the Bible and articles that centered on themes relevant to the subject matter. Historical approach was used in order to gain insight into the background of Victory Baptist Church, Ogbomoso. Analytical approach was also employed in treating data gathered from oral interviews. The study revealed that Victory Baptist Church through evangelistic activities and individual efforts does her best to preach the Gospel both directly and indirectly. Her approaches to evangelism are straightforward and effectual. The tools the church utilizes sufficiently aid her approach. Evangelism is not just limited to environment of the church. Though there are hindrances encountered by the church in evangelism they do not put a complete halt to her effort. Victory Baptist Church has what it takes to do impactful evangelism. It is therefore critical for the church pastor and the congregation to take up their responsibility to do evangelism in the power of the Holy Spirit while employing every necessary available resource. Second, Christians should be educated about the evangelistic purpose of the church and about the role every Christian has to play. Third, Ongoing training in evangelism should be constantly organized by the church so that members are groomed to have an evangelistic lifestyle and thereby uphold a culture of evangelism. Fourth, every local Baptist church should revisit their history so as to gain insight to the vision that led to the establishment of the church in that environment so that proper evaluation and revitalization concerning the evangelistic work of the church can then be carried out.

Evangelism can be practiced within the immediate environment of the church as well as beyond, even unto the uttermost parts of the earth. The factors responsible for ineffectiveness in evangelism in the local church are many and vary as per church. However, these hindrances can be overcome. The Holy Spirit is vital for the church's evangelism effort to be effective. The pastor and the church members are all responsible for evangelism at the local church level. They accomplish much in evangelism as they yield to the power of the Holy Spirit. Finance and logistics are equally necessary for effective evangelism.

The researcher discovered that the culture of evangelism in Victory Baptist Church is vibrant to an extent. The church via her activities and individual efforts does her best to preach the Gospel directly or indirectly. Her approaches to evangelism are simple but effective. They are one-on-one, door-to-door, social ministry, and online media. The tools she utilizes are the Bible, Gospel tracts, Christian literature, and open air evangelistic services. Evangelism is carried out in the neighborhood of the church and beyond. The hindrances encountered by the church in her evangelistic effort have to do with language, ignorance of what the Bible teaches on evangelism, unavailability of church members to be properly disciplined and taught, fear, excuses, ungodly lifestyle, an attitude of indifference to evangelism, and finance.

5.2 Conclusions

Evangelism by the local church is one of her key functions. It was by evangelism that the local church was planted. Failure by the church to evangelize is synonymous to her denying a significant part of her purpose in this world. The nature and purpose of the church is incomplete if she only worships, fellowships, and does

ministry within her walls. It is through every Christian in the church that God reaches out to the world.

Effective evangelism as explicitly explained in this research work cannot take place simply by the will or action or intellect of man alone. The church above all should depend on the person and the power of Holy Spirit to be effective witnesses (Acts 1:8). Evangelism is God's work. God's work has to be done God's way. Hindrances to evangelism, no matter how complex they may appear, are not sufficient to stop the evangelistic task of the church. These hindrances may only slow the work down or reduce the measure of its impact. These hindrances can be overcome if the factors necessary for the involvement of the local church in evangelism are in place. For with God all things are possible.

From the study of Victory Baptist Church, Ogbomoso via interviews and the research in the library, the writer has discovered that the local Baptist church possesses a lot of potential to do evangelism. If such potential is properly harnessed, the role of the local Baptist church as God's agency to reach out to the world would greatly improve. If this is to happen, much depends on the church pastor and on the congregation. For in God's eyes the church is not a building but a gathering of regenerated men and women.

5.3 Recommendations

In the light of the above discussion concerning the local Baptist church as God's agency for evangelism using Victory Baptist Church, Ogbomoso as a case study, the following recommendations will be of help:

The local Baptist church should search the Scriptures concerning the nature and purpose of the church so as to rediscover her true identity from God's perspective and live it out. For the church to understand who she is and why she exists, she must refer to the Owner's Manual, the Bible.

Every local Baptist church should revisit their history so as to gain insight to the vision that led to the establishment of such churches in the environment where they are. Evaluation can then be carried out concerning the work of the church based on the vision and mission of their establishment.

Christians should be educated to understand that the task of the church is not just the responsibility of some but of all Christians. Each unit in the church should have evangelism programs which they are committed to.

Christians should be educated to understand that every church member has a role to play. The pastor and church leaders should help Christians to discover their role and how they fit in to the evangelistic task of the church.

Emphasis on personal soul winning should be made in discipleship programs of the church. This would encourage church members to have an evangelistic lifestyle. A properly disciplined convert is an effective witness. Some members of discipleship groups who are not yet involved in evangelism or who have never been involved can be taken out for evangelism by the group leader once in a while.

The church pastor should prepare and motivate Christians to evangelize by being an example himself through a witnessing lifestyle and leading his family, wife and children, to live such a lifestyle.

