



# **The Impact Driven Church**

**By Dr. Bola Akin John**

# Chapter One

## Foundation for Impact-Driven

By Dr. Bola Akin John.

The church must stop existing as a mere figure but as a force. This is the major thrust of this book. The church must make a choice for impact at this end time. We dare not do otherwise and hope to affect the world for Christ. God has no other plan of winning the world unto Himself. He depends and relies on the church. Ephesians 5:25-27 states that Christ is coming for a glorious church". For the church to truly become a glorious church, she must desire to make impact and affect others.

A glorious church must first of all be a growing church, a going church, a giving church, a glowing church and a groaning church. All these combined makes the church a glorious church. And it is when we are being driven by the desire to make serious impact, signified by a growing, going, giving, glowing and groaning church that we can truly become a glorious church that will be rapturable. If we are not going to disappoint Him, we must seek and pursue every godly and legitimate avenue to make impact before this age runs to a close, that only is what will suffice at this point in time.

### **Impact - Driven - a definition:**

The dictionary defines impact as "forceful effect, a collision, indelible mark, impression of one thing upon another. The effect that gives colour, bent and dent to point of contact". Drive is defined as "to guide, control or direct". When you drive a car, it means you guide, control and direct it down the road. In other word, every church is driven by something. There is a guiding force, a controlling assumption, a directing influence behind everything that happens. To be impact-driven therefore is to be controlled, guided and directed by the desire to create effect, influence, strong impression and to give colour, bent and dent to everything and everybody the church comes in contact with.

In real fact, if your church is not being driven by something, everything will be driving her. To become the church at the cutting edge of what God is doing at this end time, the desire to make impact must be very strong. To be impact-driven is to fulfil God's purpose and will for your life and church.

To be impact driven is to make positive effect upon your world. Every church that wants to be a glorious church must desire to make mighty and marvellous impact upon the world. Every programme, plan, purpose and activity of the church must have this desire running through them. For proper understanding, we must examine the church more closely.

## **Ten Things I know About the Church**

### 1. The church is a living organism

The church is alive because the head, founder and foundation of the church, Jesus Christ, is alive forever more. Because the Head of the church is alive, the church, the body of Christ is alive and therefore must grow. All living things have one predominant quality, growth. All round growth; numerical, spiritual, physical, material, financial, extension and social growth must be present in the church.

### 2. The church is an organization:

Because the church consists of people, it must be properly organised for growth. Institutional factors is very important to the growth of the church. If the church is not properly organized growth will be hindered and no impact will be made.

### 3. The church is the Body of Christ:

As the body of Christ, the church, like the human body, can fall to the ravages of sickness and diseases. If the church is sick it cannot grow. Sick churches don't grow, only healthy churches grow. So far, church growth in African context have been able to discover eleven diseases that afflict the church. If the church is sick one way or another, she cannot truly make any tangible impact.

### 4. The church is the Temple of God:

As the temple of the living God, there must be lively worship, praise, adoration and reverence to God. People must worship the Lord with honour and adoration. When there is lively, living worship in the church and God is being glorified, the community will be impacted.

### 5. The church is the Ekklesia:

The church is the Ekklesia, meaning the chosen and the called-out one. The church is the called out. Called out from darkness to light, from sin to righteousness. Therefore there must be distinct lifestyle and separation. The manner of living of Christians must be radically different from those of the world. To impact the world the church must project a higher life and better standard of living.

### 6. The Church is the Gate of Heaven:

The church must direct people to God. There must be repentance and forgiveness for sinners. The church is a place to find meaning to life and to point people to God. People must find God and be reconciled to God in the church. It is only then she can truly make a lasting impact.

7. The Church is the Presence of God:

The church as the presence of God must provide succour and solution to people. Ideally, the church is the place to find succour to the sufferings and vicitudes of life. The church should offer hope, restoration, healing and dignity to everyone. The church should provide answers to the myriads of problems confronting the people of the world today. In actual fact, the church has the answer and if people can truly find succour and solution to their problems and disappointments, then she has truly impact her immediate environs.

8. The Church is the only Property of God:

God is infinitely concerned with the church. In the eternal programme of God, the church is in the forefront now. She is the voice of God to a perishing world. She is the avenue whereby God will convey His mind, will, heart and purpose to a wayward world. She must therefore be a true representative of heaven by being what God intended her to be. When the church is truly functioning as a representative of heaven, then she will be able to impact whoever comes in contact with her.

9. The church is the only Power that can stop Satan:

Jesus, the founder and builder of the church stated categorically in Matthew 16:18 that; "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it". That statement buttresses the fact that the gates of hell, signifying the host of darkness will fight and militate against the church, but they will not prevail. If they are not going to prevail, then the church must truly and sincerely understand the gates of hell militating against her (II Cor. 2:11) and engage in warfare to defeat them resound, else they will weaken the church.

One of the most formidable obstacles to the growth of the church in Nigeria and Africa is the entrenched power of darkness, and the church is sadly ignorant about them. And where there seems to be an appreciable degree of understanding, there is too much haphazardness and half-heartedness in actual practise. To make a lasting impact, the church must take authority and render powerless all the host of darkness hindering her advancement, growth and health.

