

Olabode, O O 2021, 'Revitalizing the Christian ministry through a holistic discipleship programme', *African Theological Journal for Church and Society*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 111-131

Revitalizing the Christian ministry through a holistic discipleship programme

Dr. Oladele Olubukola Olabode

Faculty of Education, Department of Administration and Leadership, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho
bukoladelebo@gmail.com

Abstract

Revitalization is utmost in God's heart – the desire to bring life to declining ministries; dealing with the causes of decline; building a renewed fruitfulness, faithfulness, and loyalty to God in churches. Rescuing and turning around struggling, seriously ill or dying congregations involve the price for radical change, continually reflection on discipleship's existence and fulfilment through prayers to receive instruction and inspiration from God for the future. Laying a solid foundation would help God's people reconnect with the vibrant, life-giving Spirit of God through spiritual disciplines of holistic discipleship. Church leadership should consciously organize discipleship programs with a fresh understanding of the biblical narrative capturing believers' imagination in the context of the Church's mission. Spiritual growth and vitality of individual members is enhanced, as believers grow in faith and fellowship in Christ. Therefore, this article explores Christian ministry revitalization, holistic discipleship approach and principles for revitalizing the church through discipleship programs

Introduction

Some churches have gone down so far that they should have been shut down for the apparent reason of spiritual deadness. Those churches should formally close their doors, sell the properties, and quit dishonouring the Name of Jesus in the community. For several years in some churches, no one has been saved

or baptized, no mission and evangelistic activities carried out, sin became rampant, and worship becomes lifeless. It implies that different Christian ministries which make up the Church seemed not functional, church activities become a routine devoid of spiritual fervour, leading to a decline in the number of persons claiming Christianity as their religion while God's heart is yearning for revival in God's churches (Brown 2001).

The church around us today is faced with the issue of decline and stagnated growth. The reason could probably be found in the different perspectives and attitudes of leadership to discipleship, for as much as leaders remain the key figure to the discipleship process within the local church. There seems to be lack of biblical understanding to discipleship, an unbalanced approach that separates the believer's life from the church life, thereby leading to unhealthy and unproductive churches (Rainer 2005:45). A discipleship programme that leads to a healthy and productive church is formational, transformational and expresses the application of the Word of God within the believer's life. When the understanding of biblical discipleship is addressed and implemented within the church, when a believer continues to develop in the areas of formation and transformation, there must be an avenue through which believers can practice their faith. It is at this point that strategies for practicing the Christian faith will be implemented. Application of the Word of God will lead to a true biblical disciple; then the issue of declination in churches will be addressed (Whitney 1991:17). It is the application of the principle of the Word of God within the church that will bring about revitalization of the church.

Meanwhile, revitalization is utmost in God's heart, a desire to bring life to dying fellowships and ministries, dealing with the causes of decline, building toward renewed fruitfulness, faithfulness, and loyalty to God in churches. But, rescuing and turning around struggling, seriously ill or dying congregations may be difficult. However, if successfully salvaged by paying the price of radical change, it becomes a viable option to give the church a future and a hope (Bush 2008). Therefore, this paper builds a case for church revitalization by looking into the Nigerian Baptist Convention Discipleship Programme to provide some successful church renewal guidelines.

Christian Ministry Revitalization

The concept of revitalization was proposed by a renowned anthropologist specializing in studying the culture of American Indians, A.F. Clarke Wallace, who sees revitalization as efforts of members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture by inner revival (Wallace 1956). The term has become popular in recent years, thus describing various revival forms (spiritual, physical or fitness, material situation) in everyday life. It is concerned with gathering new experiences and developing a more conscious society increasingly interested in co-deciding about their environment while still growing. Today, revitalization is defined as a many-sided effort including revalorization, restoration, reconstruction, modernization, and actions aimed at the revival of a community or town, an organized body or Christian ministry and Church devastated in various aspects, spiritual, economic, and social (Pawłowska and Swaryczewska 2002).

