

CHURCH WORKERS: AGENTS OF CHURCH GROWTH

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ABSTRACT

This paper unveiled the areas that the church workers can serve faithfully as agents of Church growth. A church that wishes her growth as God himself desires her to be must not lack workers who are passionate to ensure that growth. The effective growth and development of the Church lie in the hands of the Church workers. This is why Church must not mistakenly choose the wrong people to serve her. This paper is generated from the Church workers' retreat that held at Gate Way Baptist Church, Ogbomoso on 6th February, 2016. The paper was prepared by Rev. Akintola, Daniel Oyebode who also taught on the topic. Bible and other literatures had been the sources of this paper. It contains four aspects aside Abstract, Introduction and Conclusion: Who are the Church workers? What are the qualifications of the Church Workers? What are the Church workers are purposely Chosen for? How can Church workers be the agents of the Church growth? The paper concludes that having seen all God is expecting the Church workers to accomplish for Him among the believers (Church), no worker should work against the activities of growth in the Church.

INTRODUCTION

Church growth is an integral part of the Great Commission given to the Church. The command to “go” and “make Disciples of all nations” involves Church growth. This is clearly stated in Matthew 28:19. This scripture evidently depicts that it is God’s expectation to have the people who are being won to Him through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to gather them as a Church and grow them to become the true Disciples of Christ. The responsibility to do that is saddled to all believers. This responsibility includes and heavily rests on the Church workers.

If the responsibility to grow the Church of God includes the Church workers, the need to discuss and answer the following questions is imperative. The questions viz:

- I. Who are the Church workers?
- II. What are the qualifications of the Church workers?
- III. What are the Church workers are purposely Chosen for?
- IV. How can Church workers be the agents of the Church growth?

Treating these four questions will shed more light to the topic and do justice to the subject matter. Without hesitating, let us resume to attempt to answer the questions one after the other.

I. Who are the Church workers?

Before answering the question “who are the Church workers?” there is three important questions needed to be attempted first: 1. what is the origin of the Church workers? 2. What is Church? And who are the workers?

1. What is the origin of the Church workers?

The origin of the Church workers can be traced back to the biblical account of Moses and the people of God in Numbers 11:4-17 as it reads thus:

4 The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, “If only we had meat to eat! 5 We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. 6 But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!”

7 The manna was like coriander seed and looked like resin. 8 The people went around gathering it, and then ground it in a hand mill or crushed it in a mortar. They cooked it in a pot or made it into loaves. And it tasted like something made with olive oil. 9 When the dew settled on the camp at night, the manna also came down.

10 Moses heard the people of every family wailing at the entrance to their tents. The Lord became exceedingly angry, and Moses was troubled. 11 He asked the Lord, “Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? 12 Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their ancestors? 13 Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, ‘Give us meat to eat!’ 14 I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. 15 If this is how you are going to treat me, please go ahead and kill me—if I have found favor in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin.”

16 The Lord said to Moses: “Bring me seventy of Israel’s elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the tent of meeting, that they may stand there with you. 17 I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take some of the power of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them. They will share the burden of the people with you so that you will not have to carry it alone (NIV).

According to the passage above, the term “Church workers” came to be in the Church by adopting the Old Testament style of leadership in order to lessen the workload of the

Church Leader (Pastor) to ensure proper and healthy growth of the Church. Now that the origin of the Church workers is known, let us see what the term “Church” simply means.

2. What is Church? It is a big mistake for anyone to think Church is one big or small auditorium that people of God do meet for worship. Or that Church is an assembly of people that are unworthy (or of scattered attitudes).I.e. in Yoruba “*Ijo ni ohun ti ko jo*”. Such a definition is very far from the reality of the scripture. Let the scripture speak for itself. Acts 2:36-41 says:

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Without confusion it can be summarized from the scripture above that, Church is a community of all believers in Christ who have been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ to His body. This is corroborated to Jim and Carolyn Murphy who expounded that “of the 114 uses of *ekkleesia* in the New Testament, 109 times the word is used to describe the community of God’s people.”¹ “It

¹ Jim Murphy and Carolyn Murphy. *An International Minister’s Manual*. (Blue Jay: Hundredfold Press, 2000), P.202.

is a fellowship of people who believe in Jesus Christ.”² This fact can lead us straight away to the question “Who are the workers?”

3. Who are the Workers?

A worker is a person who works, especially one who does a particular kind of work.³ He/She is assigned to accomplish a task for an organization. Of course, a worker is a person who is given the job to accomplish for an organization or institution. With this view about a worker, it can be said that workers are the people who are being assigned to do a purposeful work for an organization or an institution.

Since the Church is a religious institution, it can be concluded, based on the above explanations, that Church workers are the selected believers from among the Church members to work with the Church leader in actualizing the administrative work of the Church for the growth of the Church of God, which is in line with Ephesians 4:11-12.

II. What are the qualifications of the Church Workers?

There are seven necessary qualities that the church workers must possess before they are being selected for the service in the Church viz:

² Lois K. Fuller. *The Missionary and His Work*. (Jos and Bukuru: Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute and Africa Christian Textbooks, 1996), P.70.

³ A.S. Hornby. *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English*. 7th Edition. (Oxford: Oxford University, 2005). P.1376.

