



BOLA AKIN-JOHN

**HANDLING
CONFLICT
&
CRISIS
IN MINISTRY**

CONFLICT IS NATURAL, COMBAT IS OPTIONAL

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HANDLING CONFLICT & CRISIS IN MINISTRY

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DEDICATION

I heartily dedicate this book to **the peace and progress of every local church in every community of the world.**





APPRECIATION

M

y sincere appreciation is toward He who calmed the storm upon the sea, the Prince of Peace Himself Jesus Christ who over 2,000 years ago

has preserved His church from countless conflicts and crisis that ever came against her and has been teaching the hands of His messengers to wisely handle conflicts in the midst of His church. To Him alone is my gratitude for the grace to have written this book amidst brief sickness as a result of heavy schedule, in the space of two weeks.



I also deeply thank my Helper the Holy Spirit for the wisdom to look into those conflicts and crisis starring the church in the face and for the revelation of scriptural wisdom to handle them which is penned in this book.

I thank my peaceful wife and wonderful kids for the full support generated in the home front and for being there for me whenever ministry takes me away from home.



Lastly I will not forget to appreciate my team of staff, volunteer workers and my printer for their contributions from the back stage towards the success of this book project.

May you be rewarded for your labour of love in Jesus' name.





Introduction

FESTERING CONFLICTS EVERYWHERE

A

s I write, conflict and crisis have engulfed our Nation, Nigeria. The Boko Haram issue started slowly in Maiduguri about 10 years

ago, almost without notice. But today, it has snowballed into raging fire that is threatening to consume the Nation. So also it is in other parts of the world. The conflicts in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Somalia, Sudan and Ukraine are showing no signs of abating.





Every day you turn on the Radio or Television to hear the latest breaking news; it is one story of conflict or the other. Communities are at logger heads and family feuds are not left out.

Unfortunately, the church that is supposed to be the bastion of peace, because she has the Prince of Peace as her Foundation, Founder and Head is

not left out. Too many conflicts and crisis have torn, are tearing and continue to tear many churches apart. Today, conflict and crisis is taking the center stage in both Old Denominations and New Independent churches.

Presently as I write, the leadership of the Assemblies of God Church in Nigeria is enmeshed in serious infighting, conflict and crisis that is now open to the public. They are using the print and electronic media to drag the name of the church in the mud. People have taken sides and with the way things are going and what the protagonists are saying, it will take a miracle to resolve it without destroying the church. The sad part is that both sides to the conflict don't care about the damage that is being done to the faith of the people and the image of the church.



Over the past few months, some people have met me to ask that I should write a book on how to handle conflict and crisis in the church. My friends on facebook equally placed the same demand on me. And as I ruminate and

pray, I felt the good Lord is leading me to put this book together for the benefit of leaders and the body of Christ at large.

Here are conclusions that necessitate the writing of this book:

a. Too Many Churches Are Conflict And Crisis Ridden

A woman recently called me to help her because the Elders in the church of her late husband are trying to send her away from the church. Many churches are like that, grappling with one kind of conflict or the other. Many churches are reeling from crisis to crisis and their growth has been arrested.

b. 25% Of Pastors Have Been Sent Out of Church

Yes, Elders, Trustees, Committees and Boards are sending Pastors out of churches. I can recollect that I was also driven out of my first pastorate as a senior pastor in 1991 by the church Board. I was a victim of executive conflict, and such is still happening today.

c. Internal Struggles Are Incapacitating Churches



Many churches that look good and okay outwardly are nevertheless contending with internal crisis one way or the other and that is hindering their forward march. Internal squabbles are being used to hinder the advance march of many churches.

d. Breakaways Are Due Largely To Conflict And Crisis

The constant break away, membership losses and divisions in local independent or denominational churches are due largely to the existence of conflicts which are allowed to snowballed into crisis that resulted in some people or groups leaving the church to start their own churches. Unfortunately, the crisis will rear its ugly head again and those churches will continue to break up.

e. Increasing Number of Believers Staying At Home On Sundays

I have noticed this in the last 10 years and the number is

increasing at an alarming rate. Believers are now sitting at home to worship on Sundays simply because they are trying to avoid or out-rightly running away from conflicts in their churches. The number is not slowing down but increasing.

f. The Inability To Handle Conflicts Is High Among Pastors

Partly because they are not trained or prepared to handle church conflicts or simply because they don't expect



conflicts to happen in the church, lots of Pastors are at a loss when conflict erupts in the church. And it is because of the inability to handle them that leads to crisis of great proportions that have closed down many promising ministries.

g. The Need To Grasp And Handle Conflicts And Crisis Well

I need to say categorically that conflict and crisis are normal in any church, nation, organization and family. It only demands that we know how to handle them. While conflict is normal, combat is optional. It is the way we handle and react to conflicts that will determine its impact. Not every conflict must end up in combat, depending on our ability, skill and capacity to handle them. These are what this book is all about.