In this vein, Brown (2016) describes revitalizing Christian ministry as a spiritual effort and action geared towards making more active, healthier, and energizing again the covenant community of born-again believers empowered by Christ to advance the kingdom through the disciplining of all. Invariably, Christian ministry revitalization is a process by which a church membership is redirected toward a healthy and sustained exaltation of Christ, the gospel's proclamation to the lost, affirmation of the Scripture guiding the church and expressing God's love in their communities. However, this definition stresses the particular importance of full church membership participation as a distinctive element of revitalization and as an indispensable tool to initiate, shape and carry out the developmental processes in the church to its final success (Skalski 1996).

According to Mark Shaw (Kim 2009:138), revitalization (or renewal or comeback) in church congregations is “evangelical activism”, and this progresses within a church community that “turns its attention from internal growth to outward mission”. Evidently, Shaw implies that in revitalization, there will first be the foundation of “internal growth” that should consequently propel “outward mission”. Shawchuck and Perry (1982:9) agree with Shaw, assuming that each local congregation and denominations know what *missio ecclesia* is and thus define revitalization to be taking place when the people of

God are brought “to the place where they can serve Christ fully”, doing “all that He asks of them”. From the perceptive of Shaw, Shawchuck and Perry, a congregation that is evangelistically in-active, a doing-nothing assembly that revels in “low spiritual vitality” is the contrast of a revitalized church. Such congregations neither grow in grace nor are effective in mature kingdom service. It is on this ground that the Church Growth Movement lists key indices of revitalization to include an emphasis on house churches, development of lay leadership, focusing on responsive cultural people groups, communicating vibrant faith, and providing a sound theological base (McGavran 1980:322).

However, defining revitalization sometimes suffer the same fate of the quality-quantity controversy as does the characterization of church growth. Declining and stagnant congregations often defend their smallness in size by claiming to be focused on quality. They claimed to be watchful against the trap of a congregation made up of a “mass of baptized unbelievers” (Wagner 1990). In this search for the glory of Christ, revitalization is a comprehensive strategy that fulfils the Great Commission by striving for church growth, church multiplication, and church perfection in both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Buys (2008) rightly says that there can be no separation between the preservation (the qualitative dimension) and the extension (the quantitative dimension) of the church in the practical labour of building the body of Christ. However, though revitalization has both statistical and spiritual dimensions, one can agree with the Church Growth Movement on the inherent difficulty of measuring the spiritual dynamics of revitalization. One can therefore narrowly conclude a church to be revitalized if the congregation has experienced a comeback numerically from a significant period of stagnation due to membership plateau and/or decline and it is continuing in actions that keep aglow the fire of revitalization, such as teaching God’s word, training God’s workers and touching God’s world in context.

Biblical and Theological Basis for Revitalization

Revelations 2 and 3 relay the scriptural need for revitalization in the church of God. Jesus, through John, addressed the spiritual condition of each of the seven churches in Asia Minor. The Lord assessed each of the churches and its leadership; gave an appreciation of their good works, a condemnation of their evils and finally gave a counsel to do that which is good. A summary of Christ’s

counsel to these first century churches include, but are not limited to the following:

- A return from the path of spiritual lethargy, death, apostasy, mediocrity, decline and stagnation (Rev 2:14–16, 20–24; 3:15–19).
- A charge to the angel of each church (that is the leadership) to cause revitalization to begin in the congregation through repentance from sin (Rev 2:5, 16, 22; 3:3, 19).
- Rekindling the first love for God by those who have lost it in the church (Rev 2:4, 5; 3:1–3)
- Zeal for evangelism and consistency in grace (Rev 3:8–11).
- Faithfulness unto death by those engaged in the face of fierce persecution (Rev 2:10).

Congregational Revitalization Sensitization

Palmer & Marjorie (1976:161–169) came up with sensitization procedure for congregational revitalization, which has relevance in all cultures and cities serving as alert to re-awaken the consciousness of any church for change and eventually alter the congregational profile completely if appropriately applied. They are:

Analyse and Evaluate

There is the need to subject every department of church work to critical performance analysis in order to discover strengths and weaknesses. There should be periodical analysis of other institutional structures that will impact the numerical grow of the congregation within its political and socio-economic environments. This will lead to effecting change and improvement on areas of stagnation.

