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DISCIPLESHIP AS AN APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF THE
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is crucial and central to any organization either secular or spiritual. Unfortunately, there is an acute shortage of trained and disciplined leadership in both local and universal body of Christ. This is a serious concern for many today. The panacea to this problem or spiritual ailment has been an effort of many concerned Christians, seeking and finding solutions from every angle. Thus, this essay will be another effort at finding solution to the leadership problem in the contemporary body of Christ, using discipleship approach with emphasis and illustrations from the early church: Acts of the Apostles.

The topic is probably one of the most complex, controversial, and opaque. It has been the object of much scholarly efforts and the most casual review of the recent commentaries on this topic will demonstrate that the world of scholarship is far united on many details in the book of Acts of the Apostles.

Therefore, the objective of this essay is not to resolve all or even most of the complex issues in the book of Acts of the Apostles for some reasons. First, it would be impossible to resolve all the exegetical issues to anyone's satisfaction. Second, any attempt to resolve all the issues would require a book – length treatment. Third, while there is much disagreement among authors at the point of details, there is also substantial agreement with respect to many of the major issues, thus, this essay will not seek to reconcile dichotomy on the issues in the selected book.

The essay will seek those broad areas of agreement on the one hand and on the other hand, it will strive to deduce their relevance to the contemporary church through the usage of some methods. Perhaps and most importantly, the goal of this essay is majorly, to contribute to the scholarly debate, but the concern is the application of the

conclusions to the problems of leadership development in the Nigerian Baptist Convention and the body of Christ at large. The concern will limit the kind and depth of exegesis to be offered, the insightful reader will note many exegetical issues that were by-passed in the essay.

5.2 CONCLUSION

On the basis of the above situation, it has now become a grave responsibility of an individual, local church, associations, conferences and the Nigerian Baptist Convention to have an appraisal of the discipleship, how progressive is it? The approaches being used, the results or outcome also being produced or experienced. If a thorough appraisal is conducted, it will help the entire body of believer to think more than suggested approaches and recommendations made to the church pastors, theological institutions and the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

Moreover, discipleship is regarded as ancient but unfading way. the two approaches emphasized in the preceding chapters were used in the Old Testament, and by Jesus Christ the Saviour, our perfect example both in life and ministry. Also, the early church embraced the approaches wholeheartedly; therefore, the contemporary churches should not shy away from adopting these approaches.

When these approaches are put in place, the church of God will become relevant. It will respond appropriately to its context by bringing to bear God's standard of raising leaders within the local churches and larger body of Christ. Also, an acute shortage of manpower in the church of God would be minimal.

The research project is written with the aim of not only contributing to the scholarly debate but also to challenge the local body of Christ to take the perfect form and shape in using discipleship as a means or approach to leadership development. As a basis for further study on this subject, to correct and modify the extremes, errors and constructive criticism. I, therefore recommend that it should be looked into with the aforementioned aim in mind by every reader.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are some recommendations, which are sub-divided into three groups.

- A. Recommendations to the Church Pastors
- B. Recommendations to the Nigerian Baptist Convention
- C. Recommendations to the Theological Institutions

A. Recommendations to the Church Pastors

1. The church pastors should see discipleship as a major approach to the transformation of life of Christians or church members. Some examples we considered in chapter three will help in this aspect.
2. It is necessary for every church pastors to understand that the transformation of life is a pre-requisite to effective leadership in any aspect of church. Therefore, this should be the primary focus of discipleship.
3. The pastors should endeavour to use information in this research to evaluate the discipleship consciousness of their churches.
4. Also, the pastor should make do with both discipleship approaches discussed in the preceding chapters: formal and informal discipleship approaches. Both formal and informal approaches were used in the early church, if we want to produce vibrant leaders, we cannot hope to take another path.
5. The pastor should make use of the suggestions on discipleship, sustain the spirit, and transfer it to all the aspects of the church. Better still, discipleship, both formal and informal approaches should be at the central of all the programmes of the church, this will help not only in raising godly and effective leaders in the church, but also transformation of life.
6. The pastor must be sure that the materials designed for the discipleship are of sound quality and of biblical doctrine; this will not ultimately lead to production of half baked leaders, rather, a sound, knowledgeable and effective ones.
7. The pastor who wants to disciple church members must be an example in every way, a life of integrity and transparency is highly demanded by this task.

8. The pastor who want to be a disciple should have a large heart, try to combine sternness with tenderness, meekness and lowliness, all these and many more will make him or her approachable and accessible to the members.
9. Entrusting responsibilities is an integral part of discipleship; the pastor must not shy from this.
10. The church as a body of Christ has many responsibilities, there are many works or assignments in the church. It cannot be done by a single person thus discipleship helps in breeding or raising capable and competent hands that will work together with the church pastor.
11. According to Martin Bicer “there are more to do than just preaching. One needs to meet people person-to-person that is informally”. The church pastor must know this.
12. The church pastor should lead the church to include discipleship in the budget for the year, this will make the church to be more committed and dedicated to the cause.

B. Recommendations to the Theological Institutions

1. One of the responses elicited through questionnaire is that, many pastors will like to be discipled. The question is where can they be further discipled? Theological Institution is one of them. Therefore, our theological institutions should be regarded as a place where church Pastors can be further discipled for better performance on the fields.
2. The Theological Institution should design a curriculum that is aimed at discipling both the pastors on the field and pastors in training.