I recently read in a National Newspaper the story of a church at Enugu, South-East Nigeria. The husband and wife are worshipping in the same church at different times. While the husband leads his group to worship from 8am to 1pm, the wife leads her own group from 2pm to 6pm every Sunday. That was the solution the Police gave to them after several clashes and threat to lives and properties. And in those service times, Policemen will be heavily present to preserve peace and order. What an amazing church conflict and crisis!

My prayer is that God in His infinite mercy will use the content of this book to bless every reader and touch our



heart to pursue peace in the church so that conflicts and crisis will be nipped in the bud.

Keep growing and glowing for Him **Dr. Bola Akin-John**



Chapter One

FOUNDATION FOR CONFLICT AND CRISIS

A

General Overseer of a church ordained his younger brother as a Pastor in his church. In fact, I was there the day the young man was

ordained but never suspected anything. They had



worked for years without much ado, but after the ordination, the young man started having other ideas about ministry. He started displaying some antics until he took away 8 out of the 10 branches of



his Elder Brother's church. The crisis was great but the Elder Brother handled it maturely.

Another Pastor I know decided to ordain 25 Deacons and Deaconesses in her young church and they eventually constituted themselves into power brokers that precipitated lots of conflicts and crisis that bedeviled that church till date.

Conflict and crisis have become the bane of many small, middle-sized and large churches today. And because they are not being properly handled, they have dealt disastrous blows to the physical, numerical, spiritual,

financial and extension growth of churches. That is why the resolution of conflicts and crisis management must be a skill every church leader must possess and hone in the church and ministry of today.

Definition

The word 'Conflict' is Latin in origin. It comes from 'con' and 'flict' – configure meaning to strike together. It carries the image of sparks of fire evoked. It shows that conflicts



may start as small sparks of fire but if not promptly handled, it may degenerate into huge conflagration or billows of flame that may consume all.

“Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!” -

James 3:5

As an example, the First World War was started by a man who shot a leader to death. It started small, but it ended in World War 1 that consumed millions of lives. The poor handling of little conflict will snowball into crisis of great proportions. If the little drop or drizzle is not properly handled, it will become a flood that will destroy many things and lives.

“The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with”

- Proverbs 17:14

All leaders will have to face conflicts. Misunderstanding misrepresentations, criticisms and misinformation plus personal agendas bring conflicts. Difficult people and circumstances will arise. Leaders must realize that conflict is natural and supernatural. It occurs simply because of human differences. Conflict is neutral in itself; it's neither destructive nor constructive depending largely on how it is handled. Conflict is normal. It happens to all of us, but how we handle conflicts and crisis will go a long way to either



further retard our progress in life and ministry or not.

The Bible has much to say on conflict and crisis in life and ministry. Lot caused conflict and crisis in the home of Father Abraham and he had to settle it courageously.



“And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.” – Genesis 13:5-9

Korah, Dathan and Abiram precipitated crisis in the church in the wilderness.



“Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?”

– Numbers 16:1-3

Moses was criticized by his senior siblings;

“And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee. And the LORD said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out

from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again.”
– Numbers 12:13-14.



King David was driven away from the throne by his own son, Absalom;

“And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom. And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.” - 2 Samuel 15:12-14.

Apostle Paul and Barnabas had sharp disagreements over an associate;

“And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from



Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;” - Acts 15:36-39.

Even the disciples of Jesus disputed and had conflict among them while following Jesus;

“And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves,

who should be the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.” – Mark 9:33-35

Diotrephes usurped the authority and position in a local church and drove everybody that didn't see eye to eye with him out of the church and spoke against the Apostles;

“I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will



remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.” – 3 John 9, 10.

