

THE IMPACT OF RESEARCH IN THE CHURCH TODAY

A CASE OF ENHANCING MEMBER-MEMBER RELATIONSHIP IN THE CHURCH

Introduction

The lack of Christ-like love among member-member relationships are of great concern to all. It demands urgent attention; a call to build healthy, selfless and supportive friendships in the church. Long lasting relationships of oneness that will continue even in heaven.

The challenge of members relating to one another has been enormous in recent times.

The church is the body of Christ. The word 'church' is derived from the Greek word *ekklesia* meaning the called out ones. They are called out with a specific purpose. The church is universal and local. Every member of the church all over the universe is part of the universal church and the local church is a subset of the universal church. It is the functional unit of the universal church with a manageable size.

Niyi Gbade (Nigeria, 2002) said the local church is a community of professing believers of Jesus Christ with a structure, an identity and function.

The church is also regarded as the community of the redeemed and a redeeming community (Peter Bergeheus). The local church is a family tied together with the blood of Jesus Christ. It is on this basis that member relationship survey is carried out to make recommendations that will enhance relationship in the church, which should ignite revival fire in our churches. In that way the revival we need and pray for is also tied to effective member relationship in the church.

Receomendations from the Survey

MEMBER-MEMBER RELATIONSHIP RATING: survey on relationship from Harvesters Church Headquarter-176 RESPONDENT

S/N	MEMBER-MEMBER-RELATIONSHIP RATING	FREQUENCY
1	EXCELLENT	18
2	VERY GOOD	19
3	GOOD	72
4	POOR	42
5	VERY POOR	12
6	NO INDICATION	13

Recommended factors to enhance member-member relationship.

Each respondent gave several suggestions that will enhance member-member relationship:

Acceptance, Prayer, Worship, Encouragement, Concern for one another, Comforting one another, Sharing with one another, Deliberate friendship, Forgiveness, Sincerity and Transparency, Programmes for more interactions, Humility, Trust for one another, Open rebuke and correction, Good understanding and Cooperation.

Avoid: Suspicion, Discrimination, Tale bearing, Gossip, Backbiting, Self-centeredness, Bitterness, Tribalism, underrating others, being judgmental and partiality

Acceptance: Members should be accepted. New members should be properly visited. New members come to church and leave unnoticed, this is not supposed to be so. Again, big brothers should be humble enough to bridge the gap of superiority complexes between them and others who are not so big; because where there is no acceptance, there will be no basis for relationship.

The biggest disease today is not leprosy or tuberculosis but rather the feeling of being unwanted, uncared for, and deserted by everybody. (Mother Theresa).

Acceptance brings cordiality, and a feeling of liberty. It makes members feel loved and reciprocate the gesture. It also creates a sense of belonging among members and binds the Church as one family.

Deliberate friendship: Every member of the Church should be encouraged to develop friendship deliberately. This however should be born out of acceptance for one another.

Although, we noticed from our analysis some members have friends that transcend tribes, there should be a consistent effort of the church and members to reach out for friendship with other members. Somebody must go out of his way, convenience, comfort, to ensure that friendship is established.

It should be purposeful friendship. It seeks out for another for the sole purposes of being a friend. This encourages the other party and leaves no room for ill feelings. It strengthens the relationship between both parties.

Forgiveness: Forgiveness is a major key to effective relationship in the church. There is no way people relate as a community without hurting each other. According to William A. Ward. Friendship flourishes at the fountain of forgiveness. We should therefore practice forgiveness amidst all the suggestions of the Devil. Genuine Love cannot be exhibited without Forgiveness. It is easier to preach forgiveness but have you forgiven your wife, brother, neighbor, and even those who have offended you in the Church?

Open rebuke and correction: It is an act of love to rebuke openly and correct another member of the Church. Love is a major ingredient in relationship, so when you rebuke a person in love it checks the person from going astray. Every member of the church should be able to correct his or her fellow member.

Selflessness: We are in the world where people love and care for only themselves, no wonder there is a lot of killing, and destruction properties, neglect of orphans, widows. But we should pursue to make others happy and successful. For relationship in the Church to be what it should be, Mr. I must give way to serving others. This will kill parasitic relationship and allow mutual fellowship in the body.

Avoid Suspicion: One thing that must be overcome in relationship is suspicion. Several relationships have come to a halt because of suspicion. If we will survive relating to each other we must again deliberately overcome suspicion. Any one who has felt being suspected should

still make effort to counter this menace with a positive approach. Those involved can be called and let there be open and honest discussion in the spirit of brotherhood.

Avoid Discrimination: Another thing that must be avoided in enhancing relationship is discrimination. We should not be tribalistic, or status and business class conscious. Relationship should strive beyond classes and nobody should be underrated. Partiality can tear down a family, causes separation among the family and destroy love. We should learn to treat people equally especially when any matter arises.

How Research Has Helped The Church

Harvesters Church headquarter has seen the need to encourage members to relate more intimately as the key to revival

The pamphlet published on relationship has been introduced to cell leaders and plans are on to pursue its use to stimulate relationship

Some churches within the state are already using the material as home cell tools We believe that a knitted fellowship is the key to new wave of revival.

Another basic impact of research in the church is that information breeds burden. Research works shared in churches has brought a lot of new impulse to the world's unreached. For example when we carried out research about the peoples of Delta State identifying several communities without churches, as this information was shared in churches many churches began thrusting out to this villages and today several of those communities are being reached.

Also, the Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association publication *A Nation to Win* brought a lot of new move of churches to the unreached areas in Nigeria. Other publications like *Conquered by the Sword*, (survey of Bornu State in Nigeria), and others by the CAPRO research office in Nigeria has also revived the church on the issue of reaching the unreached

Conclusion

Today, I've is dying and getting cool but we can revive it. Leadership is relationship. Discipleship is relationship. We can do little to disciple men for Christ without relationship; therefore it is the basis of fulfilling the Great Commission. It is only unity and knitted relationships in the Church that can bring down Pentecostal revival fire.

Also to note at this point is that except we exhibit real community we cannot change the world and posses the remaining unreached peoples of the world.

Every living church must be a moving church. A living church must be alive to each other, sensitive to one another.

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