Full Length Research

Leadership Qualities Needed Of A Christian Leader In The Contemporary Nigerian Society

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The greatest problem of any nation is that of leadership. It is the leadership that drives development in any nation be it economic, scientific or technological. Therefore, leadership is the pivot in all human endeavor whether at home, political setting or religious. Every leader has a duty within his/her jurisdiction, at the family level, political level corporate or religious. For the clergy, it is his/her parishioners who look up to him for moral and spiritual guidance. Therefore, there are certain qualities that are expected of a Christian leader in any society and not just in Nigeria. This paper focuses on the qualities needed of a Christian leader in the contemporary Nigerian society. Using library research approach qualitatively, the paper examines the concept, leadership, types of leadership, the role of a Christian leader in the Nigerian society as well as the challenges confronting Christian leaders in the contemporary Nigerian society and the way forward. The main findings of the paper are: many Christian leaders in Nigeria do not have leadership qualities needed of a leader. Many are suffering from the quest for materialism, corruption, lack of knowledge. mentorship, greed, arrogance and pride. Thus, the paper suggests sound education, mentorship, moral uprightness and hard work for all Christian leaders in Nigeria. The paper finally draws a conclusion that the level of moral decadence and corruption in the Nigerian society calls for Christians and the Christian leaders to wake up and provide good effective, active and efficient leadership that will place the society on the pedestal of economic/social development, political stability and above all, spiritual rejuvenation.

Keywords: Leadership Qualities, Contemporary Nigerian Society

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary Nigerian society is characterised by high level of moral decadence manifested in corruption at all levels of the society. The insecurity in Nigeria is seen manifested in terrorism through the activities of Boko Haram insurgency, characterised by frequent bombing of government buildings, worship centres and market areas. Again, armed robbery, ritual killings, cultism, assassinations, rape, commercial sex, prostitution, kidnapping, thuggery,

theft, terrorism and vandalism are manifestations of lack of security of lives and property in Nigeria. With all these happenings there are much expectations from the leadership as a panacea to this state of uncertainty.

ToUkeje, Akabogu and Ndu, it is generally accepted that the quality of leadership in an organisation be it religious, social, military or otherwise affects to a large extent the success or failure of that organization (192). With particular reference to Nigeria, Matthew

Hassan Kukah observed that the problem of Nigeria is that of leadership, and that it is not right to look at leadership in terms of being at the apex only. Leadership should be viewed as existing at every social unit and involving everybody (201). At the family level, school and very importantly at church level, leadership is required. As a result, everybody is a potential leader in one capacity or the other. The church as a social organisation needs good leadership to attain her purpose here on earth. In the light of decaying moral values, the church is seen as the salt of the earth that ought to preserve the virtues of the society here on earth and prepare a people for Christ second coming. Surprisingly it appears some people who find themselves in positions of authority appear ignorant of the concept and styles of leadership as well as qualities a Christian leader needs to make the church succeed in her endeavours to reach humanity with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is demonstrated in the fact that many of such ventures which are avenues for preaching the gospel, have gone moribund while their counterparts in the private sector make fortunes out of the like ventures. These are ventures like education, health and economic institutions. Although there could be other challenges in these areas, the issue of quality leadership often comes to mind as a major factor. Just as Charles Manz observed; though the teaching of wisdom of Jesus Christ does not directly address leadership, his teachings offer a wealth of ethical and practical guidance for leadership practice for Christian leaders (3).

The questions one may ask are:

- i) What do we mean by the concept leadership?
- ii) What are the types and styles of leadershipavailable for a Christian leader to adopt?
- iii) What role does a Christian leader play in the development of the society?
- iv) What are the qualities needed of a Christian leader in the contemporary Nigerian society?
- v) What are the challenges facing Christian leaders in the contemporary Nigerian society?

This paper using library research approach, attempts to provide answers to these heart bothering questions from a Christian perspective and makes relevant suggestions for the way forward for viable sustainable leadership in the society and particularly the church in Nigeria.