Strong Biblical Emphasis

This is beyond just preaching the doctrines of the Bible correctly, though critical. It includes making the truth simple and practical. It is paying special

attention to planting God's word in the deep worldview level of hearers until it changes the lives of both the young and old in the congregation.

Love and Care

Church effectiveness is usually provoked by obedience to the Great Commandment of loving one another. In congregations where the rule of love binds the hearts and lives of members, hurts heal faster, and a strong "family" tie is built.

Dynamic leadership

Dynamic leadership is visionary leadership that carefully selects able assistance and motivates fulfilment of goals. This kind of leadership encourages every department to creatively think through its own programme and challenges prompt execution.

Adaptability

Adaptability helps to turn problems into opportunities, as nothing is completely counted to be a liability. Congregations should learn to adapt to the needs of the church and community by putting to use members' gift to reach community members. It is the degree of adaptability that determines the relevance of a church to its changing environment.

Programme Revitalization among Church Members

Churches should use various strategies and other principles that find relevance in both biblical and theological reflections on church revitalization to attract interested people to the church.

Desire Change and Communicate Revitalization

The leadership of a stagnant church must desire revitalization before it can be brought to bear on the church. Such desire needs be communicated and owned by the entire congregation, with each member knowing what his or her responsibility is in the revitalization process.

Teach and Train on Church Revitalization

Churches that will experience revitalization would teach the congregation how to go about it. The word of God relevant to revitalizing the church has to be diligently taught, and there should be training on specific methods relevant to

the context of the church community. This helps the congregation to have a solid theological foundation for its belief.

Keep Revitalization vision in Focus

The book of Habakkuk gives applicable counsel for revitalization of stagnant institutions. It says: “And the LORD answered me: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end – it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay” (Hab 2:2, 3). The church declines due to weak leadership that does not give adequate direction, motivation, and positive reaction to the efforts of the followers. Therefore, revitalization demands leadership and congregational vision that is kept in focus (Buttrick 1956:987, 988).

Biblical Concept of Discipleship

Discipleship is the process of developing or making a follower or disciple. The first time the term disciple is mentioned in the Bible is in Isaiah 8:16, which speaks of God’s disciples. The Hebrew term *limmud* is translated “disciples,” which means accustomed to; a disciple, one who is taught, a follower (Mounce 2006). Based on the first mention of the term disciple, it is clear that a disciple is two things. First, he/she is taught by someone or something. Second, he/she is a follower of their teacher. When speaking of discipleship in the New Testament, it is important to look at the first time that the term is mentioned in the Greek New Testament. Matthew 5:1 is where the disciples came to Jesus and were taught the Sermon on the Mount. The Greek term *mathetes* means disciple, student, and follower; a committed learner and follower (Mounce 2006:183). This is the first mention of the term *disciples* in the New Testament and it also implies the two prior points addressed in Isaiah 8:16. The first call to discipleship is found in Matthew 4:19, which states, “And he saith unto them (Simon Peter and Andrew), follow me, and I will make you fishers of men”. It is here that discipleship moves beyond learning and following, to the actual practice of that which is taught. France (1985) states, “Jesus calls his disciples ... to take an active part as fishers of men”. Based on these three passages a disciple is someone taught by a teacher, who follows their teacher, and actively practices what they are taught.

The Biblical Responsibility of Discipleship

Discipleship is formation, transformation, and application. The term disciple simply means that an individual has become like their mentor or leader. It should be the believer's desire to follow after Christ. It should be the pastor's desire to follow after Christ and model a Christ-like example. The reason the leaders should model this example before his family, church, and community is based on the call to the Disciples in Matthew 10, the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–20, and the leadership of the pastor to equip the saints in Ephesians 4:11–16. The words of Paul in Ephesians 4:11–16 place the responsibility of discipleship on the leadership of the church as thus:

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom they whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

It is the leadership's responsibility to make disciples of Christ, who can also make disciples of Christ in their home, workplace, and other locations outside of the church. In Matthew 10, the authority is given to the believer to make disciples of Christ. Weber (2000) gives seven steps in delegating authority or making disciples. These steps are: talk about the task, do the task while the learner observes, let the learner help you do the task, help the learner do the task, let the learner do the task while you observe, let the learner do the task on his own, under your supervision and guidance, and the learner becomes a trainer, repeating the steps with someone else. It is the believer's

responsibility to follow these steps in the discipleship process, but the pastor must lead the congregation by example. It was the example of Christ that led to the Apostles' ministries, which changed the world. Disciples are taught by someone and they follow their teacher. It is the pastor's responsibility to be taught by Christ and to follow Christ. It is also the pastor's responsibility to approach discipleship with a biblical understanding. This means that discipleship is the formation, transformation, and application of the Word of God within the believer's life.

