

NBTS
M. Div. Th
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**THE IMPACT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS ON
CHURCH PLANTING AND CHURCH GROWTH**

A THESIS

**PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE NIGERIAN
BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OGBOMOSO,
OYO STATE, NIGERIA**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF DIVINITY DEGREE
(THEOLOGY)**

BY

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JUNE, 2002

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ABSTRACT

The command to the church to make disciples of all nations is more urgent today than any other time. The faithful church will not only obey in order to continue to exist, but will continue to teach and preach in obedience to the command of Jesus Christ. However, many churches today complain of lack of money as the handicap that frustrates their mission efforts. The ultimate intent of this study therefore is to examine the impacts of socio-economic status on church planting and church growth with particular reference to Ogbomoso South East Baptist Association of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

The aim of the study is to undergird and motivate churches to plant new churches while the purpose is to encourage churches to share the gospel so that people can be disciplined completely for Jesus Christ both in a personal commitment to Him as Lord and Saviour as well as incorporation into a church in which the person can worship, fellowship, mature, witness and minister.

Consequently, completed copies of the questionnaire designed for the study and collected from four members in ten churches were analysed item by item, using frequency counts and percentages. Five research questions were answered with the results from the data. The findings revealed that money has become a major deciding factor in mission work. It also showed that the dynamic leadership of the church Pastor/leader is imperative and socio-economic status of the church members can not be undermined in the effective church growth and church planting activities.

The followings were recommended: that churches should focus on the Great Commission by emphasising the five basic functions of the church through: evangelism, discipleship, ministry, fellowship and worship that can enhance numerical growth, spiritual growth, ministries expansion and missions advance.

CONCLUSION

An appraisal of the impacts of socio-economic status on church planting and church growth has brought into limelight the fact that God designed the church for growth.

God in establishing the church gave the mandate for its advancement. This mandate is the Great commission, the task of which is to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all that He has commanded. It was from this commission that the church finds its marching order as seen in the active verbs of the commission such as go, make disciples, baptize and teach. If churches and Christians are to obey and remain faithful to the Great Commission they will use their money. And if money would be involved, the socio-economic setting of the church members must be considered. The imperative to plant new churches is firmly grounded in the biblical revelation concerning God's interest in all mankind's salvation. The foundation of church planting, church growth and mission endeavours began with general missionary thrust of the Bible.

⁶ A.R. Fagan, What the Bible Says about Stewardship (Nashville: Convention Press, 1976), p. 18

The distribution of church planting activities of churches in the Ogbomoso South East Baptist Association was encouraging and challenging. About 50% of the churches in the association have given birth to new churches. This achievement however may not be unconnected with the dynamic leadership of church Pastors and stewardship of giving shown by church members.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the data collected for this study, the following recommendations are made as a way forward.

- 1 Church Pastors/leaders should view church planting as an essential aspect of church growth. They should realise that when churches plant daughter churches, enhancing growth potentials.
- 2 Churches should focus on fulfilling the Great commission by emphasising the five basic functions of the church, which include evangelism, discipleship, ministry, fellowship and worship. Performing these five functions produces good results, especially in numerical growth, spiritual growth, ministries expansion and advancement of mission work.
- 3 If the general saying that money is a vehicle of evangelism is taken seriously, and church planting is seen as an effective method of evangelism, then church Pastors/leaders need to give challenging sermons and motivating teachings on stewardship .

- 4 Churches should be discouraged from embarking on long term big building projects that often make them unfaithful in their giving to the Convention, Conference and association.
- 5 For effective church planting and church growth, Churches should have serious commitment to passionate prayers.

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