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TOWARD PASTOR-MEMBERS' CORDIAL RELATIONSHIP AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR DYNAMIC CHURCH GROWTH AT PREVAILING BAPTIST CHURCH, IYANA-IPAJA, LAGOS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the project was to address and correct the situation in which importance of pastor-members' cordial relationships in Prevailing Baptist Church, Iyana Ipaja Lagos is not valued. Several efforts made to address the breakdown of relationship did not achieve any meaningful result and this has affected the growth of the church drastically. It was therefore clear that a manual be developed to address this unacceptable situation. The project began with the establishment of a theological foundation for the project and the review of related literature to the project. Two questionnaires were employed in this project as instruments for research. The first was used to measure the pre-project degree of relationship between pastor-members and among church members, thereby establishing an objective basis for the claim that Church members' understanding about the function of pastoral office affects the level of relationship with their pastor. It also served to find out the effect of pastor-members discrepancy on dynamic growth of the church. The result obtained after a simple percentage analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire indicated that crises could be destructive to the growth of the church. It is capable of tearing a growing church down. On the other note, the study revealed that when there is breakdown of relationship, church becomes retarded in growth because, it is enough to hinder the numerical growth of the church, the church finance is slanted and this weighs down the church and above all the spiritual growth of the church is wrecked. Church members would not be encouraged to attend weekly enrichment services, and members would not be ready to listen to pastoral instructions and spiritual guidance. After the sessions of teachings on the concept of Shepherd and the flock, a second questionnaire was administered to measure the degree of openness on the part of the church members to relationship. The result from this second questionnaire indicated that an overwhelming majority of members had a better understanding of relationship between shepherd and the flock and believed that for the church to experience a dynamic growth, the importance of pastor-members relationship cannot be over-emphasized. Having seen the viability of the manual to build cordial relationship between pastor and his church members, it is therefore recommended that pastors and churches experiencing breakdown of relationship or a retarded growth could make use of the contents of the manual to promote cordial relationship between pastor and his members. It was also revealed that inter-personal relationship makes people to be more committed to the membership of the church. Therefore, interactions should be encouraged before and after the service between pastor and his member and most especially among church members. This study revealed that there would always be needs in the life of church members and they tend to be more committed to where their needs can be met. One of the ways Jesus attracted multitude in his ministry was to love his followers and to meet their needs. It is, therefore, recommended that social ministry of the church should be empowered to meet needs in the life of church members.

5.2 Conclusion

From this project one could draw the following conclusions:

From the literature review, it was concluded that the church of God should be the family of God, the flock of God and the most loving place in the Universe because its author is an embodiment of love. The Church should be a living, and be organized to be a growing reality through evangelism, deepening and maturing its life, faith and relationship.

From the theological framework, it was concluded that believers are not saved to live in isolation but to identify with the body of Christ through the local church. Church unity and fellowship in love with one another is God's blueprints about the church. It is also concluded that the kind of relationship God expected from pastor and church members is kind of relationship between shepherd and the flock. Sheep are disciples or believers of the Lord. God's people are never illustrated as being great, mighty, self sufficient or independent. The only animal that is suitable for the comparison is the sheep that is dependent on the shepherd. Most sheep grow to trust their shepherd and will follow him wherever he goes.

From the analysis of the pre-test and post-test questionnaires of the project, it was clear that the objectives of this project were met. For example, through the teaching of the manual, the project was able to provide tools to improve relationships between church members and their pastors such as visitations, prayers, supporting one another and helping one another demonstrating a godly love among members and with their pastor. More so, the project was able to assess and compare the level of relationships among members and the pastor. After the teaching of the manual, they decided to relate well with one another, old wounds were healed up, grievances were freely forgiven, gap between pastor and the members were bridged and so obvious that lovely relationship was seen in action between the church members and her pastor.

5.3 Recommendations

From this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. This study revealed that some churches see their pastor as their employee hence; they hired, fired and punished their erring pastor. It is therefore recommended that the church should face the fact that pastors are called and hired by God the Chief Shepherd; He alone has the right to reward deeds of pastors.
2. This study also revealed that crisis would be avoided if there were cordial relationship between pastor and members. Therefore, it is recommended that pastor should stop relating with his members as boss-servant kind of relationship rather a cordial relationship should be built with his members.
3. This project discovered that visitation strengthens relationship; it gives people a sense of belonging and makes people feel important. It is, therefore, recommended that both pastor and members should see visitation as a

collective responsibility. Strong and effective visitation team should be in place.

4. This study revealed that one of the missions of the church is evangelism. The role of evangelism in church growth cannot be overemphasized. It is therefore, recommended that the church should set up a viable and effective evangelism team and from time to time, the entire church should be mobilized for mass evangelism.
5. It is revealed that inter-personal relationship makes people to be more committed to the membership of the church. Therefore, interactions should be encouraged before and after the service between pastor and his member and most especially among the members.
6. This study revealed that there will always be needs in the life of church members and they tend to be more committed to where their needs can be met. One of the ways Jesus attracted crowd in his ministry was to love his followers and to meet their needs. It is, therefore, recommended that social ministry of the church is empowered to meet needs in the life of church members.
7. One of the ways to attract unbelievers into the fold is to create an atmosphere of love and acceptance without approving their sinful ways. It is therefore recommended that the church should design warm receptions for the first timers and visitors in a way that retention is made possible.
8. This project revealed that the early church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers and as a result of this, new disciples joined the membership on a daily basis. It is therefore recommended that the church should embark on a periodical breaking of bread and feasting as a way of strengthening the church bond.

9. It has been discovered that teaching is potentially efficient to transform the church to the standard of God. Therefore, it is recommended for church and pastor to prepare a periodical manual on several biblical issues so as to deepening and maturing church life and faith.

10. It is recommended that further studies be carried out on the implications of shepherd and flock relationship on church growth. This is to ascertain whether cordial relationship between pastor and church members can bring about growth and peaceful cohabitant.

11. If there is gap in communication within Pastor and members, the relationship may suffer. Issues can be discussed; conflicts can be assertively not aggressively raised and negotiated before decisions are made. It is however recommended that relationship should be a medium through which cordiality is allowed to flourish.

12. It has been discovered that pastor must be encouraged and motivated for the church to experience a dynamic growth and one of the ways to motivate ministers of the gospel is that they are to be adequately remunerated. It is therefore recommended that pastor should be sufficiently and generous-financially supported so as to empower him to work harder to lead the church into dynamic growth.