Educational and Learning Theories

The theoretical emphasis for this study is the educational/learning theory argument. Educational and Learning theories assist learning in creating life change; it also supports the synergistic methodology purported to be effective in any discipleship programme. Learning and its goals can be defined as the process that produces the capability of exhibiting new or changed human behaviour (or which increases the probability that new or changed behaviour will be elicited by a relevant stimulus), provided that the new behaviour or behaviour change cannot be explained on the basis of some other process or experience such as aging or fatigue (Knight 2006). Educational and learning theories presented will elaborate upon how the mind learns best and how teaching methods of instruction better facilitate learning into life transformation. Various educational pedagogies and learning theories support the inherent biblical and practical initiatives that are foundational for discipleship from the perspective of transformation.

Traditionalist educators believe in a more didactic, lecture or sermon form of one-way communication whereas constructivist educators place more emphasis upon two-way communicative small group learning as the teacher becomes more of a facilitator of the learning environment. Jesus was certainly a master in both pedagogical methodologies as seen through his varied use of instructional methods and how he utilized his relational connectedness to his students as he understood them through his intentional relationships with them. Indeed, Jesus employed both traditionalist and constructivist's pedagogies. In front of large groups Jesus would employ more traditional or traditionalist pedagogies. When Jesus would address a large crowd he would do so didactically or instructionally via one way communication. An excellent

example of this is seen in Luke 4:16–30 as Jesus was the “preacher” of the synagogue and directly addressed his hearers with little to no discussion. Jesus would “preach-teach” in this way often as is evident in the plurality of the word synagogues from the previously cited verse.

However, Jesus would also utilize a more constructivist approach with smaller groups of people, most notably his disciples. Consider Jesus’ constructivist tendencies in small groups as a certain type of learning and instruction takes place. Ponder how Jesus would ask or answer the questions of his disciples (Mk 8:27–30), provide reinforcement and practice activities (Mt 14:13–33; Lk 9:1–6), coach and check for understanding not to mention his careful verification of the accuracy of the disclosed information (cf. Mk 8: 1–30). These varied types of learning methodologies helped Jesus’ disciples reformulate what they had heard and cemented the information in their mind. Impressively, from these methodologies presented alone we see process, interference, and retroactive theories of learning. Other interesting educational pedagogies or learning based theories that could be included to support discipleship programs are the modified traditionalist pedagogy, proactive facilitation, and scaffolding theories of learning. These theories recognize the complexity of learning, and the combination of a whole group instruction with small or cooperative learning groups over the same subject and will favour reinforcement and higher-level thinking (Shenendoah 2011).

Holistic Discipleship Approach

The Nigerian Baptist Convention Education Ministry of the Church has a platform for developing, growing, and advancing every member through the Church's all-inclusive discipleship programmes. Ayandokun (2005) defines discipleship as a process whereby a Christian who has voluntarily surrendered to the Lord Jesus is being made to become like Christ by various experiences, activities, and disciplines administered by the Lord Himself. It includes the Follow-up activity immediately after (an individual is saved) salvation, Church Membership programme, Church Discipleship programme and Disciple's lifestyle programme. A deliberate and committed effort of both the church leadership and membership to understand and follow the local Baptist churches' procedure will enhance both the spiritual and numerical growth of the Church and revitalize the different ministries in the churches. Therefore,

let us consider the discipleship procedure from salvation experience to Christian maturity.