THE CONCEPT, LEADERSHIP

Leadership is defined as the art of directing a group to achieve an organisational set goals and objectives. According to Nwachukkwu leadership is "influence, the art of and process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly toward the achievement

of group goals" (qtdin Tyokever and Mchia 133). This involves also the ability of the followers to be influenced by the leader to work as a team for goal attainment within a specified period making use of available resources and time. Leadership is the ability to inspire, direct, motivate and encourage others positively to targeted end (Olusoji 318).

Sogdill sees leadership as the process of influencing group activity toward goal achievement. This involves the behaviour of an individual when he is directing and guiding the activities of the group toward a shared goal (qtd in Ukeje, Akabogu and Ndu 192). Leadership is often spoken of in terms of group behaviour, with clearly defined goals guided by a charismatic or appointed personality referred to as a leader. Leadership is recognized by essential functions to be described as either good or bad. Hemphill identifies five essential functions of leadership as:

- i) Advancing the purpose of the group
- ii) Administration
- iii) Inspiring activity or setting the pace for the group
- iv) Establishing a feeling of security
- v) Acting without regard for his own self-interest(qtd in Ukeje,Akabogu and Ndu 192)

WHO THEN IS A LEADER?

A leader is one who is the spokesperson of a group. He/she is the head of an organisation or community. According to Tarnande, a leader is the brain, mouth, eyes and ears of a community who uses his brain to create a vision, envisages the future, articulates it, directs and motivates others to follow (qtd in GbaerenTersoo and Nomor Tersoo 82). The leader leads and motivates others towards goal attainment as well as introduces necessary changes in an organisation in order to achieve development of his organisation and the community. This explains why leaders are seen as agents of change and transformation whose intuitive abilities and personal qualities, energies and attitudes towards achieving the goals, sustaining values or development of his organisation.

A Christian leader therefore is a leader guided by the ethical principles of his faith, who serves as God's spokesman or representative leading God's people to do His will here on earthin various designated areas. In doing so he uses the Holy Scriptures (The Holy Bible) as his basic sacred reference text. The Bible becomes the norm with which leadership could be judged as good or bad looking athis qualities, styles and attainment of the group goals he leads.

TYPES OF LEADERSHIP

The types and styles of leadership are listed briefly thus:

- Traditional leaders: These emerge from the traditional societies. They include paramount rulers such as Tor Tiv, Oba, Obi, Emir, Waziri etc.
- Elected or appointed leaders: These leaders are elected through the ballot by voting. They include the president, governor, local government chairmen and councilors.
- iii. Military leaders: These leaders mostly come to power by force. They assume office mostly through a coup d'etat. For instance, in Nigeria, good examples of these leaders are Gen. Yakubu Gowon, Gen. Ibrahim Babangida, Late Gen. Sani Abacha, Late Gen Murtala Mohammed and Gen Olusegun Obasanjo.
- iv. **Religious Leaders**: These are heads of various religious institutions in Nigeria. They include Pastors, Bishops, Priests, Imams, Shehu, Sheriffs, Caliphs, etc (Marie-France 8).

STYLES OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership style is the manner and approach a leader adopts in providing direction, executing plans and motivating his followers to work as a team towards goal attainment of an organisation. There are many schools of thought that seek to explain leadership and define what is required to excel when wearing the mantle of power. (Eden qtd in Atsuku 121) identifies the following as the styles of leadership:

- i) Authoritarian leadership style: This is the style where the leader dominates in programmes and policies. He has all the legal power to make his followers comply with his instructions. He assigns tasks or duties to his subordinates without consultation. He goes with the view that collective decisions of a group will affect his behaviour. He is a dictator since too much power is centred on him.
- ii) **Democratic leadership style**: Here, the leader involves others in decision making. His leadership supports all social activities which strengthen personal dignity and self-respect. The views of the subordinates are respected and decisions are always collectively taken with that concern.
- iii) The Laissez- faire leadership style: Under this style, the leader is less concerned about the activities within the organisation. He is aloof. There is wide communication gap between the leader and his followers. There are no strict rules and regulations to be

observed in running the organisation.