10. The Church is the only Plan of God to win the World:

Despite the seeming imperfections of the church, God is not giving up on the church. God has no other plan of winning the world. The church must therefore be a going church. There must be mission, evangelism, outreach and conservation of the fruits. The church must truly win the world by being continually involved in these five circle of F's:

Find the Lost  
Fold them into the church  
Feed them with the Word  
Feel them for gifts and  
Field them back to their world to continue finding.

It is only when the church is a going church that it will become a growing church. And if the church is truly growing, she will be able to affect and create lasting impact upon the world. Scriptural foundation for impact

The scripture shows clearly that the first century church made so much impact that in the space of few years they turned the world upside down. (Acts 17:6). The church was able to penetrate and turned things around until it became a threat to the religionists of the day. (Acts 6:5-7). The seven Deacons made so much difference from the moment of their ordination. Their presence and period was known. They were able to make a difference.

According to the popular slogan “the difference is clear,” from the moment they were appointed things began to change and growth began to happen more rapidly. When Philip went down to Samaria, he impacted it for God (Acts 8:5-13). His coming made a refreshing difference in the city. In fact the occultists in that city had nowhere to hide than to surrender. Paul also made a lot of impact wherever he went (Rom. 15:18-19).

From the foregoing, we are able to deduce that making impact is the perfect will of God for our lives and ministry. God is not simply satisfied with survival and success; He wants us to make significant difference. God has called us to impact our world for Him. We are to shine as lights and dispel the darkness of our world. Our ministry and ministrations must create effect; else the heaven will be displeased with us. (Ps. 104:4; Heb. 11:4). God desires ministers that will make serious impact in life and even in death. We must be on fire for the Lord; we must be dynamic and contagious for the Lord. We must impactfully affect everyone we come in contact with in positive way and do much damage to the kingdom of Satan to the extent that the devil will have to throw a party when we are gone. The topic of the party must be “Thank God, they are gone”.

In this new millennium, God is looking for ministers with fire, power and passion. God is not looking for a run-off- the-mill minister. He is searching for the one that will become a “devil to the devil” and bless others in a mighty way. God wants ministers that will be mighty blessing wherever they go, not whenever they go.

### **Church Growth - Quickest way for Impact**

From the scriptural passages we have looked at, we will discover that growth is the quickest way for the church to make impact upon her world. When the church is experiencing growth, she will be able to affect lives in positive and lasting ways. It is when the church is being driven by the desire to make impact that growth will happen.

To desire and be driven by impact is to desire growth and multiplication. As a professional church growth consultant, I am firmly convinced that the growth, health and multiplication of the church is the heart beat of God for this end time. I want to believe that there will be much more people in heaven than in hell. And if that will happen, then the church must rise up and grow. In the last ten years, I have been opportuned to interact with thousands of pastors, visit so many churches and conduct so many seminars and

conferences for pastors and church leaders and I have come to some conclusions. Here is one of them.

Majority of our churches are not growing. In actual fact, up to 85% are not really seeing tangible growth. The few that are growing sometimes loses focus and lost the desire to make much more impact and the growth soon fizzles out. Therefore, we must take the growth of the church very seriously. Church growth in African context has recognized eight major areas that growth must be genuinely experienced by the church.

a. Numerical Growth:

Conversion growth must be a daily occurrence. Much more people must be added to the church. The Lord must be adding to the church daily (Acts 2:47).

b. Spiritual Growth:

Those who are coming into the church and getting born again must be disciplined. They must grow up in their spiritual life. They must become better Christians and grow up in true discipleship.

c. Physical Growth:

The physical growth of the church is equally important. The structure of the church, the environment and atmosphere are contributing factors to the growth of the church. Physical growth is part and parcel of church growth.

d. Material Growth:

The chairs, public address system, properties and instruments are necessary to the growth of the church. The church must grow materially. People of today want to worship God with some degree of convenience in the church. When the material growth is non-existent, it will drastically affect the growth of the church.

e. Social Growth:

The church must project a good image in the community. The church must beware of scandals, fraud and wayward lifestyles by members that inhibit the social acceptance of the church. When the church has a bad image in the community through these unfortunate scenarios, the growth of the church will be hindered. When the people of the community are not positively disposed toward the church, it will equally affect the overall growth of the church.

f. Financial Growth:

The church must grow financially. There must be giving by members. Stingy, tight-fisted and money-pinching church members are not usually blessed by God. As the church grows in other areas, it must also grow financially. There must be more money to run the

programmes, plan, and purpose of God for the church. The giving of the people must increase so that the church will be able to launch out more ministries.

g. Extension Growth:

Church planting, annexe churches or daughter churches are part of the growth process. More churches must be planted. We must take the church nearer to the people. There must be variety of churches for variety of people. Peter Wagner has declared that, “church planting is the most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven”.

h. Healthy Growth:

The church must not be sick. Growth will happen when the church is enjoying sound health. When there is sickness such as Ethniktis; Koinonitis; Ghost town and sociological strangulation, the growth of the church will be seriously jeopardised. Proper study and research must be made as to the condition of the church, so that growth will be kept on course. When sickness that is ravaging the church is not addressed, it will definitely arrest the onward movement of the church.