Conflict usually exist in the church whenever there are serious disagreements, acrimony, contention, unresolved arguments, disloyalty, rebellion, opposing views and strives. Conflicts and crisis almost always start with foundation members, boards, trustees and cliques who want to dominate the church and want the Pastor to surrender leadership to lower forces.

There was a conflict between the General Overseer of a particular large denominational church and his immediate deputy. The infighting went on for months, yet the congregation did not know anything. The crisis degenerated to a level that the church divided into two factions. A father in the Lord invited the two of them to help settle the feud and to his greatest surprise the G. O. came with his band of supporters while the deputy also came with a group of people that are loyal to him.

Today, there are lots of conflict and crisis among and amidst church leadership. There are conflicts and crisis between associate leaders and leaders; between groups, departments, sections and areas in the church. Pastors,



Elders and Deacons are not left out in this scenario. Even churches have conflict with other churches or group of churches. There was the case of some Pastors in a particular community who were engaged in serious conflict over a parcel of land. The same parcel of land was sold to them by the landowners at different time and the ensuing crisis degenerated to the level that the Pastors were threatening each other's lives.

Crisis In Ministry

While some sections of the church have tried to sweep this truth under the carpet through faith declaration that “We cannot have crisis in my ministry”, yet the truth remains that every ministry will pass through period of crisis one way or the other. One Bishop made that statement some few years back, and some few weeks later, he had a major crisis in his ministry that snowballed into exchange of words on the pages of Newspapers before it was somehow curtailed.

Looking over our ministry in the last 20 years, I must admit that I spent the first 13 years as a fire-fighter. Some of the people I had gathered round myself were double-faced and double-tongued associates who were only interested in drawing disciples after themselves. They eventually precipitated the crisis that almost consumed the ministry, until God gave me the courage to deal with the situation.



While the internal struggle and crisis lasted, I lost some good people whom the Lord sent to be part of our ministry, only negligible percent came back. Ever since God helped me to overcome my initial fears and courageously handle the situation, the ministry has been moving on with peace and unity. The lesson there is that you will have to develop the courage and skill to handle expected crisis in the ministry. If you have not yet experienced crisis in your ministry, prepare yourself for it, because it will come. If you are passing through your own crisis presently, this book will help you to handle it rightly, wisely and maturely.

Crisis in ministry is like when an aircraft is passing through turbulence in the air. It may shake it mildly or violently, but with expert handling by the pilot, the plane will almost always survive the turbulence. Remember, conflict is natural, but combat is optional. Everything depends on your skill and capacity to handle it.



Chapter Two

GROWTH AND CONFLICT IN THE CHURCH

I

was once involved in a new church that started powerfully with like minded brethren. We followed a well respected leader. There were

great promises from the Lord that the church will be mightily used for revival. Branches were springing up and things were really looking good and wonderful. Lots of people joined our new church and

some existing churches even handed their churches

over to our denomination.

But somehow, things started slowing down spiritually and physically also. Upon much prayer enquiry, the Lord revealed to those of us in the prayer team, that there is conflict in our leadership. Initially, our leader denied it, but gradually, the truth came to the fore. His immediate Boards and Trustee were really struggling the control of leadership with him and they always have lots of quarrel in their meetings. After about five years in this state, the burble busted and our church broke into two. The Boards took some churches and the headquarters with them and our leader accepted the branches that followed him. Out of the window went those wonderful promises of God. Conflicts and crisis in leadership were allowed to hinder that great move of God.

It is quite sad that many Pastors and church leaders have not come to the realization that growth in the church doesn't follow a straight line. Steady growth in the church comes in stages. There will be time of growth, followed by crisis. If properly handled, it will lead to further growth. It goes like this; Growth + Crisis = Assimilation + More Growth.



The church in Acts of the Apostles followed similar pattern. In chapter one, Jesus ascended to heaven. In chapter two, the Holy Spirit came down mightily upon the Apostles, and in chapter three, 3,000 souls got saved through miraculous miracles. In chapter four, much more miracles and souls were saved, after the disciples were imprisoned and released by Angels. In chapter five, there was the crisis of Ananiah and Saphirah, which was rightly handled and it led to further growth of the church. In Chapter six, there was conflict, murmuring and allegations of tribalism, and it was properly handled, which resulted in the further growth and expansion of the church.

The proper handling of crisis has the capacity to lead to further growth of the church. It is largely wrong handling that allows conflict and crisis to scatter or decimate a church or denomination.