Follow-up activity immediately after salvation

Follow-up is the first assignment church leaders and workers through the follow-up team carry out on a new convert within the few days of conversion. Olabode (2017) affirms follow-up as an extension of pastoral or shepherding ministry by a matured Christian to give watch-care over those saved through the Church or those contracted by the Church who are struggling for stability in Christian walk. It is to provide an opportunity for every believer for growth towards spiritual maturity.

Follow-up Model (Acts 2:41–47)

A soul led to Christ becomes a spiritual baby that needs nurturing in the knowledge and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The following steps will assist the new Christian to grow spiritually:

1. Present a Bible to the convert if he/she does not possess any
2. Start the new convert with this lesson: That you can be saved and know it (1 Jn 5:13): That you may know you have Eternal Live (vs13): The authority of God's Word; and your faith in God's infallible Word is your assurance of salvation. "He who believes in the Son has (present tense) eternal life" (Jn 3:36). The bible is a book of certainties, which reinforces beliefs and establishes your conviction. God desires you are confident that:
 - i. You are now a child of God. (1 Jn 3:2)
 - ii. You are now the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor 5:21; Rom10: 1–4)
 - iii. You are a new being now in Christ (2 Cor 5:17).
 - iv. You are now both a son and heir of God (Gal 4:7). There is no greater assurance than one found in God's infallible Word. Heaven and earth would pass away, but My words shall not pass away "(Mt 24:35).

3. Take this second lesson with the new covenant: You are God's child now, and you are to obey Him. "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:20). You belong to Jesus Christ now. Christ now becomes your Lord and Master, and no one can serve two masters (Mt 6:24). Determine to obey your Lord and Master, Lord Jesus Christ, in all things now.
 - i. Unite with a New Testament Church (Acts 2:47)
 - ii. Follow Christ in the baptismal ordinance (Acts 2:41). Baptism does not save; it is a witness of your faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Rom 6:4).
 - iii. Begin to attend Sunday school class and study God's Word with God's children (2 Tim 2:15).
 - iv. Attend the worship service of your Church (Heb 10:25). You need the preaching of God's Word and Christian fellowship.
4. Be a faithful steward (1Cor 4:20, 6:19–20; Mal 3:10; Lev 27:30).
5. Create time to pray and read God's Word daily that you may grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - i. Encourage the new believer to join the different departments in the Church (Mt 10:32).
 - ii. Encourage the new believer to witness: "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so" (Ps 107).
 - iii. Now, help the new believer through the membership outline your Church has prepared. By the end of these lessons, the new believer must have achieved a healthy and spiritual status; the new believer could now be encouraged to start the church membership programme.

Church membership programme

This is also known as the Church training programme designed by the Nigerian Baptist Convention for church membership training on doctrines and principles of Baptists concerning the community and the society at large as they discharge their roles. Odewole and Adeniji in Ayandokun (2002) believed it

helps to reshape the members' world view on interpersonal relationship with people and interfaith relationship with people of other faith. This programme aims at training in church membership, develop the church members, educate the church members, lead members in evangelism, create awareness of ongoing events in the association, conference, and convention; lastly, it emphasizes the nature of the Baptist Church as a denomination as well as its distinctive, ordinances, doctrines, beliefs, faith, practices, polity and mission. After a thorough training as a Baptist member, the brother or sister is encouraged to start the church discipleship programme.

Church Discipleship Programme

This is one of the educational organs of the Church to upgrade the Baptist members' knowledge about the life of Jesus Christ through His words and the revelation of the scriptures. Ayandokun (2016) opines this programme enlivens and enriches the fellowship and helps to ensure its extension to the future, defining discipleship as a process whereby a Christian who has voluntarily surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ is being made to become like Christ by various experiences, activities and disciplines administered by the Lord himself. Babarinde (2009) highlight the need for discipleship programme as follows:

1. Establish Christians in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus and His Word
2. Build quality and mature workers in God's vineyard
3. Wage war against wrong doctrines and heresy
4. Discover and develop spiritual gifts for service
5. Prepare new convert to become active members in the Church
6. Reduce rancour and conflicts among the congregation
7. Resolve, reconcile and restore broken relationships arising from a dispute
8. Disciple souls as God provide an opportunity for building.

