

**THE ROLE OF THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST CHURCHES IN CURBING THE
EXODUS OF YOUTHS TO PENTECOSTAL DENOMINATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed at examining the role of the Baptist churches in curbing the exodus of youths from the church. The study was undertaken to find out why Baptist Churches who believe strongly on sound teaching are having youth exodus. The essay is divided into five chapters.

Questionnaires and interview were used to collect the data. For the analysis, the study comprised two hundred and fifty questionnaires that were distributed among twenty five churches in Lagos State Conference. The questionnaires were used to focus on the reality of youth's exodus from the church, the reasons why the youth are leaving the church and the characteristics of youth and what can be done to curtail the youth leaving the church. Three categories of people were interviewed: these are the pastors of the local churches where questionnaires were distributed to, the youth pastor or youth coordinator for those who have youth/teen Assemblies separately and the youth who had left the Baptist Church to other churches.

The data collected were tabulated and simple percentages were employed in treating the data.

1. There are still youth exodus to Pentecostal Churches.
2. Youth are no longer leaving because of Pentecostal doctrine since what they practice in major Pentecostal churches are being done in Baptist Churches nowadays.
3. Youth needs are not met. Baptist Churches are still operating far behind this generation, therefore, the youth move to other churches where their needs are

met.

4. Most parents drove their children away from the church because of their double practices- what they say at home is different from what they do in the church.
5. There is little or no relationship between the pastors and the youth.

On the basis of the finding above, the researcher notice that exodus of youth can be curtail if the pastors should be interested in youth programmes. Teenage assembly could be of help in paying attention to youthful needs if monitored by mature elders.

The church should review her programmes so that they will be relevant to the current generation.

Conclusion

There is a need for the church of God to wake up for the rate at which youths are leaving the church is increasingly alarming. It is a pity to see some leaders who are unconcerned with the exodus. A pastor was saying they can go so far, it is not out of

the church. One wonders how the church will be able to pay the salary of such pastor if all the youth are leaving. Whether the church realize it or not, the problem of youth exodus is affecting the church's purse and is robbing the church of potential future leaders who is full of ideas and insights.

The church must have time to the youths because the homes have no time for them and the society is beckoning on them. The church needs to drastically change their programmes in order to address the needs of youth. According to Francis Shaefer, "It is the responsibility of Christians in each generation to package the gospel in a way that will communicate to that generation".(1982:9) Events over the past years have brought the Pentecostal and non- Pentecostal Christians close together. Christian of every group is in need of each other to stand together and support each other against anti-religions and government. Both the two groups the Pentecostal and mainline churches need to be ready to help the youth of this generation. The Pentecostalism that has perhaps brought much excitement and dancing to the church, has perhaps sadly, brought more spiritual decay and death to the church because men began to trivialize sacred things. Many who are really disciples cannot be impressed by all the enthusiasm, activities and jamborees that are going on in several churches today. One cannot be impressed by the testimonies of church growth and proliferation of ministries. One will never be impressed by the noises in so many assemblies today. Let the church ask for new wine and let the Baptist churches be ready to pay the prize of retaining their youths by not being too rigid in adapting to changes that are good and follow them up.

There is need for some traditions and beliefs to change or be improved upon. Never before have had the youths had to deal with such incredible temptations as they

are having today. Our culture at large has rejected the gospel and truth of any kind. The Christian adults are gradually becoming insensitive to what is being shown before them on the movies to the extent that their children have no guide as to what is sin and what is not. Parents are actively and regularly participating on consuming movies night after night, which are full of outrageous sinful conduct which Jesus never meant for them to consume. When parents say one thing, but then act in another way it does not take much time to see the reason why the youths have left the church. Youths no longer trust their parents. Most youth would not tell their parents this because they know where their bread is buttered. They have also learned to tell them what they want to hear to please them and then gain their temporary reward. The youth are bombarded every day with relativism and every enticement imaginable to try and keep them away from. The schools have so embraced secularism that anything that hints at faith in Christ in the schools is being wiped out mercilessly as possible. To add to the problem, many of the parents of youth in churches are divorced and have no consistent work with God themselves.

The pastors, elders and parents must realize that there is a lot of information bombardment outside whether good or bad for children to pick. Everywhere there are “yahoo” through internet, Nigerian film shows are promoting sex, violent evil spirit like “Babalawo” and even the sale of pornography materials. Among the youth there is general quest for miraculous, good music. Baptist church must move fast to meet up with youth so that one will not lack a generation to hand the heritage over to. One must realize that the Pentecostal are always moving with time. They think of new innovation because they know youth are mobile and desirous and this is why they catch them. The young are very conscious of their carriers so they go to youth oriented programmes in other churches where their needs are meet. Let the goal of

each local Baptist church be to shake up their youth group members into greater world awareness so that they can shake the world. This can be done!

Recommendations

The principal problems faced by the youths of this generation are already highlighted above. The views of the respondents to how these problems can be solved have also been discussed to some extent. The researcher is recommending by emphasizing the solutions already giving through the questionnaire and interview of the respondents that:

1. The church needs to build a team of people who have deep passion and commitment to caring for youth. It goes beyond benevolence or home fellowship. It is about love. A team they will trust to share their lives with. A team that will be concerned with the totality of their spiritual lives, their carrier and families. A team that will make sacrificial commitment to stand in the gap and serve in order to reach youth against all odds.
2. The church should review her programmes so that they will be relevant to the current generation. Programmes should be designed to suite members of all ages. For example, the Lydia fellowship can be changed to Single Summit. The concept of Lydia is a wonderful one, purity and holiness of the ladies but it can be changed. Such type of dynamism in programming will go along to make our ladies proud to come to the programme. The uniform needs to be reviewed to current day fashion that did not expose their bodies. Young Christian ladies want to be beautiful.
3. Real revival starts in the home. It begins when the heart of the fathers are

turned back to the children and the children's hearts to their fathers. A return to parent led discipleship is needed among Christian families. Parents must be model to their children.

4. Pastors must avoid viewing themselves as shepherd of the adults only and be active in leading the entire flock while encouraging parents to be primary spiritual mentors of their children.
5. The church must learn to involve youth in mission and evangelism. This will help them to trust God for their needs, help them to learn to obey and help them to relate to each others and elders.
6. In conclusion, if the church, pastors, parents, youth leaders would preach the word and live it out with passion the trend will continue to change. So few can say as Paul did in Phil 3:17, Phil 4:9 and I Cor 4:16 (NIV) watch me, follow me and then do it.