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## The Effect of Sound Teaching of the Word of God on the Church and Political Stability in Nigeria

By

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### Abstract

The emphasis of Christ's Great commission is on teaching of the word and making disciple of all nations (Matthew 28: 19 – 20). An effective dissemination of God's word to the people would definitely lead to conversion of souls who will (because of the fear of God) not do anything to impede the peace of the society. The early church is used as a model in this work. The church started on the day of Pentecost and through the effective teachings of the apostles about three thousand souls were added to the church in one day. The burden of the writer of this paper therefore is to present the effects of adequate teaching of God's word on church growth and political stability in Nigeria. The historical method was adopted for this work and recommends that teaching of the word of God must be the utmost priority of every Christian church in our contemporary times. This teaching could be achieved through sermons, discipleship, Sunday school classes and Bible study.

**Keywords:** Teaching, Preaching, Discipleship Church Growth, Political Stability

### Article History

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### Introduction

Christianity has been adjudged to be a teaching religion and Jesus Christ, its founder is acknowledged as the greatest or master teacher.<sup>i</sup> It is important to know that everything about Christianity centers on teaching. Jesus Christ put great emphasis on teaching during his earthly ministry. When He was twelve and He followed His parents to Jerusalem for annual Passover feast He was found in the Temple with the elders deliberating on the word of God. His parents were so worried having looked for Him for days but He told them that He must do the work (i.e. teaching) He was commissioned to do. Christ went from one village to the others teaching and proclaiming the word of God. He taught His disciples and multitudes of people that gathered before Him the word of God. The Bible says in Mathews 5: 1 – 2 “when Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain and sat down; His disciples came to him and He opened His mouth and taught them...”

Christ as a master teacher taught His audience from the Scripture which He also read regularly and the teaching was with authority. At many occasion people began to wonder where He got His wisdom for His teaching was sound and impactful. The teaching of

Jesus Christ caught the attention of his listeners as Matthew 7: 28 records that the crowds were amazed at the teaching of Christ. According to Thompson, people were amazed at Jesus and his teaching because His word came from God the father and because of His personality as the Son of God.<sup>ii</sup>

This made His teaching to be sound and appealing. Therefore, His sound teaching made large numbers of people including the aristocrats, the educated elites and the Pharisees to desire to hear him (Luke 5: 7). When the word of God is rightly handled, understanding of the message would not be difficult and great converts would be made for God's Kingdom. Christ called the twelve disciples and equipped them to be useful for the proclamation of the gospel. The seventy that He sent out were given clear instruction to heal the sick and teach them that the Kingdom of God is near (Luke 10: 9). They later returned with testimonies how great wonders were done through them (Luke 9: 17).

Also, Christ laid emphasis on teaching in His Great Commissioned to believers in Mathew 28: 20. A noteworthy feature of the Great Commission as R. B Kuiper argued is that, it bids the apostles and



the church of all ages to teach the gospel and teaching is spoken of as their missionary task.<sup>iii</sup> The Lord instructed the disciples to teach the whole world to obey everything He had commanded. This teaching must be the whole truth about the Master and not half truth. The teachers must know the truth to be able to disseminate it and that is why sound teaching of God's word is paramount in making converts. The early apostles through divine empowerment taught perfectly the word of God and converts were won daily. This paper therefore argues that, right teaching of God's word will multiply converts and lead to unprecedented growth in the body of Christ. More so, when people know and keep the truth that Christ commanded His followers to teach, peace and tranquility that usually lead to political stability would be experienced in the land.

### Teaching Ministry and the Growth in the Early Church

Church is the body of baptized and regenerated believers in the Lord Jesus Christ that have covenanted together to worship God and serve Him.<sup>iv</sup> In this paper, Church is defined as a united body of believers that has come out of darkness to Christ marvelous light and agree together in carrying out its mission. Anyone that accepted Christ will continue to do His will, evangelizing and bringing souls into God's Kingdom. Thereby reducing the Kingdom of devil and making God's Kingdom to reign in the land. Church as a congregation of people of God promotes love and peaceful coexistence and when there is love and peace in the society the needed things that will lead to political stability will be available.

