

MENTORING, SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY: THE CHALLENGES FROM THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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Spiritual formation is key to leadership development in the church in Africa. And Nigeria is critical to this. To use an illustration: it's as if Africa were shaped like a gun, with Nigeria as the trigger.² Nigeria is therefore critical for any major movement in Africa. In spite of all the growth we have had in the various segments of the Christian church in Nigeria, there do not seem to be enough well-differentiated leaders on the religious stage in Nigeria. This is because there are many cultural, theological, and political challenges to spiritual formation. Mentoring is a tool that could be used for effective spiritual formation if properly fine-tuned to yield the desired result. This paper proposes that effective mentoring is key to effective spiritual formation in order to have a more robust leadership development in African Christianity.

WHY NIGERIA?

The first question that comes to mind is why the emphasis on Nigeria, instead of looking at Africa in general? Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa. It occupies a very crucial place in Africa and global Christianity.³ In the view of Patrick Johnstone, a missiologist, Christianity makes up 51.3% of the population while Islam makes up 45.1%. Ethnic

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² A. David, "Where on earth is Nigeria?" <https://total-facts-about-nigeria.com/where-is-nigeria.html>.

³ It is situated on the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa. Its neighbors are Benin, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. The lower course of the river Niger flows south through the Western part of the country into the Gulf of Guinea. Swamps and mangrove forests border the southern coast; inland are hardwood forests. It is also surrounded on the southern side by the Atlantic Ocean and in the north by the Sahara Desert.

The capital city is Abuja, while the commercial city is Lagos, which is also the tenth most populous city in the world. Land area is about 351,649 square miles, and the total area is 356,667 square miles. The population according to the World Factbook of the Central Intelligence Agency is about 162,470,737 in 2011, including more than 250 ethnic groups, such as the Hausa and Fulani 29%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo 18%, Jaw 10%, Kanuri 4.9%, Ibibio

religion comprises 3.3% while non-religious people represent 0.3% of the population.⁴

The various statistics of Nigeria conflict because religion is a very sensitive issue. The question of religion is exempted whenever a census is conducted. The questioner, therefore, determines religious statistics by educated guess. I am, however, of the view that Islam is growing faster than Christianity because of Muslims' emphasis on biological growth. The life expectancy for the population is 47.56 years. As of 2010 the life expectancy for males was 46.76 years; for females 48.41 years.⁵ Among Christians, 35.5% are Protestant, 24.5% are independent, 20.4% are Anglican, and 19.6% are Roman Catholics. As of 2005, the total number of Anglicans in Nigeria is put at 18.5 million.⁶

Nigeria today is in a state of poverty, though, it is full of natural resources like oil, solid minerals, very fertile ground, with enormous capital wealth in human resources. Yet, it has continued to rank very low economically. Nigeria has been rated 133 out of the 180 economically developed countries.⁷

Today Nigeria has the largest church building in the world, sitting over 100 thousand worshippers. The largest of churches is in Nigeria with conservatively over 2 Million worshippers once a month. In spite of the poverty in Nigeria, it also boasts of the richest preachers in the world.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION.

Spiritual formation has been very important in mission work and this is not different in the Nigerian situation. Robert Mulholland's definition is very instructive: "Spiritual formation is the process of being conformed to the image of the Christ for the sake of others."⁸ In his book *Shaped by the Word*, Mulholland invites the reader to learn to read the scripture

3.5%, Tiv 2.5%. The official language is English, but more than 500 other indigenous languages are also used.

According to a Central Intelligence Agency report, 50% of Nigerians are Muslims while 40% are Christians. The other 10% are people of indigenous beliefs. The Muslim population is expected to rise to 117 million in 2030 (see Central Intelligence Agency, "People and Society: Nigeria," under "The World Factbook: Africa: Nigeria," <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geo/ni.html> (accessed November 10, 2012)).

⁴ Patrick J. G. Johnstone, Jason Mandryk, and Robyn Johnstone, *Operation World*, 21st century ed., upd. and rev. ed. (Waynesboro, GA; Gerrards Cross, England: Authentic Lifestyle; WEC International, 2005), 798.

⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, "People and Society."

⁶ <http://www.worldchristianitydatabase.org.ezproxy.asburyseminary.edu/wcd/esweb.asp?WCI=Detail&Mode=2&Detail=45&Key=nige&Instance=104725&LIndex=6>

⁷ Uwadia Orobosa, "How Nigerian Economic Status can be Improved Upon," *Nigerian Tribune*, 29 February, 2012, <http://tribune.com.ng/index.php/news/36804-how-nigerian-economic-status-can-be-improved-upon-wbank> (accessed December 11, 2012).