- iv) **Transactional leadership style**: Popularly known as managerial leadership focuses on supervision, organising and assessing performance of groups. It expects followers to be compliant by ways of rewards and punishment.
- v) **Contingency leadership style**: Holds the idea that the success of a leader hitches at a specific situation at hand. His basic assumption is that leadership failure of an organisation is attributed to a large extent on the kind of leader such organisation has.

The Christian leader should master these types/styles of leadership and try to apply them appropriately depending on the situation at hand and the challenges he faces in the course of leading the church. He /she may strike a balance to achieve his purpose.

THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN SOCIETY

The role of Christian leaders in Nigeria shines out clearly in the contributions the churches they lead contribute to the development of the Nigerian society. The church is set up with various functions for the development of the total man. Quarcoopome et al enumerated the functions of the church in the society to include:

- i) To uphold the sacredness of man through caring for his body, mind and soul.
- ii) To enable man realise his own dignity and value in God's creation.
- iii) To fight ignorance, disease and poverty and to promote happiness.
- iv) To fight social ills like racism, tribalism, injustice and oppression (gtd in Kyernum Nyamibo 16).

In the light of the stated functions it is the duty of the Christian leader to courageously lead his followers to achieve these in the society, which can be done through:

- i) preaching of sound messages to their congregation and leading exemplary lives.
- ii) advising the government on policy issues for the general welfare of man and the development of the church in Nigeria.
- iii) public enlightenment campaigns on new policies or programmes that are for the welfare and development of the Nigerian society.
- iv) standing against social ills, like racism, injustice, homosexuality.
- v) establishment of schools to fight ignorance and restore the dignity of man in God's creation.
- vi) establishing of health institutions to fight diseases and to promote happiness in the society.

In Nigeria, it is no gain saying that the church has

done much in establishing health and educational institutions to fight ignorance and diseases. In this era of private universities in Nigeria, the church has taken the lead in founding the faith-based universities. The NKST is in the fore front in the area of educational development and health.

Moreover, other ventures like bakeries, agricultural farms, livestock feeds are being produced by the church. These create employment opportunities for many in the society as well as the production of variety of agricultural produce enhancing food security for the country.

All these would not have made any success in the absence of diligent, intelligent and faithful leaders, who organise, supervise and motivate their followers to work for the success of these ventures. If these ventures are not yielding the desired results nowadays, the problem may be due to a combination of challenges.

QUALITIES OF A GOOD CHRISTIAN LEADER

There are qualities (character) expected of a Christian leader to be described as a good Christian leader. John Maxwell has it that a good leader must have:

Good character, charisma, be committed, competent. Courageous, discern between good and bad, focused, generous, have good initiatives, passion, positive attitude, good relationship with followers, self-discipline, vision, servant attitude and ability to listen to followers, take responsibility, communicate with followers, solve problems and must be teachable (qtd in lkpilakaa, Tsavhemba and lornenge 103).

We are here concerned with qualities of good Christian leaders. Call them pastors, Evangelists, Church Elders, Deacons, Catechists, Presbyters, Bishops or General Overseers. Paul the apostle in his pastoral letters addressed this issue when he stipulates that a leader (Christian) must be:

Blameless, husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he falls into condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Even so must their wives be brave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. (1Timothy 3:1-13)

. Equally in the early church people were not

allowed into position of leadership without fulfilling the leadership criteria. There were men of probity and confirmed integrity irrespective of their cultural background. "Wherefore, brethren, look out from among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business" (Acts 6:3).

Some of the qualities of a good Christian leader could be seen as follow:

High intelligence and *Knowledgeable*: High intelligence are essential qualities of a good leader; followers want to be proud of their leaders. A leader in one place may need to meet other leaders in other places. No one wants a leader who is inferior to other leaders. A leader who has low intelligence will not be able to cope with the responsibilities of his or her office. Very importantly, a sound knowledge of the Bible to enhance a mastery of the subject matters a lot. He should read the Bible daily or always for his personal development, and to impart on his subordinates and others. After all, the Bible cuts across all fields of human endeavours.

He/she should be versatile in learning and making use of current issues to drive home his teaching and preaching. In summary, he should have knowledge of the subject matter, the basic doctrines of the Christian faith, hermeneutics, essential principles of church administration, organisation and personnel management (2Timothy 2:15). He or she needs intelligence in organising, delegating, supervising and motivating his congregation or group members to attain the maximum target of his organisation.