Growth is the fact of life, the purpose of our existence. We grow to live and live to grow. The heart of God regarding growth is revealed to us in Psalm 92:12-14: “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God, they shall still bring forth fruit in old age. They shall be fat and flourishing”. For me to really give you a sure foundation for growth I will have to do a little exegesis of this scriptural passage.

“The righteous shall flourish like the Palm tree”- The righteous are those who are born again, people of God and members of the church. The righteous are the true church. Their growth is likened to that of the palm tree. Not only growing but also flourishing. Growth is addition and flourishing is multiplication and we surely need that today. The palm tree has some characteristics that are very instructive to our growth aspirations.

1. The palm tree is an all season tree
2. The palm tree grows fresh branches everyday
3. The palm tree had green leaves all year round.
4. There is no storm that can fall the palm tree.
5. Every part of the palm tree is useful
6. The fruits are always there.
7. The palm tree don't die young. It grows very old.

The cedar tree possesses similar characteristics to the palm tree. It grows as tall as 100 feet, lives to be 1,000 years old and has 40 feet diameter buttock. Both signify durability, endurance and fruitfulness. Likewise, growth is expected at every stage of life and there should be no menopause regarding it. Even in old age, there must still be growth. Even in human beings, growth starts from the time of conception till we die. In the passage we are examining, the growth of the righteous is tied to being planted in the house of the Lord. It

simply means that the growth of the church is tied to being in the will and presence of God. In the final analysis, growth is both divine and human partnership. Without us God will not and without Him, we cannot (I Cor. 3:6).

We must do our part and then God will do His part. If our motive and reasons for starting, founding or desiring growth for our churches are not sincere and godly, then God will not be able to bring the needed growth. Growth is needed. And it is required if we are to make impact. You cannot make any tangible impact until you begin to grow! You must grow. You can grow. God wants you to grow and because of that you will grow. And through your growth, many lives and communities will be impacted and affected for God. This is your day of growth and impact making. If you don't grow now, when? If you don't make impact now, when?

## **Chapter 2**

### **Challenges for Church leaders in Africa**

As I said in the preface, the Church in Africa or from Africa must be driven by impact. If we are not going to go the way of the churches in Europe, then we must seek to make impact from our locality to national and international levels. Churches from Africa must be driven by the desire to create lasting impact in the diasporas where they find themselves.

For many years, there had been the prophecy that God will use the church in Africa to bless the world. From the look of things, this prophecy is coming to pass gradually. Churches from Africa are mightily affecting the people of Britain, Ukraine, Cuba, United States and other countries of the world.

However the churches in Africa need leaders that can take her to the next level of impact. To conserve the reaped harvest and integrate them into the main life of the church, a new generation of leaders must rise to the surface. To turn the rapid growth that has been witnessed in the last few years to solid and sustainable growth, we need godly and dynamic leaders who are willing to face the challenges that are facing the church now.

If we are going to move on from strength to strength and see greater move of God, then we need to rectify these leadership problems that are threatening the forward movement of the church here. Africa needs sincere and honest church leaders who will rise up to face, fight and finish these challenges.

Through my research, I have discovered twelve major challenges for African church leaders of today. These twelve leadership challenges are not theoretical but practical leadership problems that every careful observer can see. They are not particular to one church or denomination, but they spread across the landscape of the church here. We cannot just fold our arms, pretending like the ostrich and hope to see more impact. Absolutely no. The future of the work demands that we address them squarely today.

I want to say that my allegiance is to Jesus Christ and His body, the church, not to any church leader. Therefore I am going to write as I am led. These twelve key challenges I want to enumerate are basically problems that are very peculiar to city churches. They are found in every major city and denominations spreading across the landscape of Africa and to churches pioneered by Africans in diasporas. I sincerely hope we will be honest enough to admit them and find a way of overcoming them so that the church in Africa can keep on being used by the Lord to bring revival and growth to the rest of the church of Jesus Christ in other parts of the world.

The church in Europe and North America are in real trouble today because they ignore these challenges. They need fresh visitation from the Lord if they are going to be the true bride of Christ. Before we go too far in following their error, thereby losing God and His mighty blessings, we can still retrace our steps by doing everything possible to overcome these twelve challenges. The following are the challenges:

1. The Challenge of Individualism and Independence:

It is a reality that too many church founders are not responsible to anyone and therefore can preach, teach and lead their church the way they like. They behave as the Alfa and Omega of their churches. They relate with no one and are not responsible and accountable to anyone. In such churches many things go on in the name of ministry. Majority of these churches started as a breakaway from established denominational churches. Their grouse sometimes centered on doctrine, money or promotion issues. Their nasty experiences in the denominational set up therefore made them to rebel against the idea of being responsible to a board or being under a leadership.

Much shame and public outrage against the church is increasing almost daily due to the unbecoming scenarios and negative reports emanating from these kind of church set up. Many of the leaders siphon church money into their private pockets and justify it through misinterpretation of the scriptures. Their leaders display so much pride and avarice that you begin to wonder, yet nobody can call them to order, because they are independently registered. There are reports of scandals, adultery, misappropriation of church money and too many evils too numerous to mention, yet they are swept under the carpet and the preachers still carry on as if nothing has happened! Many of such churches experience breakaway after such scandals, yet they go to another section of the city to start another 'church' and still carry on in the 'ministry'. It's time that the church in Africa begins to find solution to this challenge. Prayers, ministerial networking, revoking of licences and

compulsory registration of ministers and churches with recognised ministerial fraternals and bodies will check some of these ungodly practises.