⁸ Robert Mulholland, *An Invitation to the Journey. A Roadmap for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 12.

formationally, rather than functionally. He encourages us to allow the scripture to master us rather than just us trying to master the scripture.⁹

The importance of practicing the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, silence, study, humility and others have always been a part of the discipleship process for a very long time in many parts of Africa. Unfortunately, in many places, the emphasis on spiritual formation has been fading away in the past two decades. The study of the Bible has become very mechanical and self-centered. In many places in Africa, and specifically Nigeria, people are tempted to attempt to use scripture as a tool for manipulating God. Also, prayer which is supposed to help the believer to learn humility and faith in God and aligning ourselves with his will, is now being used in many places in Nigeria as a way of revenge and expression of anger.¹⁰

MENTORING

The word *mentoring* comes from the Greek word meaning *enduring*. The original *mentor* appears in Homer's *Odyssey* as an old and trusted friend of Odysseus.¹¹ In the myth, Odysseus, a great warrior, asks his old and trusted friend Mentor, to look after his household while he goes off to fight. Mentor serves as guardian and teacher of Odysseus' son, Telemachus. Mentor is, therefore, seen as wisdom personified as he guides young Telemachus into manhood, where he becomes an effective and loved ruler.¹² In considering this mythical figure, the traditional understanding of mentoring "involves a relationship between a younger, less experienced person and an older who wisely guides the younger through some significant transition in life."¹³ This idea is the primary understanding of what mentoring should be.

Mentors help their mentees in a variety of ways. First, mentors give their pupils timely advice, information, financial support, and freedom to emerge as leaders even beyond the level of the mentors. Second, mentors risk their own reputation in order to sponsor mentees. Third, mentors model various aspects of leadership functions to challenge their students to move towards them. Fourth, mentors direct mentees to needed resources that will further develop them. Finally, mentors co-minister with the protégés in order to increase the mentees' confidence, status, and credibility.¹⁴

⁹ Robert Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville: Upper Rooms Books, 1985).

¹⁰ The idea of praying against one's enemies is very common among Christians in Nigeria and many places in Africa.

¹¹ Laurent A. Daloz, *Mentor: Guiding the Journey of Adult Learners*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 20.

¹² Shirley Peddy, *The Art of Mentoring: Lead, Follow and Get Out of the Way* (Houston: Bullion Books, 1998), 24.

¹³ Keith Cowart, "The Role of Mentoring in the Preparation of Church Planters in Reproducing Churches" (D.Min, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2002), 16.

¹⁴ Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1992), 39-40.

Stanley and Clinton identify three major mentoring types.¹⁵ Intensive mentors are disciple makers, spiritual guides, and coaches. The occasional mentor, on the other hand, is a counselor, teacher, and/or sponsor. The passive mentoring model seeks to mentor or receive mentoring without any personal contact through writing letters and sending tapes. Recently, the preferred methods of contact occur via internet or telephone. A good mentoring relationship includes attraction, responsiveness, and accountability. Attraction and responsiveness must be present in all types of mentoring or empowerment will be minimal.¹⁶

Ministers should encourage the concept of mentoring even up to the international level, where experienced leaders in the West can begin to work consciously toward mentoring younger leaders in Africa, Asia, and other less developed areas. National leaders should raise people from within their respective spheres of leadership to assume future positions of leadership. As Clinton mentions, leaders must establish a downward mentoring relationship with individuals who are attracted to them and their ministry. Leaders should have a good, appropriate, unique, and long-term plan to master the Word of God in order to use it with impact in their ministry and those around them.¹⁷

Pastors must become Bible-centered leaders; leaders whose task is reformed by the Bible, who have been personally shaped by biblical values, who can apply these values to correct situations, and who use the Bible in ministry to impact their followers.¹⁸

Russell West explains that mentoring is not a recent innovation, but he argues that the process merely has been ignored for a long time. "The church is rediscovering mentoring as an indispensable strategy for developing leaders because it attends to the demands of the relational-based ministry that churches develop today."¹⁹ In order to achieve the purpose of training effective leaders, the church needs to be intentional. Making new leaders does not happen unless the leader intentionally emphasizes the progression.²⁰ Intentionality means developing a model to implement a leader-making system and carrying it to completion. Jesus' discipleship method is the best among a variety of methods. Jesus was an intentional mentor. He selected twelve, stayed with them, taught, trained, and sent them. History attests to the use of mentoring in transmitting values and resources from one generation to another, even in traditional African and some contemporary African societies like the Igbo in South Eastern Nigeria.

¹⁵ Stanley and Clinton, *Connecting*, 46-145.

¹⁶ Stanley and Clinton, *Connecting*, 33-34

¹⁷ J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1988), 257.

¹⁸ Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 257.

¹⁹ Russell W. West, "Church-Based Theological Education: When the Seminary Goes Back to Church," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 2, no. 2 (09/01, 2003): 113.

²⁰ Dale E. Galloway and Warren Bird, *On Purpose Leadership: Multiplying Your Ministry by Becoming a Leader of Leaders* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2001), 31.