Growth And Barriers

Growth and barriers are synonymous, just like good seeds to weeds. In farming, you only plant good seeds; you don't plant the weeds or tares. But as your seeds come up and try to grow, many tares will also come up to grow with your seed. If you allow them, the tares will suck life out of your seed and serve as an effective barrier to the growth of the seeds. But if you carefully weed out the tares, and nurture your seeds, you will find them growing in leaps and bounds. So also is your church or ministry. There will be



crisis at each stage of growth. And the way you handle them will determine if your growth will continue or be arrested permanently.



Stage 1: Crisis of Who Is The Leader?

Every ministry/church will pass through this stage. People want to know who the leader is and whether he or she has enough clout or influence to lead the work. There will be lots of bickering and position-seeking elements. That is why churches jointly founded by many people don't really survive.

Stage 2: Crisis of Involvement

At this stage people will be asking questions of what will be the level of their involvement in the church. How much benefits will accrue to them and what areas they can use their gifts maximally.

Stage 3: Crisis of Control

There will be silent conflict of who controls the pulpit, money and administration of things in the church.

Stage 4: Crisis of Loyalty

There will always be agitation about where the loyalty of the people should be. Whether the loyalty should be to God, His word, the main leader or to the associate? There will always be associates that want to draw disciples after themselves.

**Stage 5: Crisis of Discipline**

There will be the crisis of administering discipline to erring members. Who should be disciplined and how long should the discipline be? There would be agitation for favouritism



and human sympathy that roundly negates the clear provision of God's word.

Taking a church through these stages requires wisdom, maturity, character, understanding and the right spiritual capacity. I am aware of churches that got stalked in stage one until the church nosedived and crashed. Others are stalked between stage two and five and stagnation is starring them in the face.

Growth demands that leaders must have proper understanding of each stage of crisis and evolve the right strategies for proper handling. Sweeping them under the carpet and behaving as if they did not exist will not help the proper and steady growth of the church.

As long as we fail to develop the capacity to address the complaints, murmuring and genuine issues raised by the people, our churches will be

much like a timed-bomb, waiting to explode! The Apostles knew the damage that unresolved crisis can do to the health and growth of the church, the more reason they quickly resolved theirs in Acts of Apostles chapter 6 verses 1 to 3 so that the work can move forward.



It's either we allow barriers to barricade the growth of the church, or we courageously handle the crisis very well so as to keep growth on course. Remember, growth is the end result of doing something right. If we handle the inevitable church conflict and crisis right, then it will result



in further growth. But if we allow them to fester, then they can tear the church apart and destroy things permanently.



Chapter Three

TYPES AND KINDS OF CRISIS IN CHURCHES



A

Pastor made an altar call for those who want to get healed to move forward and be prayed for. While he was in the prayer line

ministering to those who came out, a man walked up to him and gave him a serious punch in the face. His face was bleeding. While the man was being restrained, he continued with the ministration, wiping off the blood from his face. He later

commented, “Sometimes you see it coming, sometime you don't”. That was late Billy Joe Doherty.

Yes, sometime you can predict crisis by the act of commission or omission of church leaders, but other times, you don't really see it coming. It just erupts and before you know it, the flame is consuming many precious things.

Looking at the church over the years, one discovers various and different kinds and types of crisis bedeviling her here and there. They come in different shapes and sizes.

“But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another”. – Gal. 5:15

Allow me in this chapter to enumerate the various kinds of conflicts and crisis that I have seen and noticed in churches of every affiliation:

1. Leadership Crisis



“For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed.” – Isaiah 9:16

This is the first kind of conflict that arises in most churches. It's either the leader is incompetent, ineffective and dominating or he is clueless, visionless, fearful and unable to inspire confidence in the followers. Any of these two kinds of leadership will precipitate crisis in any church and too many churches are reeling to and fro under these two types of leaders today.

Poor and incompetent leaders will bring crisis of great proportions to their leadership, and their churches will never be able to fulfill their potentials. One can be a wonderful Pastor and a good administrator but a very poor leader. One way or the other, poor leadership skills will always allow conflict and crisis to thrive in any given church.

Presently, a crisis is playing out in a church in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The members complained to the authority about the incompetence of their

Pastor, but the Bishop refused to transfer him and the members now worship on the street, walking out on their Bishop and the Pastor.