Diligence and dedication: A good leader must be hard working. Often leaders have to carry additional responsibilities, many of which are expected while others come unexpectedly. Moreover, a hard-working leader shows a good example for others to follow. Dedication requires a leader to work hard for the cause or set goals. A good leader consistently works hard to maintain the ideas of what his or her group stands for. That is working consistently hard to achieve the clearly defined organisational goals.

Kindness:He cares for both his members and followers; the rich and the poor, weak and strong, sick or handicapped in the group he leads. By so doing, he handles them in a gentle and friendly manner. This brings encouragement and a sense of belonging to all members of the group.

Honesty/Faithfulness: He should be trustworthy, accurate in his business. He should be loyal to the organisation or country where he works or lives. Honesty is required of him and therefore he should not get involved in cheating (examination malpractice) neither in misappropriation nor embezzlement. Honesty is a great

quality in a leader. People trust honest leaders. They have confidence in them. Honest leaders are respected and their followers are proud of them.

Simplicity: A good Christian leader should live a simple life devoid of ostentation. Unfortunately, at present, many of our Christian leaders live in gorgeous, isolated and beautifully decorated places and mansions built of marbles and ornamented with inlaid stones of various colours. These are impediments to successful administration and unnecessary expenditure which amounts to indirect exploitation of the church members.

Service to the community: Another quality of a good Christian leader is one who offers free service to his community. He lives with his people, thinks good of the people, sacrifices for all of them, is concerned about their welfare and ready to serve them at all times(Mt 14:13-21). Infact, the leader of the people is their servant (Jhn 13:1-17). Indeed, every leader will be questioned on how he related with his subjects. It is therefore expected of a good Christian leader to render good services to his community. "No person is made a ruler over the people to become their master, he is to serve their religious and temporal interests" (Tukur 28). Members look up to him for moral and spiritual guidance.

Humility: He should be humble, that is holding a modest opinion about himself for God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. Pride is the pathway to failure. To this ,AkpenpuunDzurgba cautions: "he does not exhibit the attitudes of arrogance or boastfulness in his relationship to others; he does not also exhibit self-disrespect or self-humiliation" (73).

Peace:He should be at peace always: peace means freedom from strife, rioting, disorder, hostility, violence or war. It is also freedom from fear, anxiety, uncertainty, disturbance or tension. It is an atmosphere of calmness, security and safety. A good leader should not encourage riots neither should he make statements that will insinuate the subjects against other members, government or any constituted authorities (Dzurgba73).

Moral Rectitude: A Christian leader must live above the reproach of fornication/adultery. The wicked habit of sexual harassment should be avoided. Moreover, a bona fide Christian leader should disdain the dirty habit of smoking and vulgar language. He or she should not involve in sexual relationship with his subordinates or members to avoid the public making caricature of his or herdivine call to leadership position.

Integrity/Self-control: To be morally sound, self-discipline is required. That is ability to control oneself against the desires of the flesh. This is otherwise known as moderation. A good leader should be able to control himself against all temptations to oppress the subjects, extort money from his followers.

Descent Dressing: He/she should be well dressed

so as to cover well his/her nakedness. The wind of fashion should not carry leaders off the way. A person's dressing often reflects his way of thinking and thereby character. Shishima and Apenda notice that: "A person is judged by the clothes he/she wears this is because clothes are the first things to be noticed about appearance of a person" (195). He should dress to please God and serve as a model for the subjects to copy. It is ridiculous nowadays to see some Christian leaders who hold the Holy Bible in one hand and appear naked in the name of fashion leading the flock of God.

Tolerance: He must make allowance for other people's opinions, customs, behaviour, taste and choices. He should realise the pluralistic nature of the society and create room to accommodate diverse views of other sects and denominations. He should read wide to discover the diverse views held by other groupson the same issues or doctrines held byhis group. This makes for healthy comparison, development and defense against heresy and apostasy.