Contemporary writers in the field may refer to almost any kind of helping relationship as a mentoring relationship, even one in which a personal relationship does not exist (i.e., an author to a reader or preacher to listeners). Cowart maintains that this view represents a significant departure from the traditional model of mentoring, which is described by a close, personal relationship between an older and wiser mentor and a younger and eager-to-learn protégé.²¹

Stanley and Clinton describe eight types of mentoring relationships involving various degrees of intensity and personal involvement.²² Cowart asserts that Stanley and Clinton depart from the traditional understanding of the nature of mentoring. Cowart writes, “[D]rawing from tradition, the existence of a personal relationship was determined to be essential.”²³ This personal relationship is even more relevant especially in Africa where relationship is a major part of their existence.

According to Nathalie J. Gehrke, the mentor-protégé relationship is characterized by mutual involvement, a comprehensive focus, and affection. She writes, “It is this quality that differentiates the mentor relationship from other kinds of helping relationships.”²⁴ Another incident of effective mentoring involves the protégé-focused aspect. The mentor should have certain goals for the relationship, but he or she should not dominate the relationship.²⁵ Many mentors within the Nigerian setting attempt to take sole responsibility for directing the relationship, as in the role of the disciple in Stanley and Clinton’s mode.²⁶ The mentor should avoid the temptation of self-cloning but instead should endeavor to draw out the unique qualities of the protégé.²⁷

²¹ Galloway and Bird, *On Purpose Leadership*, 31.

²² Stanley and Clinton, *Connecting*, 41. They categorized the eight types into three subtypes. The first, the most intensive mentoring, consists of the *discipler*, *spiritual guide*, and *coach*. *Intensive* mentoring always involves the presence of a personal relationship and is characterized by high levels of attraction, responsiveness, accountability, and empowerment. The second category consists of the roles of *counselor*, *teacher*, and *sponsor*. This level is termed *occasional* since it may or may not involve personal relationship. The occasional mentoring does not usually include the dynamic of accountability. Tending to have a shorter lifespan, this style is often engaged for a specific purpose. One benefit of an occasional mentor is their availability, but they are often invited according to their ability to empower the protégés. The final category is described as *passive* mentoring because it involves using materials such as books, seminars, and conferences.

²³ Stanley and Clinton, *Connecting*, 13.

²⁴ Nathalie J. Gehrke, “On Preserving the Essence of Mentoring as One Form of Teacher Leadership,” *Journal of Teacher Education* 39, no. 1 (01/01, 1988): 43.

²⁵ Bobb Biehl, *Mentoring: Confidence in Finding a Mentor and Becoming One* (Nashville: Broadman, 1996), 42; Howard G. Hendricks and William Hendricks, *As Iron Sharpens Iron: Building Character in a Mentoring Relationship* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 196.

²⁶ Stanley and Clinton, *Connecting*, 47-59.

²⁷ Cowart, *The Role of Mentoring in the Preparation of Church Planters in Reproducing Churches*, 39.

Also, a mentoring relationship by nature is flexible and intuitive. The mentor must avoid inflexible adherence to a present curriculum. Keith R. Anderson and Randy D. Reese affirm from a Christian perspective that the mentor should use discernment in identifying and focusing on those needs or issues where God is already at work.²⁸ The job of the mentor, then, requires not developing an agenda, but using spiritual discernment to recognize and move in the direction of God's agenda.²⁹

Another quality is that of the transitional relationship. Laurent A. Daloz describes mentoring as a journey in which a mentor helps a protégé navigate transition by pointing the way, offering support, challenging, and then letting go of the protégé.³⁰ Hendricks and Hendricks go further when they write that mentoring is "less about instruction than it is about initiation—about bringing young men into maturity."³¹ This concept is very important especially for Nigerian church leaders who mostly believe in giving out instructions as their only means of doing mentoring.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MENTORING

The Bible always must provide the foundation for belief and practice within the Christian church. Therefore, this study examines mentoring and leadership development considering the Bible. The Church is God's organization and so runs according to the precepts of the Scriptures. The Old³² and New Testaments³³ provides us with the foundation for mentoring—the principle in a major way through which leaders are developed.

The concept of mentoring continued throughout Church history. Spiritual direction was the primary model at work in the Egyptian desert

²⁸ Keith Anderson and Randy D. Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 52-53.

²⁹ Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 16-26.

³⁰ Laurent A. Daloz, "Mentors: Teachers Who make a Difference," *Change*, no. 6 (1983): 25-27.

³¹ Hendricks and Hendricks, *As Iron Sharpens Iron*, 183.

