

**THE DYNAMICS OF THE HOME CELL MINISTRY AT
GATEWAY BAPTIST CHURCH, IBADAN**

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to examine the dynamics of the cell system as practiced by the gateway Baptist church, Ibadan from 1991 to 2000. The rationale for the study came from the tremendous membership increase from 1190 in 1990 to 3276 in 2000 which is quite outstanding when we take into accounts other churches within Ibadan. The method used in this study is a critical analysis of exiting literature cell system, personal interviews, questionnaires and personal observation.

Chapter one is the general introduction. It identified that without any dramatic demographic changes and great increase in population in the neighbourhood, the church has experienced tremendous numerical increase. Chapter two traces the cell system to the Bible and shows that the various developments of today are modifications on the practices of the early church.

Chapter three shows that GWBC cell system is sustained through the hierarchical order of leadership positions, and vigorous evangelism. Since the church pursues a definite goal on evangelism, chapter four explains the different areas where growth has been experienced – church workers, training, leaders' dedication, increased teaching and pastor-member closeness. Chapter five concludes that the system has much value and positive effect on evangelism and hence it is worth trying.

The study discovered that: (i) the cell system is successful at GWBC, (ii) all other factors essential for growth are employed through the cell system, (iii) it is more involving and demands continual work from the pastor, (iv) most members are involved in evangelism (v) the system provides a healthy environment for individuals

within the same locality and (vi) the system has helped members to develop deep relationship with God, and one another.

Finally, the recommendations made include:

- (i) The system should not be replicated blindly without taking into account other salient factors.
- (ii) Since the system appeals more to those who are influenced by the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, churches desiring its use should consider those without such disposition.
- (iii) Pastors should rethink over their teaching responsibilities in their respective churches.
- (iv) Churches wanting to go the cell system should study the system well and count the cost.
- (v) It is one of the ways and methods to boost the evangelism in any particular church.

B. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions and recommendations are hereby made:

1. While the cell system has its own value as shown in the case of GWBC, and like every good system, it cannot be replicated blindly. For the success of its operations, it is important to take cognizance of the commitment of the leaders at GWBC who have made it work. Anything less will prove the system as ineffective as others.
2. From the study of GWBC, the cell system or movement appeals more successfully in reaching and recruiting from those already influenced by the Pentecostal and charismatic movements. Consequent upon this, any church wanting to use the system should take into accounts members of the congregation who may not be disposed to both the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement. Much attention should be directed at unbelievers.
3. For the growth of the church, the pastor as the spiritual leader should be free to choose or decide any spirit-inspired method/system to which he can conveniently work with. The most important concern of the church should be whether it is spiritually balanced and edifying and at the same time leading to

- the growth of the church. For such to be, executive committees should work together with the pastor to realize God's purpose for the church
4. While growth at GWBC has been quite prominent during the era of cell system, the finding shows evidence of the commitment of the pastor and cell leaders. It is the commitment from the pastor that led him to motivate all workers in the church.
 5. From the study, it is evident that there has not been much change in the attitude of worshippers to the church, neither has the growth resulted from increased church programmes. The growth in GWBC has greatly resulted from increased teaching. 75% of the responses show this. Based on this, it is being suggested that every pastor rethink over his teaching roles in the local church.
 6. In GWBC teaching is no longer limited to the church auditorium. Lessons are now taken to meet members in their respective homes through the cell meetings - TEE programmes, regular leaders retreat and weekly cell meetings have added impetus to the teachings of the church. The researcher believes churches irrespective of the systems in use could equally intensify their teaching ministry to reach majority of their members.
 7. For a successful implementation of the cell church system, churches desiring it should study the system well, count the cost in terms of materials and personnel and give it all that is necessary before embarking on it. It is not a system that must be rushed into.

8. Once a church is determined to use the system, it must not be deterred so much about its cost. Indeed, most good things are costly. Rather, churches should be ready to sponsor cell leaders for conferences, seminars and regular retreat programmes where current knowledge on the system may be acquired. This will enhance the continuity of the system.
9. Cell church system at GWBC has a continual and systematic equipping process, which prevents members from becoming stagnant. It motivates members to be their best for God, the community and themselves.
10. The cell group system as in every small group fosters a kind of interpersonal relationship which enhances caring, warmth and closeness to members than can ever be experienced in any large group.
11. Since the system is much more involving and leadership training occupies prominent place, the choice of the system must be carefully made. In addition as the functions of the pastor will increase, there will be the need to drop some of the pastor's routine activities to the cell leaders and concentrate on developing materials for equipping leaders.
12. The cell system is one of the ways of fulfilling the ministry of the church and the great commission of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is able to penetrate the fabrics of the society through the vigorous evangelistic lifestyle of the committed members.
13. Finally, churches wanting to be effective soul winners and looking forward to spiritual and numerical growth will have the cell church as another option.