Impartiality: When dealing with a heterogeneous group, he should be fair in handling the members from all ethnic groups/clans. It may bethat followers have different religious backgrounds; social status or gender. Equally, one area of his services should not be taken care of at the expense of others (for instance favouring the choir against the youth Fellowship). The principle of impartiality recognises the importance of all sections of the group as necessary parts that make the whole.

Spirit controlled temperament: The early church was a Holy Spirit controlled church (Acts 13:1-3). He directed their activities and assigned them duties. A good Christian leader should always depend on Him in al lhis doings. To this MwueseAkpera-Tyoughand Solomon Audu remark: "One distinguishing character of a true Christian leadership is the process of influencing and developing a group of people in order to accomplish a purpose by means of supernatural power" (135). This power here referred is the power of the Holy spirit that works contrary to the detects of the fleshly lust(Galatians 5:16-17)

Zest: He should magnify his office as a leader in his capacity. He should therefore show enthusiasm in what he does. He should count himself fortunate to be a minister of God. After all, ministers are ranked high in divine call as Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists and Pastors (Ephesians 4:11). According to Akubue, a leader should be:

Exemplary, respectable, open minded, fair and firm, kind, friendly, patient, honest, polite, sympathetic, responsible, business like, self-controlled, courteous and sincere. These and similar personal qualities are his sources of power, his titles of esteem, and the

foundation of his authority (37)

In addition to character, a Christian leaderneeds the knowledge of various leadership styles in order to use them for effectiveness and efficiency.

Accessibility: A good Christian leader must be easily accessible at all times, day or night.

Accountability and Transparency: A good Christian leader should be accountable to his members, transparent and prudent in the affairs of church funds. Accountability and transparency must be the watchwords of his administration. As the peoples' servant, he should be prepared to declare his assets both movable and immovable and account for all funds spent every year. This will make his members have more confidence in him and contribute more to church development with trust and belief that their money will be properly accounted for.

CHALLENGES FACING CHRISTIAN LEADERS IN THE CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN SOCIETY

Materialism: Materialism manifests itself in greed or covetousness either in the life of the leader or his followers. Oji Iheoma maintains that Nigeria is a materialistic society, where mediocres are respected as long as they have money to throw about... a society where industry, output, and efficiency are not recognised" (qtd in KyernumNyamibo 55). Consequently, men of no sound moral standing are given chieftaincy titles and given various positions of authority in the country. The church is not left out as wealthy notorious famous criminals are celebrated and made patrons of various organs of the church, provided they can make useful donations to the church occasionally. This affects the church's leadership stand on evil and crime in the society.

Some young men take to priesthood not for service but for employment and personal aggrandisement. Such are not called by God but by food (Jn 6:25-27). In most cases, their parents or guardians influence their admissions in to theological seminaries, sponsor their ordination and influence their position as a means of living. These are novices without administrative acumen and without experience and cannot help the church.

In another dimension, materialism leads many pastors and their wives to reject postings to new locations where they feel the resources for their welfare appear small but Jesus did not do that (Mt.9:35-38). Some abandon their bishoprics in search of government appointment and trading. Due to materialism, some experienced pastors who would have helped to assist new consistories refuse doing so when called upon. The common excuse is always that "the holy spirit did not

permit so" while in the real sense they are not willing to bear the meager income that comes in form of yearly contribution (*Sulekahan*) and other remunerations. These consistories are then left in the hands of young new pastors with less experience.

Moreover, the quest for material wealth, has led many into unhealthy competition. This inhibits mentorship as the old pastors are afraid of the younger ones coming up to take their positions. Some pastors and church leaders even campaign so that they would be called to serve in 'bigger' churches while others have taken to begging. The habit that hinders generosity and hospitality required of a good Christian leader. They compete to officiate at rich men's, weddings, and funeral ceremonies. Shishima discovered that:

religious leaders particularly the clergy, pastors...are also engaged in begging in the current dispensation in Nigeria. Their own style of begging takes the form of organisation of thanksgiving masses and services for top political notches with hope of receiving handsome financial remuneration at the end of such highly publicised church or mosque services (31).

The result is that they sell their voices against any negative policy of the government or corrupt Politicians.