³² The Old Testament provides an example of mentoring in the relationship between Jethro and Moses as recorded in Exodus 18:13-27. Furthermore, Joshua learned about leadership from Moses, which eventually prepared Joshua for the work of taking God's people to the promise land. The relationship between Eli and Samuel provides another example of mentoring (1 Sam. 2:11; 3:1). Samuel served as a mentor both to Saul and to David. The relationship between Elijah and Elisha presents another clear example of mentoring (1 Kgs. 2:13-15).

³³ In the New Testament, Jesus mentored his twelve disciples for three years before he eventually commissioned them. The meaning of the word *disciple* is a pupil or learner. Jesus devoted the majority of his time to his disciples, and they observed him as he ministered to people. They were with him (Mk. 3:14), and they enjoyed a deep relationship with him. Later in the New Testament, Barnabas mentored Paul when Paul became converted to the Christian faith (Acts 9:26-31). In addition, Barnabas continued to mentor John Mark even when Paul felt they should leave the younger man behind. Paul himself became a worthy

in the fourth century, and this custom continued to operate effectively among clergy and members of religious orders for centuries.

NIGERIAN INDIGENOUS EXAMPLES FOR MODERN MENTORING

Examples of mentoring also can be found among historical Nigerian church leaders, including Moses Orimolade, Ayo Babalola, and Josiah Akindayomi. These leaders were within the Nigerian church, which eventually influenced many other countries in Africa.

mentor of Timothy and Titus. Hence, Scripture indicates the importance of mentoring in relation to leadership development and succession.

JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES: The ministry of Jesus offers a clear example of effective mentoring. He began his ministry by calling a few men to follow him. Robert E. Coleman writes, "Jesus started to gather these men before he ever organized an evangelistic campaign or even preached a sermon in public. Men were to be his method of winning the world to God" (Robert Coleman, *The Master plan of Evangelism* [Westwood: F.H. Revell Co, 1964], 21). This point must continue to be emphasized to have continuity with the Christian message.

Although Jesus did not choose to mentor the rich or the religious elite of his day, Jesus' mentees were willing to learn. Coleman writes, "Jesus can use anyone who wants to be used. We cannot transform a world, except individuals in the world are transformed. Jesus did not neglect the crowd, but he concentrated on the few disciples" (Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 23). The same thing must become the principle for meaningful transformation in the churches and the society in general. Coleman summarized the other principles Jesus used in mentoring his disciples. Jesus lived with his disciples, which constitutes the principle of *association*. He required obedience from them, which represents the principle of *consecration*. He gave himself away, which the principle of *impartment* describes. He also showed them how to live, this action fits Coleman's description of the principle of *demonstration*. Jesus then assigned work to his disciples, according to the principle of *delegation*. He oversaw them, which Coleman describes as the principle of *supervision*. Finally, Jesus expected them to *reproduce*, or to mentor others (See Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 21-97).

Mentoring thus represents a major way of teaching in the Old Testament and in the days of Jesus. Jesus trained his disciples in informal settings such as while they ate, traveled, and prayed throughout their shared life experience. They did almost everything together, even attending weddings and funerals, and they observed the way Jesus did things. According to Gunter Krallmann, this shared life involves the transference of knowledge, skill, and character through the combination of teaching and modeling that comes in a shared life experience (Gunter Krallman, *Mentoring for Mission* [Hong Kong: Jenco, 1992], 62).

Jesus gave his disciples the opportunity to practice that which they had learned. When they made mistakes, Jesus corrected them. Apart from when he asked them to go out to preach, he also demonstrated to them by modeling many of his own teachings. One vivid lesson occurred when Jesus demonstrated humility and love by washing the disciples' feet in John 13.

PAUL AND TIMOTHY: Paul exhibited effective mentoring in his relationship with Timothy. He calls him "my true child in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2). Paul, at different times, expresses his love to young Timothy. He also challenged him not to be discouraged. Paul influenced Timothy greatly. He traveled with Timothy to many places, and Timothy was chosen to become the overseer of the church in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:2). Paul also sent Timothy to address problems in Corinth (1 Cor. 4:17). He became a good representative of Paul. This was Paul's example which has been left as a heritage within the pages of the New Testament.

MOSES ORIMOLADE: Moses Orimolade pioneered the first African Independent Church in Nigeria. According to A. Omoyajowo, "Orimolade was like John the Baptist, a forerunner."³⁴ The Cherubim and Seraphim church, which he founded in 1925, is generally and historically regarded as the prophet/prayer healing movement in Nigeria. This movement involved groups of people who practiced belief in the efficacy of prayers for healing sicknesses and in giving specific directions for its members. H. W. Turner, a foremost scholar of the Aladura Movement in his explanation of this movement notes, "There was no dominant charismatic figure or prophet in what came to be known as the Aladura (or prayer) movement until 1925 when Moses Tunolashe (Orimolade) detached from Anglican and other churches that led to the Cherubim and Seraphim societies as they exist today."³⁵ This detachment from the old, mainline churches created the identity of the Aladura churches.

