

**BAPTIST STUDENT FELLOWSHIP AS AGENT  
OF CHURCH GROWTH IN THE  
NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research work aimed at addressing some perceived problems of misunderstanding, the uniqueness and worldview of Baptist student fellowship in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Essentially, efforts were made in this paper to present Baptist Student Fellowship of the Nigerian Baptist Convention as an agent of Church Growth, through their immense contributions spiritually, numerically, leadership and denominational growths.

Moreover, the contributions of Baptist Student Fellowship to Church growth can be greatly enhanced, if local Baptist Church leadership and members consider the student as part of the Church that must be ministered to, and used for Church's mission. Hence, a necessary enabling environment for student fellowship must be encouraged by the Church, so that both potentials and opportunities of youth strength can be tapped for Church growth. This becomes pertinent because any church that under-plays the place of student-youth, sacrifices its own future.

## 1. Recommendations for Improving BSF Contributions to Church Growth

In this respect, both the student and the Church community at large need to take some conscious steps towards enhancing the contribution of BSF in Church growth. Some of the practical suggestions for consideration along this line of action may include the following.

A. The Church should organise special ministry for their students through:<sup>1</sup>

- Annual Church budgeting to sponsor their programmes.
- Church correspondences to bridge the communication gaps and to instruct them with devotional materials while in school.
- Vacation programmes of retreats, musical concerts, drama ministration, special congregational worship services on Sunday etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Nevin C. Harner, Youth Work in the Church, p. 202.

B. The Church Pastor and /or student minister should ensure that:<sup>2</sup>

- He becomes a student himself. I.e. should not approach student ministry in ignorance, but be well informed and ready to learn.
- He becomes friend to students. I.e. you show interest in their lives and activities.
- He equips himself to minister to student. I.e. must develop unique ways to teaching students at Church, and become an effective counsellor to students.
- He provides Christian exemplary living. I. e. This refer to ability to offer students the right kind of adult models. Show by his action that he can be trusted.
- He must equip students. I. e. The Pastor should help students discover and develop their spiritual gifts. He must also provide opportunities for using their gifts in ministry.

In addition to the above obligations that Church Pastor or student Minister must perform the following tips should be considered.<sup>3</sup>

- He should be a person of faith, who willing to share the meaning of faith in his life. He must think, feel, and act on faith.
- He must be available, and willing to listen as students talk through feelings and emotions even when the words are difficult and slow in coming.
- He should guide students in interpreting the proper place of emotion in faith.
- He should involve students in ministry and mission of the Church.
- He must be patient with students.
- He must be affirming to student's actions.

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<sup>2</sup> Gary Hardin, "Teenagers and Your Church" Church Administration, p.

<sup>3</sup> David O. Aleshire, Understanding Today's Youth, p. 128.

- He must be Christian, who is real, sincere open and trustworthy.
- C. the Obligations of student to ensure better contributions toward Church Growth may Include the Following:
- BSF members should desire to understand the Baptist denominational structure and policy.<sup>4</sup>
  - BSF members should learn to exercise patience with prayer in pursuance of needful changes in the Church.<sup>5</sup>
  - BSF members must learn to be submissive to Church leaders rather than being spiritually arrogant and disobedient.<sup>6</sup>
  - Students must understand the fact that a Church consists of both youths and adults, whose worship interests must be jointly satisfied.<sup>7</sup>

### **Conclusions**

From the foregoing chapters (1-4), effort have been made to present the operations, nature and programmes of Baptist student fellowship in Baptist Churches and the denomination at large. The group has been identified as a spiritual organization within the Baptist churches which aims at developing her members, as well as, the Church and the large communities through her various evangelistic, spiritual and missionary activities.

Moreover, the BSF group of the Nigerian Baptist Convention Churches has been identified as a distinct group, that need a special ministry from the Church in order to profer relevant answers to their challenging needs. This fact

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<sup>4</sup> Kolawole S. A. Oral Interview Ogbomoso: NBTS, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

becomes pertinent as a result of the uniqueness of students' worldviews and exposure. Until students' worldview is understood and rightly interpreted by the Church pastors, adults in the church, and parents, they may continue to be a wasteful resources to the Church ministries. Their problems should rather be seen as challenges which require proper actions from the Church communities.

Besides, empirical evidences have proved beyond reasonable doubt that, wherever proper guidance and teachings are given to the students, they turned to be a great asset, for revival and missions in the Church. Their excesses, no doubt, need to be corrected in the spirit of love, patience and maturity.

Again, the various submissions in this paper have indicated that BSF visions, objectives and practices are subsumed in the larger missions of the Baptist Churches. The exception is however noticeable in their manner of approach (i. e. pentecostalism approach), due to their youthful predispositions. This approach by implication does not, and should not make them to be regarded as "anti-baptist" group.

In the finality, the writer's suggestion and warning to the Baptist denominational churches and their leaders is conveyed in the words of Nihinlola in his response to the challenges of pentecostalism in the Church:

In order for us to benefit maximally from the blessing of pentecost, my recommendation to every evangelical Christian consists of what to avoid and what to do: Don't ignore it; don't reject it; don't adopt it; study it; moderate, experience it... don't drive youth, students and adults who call for it away from the Church... God wants people of all ages in the Church. Don't send people away from God.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Emiola Nihinlola, Nigerian Baptist Convention and Pentecostal / Charismatic Worship Practice p. 6.