## 2. Challenge of Personal Kingdom Building:

It is sad to admit that many of the numerical growth of churches in Africa are not true kingdom growth, but personal empire of some leaders. It is an open secret that many church leaders are focused on building their personal empire rather than that of Jesus Christ. Most personal empire builders are leaders that are highly gifted, visionary and entrepreneurs who are focused and literally consumed with what they are doing. They build their churches with the heart of a C.E.O. building a large and successful company.

They refuse to have anything doing with the rest of the body of Christ. They see their churches and denominations as the very kingdom of God. They detest and diminish what others are doing. They exert their influence and throw their weight around. They annexe churches and snatch members and pastors of other churches. They pay large sums of money for a property so as to price it away from smaller churches and ministries. They boast of their wealth and worth to everybody. But it has been discovered that such churches are populated by people who only see Jesus as 'Father Christmas'. The staff and workers are out for their daily bread, not that they are working for God. Such churches have hurt the body of Christ by lowering the spiritual commitment of people, thereby setting wrong standards for others to follow. As I am writing, one of such leaders, who usually boast that "there can never be crisis in my church" is having crisis of great proportions in his church right now. Press reports are revealing much corruption regarding money and political manouvers in that church. It is amazing!

The body of Christ must find a way of stemming this tide. Of course, we don't have control over people's motives of coming to the ministry, but we can teach and pinpoint early the tell-tale signs of those who are only out to build their personal financial empire and not the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

## 3. Challenge of Success and Significance:

The church here also needs to grapple with the challenge of many leaders teaching and equating material success with spiritual success. Motivational speaking that sees success from physical and material angles have done much damage to the younger generation of pastors. Preachers on television, radio and through the avenue of print media have sold this lie to so many people. Majority have been hooked, and they believe that good dressing, posh car, house and material well-being is next to godliness.

The idea of 'I must make it at all cost' has really caught on with so many ministers. To showcase wealth, worth and attainments has now become the main goal of ministry. Success and significance in the ministry today is based on the

parameters of the type of cars, house, title and class you enjoy in life. If you are not living big and moving with the 'big boys' in the ministry, then you are not a success yet. Unfortunately, many have been bewitched by this error and therefore are ready to do just anything to appear as success in the ministry.

Of course, the Lord desires that we succeed in life. He promised to give us good success in Joshua Chapter 1 verse 8. But true success does not consist of physical and material attainments. Rather, true success consists of fulfilling God's purpose for your life, growing to your full potentials and sowing the seeds that benefit others. Church leaders in Africa must emphasise and re-emphasise true success to our Christians. We must take steps to balance the one sided emphasis on material prosperity which is already showing strong signs of materialism. Without balancing physical prosperity with spiritual prosperity, the church in Africa will soon go the way of the church in Europe and America.

#### **4. The Challenge of Servant Leadership:**

It is without gainsaying that the church in Africa is still yet to come to terms with servant leadership. Most of our leadership teachings and practise are wrong and way off the mark. Position, title, age and class are used as parameters of leadership. We emphasise hero worship and adulation of leaders. We emphasise control, selfish interest and connection. We operate with the unwritten code that church leadership means self-enrichment. Sadly, not much is being seen on true servant leadership. My observation is that the secular and political leadership that is prevalent in government of African countries is equally what is being practised in the churches. Our political leaders are there to swell their pockets and that of their cronies. Nobody cares for the suffering masses of the people. Political positions are used to amass wealth and no tangible service is rendered to the people who voted them there.

Quite alarmingly, this is also the type of leadership being practised in the church. Most church leaders are not there to serve the people, but to use the people for their selfish ends. Too many examples abound to prove the correctness of my assertion. Though we speak nice words and pretend to be serving the people, yet the true reason is to use the people to climb up.

The church in Africa needs leaders who have the heart of servants, who will readily and sacrificially serve the people and see to their uplift. Church leaders must rise up to the challenge of providing this kind of leadership. It is then the church will really move forward.

#### **5. The Challenge of Leadership Development:**

Another acute challenge that church leaders in Africa must rise up to is that of leadership development. It is sad to note that most of our churches have no deliberate and intentional leadership development policy. Nothing absolutely is

being done regarding raising young leaders that will take over from them and lead the church into the future. Rather, we hand pick and appoint leaders with little or no spiritual training and discipline to lead and pastor our churches. We now tilt towards secular education, high paid jobs and management styles of worldly companies to run the church of the living God. Small wonder decay is setting in gradually.

At best, our leadership development policy only produced half-baked pastors, because we failed to be thorough in our approach. Furthermore, many church leaders detest youths and young leaders, they are prejudiced against the idea of these young leaders holding a position of responsibility and growing with it. They therefore do everything in their power to suppress and subjugate such promising young leaders. In actual fact, most breakaways in churches happened because of this issue. Church leaders must begin to address this issue squarely now. We must begin the process of developing leaders who will be thoroughly trained to lead the church tomorrow. Without deliberate leadership development policy, the church will be in serious jeopardy in the next few years.

