

ORGANIZING AN EFFECTIVE STEWARDSHIP
EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN A LOCAL
BAPTIST CHURCH

AN ESSAY PRESENTED

TO

THE FACULTY OF THE
NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
OGBOMOSO, NIGERIA.

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE AWARD
OF MASTER OF DIVINITY IN
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DEGREE

BY

STEPHEN OMOTOSO ASAJU

JUNE, 1998.

ABSTRACT

The contemporary local Baptist Church has been reawakened to its missionary responsibility via a commitment to the Great Commission. However, the stewardship development of its members is stunted. As a result many of its members remain unfaithful in their giving for missions. This made the missionary efforts of the church to be ineffective because members are taught stewardship from a crisis rather than from a discipleship basis. The major reason for this situation is that these members are not motivated to practice Bible stewardship on the basis of a sound personal relationship with God experienced in salvation through Christ Jesus.

It is this situation that led the writer into this work, using Sabo Baptist Church, Ogbomoso to illustrate the work.

In Chapter One the purpose, scope and methodology of the research were examined and a brief history of Sabo Baptist Church, Ogbomoso given.

Chapter Two deals with the Biblical basis for stewardship education as found in both the Old and the New Testaments.

In Chapter Three stewardship education was examined in the context of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Nigerian Baptist Convention and at Sabo Baptist Church, Ogbomoso.

The writer in Chapter Four examined certain elements essential in organizing an effective stewardship education programme in a local church.

Chapter Five deals with the likely impacts of the stewardship education programme on individual members and the local church organizing it. This includes personal testimonies of people who have been involved in the programme. The paper gives some specific ideas as recommendations, and concludes with a challenge to every Christian and local church to be involved in stewardship education

A responsible theology of stewardship encourages local congregations to invest money in such a way as to

- (1) increase missional services in the community
- (2) maximise the effectiveness of the local church and
- (3) add to the number of households that contribute financially to the life and mission of the congregation.¹⁴

Thus, the Church's effectiveness in teaching members how to live a Christlike life, how to be good managers of its financial and other resources depends on its theology of stewardship.

A programme of stewardship education will positively affects the way the church manage its funds, the way it carries out its work, the priorities it adopts and the type of fellowship it experiences for God's glory.

Teaching stewardship to youth and children by the church will benefit their spiritual growth, their future content, their vocational success, and their church's effectiveness in mission and ministries.

Finally, everything within the church's stewardship of its resources should contribute to the edification and uniting of the church in Christ as a preparation for its ministry and mission in the world.

C. RECOMMENDATION

Due to the constraints of time and funds, the approach to this present study has been descriptive and historical. It is recognized, however that in writing any kind of description or history, there is a subjective factor both in selection of fact and in the assessment of the relative importance of facts. Therefore, it is recommended that a future research in this area

should be empirical and analytical to enhance greater objectivity.

However, based on the findings in the course of this research, the following specific ideas are recommended:

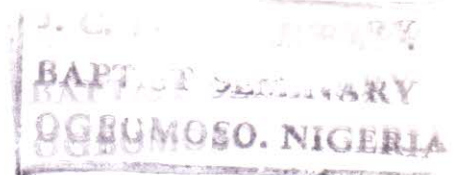
Our goal is to develop a comprehensive, multiplying stewardship education ministry in our local churches that will be an encouraging model. Therefore, the need for the adoption of a Stewardship Policy ¹⁵ should be promoted. This will help the churches to have a written statement based on the Bible to guide their stewardship education programmes.

The importance of stewardship education in contributing to the personal spiritual development of the individual and church growth cannot be over-emphasized. Thus, it is recommended that members should be encouraged to plan their growth step guided by the pledge in the Tither's Commitment Form. ¹⁶

For the local church to grow and mature in Christian giving, its stewardship efforts must be subjected to periodic review. In order to measure stewardship effectiveness, an additional instrument of evaluation—the Stewardship Standard ¹⁷ should be adopted and used.

If it is going to be effective in making individual member into a maturing distinctive Christian steward, any attempt at stewardship education must be designed within the framework of an annual stewardship calendar. However, since it is not possible for every member of the church to reach the same commitment level desired in just one year, a long-range (three-five-years) programme of stewardship development should be planned.

D. CONCLUSION



The real calling of every Christian is stewardship and missions. Expanding vision and enlisting Christian men and women in total commitment is done by educating them in the principles of stewardship development.

"Stewardship education is a spiritual task. It must be Bible-based, Holy Spirit revealed, and by faith received."¹⁸ However, stewardship education programme is full of challenges and difficulties which serve as a clog-in-the-wheel of its progress and effectiveness for most congregations:

1. Lack of biblical knowledge or understanding;
2. Poor leadership;
3. non challenging church objectives and programs;
4. non-involvement of the membership in decision-making;
5. Selfishness - the rejection of God's claims and resistance to the Lordship of Christ;
6. Poor money management either by the Church or individual members.¹⁹

The members should not allow these difficulties to discourage them, rather they should motivate them to be faithful to the chief steward, Jesus Christ. Thus, faithfulness is a requirement for all stewards. "He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness" (2 Corinthians 9:10).

The harvest of stewardship teaching is worthwhile. "Because of the proof giving by this ministry they will glorify God for your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all" (2 Corinthians

9:13).

The challenge of stewardship boils down to whether it can alter the prevailing value system and change the high-order goal from consumption of material things to their most redemptive use. Stewardship education within the Christian Church calls for support to minister to a radically materialistic generation. This is meant to motivate the active recognition of the sovereignty of God over His creation and over the creative and productive processes in which men and women share, and the uses to which they put all of the resources and means that come under their care and control.

Finally, organizing a stewardship education programme in a local church is not enough but the organizers should endeavour to make it effective. To do this, the programme should be well planned, given good leadership, well promoted and evaluated. Such a well organized stewardship education programme backed up with prayer can change lives and church full of unfaithful stewards, stunt growth and indifference to responsible Christian living to lives and church full of faithful stewards, rapid growth and responsible Christian living. It is only through such a responsible life and church changing programme that the body of Christ could be built and the members could learn to develop their talents by using their abilities "in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (I Peter 4:10).