

MINISTERIAL INTEGRITY AS A FOUNDATION FOR
SUSTAINABLE CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP
IN PORT HARCOURT METROPOLIS

BY
EVANGELIST OKOYA ABEKE
MARTIC. NO: 11/0176

A Thesis in the Department of CHRISTIAN ETHICS,
Faculty of Theological Studies, Submitted to the School of Postgraduate Studies
The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of
MASTER OF THEOLOGY

2013-0736

JUNE, 2013

ABSTRACT

In Christianity, the integrity of everyone is vital and that of the minister is pivot. Ministerial integrity that ought to be a foundation for sustainable Christian leadership is presently being overlooked and ignored by some Christian leaders. Ministerial integrity has received much attention worldwide including Nigeria but the impact of keeping ministerial integrity is still below the society and church's expectations. A critical look at this subject revealed that the church has not done well in this area and it is affecting a key pillar of Christianity as an integrity group. As a result, this study "Ministerial Integrity as a Foundation for Sustainable Christian Leadership in Port Harcourt Metropolis in Rivers Baptist Conference" seeks to examine the place of integrity in the minister's life, ministry and leadership, the possible effects that lack of ministerial integrity could bring and what could be done to prevent further lack of ministerial integrity in Port Harcourt Metropolis in Rivers Baptist Conference. The study is a descriptive survey using an interview guide in deducing pieces of information where necessary especially where document is not available. The study revealed that there is open display of lack of ministerial integrity in Port Harcourt Metropolis as many pastors and other Christian leaders are being relieved of their duties and ministries at the leadership level. Further findings revealed that excessive or absolute power and freedom given to ministers by the church is the most highly ranked cause of lack of ministerial integrity among others. Furthermore, the study revealed that the ministers are not superhuman and the church is not a place for sharp practices. Hence, it was recommended among others that there should be better and proper organogram to check ministers to prevent them from destroying their integrity and still not reduce them to ordinary slaves as their honour as ministers of God is maintained.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The research revealed that right leadership is a vital aspect of Christianity that needs to be sustained. To sustain a good and right Christian leadership, the integrity of the leader stands out as a foundational factor. It is on this basis that ministerial integrity is seen as a foundation for sustainable Christian leadership in Port Harcourt Metropolis of the Rivers Baptist Conference. It is evidently clear that there are problems in keeping ministerial integrity in Port Harcourt Metropolis of the Rivers Baptist Conference. This has given room for mental disorder, psychological imbalance, gradual withdrawal of trust, spiritual deceit, financial and spiritual lacks, moral bankruptcy and get-rich-quick syndrome for both the ministers and their congregations. All these have made many pastors to be jobless and created poor pastor-church relationship in many congregations.

However, those ministers who keep their integrity have deeper and better sustainability tendencies in their leadership. There is an unwavering trust and unflinching support of their leadership by their congregations. This is reflected in the

same vein in their family lives. Both their congregations and their family members are always satisfied and proud of their leadership. There is the atmosphere of peace and harmony between the leader and the led. It is revealed that this atmosphere of peace is enhancing development and advancement of set goals, visions and aspirations of leaders and the churches. Keeping of ministerial integrity has a lot of undeniable dividends everywhere.

Furthermore, the findings brought to bear that the church has not actually fared well in this area of ministerial integrity especially in helping ministers to keep their ministerial integrity. The family, the local church and the denomination as a whole have roles to play in the improvement of ministers keeping their ministerial integrity. This awareness is there in the Baptist Church, but the positive impact is still infinitesimally small, contrarily below the people's expectations. Much is needed to be done since right Christian leadership cannot do without ministerial integrity.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the fact that ministerial integrity is no longer kept by many Christian leaders, and there is rather an abuse of power, position and trust everywhere in an overwhelming way, hence the following recommendations are made towards an upright Christian leadership:

1. Churches should improve their methods of screening those who say they are called into pastoral ministry and need the churches recommendation for pastoral training in the theological seminaries. This is to help confirm whether their call is genuine, and to further ensure that the candidates are not merely recommended for pastoral or ministerial training sake.

2. The theological institutions should ensure that their new intake exercise is improved upon to ensure that only the right and genuine candidates are admitted for the pastoral training as required. This will prevent the admission of candidates of questionable characters as seen in recent times in many of the theological institutions. This may prevent the numerous rolling out of already questionable characters' pastors from theological institutions.
3. The church must investigate properly whom they called into their pastorate or church leadership to prevent criminals, sexually and morally loose people who claim to be pastors or Christian leaders. This is to ensure that not known pastors are not called into the leadership of the church or denomination. Tribalism and nepotism practices should be shunned while calling a pastor into the church leadership to prevent the choice of just the available pastor instead of the right and qualified pastor.
4. There should be spelt out punishment for every erring leader to prevent other leaders from undermining the consequences of erring as a Christian leader. The bodies for these disciplinary actions should be empowered to ensure smooth implementation. For without a smooth implementation, the policies will be for mere formalities and it will cause more harm than good. This is to correct the erroneous belief that Christian leaders have immunity wherever they are.
5. There should be some level of job security for pastors in the Baptist denomination to prevent unnecessary anxiety for pastors. Many ministers are feeling so insecured at their job places, and it can create room for

manipulation and other sharp practices outside the usual practices of a minister with an expected high level of integrity.

6. Ministers especially pastors should be well taken care of by the group that engaged their services by providing some special incentives to prevent unnecessary instructions that can be avoided. Lack of incentives is not good for any worker anywhere. A leader without incentives will always be discouraged and discouragement can lead to many wrongs.
7. All Christian leaders should be appreciated from time to time which is very normal in every good system. This is lacking in many Baptist churches. Appreciation services should not be unnecessarily over delayed before their observance in Baptist churches to prove the point that they care for their ministers. This will go a long way in keeping the minister focused.