1. They must be genuinely born again. It will be terrible to make the mistake of ⁴ [choosing] unconverted people as the Church Workers.
2. They must have been filled with Holy Spirit. The evidence of the fruits of the Spirit is important. Check Galatians 5:22-23.
3. They must have some spiritual gifts e.g. teaching, evangelism, administration, wisdom, helping etc. as they are recorded in the following scriptures: I cor. 12:7-10; 28-30, Rom. 12:6-8, Eph. 4:11.
4. They must be matured in Spirit. I Tim. 3:6-9.
5. They must be strong physically (having good health).
6. They must be humble to work with their Church leader.
7. They must not be people that work of the flesh can be easily traced to. Galatians 5:19-21.

III. What are the Church workers are purposely chosen for?

According to Numbers 11:4-17 and Ephesians 4:12 they are chosen for three purposes namely:

1. They are chosen to help the Church leaders having their workload reduced.
Numbers 11:4-17.
2. They are chosen to equip believers (church members) for good work.
3. They are chosen for building the body of Christ (Church).

⁴ Segun Adekoya. You could be a Missionary. Revised Edition. (Jos and Bukuru: Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute and Africa Christian Textbooks, 2004), P.31.

All these purposes suggest that all the Church workers are chosen by God to grow the Church of God in order for the Church to fulfill its divine mandate or do God's will. Hence, they are agents of Church growth. If the Church workers are agents of Church growth, then there is necessity to examine the ways they can grow the Church.

IV. How can Church workers be the agents of Church growth?

We ought to understand that the term "agent" can be referred to as a representative, spokesman, negotiator or an instrument etc. who acts on behalf of another or an organization or an institution. Such an agent is expected to work for the development and the progress of the person or institution he/she is represented. Before we look at the ways the Church workers can be agents of the Church growth, let us briefly discuss the concept of the Church growth.

Church growth in missiological studies is a complex concept with diverse models and strategies. But our concern in this teaching is to discuss the basic things about the church growth to understand the goal of this paper. It is God's purpose that Churches grow.⁵ Church growth can be defined as the process by which changes are realizing in the church whether by size or volume. In other word, it is the way by which the church is experiencing positive change within the Church. This can be actualized physically and spiritually-Physically, in the sense that the church experiences growth in number or in material and spiritually, in the sense that the Church has deeper

⁵ Graham Cheesman. *Mission Today An Introduction to Mission Studies*. (Bukuru: African Christian Textbooks, 1989), P.92.

knowledge of God and His word. I.e. they have spiritual changes in their life positively. The following passages explaining it better:

1. Church Growth: The following scriptures gave exact picture of Church growth:

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:36-47NIV).

So it is clear from the above scripture that the concept of Church growth starts from conversion to gathering in fellowshiping together. The believers’ fellowship gives birth to physical and spiritual development of the Church as they shall also be examined from biblical points of view.

2. Physical Growth: Acts 2:36-41 explains well how the church grows physically as follows:

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Apart from physical structure of the Church building, the most eminent aspect of the physical growth of the Church is the increase in number of the believers which has been depicted in the scriptures above. It is this same growth that determines the financial growth of the Church (a fragment of Physical growth of the Church) and other aspects that incorporated to Physical growth of the Church.

3. Spiritual Growth: Eph. 3:14-21, Eph.4:13-21NIV Speak thus:

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father,¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Next,

¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

The spiritual aspect of Church growth is, knowing more of God's love everyday in order to become matured and attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

The above scriptures explained well the concept of the Church growth. This can be actualized through Christian worship (Bible study, Prayers, songs etc.), Discipleship (normal discipleship programmes of the Church, Sunday school, disciples' lifestyles, different spiritual activities of the Church especially in Church departmental units e.g. MMU, WMU, R.A., Youth, Students' Fellowship etc.), Evangelism and Missions.

There are three important marks to know a growing Church namely: Such a Church will love the word of God and prayer, Such a Church will love giving to the work of God and lastly such a church will love doing missions (evangelizing souls, planting churches or adopting weak churches and crossing culture to preach gospel).

Now back to the questions "How can Church workers be the agents of Church Growth?" These can be actualized in these five ways and more as the Holy Spirit will open our eyes further after this teaching:

1. They can mobilize for Church growth. The need to convey to the mind of other church members the necessity for their church to experience growth in every facet of life.
2. They have to participate in Church growth. That is they have to make themselves available for every programme that can enhance growth in the Church.
3. They have to support Church growth with their material gifts (e.g. Money) and Spiritual gifts. They should know that everything God gives them is to cause His church to grow.
4. They have to pray for church growth. That is their agony in prayer every day is to cry to God to cause growth among the church members and the entire body. They must pray to God to grow the Church of Christ both physically and spiritually.
5. They have to give maximum cooperation to the Church Leader (Pastor) who desires that the Church of Christ should grow. No one among the Church workers should plan to pull down what God is doing to make His Church grow by working against the Leader's plan to actualize it.

V. Conclusion

Having seen all God is expecting the Church workers to accomplish for Him among the believers (Church), no worker should work against the activities of growth in the Church. This is because all are the agents of the Church growth. The reason why Jesus chooses you is to bear fruit that will abide for him among His body (Church).

Hear what Jesus says: You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. (John 15:16NIV).

If anyone fails to bear fruit that causes good growth among the Church workers this year and beyond, he or she will be guilty on the day of reckoning for the role he or she has played in the Church. There is reward for every assignment we do for the Lord (Check Luke 19:11-26).

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