2. Financial Crisis



I once read a soft-sell Magazine that chronicled the story of the 20 fastest growing churches in Nigeria some few years back. Well, what surprised me was that 16 of those 20 churches had court cases, over monetary matters. Financial crisis have rendered many churches weak from inside. Accusations and counter-accusations of misappropriation, inflation of contract, projects funds and outright stealing is a reoccurring decimal in many of our churches. Those in charge of money are having their hands soiled and people are reacting in anger, fury and court cases.

In a particular church, the Elders took over the church finance from the Pastor and drove him away simply because he asked too many questions regarding the finance of the church. In another church, those in charge of

money lied about the Pastor to the authority of the church and asked him to be transferred simply because he tried to stop them from sharing the church money among themselves. Petitions upon petitions are flooding the National offices of some big denominations about Pastors financial dealings and crisis upon crisis are being visited over churches as a result.

3. Associate Leaders' Crisis

In so many churches, Associate Pastors, Deputy Leaders and Junior ministers are the causative agents of conflict and crisis. Associates that are rebellious at heart, doubletongued, double-faced, greedy of gain, and who are ambitious will almost always cause crisis. When associates



don't support the vision of the leader but have their own vision, then they will draw people after themselves. Associates that make snide and negative comments about their leaders will steal the hearts of the people, just as Absalom did to his father, David.

I could recollect the story of an Associate Pastor that secretly schemed to take over the church from his Senior Pastor. He went and liaised with the Lady Prophetess of the church that they should prophesy that the Senior Pastor has fallen into sin and would need to go away for 7 years for spiritual cleansing. The Prophetess gave the prophecy and crisis erupted and the church scattered.

4. Pastors' Wives Crisis

This is a phenomenon that is growing in churches across the Nations. The spouses of Pastors are contributing significantly to the festering crisis in churches. Pastors' spouses have been known to usurp the role of the Pastor, fight with members, and try to dominate women in the church.

A senior Pastor told me few days ago how he was forced to transfer two of his Pastors to far away branches because their wives are always engaged in physical combat, fighting and tearing each other's dresses in the parsonage. What a shame! Another Pastor's wife picked a quarrel with a church member and fought her until all the plastic chairs in the church were broken to pieces.



There are also situations whereby the husbands of some female ministers will impregnate the women members of the church. In many cases, the spill over effect of the quarrel in the Pastor's home usually affects the church negatively. Pastors' wives who are in the habit of borrowing money from members, get involved in phony cooperative contributions and misappropriate the monies of people have caused crisis of great proportions in churches.

5. Old Members' Crisis

Most foundation members who know the story of the days of little beginning of the church do constitute themselves into power block and 'stakeholders' that desire to control things in the church. They detest new members and try to play them out of any significant position in the church. They love to hold on to power, and see new enterprising members as intruders who have come to eat where they have not sown. They always seek to control the Pastors, the pulpit and want their decision to override

any other ones. They will dominate the affairs of the church and do everything to put Pastors in their pockets. Pastors that refused their domineering spirit will be made to lick the dust in the church and these have led to lots of crisis of great conflagrations.

In a particular church, a church trustee, who also happened to be the Secretary of the church seized and



kept the cheque book of the church on the excuse that too much money is being spent by the church. He refused to release the cheque book for months until the signatory to the account was changed without his knowledge. It was then the church could move forward financially.

6. Members' Ministry Crisis

It is quite sad that church leaders have stroke up the fire of crisis repeatedly by refusing to allow the ministry of members to thrive. Somehow, church

leaders believe that members are just to sit down, listen to the preaching and do nothing in the church. They forget that every bornagain and Spirit-filled Christian is gifted by the Lord to carry out an assignment for the kingdom. And when those members begin to discover, develop and want to deploy those gifts, church leaders usually rise up against it and conflict will arise that more often than not will degenerate into crisis of breakaway, losses and stagnations.

The inability to allow members to fulfill their God-given ministry have brought untold crisis to churches. Leaders and churches that took joy in depriving their members the opportunity of obeying the call of God into kingdom ministry of praying, intercession, singing, teaching, evangelism and drama almost always have to contend with crisis of breakaways.

I know many of such ministers that have been sent out and continue to be sent out of churches. I too was forced to resign from our church in 1996 when the atmosphere



became too tensed and my presence was no longer welcome. They wanted me to pack up the teaching and training ministry of Church Growth that the Lord asked me to start two years earlier then. Churches and church leaders continue to lose dynamic Christians who could have added much more to their churches simply because of the inability to allow the ministry of members to thrive.

