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**CURBING THE EXODUS OF BAPTIST YOUTHS FROM THE
CHURCH: A CHALLENGE TO CONTEMPORARY PASTORS**

**AN ESSAY PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE NIGERIAN
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ABSTRACT

This essay "Curbing the Exodus of Baptist Youths from the Church: A Challenge to Contemporary Pastors", examined the problem of youths exodus from Baptist churches.

The study comprises of five chapters. Chapter one is the introductory chapter. This chapter contains the motivation for the work. This motivation comes from personal observation of the writer. Chapter two deals with review of related literature. On the causes of youth exodus, the attitude of the church, generation gap and the problem of change are various reasons among others why youths are leaving the church. However, among various solutions to the problem of youth exodus, the issue of providing relevant and appealing programmes is discovered as ultimate solution to the issue of youth exodus. The chapter also identified some effects of youth exodus from the church.

The third chapter is research methodology while chapter four presents data analysis and discussion. From the findings lack of relevant and appealing programmes appeared to be the major cause of youth exodus from the church. On solution, the finding showed that for Baptist churches to hold their youths, they must actively involve in church activities. In addition, they must be given relevant programmes. The last chapter, chapter five, gives the conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

CONCLUSION

The issue of youths exodus from the church is a present reality. The result from the questionnaires and the interview confirmed this. The blame of the problem cannot be placed on an individual but it is jointly shared by: Youths, adults, parents, pastors and the church. Although the effect cannot be quantified but the problem has some effect associated with it. These effects are on all the parties involved. For instance, one of the effects of the problem is that many youths has made a mistake of running in to wrong places and thus wrongly indoctrinated. This is a spiritual poison. Whether the church realize, it or not, the problem of youths exodus is robbing the church of potential future leaders, useful ideas and insights. Also the church is losing the money of these ones to other churches. In view of these, the church especially pastors need to rise up to curb this problem.

There is no gainsaying that the future of the Nigerian Baptist Convention lies in the hands of her youths. Therefore, there is need to take care of today's youths in order to have a successful and stable convention tomorrow. To do this, the role of the pastor as a leader is more significant than all the people involved

The results of the data as well as the interview revealed the need for improved programmes as well as involvement of youths in church activities. The solution to this problem lies in the hands of pastors in cooperation with the youths, adults, parents and the church at large. In planning improved programmes, the Holy Spirit should be allowed to operate freely rather than holding tightly to the Baptist Faith and Doctrine. The researcher is not advocating for abandoning the Baptist Faith and Doctrine but necessary changes

where necessary under the guidance of Holy Spirit. Also mature youths should be given freedom to operate in the church.

Experience has shown that most youths have made mistake in the process of moving from one church to another. Some have run into wrong churches and has been indoctrinated in a negative ways. An adage says that "The death of a green leaves is a warning to other green one's." Therefore, leaving the church is not the best approach. In the face of crisis, be patient and prayerful and very soon you will be recognized. Use your gifts, talents and zeal to bring positive change to the church. The church need the youths.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Pastor should endeavour to teach the youths Baptist Faith and Doctrine. This will enable some of the youths to cherish the Baptist Heritage.
2. Pastor should try and find out what other churches are doing (especially Pentecostals) that are attracting the youths there. Prayerfully, they should implement, if they biblical based, some of these programmes.
3. Plan appealing and relevant programmes for the youths.
4. Give them freedom in the church to be in church activities.
5. Recognize their importance by giving them leadership opportunities in the church. There are Elihu, Daniel and even Timothy among the youths and their contributions can bring a lot of difference.
6. Churches should organize dialogue sessions for youths and adults so as to curb the problem of generation gap.
7. Baptist churches should endeavour to cater for her youths who are students in higher institutions through campus ministries. This will help to retain some or majority of them for future.
8. Church should show love to the youths.

9. Youths should be patient in the face of crisis.

In conclusion, let the church take note of all the solutions proffered on the questionnaire.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

1. The effects of new waves of Pentecostalism on Baptist youths
2. The characteristics and the needs of the Christian of the Christian youths.
3. The problem on the generation gap in Baptist churches

Let me end this work with the words of William M Dyal. "Preachers, hear the youths of your community! Their questions will keep your sermons honest. Congregations, give the youths a place to serve! Their vitality will bring life. Parents, listen to youths! Their critique may cause you to cross-examine your values. Saints paragon, superhuman, perfect...they are not! But we rely on these youths for our hopes of better days! And thus, is a real sense for the very meaning of our own lives."¹