The church mission according to Anthonia Ahimah is to evangelize and teach the word of God<sup>v</sup> which is evidenced in the work of the early believers. The beginning and growth of the early church showed how fundamental is teaching (*didasko*) and proclamation (*Kerygma*) of God's word. Teaching was recognized by the early church as essential to the spiritual growth and development of the individual believers.<sup>vi</sup> The apostles did not take with levity teaching in the early church. Through teaching and proclamation of the word on the day of Pentecost by Apostle Peter over three thousand souls were added to the church. Peter explained the Scripture to the great crowd that witnessed the event and when the message was well understood, many converts were won to join the believers which marked the beginning of the church. In the word of Daniel Aleshire, the early church was born while declaring *Kerygma* of God's love and saving grace made available through Jesus Christ. He said further that, the task of *Kerygma* never ended at this declaration but as the believers continue to practice the faith, the need for the teaching about the work of God and the life of faith developed.<sup>vii</sup> No wonder education or teaching ministry of the church is seen as 'the effort to introduce person into the life and mission of the Christian community'.<sup>viii</sup>

It is germane to know that after making converts in the early church, the apostles devoted their times to exposing the Scripture in order to nurture the new converts to become mature Christians. The major avenue of teaching in the early church according to Bruce Powers mostly focused on catechetical instruction or

indoctrination. This must have been given to the three thousand souls that joined the church on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2: 41 – 42 that '... they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day they were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.'

Moreover after the indoctrination the early apostles continued to teach the church daily about Christ as reflected in Acts 5: 42 '...and daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ'. It was also noticed from the activities of the early apostles that they were devoted to the teaching of the word and never allowed this ministry to suffer (Acts 6: 3). They considered it as their primary assignment and did it effectively.

For example, after the death of Stephen and the church faced persecution, though the believers were scattered but they continued teaching and proclaiming the message of Christ. Phillip was led by Holy Spirit to the Ethiopia Eunuch who was reading about Christ from the book of Isaiah. He became a Christian when Philip exposed the Scripture to him more. Apostle Paul also made tremendous contributions in teaching the people about Christ. He taught effectively in his ministry. The account in Acts of Apostles showed he was an effective teacher and Tidwell ascribed him as second in greatness as a teacher to Jesus Christ who was a master teacher.<sup>ix</sup> When Paul and his associates met with the church in Antioch for a whole year they taught a great number of people in the church. As a result of their effective teaching, the disciples were first called Christian in Antioch (Acts 11: 26). This was because the practices of the disciples were just like that of Christ. Also, Paul upon the revelation of Holy Spirit stayed in Corinth for a year and six months teaching the new converts more about God (Acts 18:11).

Moreover Tidwell argues that Paul taught faithfully throughout his ministry<sup>x</sup> as Acts 28: 30 – 31 says that "...he lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered". Paul as seen in this Bible text was a God's fearing teacher who did not budge the responsibility of his ministry on his converts but depended faithfully on God's provision. He therefore, taught what he practiced and he showed good example to his audience. Furthermore, Aquilla and Priscilla did wonderfully well in calling to order an enthusiastic Apollo who taught diligently the things of the Lord in the Synagogue but knew only the baptism of John. On discovering his weaknesses the couple called him and expounded the Scripture more to him and he later became useful for the church. In a nutshell, the teaching ministry of the early church contributed immensely to daily growth the church recorded. Teaching therefore is an essential part of the ministry of the church.

## Different Strategies of Teaching Ministry in the Church

Teaching as said earlier is an integral part of the ministry of the church because it is through teaching that the word of God can be effectively disseminated in the church. There are various ways of engaging in sound teaching of the word of God that would lead to church growth and political stability. These are discussed below

