

A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE GOLDEN JUBILEE OF BAPTIST WORK IN
AKWANGA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA (1962 - 2012)

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ABSTRACT

This research is set out to appraise the Golden Jubilee of Baptist work in Akwanga Local Government . Akwanga Baptist Association and the United Baptist Convention. A golden Jubilee is an unfathomable unique life experience of individuals, family, group, tribe, state and a nation. A reflection on the beginning of God's work through the ministry of the Baptist (1962 – 2012) in a region which was purely pagan and Islamic in orientation and upbringing call for a deep study. The region had no benefit of European Missionaries ,like other parts of the country but virtually made up of illiterate local traders from the South – West of Nigeria – Specially the Ogbomoso traders who brought their Bible to the unknown land of Akwanga demand a good study.This is the reason why the researcher attempted to find out some of the achievements made in fifty years of Baptist work in Akwanga. The reason for insignificant growth and progress in terms of Church planting and growth as well as holistic Jesus' ministry was evaluated. Discovered were notable reasons for low productivity viz: Language barrier, Poverty, unregenerate lives of members, cooperation, poor mission-outreach, lack of enlightenment, in – fighting, culture and tradition, enumeration of Pastors and ill spiritual awakening. This work was carried out through library source, oral interview and questionnaire. Simple percentage was used to the date collected. It was discovered that the way out of problems that has affected Baptist work in fifty years should be by fasting and prayer, individual involvement in mission and evangelism, enlightenment and education on Baptist work, stewardship, cooperation, and faithfulness in giving vision and planning of Pastors and joint fellowship for all Baptist Churches in Akwanga should improve situation drastically. The Nigerian Baptist Convention should improve partnering with Baptist Work in Akwanga.

for support is a major problem in Akwanga. Members reject this doctrine of Baptist work.

In some cases, Baptist preaching does not portrays true agape love. Baptist teaching is judgmental and focused on condemnation. The claims of self-righteousness but denial of God`s power is a big hindrance. Indifference of Pastors and the church in the needs of church members – is a major obstacle of progress. Members are not happy about these.

5.2 Conclusion

The following conclusions are drawn from this study after a critical analysis of Baptist work in Akwanga since 1962

A better, strong and greater Baptist ministry is possible and it must be desired by the Nigerian Baptist Convention. All the hindrances of rapid growth of Baptist work in Akwanga are man made and not permanent. These could be tackled by God and man.

The current administration and machinery put in place by the Nigerian Baptist convention is enough for wholistic transformation of Baptist work in Akwanga after fifty years of existence.

The role of Baptist Pastors and members combined should propel growth in Baptist work. Churches should make use of all available facilities for Mission and Evangelism. There is need for more enlightenment and awareness of Baptist doctrines for members through preaching, teaching and discipleship.

In-fighting among members of Baptist churches in Akwanga should be disccouraged. There is need to see one another as co-labourers in God`s vineyard. Agape love is very important and paramount in Baptist work. With this, saved

members will see the need to win the souls of the perishing outside the fold. The problem of polygamy can be handled with love and care whereby the polygamous families will not be treated as outcasts.

The need to make Christinity contextual will go a long way to make Christain faith relevant today for living. Modern way of handling church service and worship should be employed by Baptist pastors and members in areas of mission and evangelism, charity, social services, and utilization of spiritual gifts by all members.

Baptist people should wake up in terms of giving and investing in God's business because without constant giving for the support of the work, little impact shall be made in spreading the gospel. It is high time churches responded positively to the remuneration of Baptist workers engaged in Akwanga. This will enhance their concentration and commitment to Baptist ministry. Baptist work should focus on the indigenes.

Every Baptist church in Akwanga must resolve to engage in aggressive church planting of at least one daughter church per church each year. This will make Baptist family to double each year.

Ministers should take lead, supported by deacons, in the new step towards wholistic transformation of Baptist work in Akwanga. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is very crucial because by strength shall no man prevail – 1Samuel 2:9b.

5.3 Recommendations

The outcome of the discoveries made as a result of critical appraisal of the Golden Jubilee of Baptist work in Akwanga is instructive. The following recommendations are made to improve the growth of Baptist work in Akwanga Local Government.

Baptist families in Akwanga need to organise fasting and prayers as a mark to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Baptist work in Akwanga. This will help to overcome the present retrogressiveness and indifferent attitudes. Baptist Pastors should cultivate the habit of personal witnessing and evangelism because leadership by example is the key for good motivation. Pastors should engage and encourage members to engage in personal witnessing and evangelism.

People are perishing from lack of knowledge – Hosea 4:6. Baptist members should not be allowed to stray. Members and Pastors should surrender themselves for continuous teaching, training and retraining through Bible study, workshop, seminars and retreats.

Members should imbibe stewardship of influence in all areas they find themselves. This will bring a lot of turnover to the ministry of the Baptists in Akwanga. Baptist people should be taught to depend on the grace of God. They should always seek for God's providence in all situations. They should not depend on physical reward from the church or pastors.

It is high time for Baptist families to allow prayer of Jesus Christ on unity of believers to be answered. It is indisputable that without unity even little things cannot be achieved. Cooperation between members and Pastors is crucial in the ministry of our Lord.

Baptist leadership in Akwanga should develop a new method of church growth and church planting in a way that will appeal to students, youths and adults. Pastors should always go some extra mile in preaching, inspiring and have spirit-filled messages. They should make sure they live it. Pastors should strive for righteousness, holiness and perfection because they are God's ambassadors. Pastors should be men

of their words "Do as I do" and not "do as I say" Only the Pastors' "Yes must be yes" and his "No must be no" – Matthew 5:37.

Faithfulness in giving should be encouraged because our God is a giver (John 3:16). Christians are created in His image. We must be like him. It is recommended that the Nigerian Baptist Convention should see the need to partner with Baptist work in Akwanga because there is more land unconquered.

It is recommended that Baptist families should stop blackmailing and castigating Baptist polity because of misunderstanding. It is recognised that Pastorless churches are the problems of Baptist growth. Effort should be directed that no church should be recognized without a Pastor at any given time.

It is recommended that the problem of in-fighting, envy, jealousy and hatred among Baptist families should be discouraged for effective church growth. Yorubas should allow the indigenes to take up leadership positions in the churches and Associations at large. Baptist men should wake-up spiritually, financially and politically. All Baptist organizations viz: M.M.U, W.M.U, Youth, B.S.F. and choir should be empowered and encouraged to live according to their names and vision statements. House fellowship or cells should be encouraged to develop to baby churches.

It is discovered that lack of vision and planning in our churches is a bane of Baptist work. It is therefore recommended that our churches should embrace issues of visiting and planning for smooth running of the church.

In view of the above, it is formally recommended that budget planning in churches and Associations be encouraged and enforced. This will reduce or stop reckless spending in churches and Associations. Secret borrowing of church and Association money should be stopped because this renders Baptist work impotent.

