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THE RELEVANCE OF THEOLOGICAL TRAINING ON DISCIPLESHIP AND
CHURCH GROWTH

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ABSTRACT

This study determines the impact of theological training on discipleship and church growth. The study involved the distribution of Questionnaire to some selected churches in Ibadan District of the Foursquare Gospel Church in order to sample the opinion of some members as well as pastors on whether there is any impact of theological training on the administration of the church. The seriousness of the problem stems from the way theological training is viewed as a waste of time and the claim that many people did not have theological training and they are "doing well" in the ministry. How do we determine "how well" they are doing? Is this in terms of number and cathedrals being built or spiritual growth and development of the church members? How do we measure the growth of the church? The answer given by individual was made highly confidential because of its sensitivity. Some people were reluctant to fill the questionnaire even with the assurance of confidentiality; some had to be assisted to fill their questionnaire after carrying interview for them.

A good number of the respondents established the fact that there exist a firm relationship between them. However, one wonders why it is not emphasised in many places and why it is even discountenanced in some other places.

All hope is not lost from the researcher's findings as the findings reveals that there is a growing awareness lately on the importance of theological training revealed by the responses although still minimal. There however needs to be more awareness on the need for training and the long existing seminaries should be more opened to taking candidates from other denominations and also there is the need for exchange/seconding of faculties and lecturers from already established seminaries to enhance those just coming up.

up doing theology in the various facets of theology mentioned above, it demonstrates that the responsibility of a pastor to refute those who oppose sound doctrines have to engage in doing theology.

Refutation of contrary doctrines appears more in the realm of apologetics rather than theology. However, apologetics is actually one aspect or form of doing theology. Presuppositionalist John Frame has defined Apologetics as “the application of Scripture to unbelief.”

Another important aspect of why a pastor should be engage in doing theology is because the study of the teaching of God is important in protecting the body of Christ from false doctrines threatening the Gospel message. A pastor must do theology for the Gospel’s sake. Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 4:12, “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.” Note that Paul exhorted Timothy to pay attention to one’s teaching and one’s entire self (or life). Paying attention to one’s teaching is theological in nature, and even the attention to one’s moral and spiritual life require that one engages in doing theology in order to have access to sound doctrines, sound doctrines which God has ordained as the means in which one exhort oneself and others towards godliness and the truth.

5.1.1 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

First, it is pertinent at this junction for churches and ministries to place emphasis on training their ministers. Although, this has started but it needs to be given a prime of place. Donald McGavran in a lecture delivered at Columbia Bible

College in 1975 described five levels of church leadership needing theological education as follows:

1. 'Unpaid leaders heading in'—elders, deacons, Sunday school teachers etc.
2. 'Unpaid leaders heading out'—a variety of lay evangelists.
3. 'Unpaid or part-time paid pastors of small congregations' (who benefit most from theological education by extension).
4. 'Full-time paid pastors of well established congregations.'
5. International leaders' who link Christians worldwide. The church will be the better for it if this is given prime of place.

Second very important thing to do is to rescue theological institutions from the apron of Universities. From the researcher's historical analysis, theological institutions gave birth to Universities, it will now be abnormal or a misnomer to make theological training an appendage of the university system which tends to water down the theological contents of the training thereby making our training more a secular theology.

Thirdly, unaccredited seminaries should pursue accreditation with appropriate accrediting body(ies) and dissuade from affiliation to Universities. Affiliation is like making cart before the horse. At best it is subjugation.

Fourth, theological education should be goal oriented, student centred and problem solving. How do I mean? A goal oriented training is to be targeted at what goal is the training to achieve in the ministry of the students training for the ministry. Student oriented training is to allow the teachers/faculties have more personal one to one interaction for the purpose of mentoring. Then problem solving in the sense of making the training relevant to the ills of the society. When Billy Graham preached

in Shreveport, Louisiana, liquor sales dropped by 40 per cent and the sale of Bibles increased 300 per cent. During a mission in Seattle, amongst the results there is stated quite simply, "Several impending divorce actions were cancelled." In Greensboro, North Carolina, the report was that "the entire social structure of the city was affected."

One of the great stories of what Christianity can do came out of the mutiny on the Bounty. The mutineers were put ashore on Pitcairn Island. There were nine mutineers, six native men, ten native women and a girl, fifteen years old. One of them succeeded in making crude alcohol. A terrible situation ensued. They all died except Alexander Smith. Smith chanced upon a Bible. He read it and he made up his mind to build up a state with the natives of that island based directly on the Bible. It was twenty years before an American sloop called at the island. They found a completely Christian community. There was no gaol (jail) because there was no crime. There was no hospital because there was no disease. There was no asylum because there was no insanity. There was no illiteracy; and nowhere in the world was human life and property so safe. Christianity had cleansed that society.

Where Christ is allowed to come the antiseptic of the Christian faith cleanses the moral poison of society and leaves it pure and clean.
—Barclay's Daily Study Bible (NT). This should be the goal of theological training.

Fifth point is that the curriculum of the theological institutions should be revised from time to time to contextualize it and make it contemporary thereby answering the questions of our world today. Audi Moses noted

In some theological institutions there are defects in the contents of the training. Some older institutions suffer from foreign ideological imposition of the founding nations. Some suffer from attempts at contextualization of the contents of the theological training. In the process, they run into negative syncretism. Defect in the context also occurs when the institution does not evaluate the relevance of the courses of study and when too many irrelevances are involved in training prospective pastors. Defects in theological training also come through the increasing yearning for specialization of training. The need for specialization is sometimes stressed to the point that the core base of general (or necessary) foundation is ignored. This kind of situation produces a pastor who can reach out but cannot disciple. There is also the dilemma of emphasis being laid on the content and skill development in theological training. If a balance is not reached between these, defective training results. Such a defective result on the other hand has direct unhealthy consequences on the growth of the church under the leadership of pastors from such institutions. Godly family as an instrument of Church Growth (47-48)