1. Bible Study: - the best way of passing the word of God across to the people is through effective Bible Study. During Bible Study church assembled to learn from the Scripture and members can ask questions or contribute to the subject of discussion. Tidwell submits that education that is Christian must first be education in the Scripture.<sup>xi</sup> When a church is committed to regular Bible study, the members will grow deep in the word of God and it will be difficult for anyone to introduce any doctrine that is not found in the Bible to them. The early apostles were aware of these they were devoted to teaching the believers and they in turn continued daily in the teaching delivered to them by the apostle. This later led to the growth of the church as more converts were added to the fellowship and unity also promoted among the members because they had things in common and did not lack anything. Undoubtedly as people become more committed to the things of the Lord unruly behavior will not be found among them. The society will benefit from this as number of people causing troubles reduces, there will be joy, harmony and peace and political stability in the land.
2. Sunday school: - Sunday school is an avenue of passing Christian teaching to the members of Christian community. It is a good way to inculcate God's word to the heart of the people and be useful for him. Tidwell identified six tasks of Sunday school as follows; reach people for Bible study, teach the Bible, witness to people about Christ and lead them into church membership, minister to Sunday school members and non-members, lead members to worship, interpret and undergird the work of the church and denomination.<sup>xiii</sup> So, Sunday school is a good strategy for church growth as it brings worshippers to know God's word and it is useful for all ages in the church.<sup>xiii</sup> Though there was nothing like Sunday school in the early church but Bruce Powers noted that Catechetical instruction was the practice of the church before the development of Sunday school in the eighteenth century.<sup>xiv</sup> So, it is possible to say that the church's Sunday school today is similar to the catechetical instruction of the early church.
3. Discipleship Training: - this has to do with the teaching of Christian converts in the knowledge of God. The mandate to disciple all new converts was given by the Lord in His Great Commission and it is another useful strategy for church growth in Nigeria today. The early church did not play with disciplining new converts, they

were tutored to live in love and practice communalism. This made all members of the community to live in one accord, have many things in common and no one lack among them. Of course, there was peace in the land before the persecution of the church. Also, during persecution the church continued teaching through discipleship. Phillip went to Samaria teaching and disciplining new converts and more souls were won. Discipleship training is a necessity for the churches in Nigeria; it is a life-long training that must not be played with. If the church today can follow the example of the early believers and embark on meaningful discipleship training both numerical and spiritual growth would be recorded in the church and reducing political instability taking place in Nigerian today.

4. Effective Preaching of the Word: - preaching of the word of God is another way of making converts for the Kingdom of God. A message that is presented through the power of Holy Spirit would bring positive result. Church exists for the purpose of disseminating the word of God which can be done through the spoken word and in action (that is helping people in need otherwise known as Social gospel). The church in Nigeria today must take preaching of the undiluted word of God seriously and also provide assistance for the people in need. This will make more people to join the church and reduce political instability
5. Providing Christian Education: - Christian education is an education that is aim to promote the word of God. This can be done through the establishment of Christian schools and give the opportunity to every member of the public to attend. In other words, the school must be affordable because it aims at reaching out to the public with the word of God. Christian education was one of the avenues used by the early missionaries to reach out to the Africans. So many people benefited from it as many of them received western and Christian education and some of them are in politics today. For example General Olusegun Obasanjo was trained at Baptist Boys' High Abeokuta; he served twice as the President of Nigeria. If churches today that established schools can make their school affordable and use the schools to teach the word of God in addition to secular education, so many people would be led to Christ and there would be political stability

## Recommendation

The writer base on his argument in this paper recommends that, the church in Nigeria today should make sound teaching of the word a priority. Though, the circumstances of the inhabitants of Lagos state are making some churches to fix Bible study and prayer service in a day, mostly on Wednesday. Effective teaching of the word that is the argument of this paper could not be realized like this. A separate day should be allotted for Bible study in a week for in-depth teaching to be achieved. When the church teach the truth

it will be difficult for the members to be led astray and as the church knows and practices the truth, the society will also live by the truth and experience peace and tranquility.

## Conclusion

This paper has argued that one of the ways to serve God is through teaching of His word in order to make converts for His Kingdom. The Master's Great Commission underscores the important of teaching for converts to be made. It is imperative for the disciples (that is all Christians today) to go to the world and make disciples into the Kingdom. The church's teaching responsibility is not limited to the members alone, the outsiders that have not heard about Christ must also be told. This is the reason why Christ instructed His followers to go to the world and make disciples of all nations. As the church becomes committed to her teaching ministry, the number of unbelievers in the society would reduce and souls would be added to the church. The work of the church is done by the regenerated members who have been exposed to the Biblical truth. But how can they hear this truth except they have been taught? Those who have been taught the truth of God's word will have positive influence on others and those who are not taught will keep on constituting nuisance in the home, church and society as posited by Ayandokun.<sup>xv</sup> With this submission effective teaching of God's word would produce regenerated members that would be useful for the mission of the church in making God known to the world and promoting political stability.

## ENDNOTES

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