9. Enabling emotional stability in the life of members

The resources of discipleship with each category of training and the duration are as follows:

- a. Christ indwelling in your life: 6 weeks
- b. Follow the master: 11 weeks
- c. Serve the master: 11 weeks
- d. Experiencing God: 12 weeks
- e. In His Presence: 6 weeks
- f. Master life: 3–6 months
- g. Prayer Life: 6 weeks
- h. Mind of Christ: 12 weeks
- i. Million Mandate: 6 weeks
- j. Lead Like Jesus: 6 weeks
- k. In His Steps: 6 weeks
- l. Purpose Driven Life: 40 weeks

These programs could be in the discussion, lecture, interaction, and question and answer form based on individual skills of imparting knowledge; meanwhile, the resources are available in the Nigerian Baptist bookstores across the nation.

Disciple's Lifestyle programme

The Disciple's Lifestyle is another essential discipleship programme of the Baptist Churches designed to provide in-depth knowledge on social, political, and relational issues to serve as a significant growth process of the new

believer. It aims to train church members, develop church members spiritually, educate members on doctrinal matters, and lead quality evangelism. It creates awareness of ongoing events in the environment, society, and the world at large, informing members about the positive programmes of government and its agencies (Ayandokun 2016). Disciple's Lifestyle also provides a balanced programme that promotes unity, love, patience, and better relationships. It helps in organizing the Church for future mutual coexistence with the provision of a visionary leader. It equips members to cope with life challenges and reinstates members' roles within the Church and society, preparing to discharge functions paying taxes to the government and tithes to the Church. It reshapes the Christian worldview on cultural differences, politics and interfaith relationships, touching human problems, suggesting lasting solutions on joblessness, health-related issues, communal relationships, and other identified issues (Adebajo & Adedoyin 2008).

Utilization of the Holistic Discipleship for Christian Ministry Revitalization

Like the rebuilding of the temple, God addressed the issue in two primary ways. First, three key leaders are to be His catalysts for rebuilding (Haggai 1:1–2). Second, Judah's people are commanded to change their conduct and move from selfish behaviour to selfless behaviour. The people obeyed, and the house of God was rebuilt (Haggai 1:12–14). Invariably, two foundational issues must be addressed in Christian ministry revitalization. First, the Church must have veracious leadership at the elms of affairs. Second, the behavioural patterns of the church members have to change. Invariably, the congregational revitalization sensitization becomes a jump start process for any congregation to prepare for a lasting revitalization in the church. Cronshaw (2015) therefore, puts all together to suggest five principles or practices that are foundational for Christian ministry revitalization.

Principle of Revitalizing Leadership

Leadership is a significant revitalization element; therefore, a wise and careful leader with a commitment for suitable processes and a commitment to see a revitalization process is essential for congregational revitalization. A leader with a uniquely reengineering leadership style; gifted by God to thrive on the challenge of taking a troubled situation, a team that has lost its vision, a

ministry with people in wrong positions, a department trying to move forward without a strategy and turn it around (Hybels, 2002). The leadership role is to facilitate the congregation to discern a direction through coaching and gathering for discipleship and mission. Revitalizing leadership requires a careful approach to cultivating trust, building a team, developing vision, fostering experimentation, and persevering with a non-anxious commitment to transformation. A quality revitalization process will seek to recruit, make room for, and create that kind of leadership.

Principle of Spiritual Formation

The foundational element of revitalization is spiritual in-depth. The heart of revitalization is reconnecting a church to the relationship with the living God. Jesus Christ said, "I am the vine, and you are the branches, abiding in me and I in you make you bear much fruit because apart from me you can do nothing." (Jn 15:5). Part of people's dissatisfaction with existing forms of Church is over-reliance on rationalism, cerebral conditions. Walker and Bretherton (2007) affirmed that mission-shaped churches and emerging churches for all their resourcefulness, vigour, and imaginative drive, but would not succeed unless they heed the lessons from their charismatic precursors in renewal and drop anchors in the deep waters of a church that goes all the way down to the hidden reservoirs of the life-giving Spirit. Revitalization is not firstly about strategic planning and organizational restructuring, nor do heroic leadership and innovative programs, but foundationally about helping God's people reconnect with the vibrant, life-giving Spirit of God through classic spiritual disciplines-Discipleship.

