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**UTILIZATION OF BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTERS:
A MEANS OF PROVIDING PASTORAL LEADERSHIP
IN RURAL CHURCHES**

By

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ABSTRACT

This research work titled "UTILIZATION OF BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTERS: A MEANS OF PROVIDING PASTORAL LEADERSHIP IN RURAL CHURCHES" focused on the significance of leaders in the growth and development of a church. The intention is to establish that pastors are the only recognized leader of a church that can bring about the desired growth and development. The study is an attempt to discover why most churches in the rural areas accepted the choice of other kind of leaders to lead them instead of a pastor. This essay examined the growth and development of churches in the rural areas in one of the Baptist Association in the Ogbomoso Baptist Conference as a case study. The necessity for the right kind of leadership for our churches was viewed through the lens of scriptures. The Old and New Testament established the kind of leadership God desired for the church. It also established the biblical evidence in support of the bi-vocational leadership for churches. The result of the examination on the growth and development of these churches shows largely the kind of leadership they have over the years. The need to provide right kind of leadership for all our churches must not be limited by the location of the church or financial sustainability of pastor as their leader. This is the core of this essay. The bi-vocational ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention is to be properly utilized in solving the problem of growth and development emanating from the lack of pastor as leader in most of our churches in the rural areas. The availability of bi-vocational ministers as leaders in these churches would lift their vision to higher sight and beyond their normal limitation. This would definitely translate to desire growth and development. The weak, small or poor churches in our convention would become strong, big and rich churches if optimal use were made of our bi-vocational ministers.

5.2 CONCLUSION

Based on the study, the following conclusions were derived:

- (i) It is evident that many of our churches existed for years without proper nurturing. They exist without shepherd and they lack direction. This had greatly hindered their growth.
- (ii) Most of these churches are located in the rural areas and some of our trained pastors from our theological institution are not ready to go to rural area as the rural churches does not also have the means of taking care of their welfare.
- (iii) Our churches prefer pastors who would not only be available on Sundays alone but would also be available during the week.

- (iv) Bi-vocational ministry is not an unauthorized or illegal intruder in the Christian ministry as it had a theological basis and a noble history and is essential to the Christian world mission in today's world.
- (v) Bi-vocational ministry produces long-term pastorates in their churches and this enhances stability and unity of the church.
- (vi) The old and New Testament evidences abound for the bi-vocational ministry.
- (vii) The Nigerian Baptist Convention has not fully grasped the opportunity offered by the bi-vocational ministry to strengthen our weak and poor churches in order to turn them into strong and rich churches.
- (viii) The level of awareness of our churches to see bi-vocational as biblically appropriate must be improved upon. This would afford them the opportunity to see the need for bi-vocational pastor.
- (ix) Our co-operatives fund is not fully subscribed to because of the lack of pastors leading our rural churches.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

- (i) Improvement on the training of more bi-vocational ministers as it is a self-supporting ministry. The majority of the pastor's income is derived from sources outside the local church.
- (ii) As a matter of urgency, we must utilize the opportunity to establish in the ministry offered by the bi-vocational ministry for community connections.

- (iii) All bi-vocational ministers must be registered in their various associations and conferences for proper mobilization to the area of need of each association and the conferences.
- (iv) To arrest the greatest difficulty for rural and small churches which is the consummation of church's weekly income by pastoral package, all churches in this category must also registered and signify their need for a bi-vocational minister.
- (v) Our church planting activities should involve more of bi-vocational minister instead of the fully funded minister. A policy document needs to be formulated and ratified on the convention in session for proper implementation.

The above recommendations are to be shouldered and pioneered by the convention-in-session, as bi-vocational ministry is biblical, it also reasserts foundational Baptist Principles, it works, and though its employment creates a number of challenged to some of our beliefs of the pastoral ministry, and its advantages far out weigh any negative considerations.