During the revival days, Orimolade mobilized men who accompanied him wherever he went. These men included E. A. Davies, E. O. Bada, and his elder brother Peter Omojola. Orimolade chose seven men and a band of seventy men. The Cherubim and Seraphim movement in its different variety has hundreds of thousands of followers in Nigeria and many parts of Africa

JOSEPH AYO BABALOLA: Joseph Ayo Babalola (1904-1959) was responsible for the revival of 1930s Nigeria. Many African church historians have regarded this revival as the origin of modern-day Pentecostalism in Nigeria. During the revival, a Christian Missionary Society missionary commented, "Babalola has been able to accomplish more in six weeks than the Anglican Church has been able to do in sixty years."³⁶ Thousands of souls were converted, healed, and delivered. The dead were raised, the national newspaper wrote about it, and people from other parts of Africa came to receive the blessing.³⁷

In spite of the revival's time consuming and tedious nature, Babalola fostered men who have continued to affect Nigeria. He trained people by involving them in praying, fasting, and including them in his daily travel. Such men included Babatope and Daniel Orekoya, who continued the revival at the base while others travelled, such as A. Medaiyere, S. G. Omotosho, Adegboyega Ajilore, and some leaders of Faith Tabernacle. Daniel Orekoya took the revival to Ibadan on his way to Lagos. According to Moses Idowu, a dead pregnant woman was raised after three days.³⁸ The revival led to the founding of an indigenous church in Nigeria that has

³⁴ A. Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim: The History of an Independent Church* (New York: NOK, 1982), 42.

³⁵ H. W. Turner, *History of An African Independent Church: The Church of the Lord (Aladura)*, volume 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 3.

³⁶ Moses Idowu, *More than A Prophet* (Lagos: Divine Artillery, 2009), 216.

³⁷ Idowu, *More than A Prophet*, 216.

³⁸ Idowu, *More than A Prophet*, 206.

contributed to church growth and power evangelism, which is an attempt to win souls through the use of signs and wonders to prove the superiority of God to this day.

JOSIAH AKINDAYOMI: Reverend Josiah Akindayomi founded the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), which is one of the fastest growing church denominations in Africa, planting thousands of churches every year. Akindayomi was a prophet in the Cherubim and Seraphim movement before he was called to begin a prayer group. The *Ogo oluwa* prayer group eventually became the RCCG church, founded in 1952.

Akindayomi's church eventually began to branch out into different parts of Nigeria. Although he could not read, he had strong faith in God and devoted himself to prayer. He developed his ministers in prayer and fasting together with substantial Bible study. Enoch Adejare Adeboye, who eventually became Akindayomi's successor, joined the church in 1973. He became a Christian and began to work within the church. Two years later he was made a pastor. The church's founder chose Adeboye, a lecturer with a Ph.D. in mathematics, as his successor.

Akindayomi commissioned Adeboye to interpret his messages during the service. Josiah gave special tutoring to his successor and took him everywhere he went, including Jerusalem. Akindayomi made several pronouncements concerning the nature of his successor. For five years, in various ways, Akindayomi prepared the minds of his followers for the future. He finally prepared a written will, thereby sealing his choice of a successor and identifying Adeboye as the choice of the Holy Spirit. After about thirty years succeeding Akindayomi, RCCG's popularity increased after Adeboye came into leadership. His spiritual gifts and insights superseded and transcended that of his predecessor and spiritual mentor. Mentoring has truly been a pattern of leadership development and succession in church history, even among Africans.

MENTORING IN TRADITIONAL NIGERIAN SOCIETY

Leadership development has been a part of various professions within the typical Nigerian society. The concept of mentoring is embedded in the apprenticeship form of education. According to Babatunde Fafunwa, a foremost educator and former Minister of Education in Nigeria, before the advent of the European order, all the Nigerian ethnic groups had their own distinctive cultures, traditions, languages, and indigenous systems of education. They all had common educational aims and objectives, but their methods differed from place to place as dictated by social, economic, and geographical circumstances.³⁹

Within the old Nigerian society, functionality was the guiding principle. The society regarded education as a means to an end and not an end in itself.

³⁹ Babatunde Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria* (Ibadan: NPS Educational, 1974), 2.

Education was an immediate induction into the society and preparation for adulthood. Children and adolescents were engaged in participatory education through imitation, recitation, and demonstration particularly during ceremonies and ritual.⁴⁰ Indigenous education was therefore an integrated experience, combining physical and intellectual training with character-building disciplines. The aims, contents, and methods of indigenous education “were intricately interwoven; they were not divided into separate compartments as is the case with western education.”⁴¹ Africans tend to see everything in wholeness and not in fragments.

Nigerians in traditional societies raise farmers, weavers, hunters, and even traditional leaders using these methods. At different stages of education, students take practical tests relevant to their experience. In a traditional sense, the father is the male child’s first mentor, and subsequent mentors assume a patriarchal posture. However, over time, and with the influence of individualism from the West, such practice is gradually fading.

