

## **Apostle Peter's Leadership Legacies and the Implications for African Pastorate**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the Apostle Peter's leadership legacies and the implication and relevance to African pastorate. The Society today needs competent and credible ministers with Charisma, called and made by the Lord. The making of a credible African Pastor doesn't happen in a day or week. It is not a programme but a long process. It is in view of this that problem arises on how to lead the saved and the unsaved without friction and how to allow our earthly and spiritual wisdom to meet the expectational needs of the different categories of people that make up the church. Leadership in this context means guiding, directing commanding the flock to achieve a desired goal or vision. Peter like his master – the transforming leader provides us with the nitty-gritty required for a balanced explanation and analysis of the concept of leadership in the spiritual domain. It also examines the ministerial or pastoral calling in Nigeria which seems to have become a "business for all", different from Christ's original intention. It can be said that as far as Nigeria is concerned, the church is in trouble. Many church members in Nigeria find themselves in dilemma. The problem of the African pastors to feed the sheep of the Lord lies in two areas. First, many of the Pastors are theologically and spiritually illiterate; secondly, they have no formal calling into the ministry, they joined because of business and exam failure.

### **Introduction**

To approach this topic, it is pertinent to explain the meaning of some of the central concepts involved in our discourse. The concepts include "Pastorate" and "Leadership".

A pastor means a servant, representative of a superior. Someone who delivers what he or she was given touching, transforming and impacting others. A vessel through which messages can flow in a clean, clear and conducive way. Someone who has been and is still being made by Christ. There are pastors who are credible but incompetent. They are okay and spiritually healthy in the things of the spirit, but are largely incompetent in the Pastoral Ministry. Their work is stagnant, non-growing and almost fruitless. That is the tragedy of the African Pastorate today.

Competent and credible ministers must be made by the Lord. To become one, you will have to surrender yourself totally to the refining process of God. The making of a credible

African Pastor doesn't happen in a day or week. It is not a programme but a long process. God loves to incarnate Himself in men and women and use them to destroy the works of the devil. And such men must measure up to his standards. He uses unqualified men, and qualifies them by His spirit, power and grace.

The local Church should be a gathering of those who have fellowship with God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost (I John 1:3). It is also open to those who are seeking the way for spiritual transformation. It is against this background that a problem arises that is, how to lead the saved and the unsaved without friction and how to allow our earthly and spiritual wisdom to meet the expectational needs of the different categories of people that makes up the church bearing in mind the presence always of 'touting' or mixed 'multitude' who though may be canvassing for enthusiasts of heaven are themselves not in the mood of going anywhere. These are the "tares" planted among the wheat. It is this complex, weird composition of the church that calls for special quality of leadership in the church. This leads us to the examination of the concept of leadership.

Leadership on the other hand has different connotations. Leadership can be seen from either the natural or spiritual dimensions. This means at the natural level we are talking about political, economic, social, cultural connotations. Many people have defined leadership from different perspectives. For example, Casey Treat defined leadership as the process of guiding, directing, commanding others to achieve a desired goal or vision. Leadership is seen as either authoritarian, democratic or laissez faire". Lord Montgomery sees leadership as the capacity and will to rally men and women around for a common purpose and the character which inspires confidence. John Mott defined leadership as the capacity of knowing the road, giving the lead and pulling people to reach the right destination, defines a leader as Truman has put it, "a person who has the ability to get others to do what they naturally would not want to do. Oswald Sanders sees leadership as influence, the ability of one person to influence others. All these definitions are correct but none reaches out into the deep dimensions that are indispensable for the type of leadership this paper seeks to typify for the African pastorate.

Like Ofuokaa (1990) has rightly pointed out, Christian Leadership is a vocation where there is a perfect blending of qualities that are both human and divine. Leighton (1991) in his book "Jesus: the transforming Leader," provides us with the nitty-gritty required for a balanced explanation and analysis of the concept of leadership in the spiritual domain. He notes that leaders are concerned to do the right things, take the lead, move people to follow them, get attention through vision, meaning through communication, inspire trust

through taking a clear and committed stance and know how to deploy themselves through a positive self regard.

