

Preamble

I would like to salute every preacher of the Gospel for stepping out in faith to make a difference. I have already been enriched by last night’s message and I am sure the rest of this weekend will add value to all of us.

Since there is no magic formulae for revival, before we dive into just having an interesting discussion, let us put our discourse into context.

What is the single most important role of the church?

Yesterday Granville and I visited the historical Cape Spear site.

I was particularly drawn to the Canons built in the 1940s for World War 2 that were never fired. Then I was mesmerized by the lighthouse, that was first built in the 1800s and although needed to be updated, it is still functioning today.

Since the nature of our spiritual warfare changes with time, instead of spending all of our time preparing for a war we may not be fighting tomorrow, my opinion is that the church should spend most of its time being a lighthouse because people will always be in need of direction.

What are we up against?

1. A devil who comes to steal, kill, and destroy through the luring of sin and its consequences
2. Life with its trauma and unpredictable challenges
3. A Generation that does not know God or its true purpose in life
4. An evolving culture from the baby boomer generation to the millennial (generation X)
5. A secular Christian world that has gone out of its way to define/ brand Apostolic Believers as conventional and irrelevant...secular Christianity attracts people by inviting people as they are with a promise to leave them as they are...they motivate and inform but do not require much change

How do we attract and assimilate guests and new members into our churches behind these opposing forces?

Topics to consider

1. Spiritual weapons
2. Cultural relevance without compromise
3. Growing churches through church health
4. Vision casting and managing
5. Recognizing and hurdling church plateau

As we consider these areas, keep in the back of your mind the analogy of the church being a restaurant...how is it that some restaurants price list is expensive and their location hard to get to yet still they have a steady stream of customers while there are cheaper and more convenient restaurants with the best customer service that only attract new customers because of gift certificates.

Spiritual weapons

“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds”

2Corinth 10:4

Prayer and Fasting	Word of our Testimony
The Word of God	Praise & Worship
Word of Faith	A well lived life

Cultural relevance without compromise

Every preacher of the gospel must come to that personal place of conviction where we truthfully embrace not just **the Pentecostal message** but also **the Apostolic lifestyle**

Notwithstanding, we should become more aware of the evolution of the culture around us so we can more effectively relate to our new world.

Baby Boomers	Millennial (Generation X)
Born to parents and grandparents who have been through World War 2	Only need to hear someone say “yes we can” to be mobilized
Have seen and even experienced much hardship	Prefer working smarter and shorter than working harder and longer
Inspired by loyalty, hard work, and a sense of duty	Kids are in little leagues where there are no losers and where everybody is rewarded for trying
Believe in commitment and lasting relationships	Instant coffee era where things happen quickly
Believe in authority and leadership	Teamwork and democratic fair play are codes of conduct
Will conform out of respect even if they don’t understand or agree with your stance	Do not like terminologies such as boss and supervisor , prefer words such as life coaches and mentors
Grew up hearing the words of JF Kennedy that before the century is over they would land a man on the moon and return him safely to earth	Do very little unless they understand why
Grew up hearing the words Mahatma Gandhi “The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.”	Motivated by inspiration and turned off by guilt techniques
Grew up hearing the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”	Expect the church to cater not just to spiritual needs but also to social, wellbeing, and environmental interests
Grew up hearing the words of Winston Churchill “Never give up...never give up”	Require a high degree of transparency and accountability from its leaders

Growing churches through church health

We do not need to tell a healthy child that he/ she should grow.

Neither do we control how tall a healthy child grows.

Consider the bamboo

The bamboo is the largest of the grass family

Bamboos are capable of growing at a rate of 3 feet in 24 hours and in one 3 – 4 months season can grow as tall as 130 feet

But in the first 5 years of a bamboo’s life we see very little sign of outward growth. This is because its roots take time to grow underground

I believe our churches will stand a better chance of growing faster and larger if we pay more attention to the health of our church in nurturing its foundation.

The key to church health is church balance - We should stress Evangelism, discipleship, worship, ministry, and fellowship to the same extent

Vision casting and managing

1. Church membership no longer attracts the average person because people prefer to avoid unnecessary contracts that bind them.
2. However people will rally around a vision if it is expressed in a way that they can believe and share in it.
3. If people perceive (correctly or incorrectly) that our church is our “little kingdom” they will not fully support it
4. Goals and visions are not the same thing.
5. Goals are measurable objectives which are typically only meaningful to managers and those responsible for reporting.
6. Visions are dreams that typically can only be realized with the “buy in” of others – its emphasis is not so much activities but passion and connecting with the heart
7. Few leaders take the time to effectively communicate visions
8. Even fewer leaders take the time to manage visions on a continual basis
9. Church visions should be communicated and managed weekly

”Where there is no vision, the people perish” Proverbs 29:18

Recognizing and hurdling church plateau

Most pastors hide behind of the veil of declaring that in God’s time He will bring us revival as a way to avoid dealing with church plateau.

Irrespective of our size, if a church attendance is the same plus/ minus 10% for more than 16 months then there is a good chance we are experiencing church plateau.

In many ways this is indicative that we do some things well since we are producing results

But there are some other realities that may be true too:

- Maybe our members are not inviting as many people to church as they could
- Maybe our church members themselves are not growing as much as they could
- Maybe we spend more time attracting and not enough time keeping our members
- Maybe we are the victims of negative advertising where some of those who have been to our churches are passing on negative comments based on their experiences with us.

In plateau churches 20% of the church does 80% of the work....in truly growing churches 80% of the church is involved in some area of ministry

Church's checklist

Back to the restaurant analogy, what would you think if the first 10 things you ordered on a menu were not available, leaving you with only the special of the day? How is it we expect people to come back to our churches when we advertise it with such lavish services but when our guests come, they are restricted to only kind of ministry?

1. Are we experiencing church plateau or are we truly growing?
2. Can our members honestly trust our leadership enough to bring their friends, peers, and family members knowing that we will take care of them?
3. Do we sing the same songs every Sunday with the same people and with the same style?
4. Do we preach using the same mannerism and tone in every Service?
5. If our mid-week Bible studies are lecture style where we do all the talking, do we provide another service in the week that is more interactive where people can give input and ask question?
6. How much effort do we put in training and development?
7. Do we provide literature about our church and information about our schedules and ministries along with the format of these so people can choose how to start becoming a part of us?
8. Are people uncomfortable in our services if they do not dress and look like us?
9. Before people totally line up with our doctrine and lifestyle teachings, are there avenues for them to express that they are connecting with our vision and ministries?
10. Do we only call our contacts to remind them of our church services or do we stay connected in general?
11. Do we teach the principles of holiness as much as we teach the practice of holiness?
12. Do we try to completely pastor people using a 2 hour Sunday service or do we implement ministries that consider environment, timing, and appropriateness?
13. Does our soul winning approach include fear and guilt tactics to bring about change or do we rely on the timing and the conviction of the Holy Spirit?
14. What kinds of equipping tools do we provide so that our members can keep growing outside of structured church schedules?
15. Does our ministry prepare people to thrive in this life as much as we prepare them for the next life to come?
16. Do our churches make promises to our guests and members in as much as we want our guests and members to make commitments to us?
17. Is our church gender and culture neutral from the guest greeting position to the senior leadership positions?
18. Do we only plan annual conferences with a guest speaker to preach to our guests and members or do we regularly invite experience men and women of God to look at our church operations and give us different perspective?
19. Are we growing as leaders?
20. Are we preparing others to grow beyond our ministry