Vanessa P. Dennen describes apprenticeship as an inherently social learning method with a long history of helping novices become experts in fields as diverse as midwifery, construction, and law.⁴² More experienced people assist less experienced people, providing structure and examples to support the attainment of the goals. Dennen asserts that apprenticeship as a method of teaching and learning is just as relevant within the meta-cognitive domain as in the psychomotor domain⁴³. Of course, as already discussed among the indigenous Nigerian people, apprenticeship is the major way of mentoring. Today I note that the West is now attempting to teach Nigerians about this type of mentoring.

In discussing mentoring from the Nigerian perspective of relationship or apprenticeship, Andy Roberts describes eight necessary attributes: (1) a process form, (2) an active relationship, (3) a helping process, (4) a teaching and learning process, (5) reflective practice, (6) a career and personal development process, (7) a formalized process, and (8) a role constructed by or for a mentor.⁴⁴ These attributes if used within the context of the culture of the people could be very effective.

The traditional system of apprenticeship involves all of these attributes. If Christian leaders had followed the above method with consistency, young leaders in the Christian churches might have experienced more effective mentoring relationships. Today a more effective form of mentoring system

⁴⁰ Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria*, 2.

⁴¹ Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria*, 2.

⁴² Vanessa Paz Dennen, “Cognitive Apprenticeship in Educational Practice: Research on Scaffolding, Modeling, Mentoring, and Coaching as Instructional Strategies,” in *Handbook of research on educational communication and technology*. ed. by David H. Jonassen (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2004), 813-828.

⁴³ Vanessa Paz Dennen, “Cognitive Apprenticeship in Educational Practice,” 813.

⁴⁴ Andy Roberts, “Mentoring Revisited: A Phenomenological Reading of the Literature,” *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning* 8, no. 2 (Aug. 2000): 151.

within the organization is possible by using the apprenticeship method of indigenous Nigerian tribes and at the same time adjusting this method within the context of the contemporary world.

Research among clergy in African American congregations also confirms the effectiveness of mentoring through intentional apprenticeship. Timothy Larkin's doctoral research in sociology, completed in 2007, evaluated this pattern as still effective. He examined the extent and variations in apprenticeship patterns across the different dimensions of region, class, religious denomination, and age.⁴⁵

The same pattern existed in many Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, in which the younger pastor lived with the senior pastor, but this pattern has since changed as many young pastors are becoming more individualistic in their nature.

Of course, it is no longer a controversial statement to say that Christianity's center has been moving to the global south during the last two decades. Philip Jenkins,⁴⁶ Kwame Bediako,⁴⁷ Stephen Offutt,⁴⁸ and Paul Gifford⁴⁹ are among those who have done substantial studies in this area.

African Christianity could be said to be very Pentecostal in nature, irrespective of the tradition one may be talking about—Catholicism, Anglicanism, Baptists and so on. In his preface to *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, Allan Anderson of University of Birmingham noted that, "The global South has been seen a remarkable expansion of Pentecostal forms of Christianity in the last century, an expansion that altered global religious demographics considerably."⁵⁰ One reason for this immense growth is that Pentecostalism addressed allegations of both the foreigners and the irrelevance of Christianity in African societies. They emphasized the priesthood of all believers, which broke down barriers of race, gender, and class—and they challenged the long practice of ordained male and foreign clergy. Pentecostalism was able to adapt itself to different cultures and societies and give contextualized expressions of Christianity. There was also the involvement with social issues, transposing into the local African cultures, and religions. Most important was the emphasis on the experience

⁴⁵ Timothy Larkin, "The Clergy Apprenticeship Pattern in the Black Church" (PhD, University of Illinois, 2007), 1.

⁴⁶ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴⁷ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, and Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995).

⁴⁸ Stephen Offutt, *New Centers of Global Evangelicalism in Latin America and Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁴⁹ Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Global African Economy* (London: Hurst & Company, 2004); Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

⁵⁰ J Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2013), xii.

of the Spirit and the spiritual callings of leaders, without the need for formal education in church dogma.⁵¹

Notwithstanding all these, spiritual formation is still a major issue within African Christianity, especially in Nigeria, the giant of Africa. The problem is that there are some key challenges to the ability of Christian leaders using mentoring as a tool for spiritual formation. We shall examine a few of those.