## **6. The Challenge of Fathers and Mentors:**

If we truly want the church in Africa or from Africa to other parts of the world to be impactful, then we must rise up to another challenge. This is the challenge of fathers and mentors. The cry all over is for true fathers and mentors. So many young leaders desire to have genuine fathers and mentors, but sadly, there is not too many out there. Many fathers have led in the wrong way and many so called mentors are only tormentors or mentholatum - a pain in the eye. Quite disheartening, not many big-name preachers and church leaders are providing themselves as true models to follow. Today, you cannot follow many professed leaders closely, else you have yourself to blame.

Moreover, majority of those who say they are mentoring others are only out to fleece their protégés. They form associations, ministerial networks and fraternal with the sole aim of using their protégés to climb the ladder of wealth and fame. The protégés must buy their tapes, books, sow regularly into their personal pocket and ministries and be present in all of their meetings. There is no corresponding investment of time, attention, and resources in the lives and ministries of the protégés.

In some unfortunate situations, the mentor feels threatened by the dynamism, growth and potentials of his protégé and therefore sets out to cut him to size. These are the kinds of mentoring that are being practised here. But we must put a stop to all these and provide true mentoring to emerging leaders if we are to gladden the heart of our Lord. Good mentoring starts from being a worthy model and example to others. Being a father calls for large heartedness and willingness to be a ladder to others. It is the grace and ability to discover and develop the

hidden potentials of others. May the good Lord grant us such leaders in abundance in the church. It is then and only then that the future will be secured.

### **7. The Challenge of Pitching Camp:**

This is one great malaise that is eating up the unity of the body of Christ in Africa. Every leader has a camp and if you do not belong to their camp, you are declared a *personal non-gra-ta*. Church leaders of different camps and ministerial networks feverishly work to discredit each other. Sometimes, doctrinal bigotry and holier-than-thou attitude are the foundation stones of these camps.

Other times, it is personality clash and ego trip that makes Christian leaders to work for the downfall of each other. Unfortunately, their followers also follow suit and in some cases, they carry the fight to their grave. Belonging to camp A or B has worked against the unity of the church of Jesus. Of course, I am not canvassing for uniformity, but unity in diversity. The Lord is aware of our various distinctiveness, whether we are Pentecostals; Charismatic; evangelicals or conservatives. Yet, we can work together and become a family that fights for one another.

It is time we forget those things that divide us and focus on those things that unite us. Despite our avowed distinctiveness, there is only one Lord, one Spirit, one Baptism and one heaven for every genuine and sincere Christian. It's time we come to the full understanding that the only enemy we have is the devil, not the next door pastor. Therefore, instead of fighting one another let us begin to fight for each other. Pitching camp will never help us to reach our communities and cities for Christ. The irony of the matter is that occult practitioners are united and work hand in hand against the church in each locality. Why is it that the church cannot unite against the enemy of the gospel. It's time that church leaders rise up to face this challenge and overcome it if the church is to really conquer kingdoms for our risen Lord.

### **8. The Challenge of Mega Churches:**

In the last twenty years, the landscape of our continent has been dotted with mega churches. Many congregations that count several thousands of people in a weekend service have become part of our church culture. However, these mega churches have also posed challenges to the body of Christ. Consciously or unconsciously, mega churches and their pastors tends to behave as if they own their territory.

They look down on smaller churches and tend to control and demand obeisance from them. In some cases, they tend to take over the properties of smaller churches, thinking erroneously that they are the only ones that can win the city for Christ. This attitude has brought much anger to the body of Christ. It is on record that mega churches and their pastors don't cooperate and work together with other churches and Christian ministries in community and city reaching

efforts. They disdain and discountenance such efforts in the believe that they are higher and above everybody else. Such wrong attitudes have drawn the church back and are still drawing back the church.

It is high time we realize that both small and big churches are the will of God. Both of them are needed for the expansion of the kingdom of God. There are people that small churches can reach which mega churches cannot reach and vice versa. Big and small churches need each other. This we must realize and act upon.

#### **9. The Challenge of Continuous Learning:**

The mighty and greater impact of the church demands that church leaders must overcome the challenge posed by inability to continue to learn. A careful observer will discover that the average church leader doesn't possess a continuous spirit of learning. Church leaders in Africa need to overcome the challenge of refusal to keep on learning. Many who have experienced one form of growth or the other now detest learning. I have come to discover that once you have a fairly big church; stable membership; travelled to America or Europe, rides Mercedes Benz or Pajero Jeep vehicle; live in your own house and your children are in tertiary institution, the urge to learn and keep growing will greatly reduce. Pastors and church leaders in the situation I described above find it hard to attend conferences, seminars and read quality books again.

They always feel they have got to the zenith of ministry and have seen it all. They feel learning and hustling in the ministry is for small boys who have not got these things. But how wrong they are. These generations of leaders always wake up to find crises of great proportions in their churches and they will be lost on how to handle such problems and invariably, their work perishes before them. Lack of learning spirit is hindering the continuous growth of the church. Leaders with no relevant, current and up-to-date information cannot lead the church upward but downward.

