

AN EVALUATION OF FINDING PLACEMENT WITHIN

THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION

AFTER THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The evaluation of finding placement after theological education within the Nigerian Baptist Convention is a problem that was not in existence during the past 159 years of Baptist presence in Nigeria. Until recently, the issue of finding placement has become a cause of concern to pastors, churches and the Convention.

This research was carried out through library research, interview, and questionnaire in order to ascertain the cause (problems) and solutions of pastors without placement, the loss of placement as well as churches without adequate personnel. The work revealed that factors ranging from inordinate ambition, lobbying for churches in the metropolis, insensitivity to the leading and timing of God, ill-preparedness, lack of genuine sense of call and demand for higher remuneration amongst others on the part of the pastors contribute either to their losing their placement or delay in getting placement. On the part of the churches, excuse of constructing church auditorium, not having a befitting pastorium, fear of financial implication of engaging a pastor, engaging bivocational pastors, embarking on multiple gigantic projects at a time, gullibility of some church leaders/deacons in not calling a pastor and naivity of some churches of the need of a trained personnel etc hinders a church from engaging a pastor.

Further research showed that the call system practiced by the Baptists seems to be the best as both pastors and churches have the liberty of exercising their autonomy and priesthood of all believers without interference.

However, it is recommended in order to reduce and eradicate the lack of placement, the various entities (i.e. pastor, church and Convention) should play their roles in the suggestions as follows: Pastors should follow due process of being

engaged, pray and wait for the leading and timing of God; not be over-ambitious, rely solely on God and prepare themselves for the ministry; churches should have policies that church leaders/deacons lead the church for a specific period, relate well with their pastors, orient themselves on the need for a pastor and not allow a section of the church to dictate to church and also to follow the right method of engaging a pastor. And the Convention should have policies that specify the duration a church can stay without a pastor, aid financially incapable churches to engage a pastor, encourage churches to adopt the multi-staff system, plant more churches and include church planting in the curriculum of all students of her theological institutions.

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Conclusion

From all angles being trained for a particular assignment and thereafter remaining redundant is not expected; moreover it is not a sweet experience. So also pastors without placement are seen to be workmen without a place to cultivate. Agreed that some pastors without placement contribute to being placed or losing their placement, the research revealed that solutions are available to both those who do not have a place to serve and those who have lost their placement.

Lack of placement has its implications and if not curbed, its growing trend might lead to more pastors sending their resumé to churches without being asked to do so, lobbying to get engaged in a church might be through awkward and crude means other than the call system. Also these might lead to the point where the Convention can no longer control itself. In fact, some churches are said to extend call to 4 – 5 pastors with the aim of sampling to get the best through trial sermon.

Experiences of pastors who did not get placement on time was sought and their responses was that pastors who are in such situations should pray, seek the face of God, be sensitive to His voice and leading while also be alert and prepared for the call. Examples in the Bible abound of those whom God called (anointed) for a particular task (assignment), yet it did not materialize immediately. Therefore, it is expected that perhaps God wants to prune certain areas of such life before he/she can manifest the grace given to him/her. Each pastor should know that God has a place for all He has called for his giftings differ in measure and efficiency.

Recommendations

Lack of placement is a problem that must be solved, therefore, the pastors concerned, churches as well as the Nigerian Baptist Convention need to join hands to alleviate this maniac in the Convention. The recommendations below can be avenues of relief as well as lasting solutions to the issue of finding placement by pastors:

1. Pastors entering the theological institutions must be certain of their calling; they should also see the pastorate as a calling and not a profession.
2. Pastors should cultivate character; be focused on their calling and shun inordinate desires.
3. Again, pastors should desist from politicking; they should obtain right counsel where necessary. Also they should improve themselves ministerially and above all, be in constant relationship with God who is the Caller, obeying every instruction of His promptly.
4. Churches should not send pastors away without authentic proof and leading from the Holy Spirit.
5. Churches should stop accepting bivocational pastors and set out what they need in the pastor they intend to call.
6. Church leaders/deacons should educate and orient their members on the necessity of engaging a trained minister. They should also agree on a given period of having to be led by a church leader/deacon.
7. The Baptist theological institutions should model their curriculum to equip students for a more pragmatic ministry; also they can collaborate with conferences to absorb pastors under the call system.
8. The Convention should collaborate with churches to plant more churches, support weaker ones and come up with a policy of an acceptable period a church that is viable can stay without engaging the services of a pastor.
9. The Convention should also address the issue of bivocational ministry as it is fast encroaching on the relevance of the necessity of the full time ministry of pastors.
10. And the issue of religious crisis in recent times cannot be ruled out; therefore, intermittent orientation/education and adequate information should be

circulated by the Convention to keep pastors tuned to current trends in the various regions.