CHALLENGES OF MENTORING AS A TOOL FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION

THEOLOGICAL CHALLENGE

Many in Nigeria still do not have a proper understanding of what the Christian ministry should be from a theological perspective. Stephen Seamands' definition is instructive here: "The ministry of Jesus Christ, the Son, to the Father through the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the church and the world."⁵² In this definition, Seamands proffers a trinitarian description for the Christian ministry. Seamands, himself an experienced minister and from the family of international ministers and missionaries presumes that many people in ministry have not adequately observed or applied the doctrine of the Trinity significantly in their ministry vocation. He therefore emphasized that the minister should have a strong communion with God in which his life is impacted by the passion and the desires of God. This is why spiritual formation is very critical in doing ministry; the person who is acting on behalf of God has to of a necessity have the knowledge of all that God is. This idea is exemplified in the story of Moses in Exodus 3, when he asked God to reveal his name so that when he showed himself to the elders, he would be confident in the person that had sent him.

BIBLICAL ILLITERACY AND DISCIPLESHIP GAP

Spiritual formation is more effective when new believers are not left as infants but allowed to grow up. Andrew Walls talked about the indigenizing and pilgrim principles, that Christians should feel at home in their various cultures but also should live as though they do not belong in their cultures. The tension between the two existences is where the church is expected to live.⁵³ According to Hiebert, the Christian religion operates with a "centered set"; therefore, the essentials of the Christian faith remains the same while

⁵¹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, xiii.

⁵² Stephen Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 9-10.

⁵³ See Andrew F Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996); *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002).

the peripheral things are for individual differences.⁵⁴ This reality opens Christians as they journey in their faith to various categories of people without compromising the core of the gospel. For example, integrity of the heart, which leads to a good moral life, is core in the Christian faith. The subject of discipleship becomes very important.

In reference to the problem of discipleship Rene Padilla reveals that one major problem with the majority world is that we have a church without theology.⁵⁵ He attributes this to two factors: the divorce between evangelism and theology and the concentration of evangelistic work on numerical growth.⁵⁶ This results in the church's inability to articulate a proper theology. It has also led to the lack of contextualizing the gospel in different cultures, the inability of the church to withstand the ideologies of the day, and the loss of the second and third generation of Christians.⁵⁷

The fact that there is not much of a church-based discipleship effort in which members are systematically taught the Bible is a major downside of African Christianity. This problem is also echoed by Gifford when he asserts that, what we have in Nigeria is "enchanted Christianity."⁵⁸ This brand of Christianity has been championed by Daniel Olukoya of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministry, a church with multiple branches all over the world. Gifford is right to explore this emerging Christian imagination from the Nigerian Christian milieu. It is, however, instructive to mention that there are some ministers who are considered biblical evangelicals in Nigeria, and they seem to have different perspective to this and are not guilty of the above charge.⁵⁹

This discipleship deficit has continued to be a major concern among global Christian leaders. Many churches are full of people on Sunday, but throughout the week, the church is faced with the challenge of moving believers from being members to being disciples, which eventually shows in the way they live their lives. Christopher Wright offers this insight: "If we are the people of God, what kind of people are we supposed to be? If we preach a gospel of transformation, we need to show some evidence of what transformation looks like. So, it involves some ethical dimension. Our gospel is not just to be believed but also to be obeyed."⁶⁰ Rather than

⁵⁴ Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections*, 125.

⁵⁵ Rene Padilla, *Mission Between the Times* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Langham Partnership, 2013), 114.

⁵⁶ Padilla, *Mission Between the Times*, 118–20.

⁵⁷ Padilla, *Mission Between the Times*, 121–23.

⁵⁸ Gifford, *Modernity*, 18.

⁵⁹ Pastor Kumuyi started the Deeper Life Bible Church with members from all over Nigeria, with emphasis on holy living and integrity. Also, Gbile Akanni is an independent bible teacher who has done a lot of discipleship work among young people in Nigeria.

⁶⁰ Christopher J. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2010), 30.

spend a lot of time teaching people how to claim other people's goods and blessings, it may be more profitable for them to learn contentment.

Another contributing challenge to Christianity in Nigeria is what Hiebert calls split-level Christianity: a situation where people claim to be Christians but when there is a problem, they will return to their traditional religions, thereby rendering the gospel of Christ to no effect. In another work, I noted that many of the churches are more concerned about buying more seats and constructing more buildings for the church. Churches may begin to question how they will train their members for lifelong discipleship. Gerald Hiestand and Todd A. Wilson insist that the church has suffered from "theological Anemia and Ecclesial Anemia." The native soil on which theology should be studied is the church, which has been displaced for over two hundred years. They propose that the solution to this problem is the return of the "pastor theologian."⁶¹ Such an endeavor will help the church in Nigeria become theologically viable and poised to face day-to-day challenges from a scriptural perspective. The focus on discipleship should be reawakened in the Nigerian church. As the research proved, there is not much difference in the way the different traditions have handled the problem of corruption from a practical sense. The problem that the American sociologist Christian Smith raises about religion among young people in the United States is still very relevant to the Nigerian church: it is a shallow, self-centered religion.⁶² Churches and pastors in Nigeria should begin to develop relevant discipleship materials for the context of public life and the challenges of corruption in the Nigerian society.