This learning spirit supersedes theological degrees; because that is one area we are so good at. We love to amass theological degrees and be referred to as, *Reverend; Doctors; Bishops and lately, Apostles*. Of course, there is nothing wrong in these titles, if we really work and merit them. But in most cases, they are only smoke screen to cover the shallowness sand emptiness of the preacher.

A true learning spirit is highly needed among church leaders of today. Continuous learning is what will help us to grapple with the complexities of the church of today. To keep learning is to keep growing. To stop learning is to start leaning. You can go to any level, provided you are willing to learn and keep on learning.

#### **10. The Challenge of Church Image:**

Nobody in his right senses can argue against the fact that the church has the issue of wrong image to contend with today. The society sees the church in various light due to the actions and attitudes of Christians and their leaders. The untoward behaviour of pastors and church leaders have created wrong image for the church. Too many financial scandals, moral failures and sexual escapades plus occultic practises have made the society to lose much respect for the church and her leaders. Today, the media, society and government officials take relish in bashing the church left, right and center. Some of them sees the church as a 'commercial venture'. While others say the church is a glorified 'business center'. Majority agrees that the church has not kept to her divine mandate and has therefore disappointed the society through her actions and inactions.

Most of the wrong views people have about the church boils down to wrong leadership being displayed. This wrong image of the church has rusted the evangelistic edge of the church. It has rendered the church ineffective in winning much more people today. It has given some victory to enemies of the cross of Christ and religious bigots.

To change the image of the church, her leadership must lead the way. Church leaders must overcome this challenge through holy living, lifestyles of integrity and moulding of godly character in our Christians. We must return back to godly living and simple lifestyles.

#### **11. The Challenge of Wrong Motive:**

It is crystal clear today that many are in the ministry for the wrong reasons. The desire for money and financial gain has eaten so deep into the lives and blood of many so called leaders. Everything is being done from the view of gain and benefits accruing to the man of God. The maxim for ministry is "big title, big position, big pocket and big belly".

Too many reports of wrong deeds by church leaders show clearly that their motives are coated with alluring words and make-believe statements. Yet, people see through these motivational speeches, and often their actions later show that the people are correct. Pray me, how can one explain a situation where preachers inflate attendance figures of an outreach programme and make fantastic claims of millions getting born again in order to impress his donors and financiers, when in reality 99.9% of the people in attendance were Christians from various cooperating churches.

What do we say of preachers that raise funds on crusade grounds and sell seats to people? The closer you are to the altar, the higher you pay for the seats.

How about so called church leaders who went abroad to canvas for money on behalf of ministers and the less privileged and yet come back to spend all on his

personal house? Though I hate to admit this, yet these are not isolated incidents, but they are wide spread and re-occurring. It is almost becoming a way of life for church leaders. Both our white and black brethren are guilty of this, especially acclaimed world evangelists. They have corrupted the church in Africa than they met her. It's time genuine and concerned leaders rise up to stop these mercenaries who masquerade as evangelists from further soiling the image of the church in Africa. Church leaders in Africa must purge themselves of unholy motives and financial lucre. They must rise up to face this challenge squarely, else, judgement will start from us in earnest.

## **12. The Challenge of Successors:**

It is an incontestable fact that church leaders in Africa have not really come to terms with the issue of successors. They still behave as if they will live forever. They hate and detest the idea of having successors. In actual fact, whoever mentioned it will incur the wrath of the leader because he feels he is being asked to die soon so as to leave the position for whoever will succeed him.

Moreover, those who have realized that they need to choose their successors are doing it the wrong way. They choose successors based on carnal motives and ego trip, not on the leading of the Lord. Furthermore, many stumbling blocks and man-made barriers are placed in the pathway of the would be successor so that he can fail!

In some cases, when the leader dies or is incapacitated, no one is able to take his place simply because he has not trained or rose up anybody. This has led to the decay and death of so many once promising ministries.

It's time we begin to address this challenge squarely. There is no success without successor. Every leader has greater leaders behind him or her. All the promises of God for your church cannot all be fulfilled during your lifetime, no matter how hard you try. Some of them will come to pass during the days of your successor. Therefore you must prayerfully choose who will succeed you and start to nurture, develop, train and test him while you are still around. It is then the future of the work will be secure. The true mark of a great leader is that he has developed people who can do the work better when he is still around, thereby securing the future.

Conclusively, every challenge has a solution. We should not see these twelve issues as problems; rather, they are challenges that young Christian leaders of today must do all in his power to overcome. The Lord of the harvest can help us to overcome these formidable challenges with the formidable power of the Holy Spirit.

In as much we are ready to admit our mistakes and are willing to change and adjust where necessary, the Lord will give us the grace to become who He really want us to be. Then, the church will take a giant leap forward.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Something is Driving your Church**

It is high time we come to the deep realization that every church has something as the directing influence and controlling force. Every church has a driving force behind it. It may be known, it may not be known. It may be knowledge or not, yet there is no church without a driving passion and purpose. What drives the church is what will determine the health and growth of the church. In this chapter we are going to examine some of the directing forces behind churches, we shall first examine the negative forces before looking at what should really be your driving influences. What is driving your church?