7. Guest Speakers' Crisis

Yes, Guest speakers do precipitate crisis in churches, and lots of churches are grappling with the crisis caused by their invited Guest speakers. There are Guest speakers who will use occultic means and gimmick to raise money; teach strange doctrines and practices and who will leave huge hotel, telephone and food bills for the church. Some of them usually frolic with their hosts' female members in the name of private counseling and deliverance sessions in hotel rooms. They will demand for high honorarium and use prophetic mumbo-jumbo to pick witches and wizards in the church.

All these have caused crisis of great magnitude in many churches. In other instances, Guest speakers have eloped with the wife of church members or took members away to start another church closed by. Too many churches have been affected and continued to be affected negatively by these antics of ungodly Guest speakers, yet church leaders continue to invite them to their pulpits, simply because they are popular and can raise funds!



8. Barren Atmosphere Crisis

When the atmosphere of a church is barren, unfruitful and dry to the extent that members don't prosper spiritually, physically, materially and in every sphere of their lives, conflict will arise. At such instance, members will urge one another to relocate from such a barren church to other churches where they could be fruitful and their lives prosper. I know churches that lost all their well-to-do members because those members no longer see God's blessing upon their lives in the church despite their commitment, devotion and giving. In fact, the more you give, the worse your situation becomes in those churches and the easiest thing to do is for members to run away.

9. Crisis of Strange Doctrines

There are churches that started in God, with sound biblical doctrines, but gradually digressed from the truth and want their churches to digress with them. A Pastor who believed in monogamy of marriage and taught it

severally in his church suddenly changed on his return from a foreign trip and began to teach divorce and 'scriptural polygamy'. The people in his church reacted angrily against such strange teaching and left the church in large number.

Another Pastor that I know very well lost more than 1,200 people simply because he started dismantling the



conservative Bible doctrines of the church for his so-called 'new revelations' that the people found disgusting and unscriptural.

Many church leaders have precipitated crisis in their churches through the introduction of doctrines that are against what they have taught the people.

Conclusively, more could be said, but enough for now. But what have been said points to the fact that human mistakes have allowed crisis to engulf churches today. These various kinds of internal crisis are simply rendering

the body of Christ powerless to further the cause of world evangelization today. By focusing only on fighting these internal flames, so many churches are no longer relevant to their generation. And that is one strategic masterstroke of the devil to incapacitate the church of Christ in the world.





Chapter Four

PEOPLE THAT CAUSE CONFLICT AND CRISIS

I



n a certain church that was growing in leaps and bounds, some prominent brothers came together to lay allegations against the Pastor.

They called him into a meeting and laid seven serious allegations against his leadership in the church. They accused him of sleeping with a young widow and many other nasty things. Though all the allegations were later proved to be untrue and tissue of lies, but much damage had been done to the life and ministry of that Pastor and the revival atmosphere of the church. The Pastor was sorely investigated and transferred out of that church and the revival fire died out and the lives of those 'accusers' had never been the same since then. I can write this because I know all the personalities involved in this sad scenario.

Usually, there are four types of people in churches in relation to problems:

- i. People that cause problems – 25%
- ii. People that identify problems – 15%
- iii. People that spread problems – 55%
- iv. People that solve problems – 5%

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.” – 1 Thess. 5:14

“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all



men have not faith. But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.” – 2 Thess. 3:1-2

Many times, it is people that cause conflicts and crisis in churches. Handling them requires that we know those type of people and have the required skill to lead them.

1. The Goats

These are church members who had been in church for years but are not born-again, or they were once born again but have now backslide in their heart.

“The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.” – Proverbs 14:14

These set of people are stubborn, rebellious, immoral, quarrelsome and problematic in the church. They pollute the atmosphere and mess up the whole place with their ungodly examples and lifestyle, even though they are positioned and titled people in the church. They oppose anything that is good and progressive in the church. Their goat-like nature makes them to sow discord among the brethren. They instigate and support rebellion and disobedient living among the people. Goats do cause crisis and conflicts in the church and until they turn to sheep they



will continue to cause crisis. What is the percentage of goats to sheep in your church?