### **Biblical Perspective on Leadership**

This entails an intelligent, overpowering dexterity in the handling of problems, psychical, spiritual or material. Jesus did say, “but it shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister or servant” (Matt. 20: 25-28).

The word “servant” here means humility, considerateness, empathy and willingness to help out of trouble, service by way of discharging beneficial functions. But servant does not mean slavish, hypocritical submission, servitude or meanness to the point of being contemptible. A leader must be one who serves while retaining the quality of inspiring followership. A Christian leader must be a man of different parts – born again, wholly transformed, blameless, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, not given to wine, not greedy of filthy lucre, not covetous, not double tongued holding faith and good conscience. As an African Pastor, a shepherd of God’s flock, do you possess all of these?

And as Peter adds, the Christian leader must feed the flock of God willingly, not by constraint, not for filthy lucre and not as Lord over God’s heritage but as example unto them (1 Peter 5:2-3). It is the light of Peter’s additional requirement that we detect a problematic in the question of leadership in the Christian Church. This is not to say that we have generalized this problem because in some denominations the problem of leadership is not pronounced while in others, it is very pronounced. We however, do not seem to see the most minimal spiritual qualification in some church leaders, they are proud and lords over God’s own flock. The truth is that some leaders who were formally following Christ, today are running small kingdoms of their own and have lost their first love and contact with the chief shepherd. They began in the spirit but today they are operating in the flesh.

As many as therefore want to be truly great in the sight of God must take a cue from the Chief Shepherd. Even though Jesus was good and perfect, when referred to as “good Master”, he declined the offer. He was humble, meek, lowly, submissive, patient, loving, self-abasing and good. When we see leaders who are proud, self-opionated, arrogant and without any air of fear and trembling, we know that such people have lost contact with divinity – the source of godliness. We cannot be lord of the Gentiles and at the same time be lords over God’s flocks. Paul warns, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over that which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of

God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” Acts 20:28. If the African pastors grasp the sacred import of this statement, they will work out their salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). Did Moses not miss the Promised Land by daring to be rash with God’s heritage? Utmost carefulness, sobriety, and vigilance, temperance is what we need to skip the hurdles of leadership. Proverbs 27:23 tells us to “Be diligent to know the state of our flocks and to look well to our herds”. But today’s experience shows that some Christian leaders are walking from the opposite side of the Biblical injunctions given to leaders.

### **The Apostle Peter’s Leadership Legacies**

Having highlighted what leadership is and the biblical perspective on leadership, the question now is the consideration of Apostle Peter’s leadership legacies that needed to be imbibed by the African Pastorate for effective service and good shepherding of the Masters flock. First, let us start by briefly analyzing the man Apostle Peter before his leadership legacies.

#### **Apostle Peter**

The influence of Peter among the disciples of Jesus from the time Jesus was with them cannot be over emphasized in all the four gospels. Right from the time of his calling, Peter was the leader of group of fishermen whose canoe was used as a pulpit by Jesus. He led in questioning Jesus about the essence of their calling; “We have given up everything to follow you, “We have left all, what then shall we have? (Mk 10:28). He led in confessing the person of Jesus when asked “who do men think I am? (Mt. 16:16). He led in dismissing the prophesy of Jesus that all shall betray him in a night (Mt 16:22) and so on.

Peter also led others in saying, “I am going fishing” (John 21:3). “I am going fishing” looks a simple statement which does not imply that other disciples should follow him to fish but the statement was made by the most influential among them. He had been given or promised the “keys” to the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 16:19).

It should be understood that it will be easy for other Apostles to assume that he, Peter, has been appointed by the Master as their leader therefore as far as they were concerned, obedience to him as the new leader may mean obeying the master. That could explain why the response of other disciples to Peter’s personal decision to go fishing is; “we will come too” (John 21:3). The statement of Peter and the cooperation (unsolicited) of other disciples indicates that there was an influence in this action. Not only did this action indicate an influence Peter had over them, but also cooperation from the other disciples. The disciples were in financial predicament. The disciples were so devastated, they were not sure of how

to understand what happened to the Master. They were not sure of what to do next, they were living in fear, and to crown it all, they were probably having financial difficulties, yet they did not go different ways, Peter had the ability to gather them together for one purpose.