#### **Ceremonialism**

The study of churches has revealed that some churches have ceremonialism as their driving force. They are engrossed in ceremony. They always have one thing or the other to celebrate. They don't really care about growth as long as they have one thing or the other to celebrate. Anniversaries, remembrance days, birthdays, marriages, naming ceremonies, burial ceremonies, house warming and graduations are all celebrated with passion and fanfare. The church is always searching for one thing or the other to celebrate. The growth and the well-being of the church is measured by how many of such celebrations we can have in a given year. Ceremony-driven churches normally lose serious and heavenly minded members to other vibrant churches.

#### **Materialism**

Tragically but truthfully, some churches have materialism as their driving passion. Everything is being done to achieve outward success. The desire for property and outward show of success and attainment runs so high that every other thing pales into insignificance. The outward show of success exemplified by cars, clothing, phones, buildings mansions and educational level are used as the criteria for growth and God's favour. Such churches weigh and judge everything according to how materially blessed you are or not. Materialism driven churches usually become worldly, carnal, cold and eventually unspiritual, decayed and are dead.

#### **Tradition**

Some churches have tradition as their guiding force. Their attention is focused majorly on how to maintain the tradition the church is noted for. The main slogan of such churches is “as it was in the beginning, so it is now and so shall it ever be”. They repel and reject any form of change. Whenever any new thing is introduced, they chorused “we have never done it like this before”. If anything comes that is against the tradition the church holds on to, it is usually rejected and castigated. Such churches believe that tradition is more important than being relevant. Tradition driven churches are always stagnant, deteriorating and decaying.

### **Personality**

Many churches are being driven by some important personalities. In some situations the pastor is the dominant person, while one influential lay person or the other holds the key. In churches where the patriachs of the church have more influence than the pastor, growth will be hindered. In some other churches, the foundation members or the elders and deacons are the ones ruling and directing the affairs of the church to suit their purposes. Personality driven churches are always enmeshed in crisis and breakaway.

### **Finance**

This should not be surprising in the light of the fact that many churches are now founded with money as the main motive. No wonder the unbelieving world sees the church as financial enterprise.

Churches that are driven by finance concentrate too much time, effort and energy on offerings, tithes and contributions. Every service and programme is considered a success or failure according to its financial benefits. People are told to contribute so much and so often that there is virtually no money in the peoples' pockets. Fantastic and unbiblical promises are given to the people. Your commitment is measured, only, based on your financial contribution. Financially driven churches are usually engrossed in sins, scandals and ungodly scenarios.

### **Programmes**

Churches that are programme driven are so many in our nation. Programmes are being conducted for the sake of programming. Questions as to the effectiveness, relevance, impact and necessity of the programmes are never considered. The most important thing is the holding of the programme.

Much energy and activities does not however produce corresponding result. In such churches, the programmes have taken a life of its own. They become so sacred that nobody dare touch them or thought of cancelling or changing them. As long as such programmes are being conducted, the church is considered as growing and healthy. However that is far from the truth. Programme driven

churches usually deteriorate and die gradually without the leaders being aware of it.

### **Maintenance**

Churches being driven by maintenance are usually inward looking. The overriding concern is on how to maintain the saints and not much effort is being made on those who are outside. Their major focus is on the saints. Fundamental, evangelical, holiness and to some extent, Pentecostal churches are found mainly in this category. Much effort is expended on keeping the few saints inside the church and make them heavenly minded. These churches usually don't experience growth. And such non-growth is justified and rationalized. Maintenance driven churches are usually small, sick, stagnant and struggling. They don't possess a promising future.

### **Seekers**

A number of churches are being driven by the desire to please sinners. They become sinner or seeker oriented to the extent that they are ready to compromise biblical truth in order to draw in the sinners. They neglect the foundational truth of the scripture regarding repentance, forgiveness and life transformation. They don't want to displease or offend seekers with the demands of the scripture. Such churches bend backward to satisfy seekers. They don't tell the whole truth regarding their salvation and genuine godly living as demanded by the Lord. This is the more reason we have so many people attending churches, yet they are not better than those who have never heard the gospel. The tendency is always to compromise the truth of the gospel so that they will not be offended and thereby go away. Such churches will surely end up as nominal, lifeless and eventually, monuments.

### **Faithfulness Theory**

This theory contends that God has called us to be faithful and not necessarily to be successful. Churches being driven by this theory are the ones that have experienced years of little or no growth. It is also believed that these churches have suffered years of failure and decades of defeat. They believe faithfulness in prayer, commitment and devotion more important than being successful, productive and fruitful. Such passion has retarded the much needed growth and multiplication of the church. In a balanced setting, faithfulness and success goes hand in hand. You cannot have one without the other. However, many churches still hold on tenaciously to this defeatist theory. And such churches usually decline, deteriorate and die.

### **Competition**

Alarmingly it is true that some churches are being driven by competition. The desire drive to be like others is a reoccurring decimal. Such churches are always on the look out for the programme and activities of other churches and they copy them wholesale. Such churches don't possess any clear-cut and definite vision from the Lord, they are only out to adopt and adapt the programmes of others. Churches that are driven by competition are usually critical and sarcastic of others. And such churches will nonetheless experience downward spiral and tailspin.

