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AN EVALUATION OF THE TASK AND RELATIONSHIP
FUNCTIONS BETWEEN THE PASTORS AND THE LAITY IN
NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION

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This study was carried out to evaluate the task and functional relationship between the Pastors and laities of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. In making it possible, it is important to first clear the air that the Baptist Pastor's are called by God, and the lay leaders are selected by God's people. By implication this shows that both of them should work for God and complement one and other in good and harmonious atmosphere. In other words none of them can claim ownership of the Church, but rather co-labourers and partners in the Lord's Vineyard.

In another way every Baptist Church is autonomous and every Baptized Baptist members is assumed to be a priest, because of their believes in priesthood of believers, (I Peter 2:9). This makes the administrative head of a local Church to belong to no one in particular. This is also the bottom-line of what makes the Pastors and the laities to be at larger-head many at times.

However, the Pastor must know that in every place, everything begins and falls on the leader. No place can be better or grow than what the leader can offer. It is obvious that any leader that leads well will surely receive his gain in double portion, both from the Lord and from the led. Therefore every Pastor should know that in most of the times what the members do to them is what the members have seen them doing or acting.

A Pastor should not see himself working for the Church, but rather as someone working for God in God's presence but among His people. The Pastor is like a supervisor in a Baptist Church. He leads and the members follow, but not without question or challenge when necessary.

The members or laities in a Baptist Church are there to complement the efforts of the clergy. They are there to allow the job done and to assist it done. Caution should be taken by the laities so that in their eagerness to serve God they will not over ambitiously overtake the Pastor or hijack the Pastors' duty. The laities are to diligently and loyally perform every duty assign to them by the Pastor.

The lay leaders are the watch dog for their Pastor if it is in a place where things go as they are supposed to go. In other words the Pastor cannot be everywhere at all times but one member or the other will always be there. This implies that whenever the Pastor cannot be, the lay people serves as the Pastors representative. Even in the Church, especially where the congregation is large, the Pastor cannot know everybody, or be aware about the welfare of everybody, but the lay people, elders, deacons and so on are the eyes and ears of the Pastor. They serve as his watch-dog. In other words they help the Pastor to know what is going on in the Church among the worshipper that the Pastor can never know. This kind of operation enhances cordial relationship and the free flow of the spirit of God in His Church.

Conclusively, the Pastor should not act or be like Mr. Know All or do it all, neither should he try to work in isolation. Man was not created in isolation, because God called to himself "come let us create man in our image" Genesis 1:26. Jesus also did not work alone but called twelve disciples and delegated them as well. Pastors must follow suit with good spirit of relationship. At the same time the laities are not to be Catholic than Pope, neither should they be loyal or follow blindly. It should be noted that whoever is not a good follower cannot be a good leader.

Recommendations

The purpose of this study is to find how the Pastors and laities can be better in their task and at the same time improve their relationship with one and other. Hence the researcher has taken some time to explore the situation properly and has the following recommendations that:

1. Pastors should always remember their sacred office and mind their language to the members and everywhere.
2. the idea of cat and rat relationship between Pastor and deacons should be eradicated.
3. Pastors should turn from do it all, but rather train laities and delegate them to right duties
4. there should be proper and adequate interpretation of the priesthood of believers to the Baptists. It should be explained that every interpretation of a biblical passage has limitation.
5. Organisation of seminars on similar or related topics should be held in high esteem in the Nigerian Baptist Convention, from local Church to the highest level.

6. both parties should learn to practice consultation and not confrontation.
7. both must know the devils' devices (II Corinth 2:11), that the devil always want God's workers to clash e.g. Paul and Barnabas in Act 15:36-39.
8. both must know that position does not mean performance.
9. the annual Convention General Workers' Conference should include discussions about this kind of topic.
10. people should develop themselves in education, especially Pastors, because this will make them to be more skillful in their task.
11. both Pastors and laity should be broad-minded.
12. Pastors should know that when there are differences, it is the time for them to demonstrate what they are teaching the members.
13. little fire can burn a whole house, so every disagreement should be nipped at the bud before it reaches a big quarell
14. There should not be any room for gossip or hear say
15. Pastors should not arrogate unnecessary powers to themselves, either consciously or unconsciously.
16. there must be harmony so that there may be progress. An adage says "united will stand, divided will fall"
17. more emphasis should be placed on spiritual and discipleship in sermons and teachings. Pastors must know that if they do not devote time to teach members well, such members may not know the truth and may soon become torn in their flesh.

18. **caution** must be exercised about the kind of people we recommend and admit to the Seminary to be Pastors as well as those members that we select and train as laity.
19. Pastors must always remember that they were formally Church members and members too must know that they may become Pastor tomorrow.
20. Pastor and laity must always practice Matthew 7:12 which says "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them:.."

(KJV)