It should be observed that Peter did not invite other disciples to come and fish with him, he simply informed them of his personal intention, "I am going fishing". The story of Peter's leadership confirms at least three important points in African Pastorate Ministry:

- a. The essence of the calling of the Apostles has much to do with feeding of Jesus' sheep this is also the essence of the call into pastoral ministry.
- b. The foundation of the work has something to do with the love for Christ first of all.
- c. The call also has even more to do with the proportion of the love we have for Christ compared to the love we have for something else.

It should be understood that proportional aspect of Christ's love is the major concern here because it is the root of all problems in Pastoral Ministry in Nigerian and African Churches. Many in the pastoral ministry in Africa are just there physically, their minds are still on the unprofitable business from which they are called (if at all there is any calling).

### **Apostle Peter and the African Pastoralism**

Ministerial or pastoral calling in Nigeria seems to have become a "business for all", different from Christ's original intention. It can be said that as far as Nigeria is concerned, the church is in trouble. Many church members in Nigeria find themselves in dilemma. There is no hope in the nation's political or military leaders; the hope of oil boom has collapsed into the spiral of economic decline which comes along with the social and political leadership decadence. Nouwen (2002) commenting on Jesus' question to Peter, he attested that we (modern pastors) need to hear that question as being centered to all of our Christian Ministry because it is the question that can allow us to be, at the same time, irrelevant and truly self-confident.

The popular message preached almost in every church could be divided into two; namely (i) how to make money and (ii) how to cast out demons. It has come to a stage whereby whoever is called to be a pastor or plant a church with intention of multiplying members must address both and failure to do so means the church will collapse. These two messages are all for "business" which is not an aspect of pastoral work, but pastoral work is more than that because this is not the total feeding that Jesus meant. It should be noted that there are more churches than schools in African Countries, yet ironically, the crime rate is

soaring almost at the same percentage the church is increasing. The increment of the church members has nothing to do with increment of saints in our congregations. But it is imperative to note whereas, increment of the saints, that is, the heavenly minded Christians, is the goal of pastoral work, that Christian pastors are called to do. The improvement of members' financial status and physical healing which, though important but are transient are not as significant, "seek ye first the kingdom of God..." (Matt. 6:33).

Many of the pastors (even church members) in Africa lack the "food" that is needed for their spiritual growth and are therefore dying of spiritual hunger. In the Gospels, Jesus also fed multitude with food, bread and fishes (John 21:13). But after feeding them, Jesus gave them the hard morsel and the best food but majority rejected it because it was the flesh and the blood of the son of man.

The same principle needs to be adopted by African pastors of today. This principle would help to discover those who are true followers of Christ. But unfortunately, majority of African pastors today are concentrating on the first aspect. They emphasize quantity rather than quality of living. Malphurs (2000) was mindful of this when he declares that just as personal values speak to what is most important in our lives, so a congregation's values speak to what is most important in the Church's life. He gave nine reasons why core values are so important to the life of a church.

The problem of inability of the African Pastors to feed the sheep of the Lord lies in two areas. First, is that many pastors have no food to offer because they are theologically and biblically illiterate, they have no formal and or quality training in pastoral work and theology, yet they joined the ministry because they have a degree in secular education. Secondly, many also have no formal calling into the ministry they joined because of exam and business failures for the purpose of making ends meet and being relevant in the society. This implies that what brought such people into the pastoral ministry is not the special "love" for Christ which should be the foundation of many model pastoral leadership and ministry as was the case with Peter who left all to follow the Master.

It is easy to answer the question on the love of Christ than to answer the question on ability to feed the sheep because many will assume that they only have "sugar-coated poison". In order to ensure that the pastors have the right food for Jesus' sheep, they need a good theological training at both University and Theological Seminary levels in order to address both critical and spiritual aspects of the needed training; this is how they can get a balanced diet needed to feed the sheep as demonstrated by Peter during and after Christ departed. Adegbite (2011) declares that every African pastor is a driver and a pastor without a

theological training is like a driver without a driving license, hence an illegal driver... You may think that at least you are moving on; yes, driver without formal training can move a vehicle, but to where?

