

MISSIONARY RESPONSE TO POVERTY IN ABEOKUTA WEST BAPTIST  
ASSOCIATION

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## ABSTRACT

This study focused on missionary response to poverty taking Abeokuta West Baptist Associate as the case study. The missionary in this context is not restricted to those who travel across cultural boundaries with the message of the gospel alone but also includes every members of the church as the mission agents of God. The study examined causes, effect and possible ways of tackling poverty which is a prevalent phenomenon all over the world. Interview and observations were conducted for people in the area and the information gathered was used to conclude on possible ways out of the dilemma. The study concluded that there is poverty in the area as a result of poor attitude to work, family background, extravagant spending, alcoholism and pleasure, monotony of occupation e.t.c. the study then recommends the preaching of wholistic gospel, discipleship, empowerment programmes, mission schools, Church based cooperative programme, social ministry e.t.c as possible solution to the problem. The study also employs the government at all level to rise up to its responsibility in finding solution to poverty in Nigeria.

## 5.2 CONCLUSION

Poverty is an ugly situation in Nigeria that no one can deny. Most of the blame of it is always on bad leadership. The fact that the Nigerian government has not been able to tackle poverty is evident. According to Ishola, the Obasanjo administration floated what is known as NAPEP that is, National Poverty Eradication Programme, as well as the NEEDS, or National Economic Empowerment and Development strategy to address the problem of poverty. The United Nations UNDP is the global club's effort to address the subject of underdevelopment in many poorer countries and even recently floated NEPAD to aid African countries to address poverty. What we see, however, is a waste of public funds as operators of the programmes simply divert the funds elsewhere and to wrong people. In most cases, the funds meant to help the poor end up helping those who do not need it. Within few months of the introduction of such laudable effort, the purpose of the programme is defeated (5). And this is the major problem in Nigeria. The gap between the rich and the poor keeps widening. But, the Bible clearly establishes that God cares for the poor and wants believers to do

the same. In fact, failure to care for the poor brings God's judgment. The church must thus be careful to maintain a compassionate attitude. The church should live up to its spiritual and social responsibilities to present wholistic gospel, give generously, encourage governments to help the poor by formulation and proper implementation of policies that will help the masses. The church should also work with church-sponsored agencies or non-governmental organizations to start programs and projects intended to help specific target groups.

“There are too many hurting people in every society. They are so poor they are unable to help themselves in anyway. They may be Christians or not be Christians. It really does not matter. What matters is that, they are created in the image of God and thus deserve better standard of living” (Darku, 134).

Therefore, it is high time for the church to look into the Bible and discover God's mind on the issue of responding to the need of the poor and take practical steps toward making life better for the poor. The Bible says “Is not this kind of fasting I have chosen: to lose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter-when you see naked, to clothe him and not to turn away from you own flesh and blood (Isaiah 58:6-7). Also James affirms that the religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world (1:27).

### 5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings of this long essay as well as the discussions on them, Churches within the association should seek to proclaim wholistic gospel that will emphasize being rich spiritually and being socially concerned for others. The issue of discipleship to maturity of the believers in Christ should also be given a due attention to stop producing half-baked Christians. The church should also embark on empowerment programmes that will liberate the poor and give them better standard of living. Churches in the city of Abeokuta should rise to the help of the churches in rural area. There should be a church based cooperative programme from which many people can get capital to start their businesses.

Pastors within and outside the Association should strive to provide a biblical model of living for members to follow. The pastors or missions ministers should identify with the poor through counseling them and prayer. Individual Christians within the association should also embrace charity and care for the less privileged.

The government should also seek to implement policies that will help the poor. The government should provide basic education, free health care, social amenities such as good roads, potable water, electricity and storage devices for agricultural products for people within the area.