

EMPOWERING WEAKER CHURCHES TO BECOME VIABLE:
A CASE STUDY OF BATONU BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

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ABSTRACT

It is generally believed that as a church advances in age there will be indications that it is growing and will be able to support its own ministry. The case is not true with Batonu Baptist Association, despite its year of existence most of the churches could not pay the pastor as suggested by the Nigerian Baptist Convention not to talk of multiplying itself. Most still depend on outside help even when all it takes to become viable are available. Data for this essay were collected through personal observation, oral, interview and bibliographical search method. I found out in the search that most times people had developed dependency mentality right from the start of Baptist work in the area and find it difficult to change and accept responsibility. This writer identified possible ways of making weaker churches viable if available resources are made used. It is envisaged that the churches can become stronger as the leaders and members are prepared to pay the prize. It is recommended that leaders of the churches be re-orientated about principles of growing churches; and church leadership. The leaders need be taught about the three characteristics of the New Testament church namely: self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. When the churches are well prepared, they will be strengthened and conquer more land for God.

Conclusion

The church is the most single important entity on earth. Financial growth is part of the growth of the church. The plan, project and programmes of the church

demand financial buoyancy. Without financial growth all other areas of growth will be stagnant. When the finances are low, the gospel will move slowly.

People need to reject myths and assumptions about money and ministry. Such assumptions include people are selfish, talking about money is a sign of carnality, the people are too poor to give and that churches in mission field are responsibility of strong churches from the cities and the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

Churches in Batonu particularly need to learn secrets of financially strong churches. Proper teaching about the stewardship of money, dynamic leadership, proper administration, proper record keeping of member's financial faithfulness, and systematic teaching on giving, partnership and investing in God's work are a few of these secrets (Akin-John 153, 154-156).

The writer is convinced that taking these steps and all aforementioned into consideration will go a long way to increase the financial strength of the people of Batonu Baptist Association and to eventually turn churches in Batonu into financially strong churches making them viable than what situation is at present.

A viable church is a terror to the devil and can make much more impact, affect more people and it becomes a weapon in advancing the kingdom of God to break new frontiers.

Recommendations

In order to ensure and maintain viability of churches in Batonu, efforts should intensified on the principles of the New Testament church Global Mission Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention should have agricultural project in the area making use of resources around, career mission staff may be engaged. The local leadership

training needs be put in place to address peculiar issues and empowered for effectiveness. Financial empowerment seminar needs be organized from time to time at least for the space of five years. The churches in the area has potentials to become viable. The mission work there must grow. It cannot afford to be that of dependency any more.