On this premise, we can agree undoubtedly that we have a lot to learn from Apostle Peter's effective and efficient "feeding of the sheep" (leadership of other apostles). Peter in his leadership, employed interactive method more to the side of democracy than theocracy. He allowed participation, discussion, and dialogue. He accepted what he did not know, was master (leader) and servant. He showed a blend of astonishing meekness and a burning zeal for holiness. This means that sin must not be condoned on the grounds of meekness, gentleness or humility. African pastoral leaders, like Peter, must not explain away their weakness on the grounds of feigned meekness. Weakness is deprecated but courage, strength of character fine-tuned with compassionateness, considerateness, and holy participation, corporate building of the body of Christ cum household of faith with leadership in sight, sincerity, biblical convictions and authority are all the fine leadership ingredients Peter demonstrated and bequeathed for the African pastor of this end time and which are important for his inspirational and transformational leadership.

It is not out of place for leaders to seek godly counsel from members and elders of the church. God has kept members with diverse gifts and talents to help build up the church and edify the saints (1Cor 12:1-20, Eph. 4:11-13). No leader should presume to know it all. Members should be allowed to contribute their quota to the growth of the church, "That we be no more children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine".

It should be made abundantly clear that whatever titles we hold, it is by the grace of God for the hood does not make a monk, nor homiletics a minister, it is rather the spiritual quality of the inward man that is of great price. God does not look at the countenance or appearance of the heart. Yet, the heart and the countenance need to agree together for a good man in the sight of God. Our Christian leaders should no more hide under the façade of theocracy or divine election to unleash a reign of terror on gullible, vulnerable, unsuspecting creatures of God. For God is not mocked, whatsoever we sow, that we shall reap – if we sow whirlwind, we shall undoubtedly reap the same. We must resist the temptation of wanting to follow the multitude to do evil, avoid self – aggrandizement, self perpetuation, fame and popularity but rather seek to please Him who has called you to lead his flock.

Other leadership legacies of Apostle Peter that are suitable for today's ministers includes among others:

Peter preached and demanded genuine repentance as a first step in relationship with God – True leaders and ministers of God must repent and call people to true and heartfelt repentance. Using your ministration to bring people back to God in genuine repentance will make you pleasing unto the Lord.

Peter lived a simple life – Peter is an epitome of simple living. Church leaders that want to be God’s favourite today must imbibe the principle of simple living. Living in a simple, transparent, pure, godly and unpretentious way must permeate our lives. Today, many pastors/church leaders are worldly, ostentatious and extravagant in their lifestyles. They flaunt their monies, wealth and worth here and there by buying expensive and eye-popping mansions, properties, automobiles and various stuffs that are state-of-the-art, under the guise that ‘if God has blessed me, I need to show it’.

Peter told people, including the disciples the truth and did not deceive them – Peter endeared himself to the Lord because he lived the truth, spoke the truth, stood by the truth till he died. He was clear about the specific evil in people’s lives. Today, many ministers dance round the truth and speak in proverbs to the people. In the name of “positive gospel” or motivational messages, we murder the truth and tell people only what they want to hear.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we at this junction should activate what our misgivings are and the options there are for the leadership in truly Christian churches to receive the prop and face lift which is badly needed today. For we are concerned with truly Christian churches, for those without we have no authority. To treat Christianity as if it were a unified system of beliefs and practices would be to distort reality. There are Christian churches and there we have Christian leaders but only to those treating the masters’ footsteps do we own allegiance.

Like Peter, our duty is to feed the Masters’ flock. But with what, as shepherds, have we been feeding Jesus’ sheep so far as leaders? What, as Christian leaders, do we have to feed them now and in future? Bearing in mind that everyone who claims to be called into Pastoral Ministry, must be properly trained for the job so that they can give the complete spiritual balanced diet like Peter did to other apostles and not to poison the flock. They should always resist the temptation of using the church as “business”. Moreover, every pastor must prepare for divine visitation at any time and be willing, as a leader to accept the Lords correction and direction.

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