2. Power Brokers

Power brokers are permission-granters, opinionmoulders, decision-makers and influential members of the church. Foundation members, Trustee members, Board of Elders, financial backers, personal associates and

elderly members can all become power brokers in the church. Power brokers usually form cliques and seek to control the Pastor and direction of things in the church. If they are allowed, they will take over the finance of the church and decide which message should be preached from the altar. I have heard cases of power brokers who invited the Police to arrest Pastor and got him locked him up because he demanded to know the financial state of the church. Power brokers had continued to cause crisis in churches and Pastors had continued to fall prey to their whims and caprices.

3. Thumb Suckers

These are people that are immature and have refused to grow up in the things of the Lord. Thumb-suckers will complain, murmur and throw temper tantrums because of



little things that have eternal value. They usually take direct preaching as personal attacks and will threaten to stop attending church because of little

offences. Thumbsuckers will complain if the service is too long, too short, too loud, too quiet, too many people and too few people. They use their mouth and actions to cause conflicts and crisis among the brethren.



4. Users

These are people that only want the Pastor and church to pander to every need they have. They believe in taking but not in giving. They love to use the church for their selfish ends only. You will see them when they need prayers, financial support and material needs, but once things are okay, you won't find them around. If their needs are not being adequately met, they will raise lots of dust and throw negative words here and there.

5. Wet-blankets

Wet-blankets are hurting people who are always sad, downcast and moody. They are morose and see no reason why some people are shouting, singing and dancing on top of their voices. Their inner hurts usually make them to speak hurtful words to their leaders and use the horns of their hurts to hurt

others. Wet-blankets will not see anything good in the church and will always see the cup half empty rather than half-filled. They become sarcastic, irritating, touchy and critical of others which inevitably will lead to conflicts here and there.



6. Chameleons

These are hypocrites who project who they are not. They are actors and actresses in the church who pretend a lot. They are expert in make-believe and cause brethren to fight with each other. They say one thing to people and practice other things in the presence of others. They cause unsuspecting brethren to fall into sin, evil and shameful acts, and thereby creating schism in the Body of Christ.

7. Tempters

These are men and women who are lustful, immoral and sexual agents in the church. They cause pollution and sexual pervasion. They use their

bodies and sexual antics to seduce men and women of God, top leaders and ministers in the church to immoral acts until the whole church is polluted. They can be the personal assistants, administrators, choristers, praise and worship team leaders in the church. They can also be young widows, matured singles or single parents. They become sexual predators in the house of the Lord and sleep around. Tempters or sexual agents of Satan have brought manifold modus-operandi of Satan to destroy promising ministers and churches. Unfortunately, lots of church ministers are very careless here, because such people do initially appear harmless.

8. Garbage Collectors

These are people that thrive on rumor, bickering, backbiting and spreading of unfounded stories in the church. They move from house to house, form groups and cliques to address perceived insults from the church. They will never verify stories but will go ahead to write petitions or anonymous letters to allege many things in the church, thereby causing disaffection and conflicts of great proportions.

9. Space-Cadets

These are idealistic and unreasonable people, who live in another world with their ideas. They feel their unreasonable ideas should be followed and any attempt to make them see reason is met with rebuff. They proffer unworkable solution to issues and feel slighted if their opinion is not followed to the letter. They issue threats and secretly work to bring down the church and her leaders. They report to church authority and demand that the Pastor be dealt with. Many Pastors have been driven out of churches because of this category of people, thereby plunging local churches into untold crisis.

10. Gifted But Bad-Character People

These are very active and fervent members of local churches. They are gifted to pray, sing, prophesy and



minister to people. However, they are characterless, proud and pompous. They don't take leadership into cognizance and behave as lawless people. They use their gifts to cause division and dissension in the church. They have 'church inside church' and have their loyalists. At any slightest rebuke, they will pull out of the church and scatter things with their lack of manners.

These categories of people have allowed themselves to be used one way or the other to cause conflict and crisis in churches in the past and in the present. Capable leaders must identify them and evolve the right strategies to handle them in the church. They can be found in almost every church, but their capacity to do damage will either be limited or enhanced by the competency and effectiveness of the leadership being provided.