### **Doctrinal Correctness**

It is a reality that some churches are being driven by doctrinal correctness. Such churches are positioning themselves as the "doctrinal watchdogs" of the church of Christ. They go to the extent of castigating and condemning those who fail to agree with their doctrinal point of view. Everything is being done with doctrinal correctness as the guiding principle.

Unfortunately such churches become so enmeshed in doctrinal battles that they have no energy left to grow and impact the world. As good as doctrine is, it cannot win the world and unite the church. I want to believe that the eternal doctrine we should believe is, salvation through the death, crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and whosoever is born again does not live in sin. After these two eternal doctrines, the rest are subject to controversies. Doctrine will rather divide than unite the church.

Maturely, we must concentrate on the essentials and leave the non-essentials, and in everything show love towards everyone. Churches that are doctrinally driven cannot truly impact their world. They choose to be doctrinally correct than to be relevant and impact their world.

### **Dedication**

The last but not the least of those negative driving forces behind churches is dedication. The believe is that if there is enough dedication in terms of prayers, fasting, Bible study and faithfulness, the church will necessarily grow. But the truth is that dedication alone will never grow the church. There are thousands of dedicated church leaders who have never seen growth in their churches.

The truth of the matter is that dedication must be balanced up with skills and these skills must be acquired through training. The Nigerian churches have not truly acquired the needed training that will really ground the church in growth principles. The more reason there are so many fumbling and floundering churches and church leaders.

The ministry of Church Growth Services and the first Institute to teach church growth in African Context, African institute of Church Growth have come to fill

this most important gap. Many pastors that have passed through our week long conferences and 6 months course in the Institute have come back or written to testify of the great things and growth they are now experiencing. Here is a sample:

“I am the pastor of a 23 year old church. My church grew in the first 17 years and sincerely I don't know the reason for the growth. So when my church starts to decline in the last six years, I was also at a loss for the reasons. But when I came to your conference at Ibadan, I was able to discover the reason for the growth of the first 17 years and the decline of the last six years. When I applied what I learnt, my church begins to grow again” - Pastor Akanbi.

Many more testimonies abound of what God is doing in churches after the pastors acquired the foundational skills to bring growth to the church.

### **Pastor's Driving Force**

Hardly do you see a church being driven by something in the absence of the pastor and leader. Church growth teachings believe strongly in the headship of the pastor. He must be the leader over the church. The bulk stops at his table. Therefore, it logically follows that whatever is driving the pastor is what will drive the church. Take a closer look at all the negative driving forces we have looked at and you will discover that majority of them, if not all, originated from the pastor. What he is passionate about is what he will pass down to the church.

What is the burning vision, desire and purpose of the pastor will automatically become the driving force of the church. What penetrates and percolates the pastor is what will penetrate and percolate the body, bone, sinew and life of the church. The church can hardly live outside the controlling passion of the pastor. The church will not rise higher than the life and consummate passion of the pastor.

When a church wants to run outside the driving force of the pastor, there would be crisis, chaos and breakaway. In the light of this salient truth, it is therefore necessary for the pastor to strive to be controlled, guided and directed by the right forces. To be driven by the desire to make positive impact will go a long way to bring health and growth to the church.

### **What should drive the Church**

Impact-driven churches must focus on these five areas. The desire to make impact must be majored in these five key areas. Rick Warren put it this way:

Churches grow larger through Evangelism  
Churches grow deeper through Discipleship  
Churches grow warmer through Fellowship

Churches grow stronger through Worship  
Churches grow broader through Ministry.

Every church that desires to make lasting and positive impact upon the world must be driven by these five areas. A balance must be sought and obtained in these areas. The church must emphasise these five key areas and focus on them for lasting impact to be made. Church leaders and pastors must strive to be driven by these five areas. They must acquire the skill to balance the church in these areas. "Blessed are the balanced for they shall outlast everybody". When the church is imbalanced in these areas, it will lead to retardation and stagnation of the church.

Lasting and solid growth will be achieved in the church when the church is being driven by these five areas. Until the church is focused in these areas and being driven by them, not much impact will be made upon our world. The impact we will make will be largely determined by how we are being skilfully driven by these five above mentioned areas. The whole of chapter six will explain how to be driven by these five areas.

To be impact-driven is the most exiting journey your church can undertake. Be impact-driven today and your impact upon your world is surely guaranteed. Jesus was driven by the consummate passion to die and pay the price for man's salvation (Lk. 19:10; Jn. 4:34; 9:4).

The first century church was driven by the desire to change the world and spread the word of God (Acts 6:4). Apostle Paul translates what drives him to his Christians (Phil. 2:10-14; 1:20-21). You could see the sequence; Jesus was being driven by the desire to redeem the world and all his life was spent focusing on that singular goal. He passed on His driving force to His disciples, who in turn were ready to lay down their lives in order to spread the good news of Jesus Christ within their world.

What drove the apostles is what they passed on to their Christians. Evangelism and discipleship were the driving force of their hearts and live. By preachings, teachings, letters and exhortations the churches were infused with the driving passion of the leaders. Today is your day to make impact. Be driven by a noble goal in life and pursue it to a logical conclusion.

**To be completed in shortly.**