Principle of Connecting the Biblical narrative with Congregational Story

Another principle for revitalization is the leadership helping a church reconnect biblical story with its congregational story. A church with a fresh understanding of the biblical narrative can have their imaginations captured with how they can locally continue God's mission they read about in Scripture. A church that understands its own story: its origins, narrative highlights, key characters, crises, and the values that continue to shape the Church will be more likely to understand its DNA and how to best live out its mission in ways that are authentic to their own story (Cronshaw 2015). The leadership should improve on discipleship exercises and programs that will help a church

understand its history in the context of the biblical story and their own local church story; this will inform an imagination of a renewed story.

Principle of Congregational Conversation and Discernment

Another essential principle for Christian ministry revitalization is to invite the congregation into a conversation and some discernment process. The assemblies will reflect on and discuss the church history, present status, weakness and strength, and Church future growth plan. Roxburgh (2011) believes that the great reality of the Church is that by the Spirit, God's imagination for the future is already among God's people. So the work of leadership is in the discipleship programme to cultivate an environment that will allow this image to gather energy. There is a need for conversations at congregational and denominational levels, leaders and churches clustering to dream and scheme about listening to God and respond. Devine (2014) believes that relationship deterioration happens when a couple stops paying attention to their relationship. Invariably, Church discipleship programme helps churches to reflect on the reason for existence and mission fulfilment. However, a church that seeks to be attentive to God's instructions through listening with discernment to one another's prayers and visions will experience fresh inspiration for the future.

Principle of Creative Dreaming and Innovation

The final principle of revitalization is creative dreaming and innovation. Church turn-around process begins from thinking outside-the-box to change the status quo, for it is an organizational insanity to think you can continue doing the same things and get different results. Church discipleship programme establishes a mandate to dream about new directions for developing appropriate pathways to grow people in faith, make disciples increase their relevance, process guide in imagining and exploring fresh ways to express worship, prayer, mission, and community (Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006). In the story of God's people, it is often those who dared to imagine a different reality that was crucial in helping their community that will move in God's new direction (VVB 2011). It is essential that Churches need to reconnect with God, biblical narrative, and congregational story, and listen to one another and their leaders, to dream outside their boxes, they also need to listen to their neighbourhoods and neighbours who are not already engaged with church life.

Conclusion

The discipleship programme of the convention and other denominations serves as foundational hold prepared from the life-giving Spirit's hidden reservoirs and orderly administered to the new believers. The foundation should help God's people reconnect with the vibrant, life-giving Spirit of God through classic spiritual disciplines. However, observations in churches have shown lack of commitment to discipleship programs from the part of both the leadership and members for obvious reasons. Therefore, the entire Nigerian Baptist Convention Discipleship activities must be completely overhauled by a uniquely committed reengineering leadership strategy to turn around the whole discipleship programme and restore its original vision.

The need for the leadership to organize discipleship programs with a fresh understanding of the Biblical narrative that will capture the believers' imagination in the context of the mission to the Church is emphasized. There should always be interactive sessions at the Church, association, conference, and convention levels to continually reflect on discipleship's existence and fulfilment through prayers and receive instruction and inspiration from God for the future of ministry. There should be creativity and innovations in the discipleship programme; that will birth a consistent dreaming of fresh direction to develop appropriate pathways, providing a guiding process for exploring new means of engaging the believers with ministry and church life.