CORRUPTION AND THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL

A Nigerian public theologian was very unapologetic about his view when he argued that the threat to the church in Nigeria is not just Islam but, much more, "the lack of Christian public integrity and witness in our society."⁶³ If truth be told, the public image of Christians in Nigeria today is very undesirable. Agang continues, "Christians in Nigeria are dancing on the brink of moral and ethical collapse. Many Christians who hold public office have become corrupt or immoral, betraying their public Christian testimony. They lack integrity and cannot present a strong moral ethical witness. They lack the virtue of honesty in public life."⁶⁴ Whereas this comment is painful to many Nigerians, it is very difficult to disprove, hence the

⁶¹ Gerald Hiestand and Todd A. Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting and Ancient Vision* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2015).

⁶² Christian Smith calls this scenario "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism." See Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁶³ Sunday Bobai Agang, "The Greatest Threat to the Church Isn't Islam—Its Us," *Christianity Today*, April 21, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2017/may/radical-islam-not-nigerian-churchs-greatest-threat.html>.

⁶⁴ Agang, "Greatest Threat to the Church."

need to begin to develop a robust theology of public life for the Nigerian church. Miroslav Volf reiterates that Christians should endeavor to have an engaged faith. He further argues that believers should learn to hold in tension the practice of accommodation and separation from the world.⁶⁵ Lesslie Newbigin adds to this argument when he says that Christians proclaim the gospel by making people understand the gospel message while being witnesses in their deeds. The people of God then become what he calls the “hermeneutic of the gospel.”⁶⁶ For the gospel to thrive, the combination of words and acts is not negotiable. The mission of reaching out, that the Nigerian church has been involved with for almost two centuries, will be more effective if people will live their lives in the public sphere as genuine disciples of Christ. This is another major challenge.

Faleye and Mfumbusa believe that the church has not done much to create any change in the area of corruption.⁶⁷ Abeboye and Allan Anderson are also of the view that the church has taken advantage of the needs and powerlessness of the people to offer them the prosperity gospel that Anderson claims is synonymous with business and exploitation.⁶⁸ Gifford presents the above facts in his books mentioned above. He believes that the prosperity gospel and materialism has been exported from America.⁶⁹ In contrast, Falola and Heaton are of a different view: they praised the charismatic church communities for providing for their congregations with social services, church-based schools, and health clinics. They also continued to preach miraculous healing and provisions.⁷⁰

The approach led to helping the churches to grow financially; members pay their tithe and they can embark on projects. Gifford also emphasizes the cultural shift brought about by Pentecostalism in Nigeria; creating a more individualistic or personal decision over extended family lifestyle.⁷¹

THE CHALLENGE OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION/CULTURE

This paper will not be complete without mentioning the lasting effect of African Traditional Religion on many African cultures even today. First

⁶⁵ Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011), 85–87.

⁶⁶ Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), 221–23.

⁶⁷ Oluwakayode Faleye, “Religious Corruption,” 172; Mfumbusa, “Church is Growing.”

⁶⁸ Olufunke Adeboye, “‘Arrowhead’ of Nigerian Pentecostalism: The Redeemed Christian Church of God, 1952–2005,” *Pneuma* 29 (2007): 24–58 (paper presented at the Africa Forum, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Apr. 11, 2000); Allan Anderson, “Evangelism and the Growth of Pentecostalism in Africa.”

⁶⁹ Gifford, *Christianity, Development*, 148–180.

⁷⁰ Toyin Falola and Matthew Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 221.

⁷¹ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 346.

is the lingering effect of the belief in intermediaries in African religions; this is still affecting many in leadership today. It is still difficult for many young leaders to come directly to their mentors for guidance and learning because it is considered by some cultures as disrespectful to come directly to the “boss.”

Next is “hero worship”—the attempt to treat successful leaders as heroes that do not make mistakes. This same ideology has continued to affect the implementation of servant leadership in many quarters. The senior leader is not allowed to portray any sense of vulnerability. This “*Kabiyesi*” syndrome is more pronounced among the Yoruba people of Western Nigeria who are very influential to the Christian faith in Nigeria. This attitude has affected the effectiveness of mentoring in Nigeria; it therefore needs to be critically analyzed and reviewed.

CONCLUSION

African Christianity is certainly growing. The challenge has continued to be the quality of the growth. The need to raise godly leadership through the process of spiritual formation is very crucial. However, Africa must return to a part of her past to revitalize the mentoring process through the apprenticeship method.

This mentoring needs to be done in an authentic way, with a leadership that is committed to biblical servanthood and transformational leadership principles, the rejection of corruption and greater focus on biblical literacy with the goal of raising a godly, impactful new generation. I consider this as a major challenge for leaders in Africa today. The opportunity to mentor well rounded leaders is now, and this will be the hope of the Christianity of several decades to come.