Insecurity: Another challenge is insecurity in the land. As stated earlier, the contemporary Nigerian society is characterised by a lot of security challenges. As a result, many Christian leaders' resort to African medicine men for protective charms and amulets. Cultism is on the increase, and some clergies attempted to hire thugs as their body guards. It appears the African medicine and sorcery hitherto condemned as diabolical are being revived and patronised by some Christian leaders.

Study habit: There is also the challenge in developing a disciplined study habit. Many clergy and leaders find it difficult to develop a disciplined study habit. Many after graduation from seminary have stopped reading books, talk more of going for further studies. They only consult the Bible and of course Bible commentary while preparing for sermons. No book on church administration. personnel management, biography of Christian leaders for their personal development. This makes them myopic when it comes to public opinions and national issues. Some church leaders and deancons are even more ill informed on church matters than pastors.

Time Management: A good Christian leader must know how to manage time very well in order to achieve good results. There is a saying that time means money. Proper time management can save/convert a lot of souls for Christ. Every church activity should have timeline. Indeed, there should be a church calendar every year with well-articulated timelines. These timelines should be

religiously adhered to. The key here is consistency. For instance, if church service is to start at 9am and end at 12pm, this should not start at 9:30am or 10.00am on other days and either end 12:30 or 1pm. Time management is very important.

Visitation: A Christian leader should be able to visit the members of his church irrespective of their status (Mt.9:35-38). He should visit all the local churches and urban churches regularly without discrimination. By so doing, the members will feel a sense of belonginess and be more committed to the work of God. At present, this is lacking as many church leaders find it difficult to visit their members even when they are ill.

Arrogance and Pride: A good Christian leader must shun arrogance and pride. Some Christian leaders are very arrogant, proud and boastful. They claim to know everything even if they have very little idea of other things. Christian leaders must imbibe humility.

THE WAY FORWARD

For effective and efficient Christian Leadership in Nigeria, the following principles should be adapted:

- i) **Principle of Mentorship**. The Christian leaders should aim at reproducing themselves in the lives of the younger potential leaders. This was the method that made Moses and Paul the apostle successful leaders. They produced Joshua and Timothy respectively. Elijah produced Elisha. Note Jesus appointed the twelve apostles to continue after him. A good leader should learn to rejoice over the achievements and development of the young ones they nurture to grow as their own achievement not as a threat to their positions. This will bring continuity in good leadership.
- ii) **Apprenticeship:** The newly ordained pastors should be made to serve under a seasoned pastor for a period of not less than two years before assigning them to oversee the affairs of Bishopric.
- iii) **Delegation of duties**: Leaders should learn to imbibe the principle of delegation, supervision and motivation of the subordinates who would serve as future good Christian leaders. This reduces stress which is usually associated with church leadership.
- iv) Attendance of Seminars and workshops: Self-developmentcan be achieved through attending leadership seminars/workshops and conferences. Good reading and writing culture should be inculcated to widen leaders' horizon and to update their knowledge to be able to proffer solutions to contenting contemporary problems of their subordinates and organisations. They should read biographies of many church leaders and discover why some failed and why some succeeded despite challenges.

- v) A daily walking relationship with the Holy Spirit, the chief executive of the Christian faith should be maintained. Hence, he is holy, moral rectitude should be upheld so that he will not be grieved (I Corinthians3:16-17).
- vi) Sexual immorality, covetousness, should be disdained. "Let it not be mentioned among you as becometh saints" (Ephesians 5:3).

CONCLUSION

The level of moral decadence and destitution in leadership in Nigeria, calls for the Christians to wake up to the challenge of our time and provide good, effective, active and efficient leadership that will place the society on the pedestal of economic development, political stability, social development and above all spiritual recovery of the lost vision of the church and virtues that make for peace and development. The church ventures that facilitate the social gospel such as agricultural farms, fuel dumps, health and educational institutions that are moribund or ramshackle need nothing but faithful, dedicated, spirit-controlled leadership to revive and aid the preaching of the gospel in the contemporary Nigerian society. Church leaders have a big task to achieve all these aforementioned in Nigeria and they must rise to this challenge. A good leader must lead by good examples. He must be a model.

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