Bibliography

- Adebajo, A.S. and Adedoyin, J.O. 2008. *Presentation on Discipleship Programme*. Lagos: Baptist College of Theology
- Ayandokun, Esther O (2005). *Ministering through Church's Educational Agencies: A Teaching Church is a Living Church*. Lagos: Centennial Olympics Publication.
- Ayandokun, Esther O (2016). *A Manual on Educational Administration in the Church: Growing the Church through effective ministry using all Church's educational programmes*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Baptist Press.
- Babarinde, O.B. 2009. *Spiritual Formation and Introduction to Ministry Handbook*. Lagos: Baptist College of Theology.
- Brown, Callum 2001. *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800–2000*. London: Routledge.
- Brown, R 2016. *Defining Church Revitalization*. [Online]. Available: bbrownmbaptist.org [Accessed: 15 November 2019].
- Bush, Peter G. 2008. *In Dying We Are Born: The Challenge and the Hope of Congregations*. Herndon, VA: The Alban institute.
- Buyts, P.J. 2008. Shame, guilt, HIV and AIDS in rural communities. *Practical Theology in South Africa* 23:142–162.
- Cronshaw, D 2015. *Revitalization consultancy models: Australian church case studies*. DOI 10.1515/ijpt-2014-0011 *IJPT* 2015 19(2):1–29.
- Devine, D. Interview with Darren Cronshaw. 4 February 2014.
- France, R.T. 1985. *Matthew. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 104.
- Hybels, Bill 2002. *Courageous Leadership*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 153.
- Kim, C.C. Ed. 2009. *African Missiology: Contribution of contemporary thought*. Nairobi: Uzima Publishing House.138.
- Knight, George R. 2006. *Philosophies and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*. Berrian Springs, MI: Andrews University Press. 9–10.
- McGavran, D.A. 1980. *Understanding church growth*. Fully revised edition.

Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 322.

Mounce, William 2006. *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary Of Old & New Testament Words*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. 964.

Mounce, William 2006. *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary Of Old & New Testament Words*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. 183.

Odewole, R.O. and Adeniji, A.P. 2004. *Church Training Programme; In a Teaching Church is a Living Church: Ministering Through Church's Educational Agencies*. Edited by Esther O. Ayandokun. Lagos: Centennial Olympics Publication.

Olabode, O.O. 2017. *Follow-Up as Church's Spiritual Responsibility for Establishing a Disciple; In Raising Kingdom Ministers for Christ through Theological Educators*. Academic Papers In Honour of Revd. Mrs. Esther Aderonke Adeniran, Ph. D., Revd. John Adelani Ojo, Ph.D. and Revd. Peter Olufiropo Awoniyi, Ph. D of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, edited by Gabriel Olatunde Olaniyan and Samuel Olugbenga Akintola. 471–486.

Pawłowska K and Swaryczewska M. (2002). *Ochrona dziedzictwa kulturowego. Zarządzanie i partycypacja społeczna*. UJ, Kraków: Wyd.

Rainer, Thom 2005. *Breakout Churches: Discover How To Make The Leap*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. 45.

Roxburgh, Alan 2011. *Missional: Joining God in the Neighbourhood*. Grand Rapids: Baker.

Roxburgh, J. Alan and Romanuk, F 2006. *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.themissionalnetwork.com> San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Shaw, M. 2009. Politics of revival: Aladura movement and Ghanaian neo-Pentecostalism as evangelical revitalization movements. In Kim, Caleb Chul-soo (ed). *African Missiology: Contribution of contemporary thought*. Nairobi: Uzima Publishing House.

Shawchuck, N and Perry, L.M. 1982. *Revitalizing the Twentieth-century Church*. Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute. 9.

Shenandoah, A 2009. *History of America's Education Part 3: Universities*,

- Textbooks and Our Founders (Columbus:)*. 43. [Online]. Available: http://www.tysknews.com/Depts/Educate/history_part3>htm [Accessed: 27 April 2021].
- Skalski K.M. 1996. *O budowie systemu rewitalizacji dawnych dzielnic miejskich*, Krakowski Instytut. Kraków: Nieruchomości.
- The Voice of Victorian Baptists (June 2011). Reviewed by Darren Cronsaw in *Witness*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.buv.com.au/component/content/article/26-witness-online/261-jun-11-review-out-of-the-box>
- Wagner, C.P. 1990. *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*. Ventura, CA: Regal.
- Walker, A and Bretherton. L 2007. *Explorations in Deep Church*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster. 20.
- Wallace, A.F.C. 1956. *Revitalization Movements*. Amer. Antropol., New Ser., 58(2).
- Weber, Stuart K. 2000. Matthew. *Holman New Testament Commentary*. Nashville, TN: Braodman & Holman. 138.
- Whitney, Donald 1991. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress. 17.