Chapter Five

THE ROOT CAUSE OF CONFLICT AND CRISIS IN CHURCHES

A

certain church leader was mightily used by the Lord to gather much people and affected them positively for the Lord. He

built a great work and did all he could to raise a good successor. In fact, he named his successor before he died and after his burial, his successor was installed in the church. But that church is in great crisis today because the children of the late founder came and

burnt down the company and private properties of the new leader of the church, claiming that he took over their father's property and that he is not from their ethnic group. Unfortunately, they have supporters inside the church and in the town where the headquarters of the church is situated.

Root Cause

Conflicts and crisis don't just erupt in a church or ministry. There is usually a root cause. Whenever there is public disturbance and social unrest that leads to great crisis with attendant losses, good governments do set up panel of enquiry to find out the root cause of such so as to prevent future occurrence. We cannot do less in the spiritual realm. Crisis and conflicts in churches have root causes, and the earlier we take time to find them out, learn from them and take steps to address them squarely, so as to prevent future occurrence, the better for us and the Body of Christ.

In my research among churches and leaders, I have come to conclude that the root cause of church conflicts and crisis are twofold; Spiritual and Human.



a. Spiritual Root

The spiritual root cause of conflict and crisis in the church refers to the madness, animosity, hatred and anger of the devil and his cohorts against the church of Christ and his determination to do everything to hinder her forward march in the world.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” – Matthew 16:18

The 'gates of hell' will do everything to prevail against the church and one of the ways to achieve that is to instigate conflicts and crisis that will either slow down the church or destroy and scatter her. Most times, the devil and his demons do cause the persecution of believers.

“Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.” – Acts 12:1

“And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the



regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.” – Acts 8:1

Instigation of lies against the church; legislation against the church (Acts 4:14-18) and sowing seeds of discord and disunity among the brethren are all works of the devil.



“But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.” – Acts 5:1-2

“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.” – 1 Corinthians 1:10-11

He equally causes unrest, rumor, misunderstanding and misrepresentation in the church.



“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.” – Acts 6:1



“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.” – Acts 9:31

He will also introduce strange doctrines, errors and practices that will drive out God's presence.

Furthermore, the devil sometimes sends his agents, who will camouflage as genuine believers to cause immoralities, conflicts and rebellion inside the church until everything will be polluted and the Spirit of God will depart from that church.

“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she



repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.” – Revelation 2:20-22



The devil has succeeded with this strategy for too long in many local churches and denominational ones. However, it is rather unfortunate that majority of church leaders of today have failed to see the handiwork of the devil and his demons in the conflagration of crisis that has engulfed many churches today and thereby making the devil to rob his hands with glee on our eyes.

b. Human Errors

This is the second root cause of conflicts and crisis in our churches today. I need to admit that there are many crises that are ascribed to the devils but which are caused by human foibles and failures. Yes, I quite agree that there are demonic infiltrations and manipulations, yet I have to admit also that majority of the conflicts and crisis in churches stemmed from leadership mistakes. Pinpointed here are mistakes that leaders usually make and which will lead to conflicts and crisis, sooner or later:

- * Breaking trust with people.
- * Scandals of immoralities and financial scam. * Relations and family members as associates.

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Wrong foundation of starting the work in rebellion.

- * Surrendering authority to foundation members and partners.
- * Treating serious issues with kid's gloves.
- * Double standard in dealing with cases.
- * Secrecy about ministry financial handlings.
- * Quick ordination of too many associates.
- * Bringing many strange bed-fellows together. * Vengeful transfers and injustice in administration. * Favouritism, ethnicity and respect of persons.
- * Hearing only from one side and judging people.
- * Incapable and incompetent ability to lead people well.
- * Inviting the wrong Guest minister to church.

- * Failure to live by the word of God and demanding obedience to God.
- * Failure to confront strange doctrines and practices.

These are some of the mistakes that church Pastors, Preachers, Bishops, Apostles and Prophets have made which has led to multifarious crisis in their churches. Yes, I concur that there are people that are difficult, hard-to-please, critics, users, disenchanted, rebels, traditionalists, pretenders and domineering in our churches and they do cause conflicts. However, most conflicts in churches emanate from these leadership and human foibles.

I can recollect the story of a church leader that has the practice of collecting all realizable income from all the branches and treats his staff and workers as scum with abysmal low pay. He handled the finances of the church as his personal estate and staff welfare was zero. This led to



crisis and many of his associates broke away and some of the staff took the money they could lay hands on and bolted away.

A very popular female minister broke trust with her people by hopping from one man's bed to another until it led to crisis in her church and many members and churches broke away. She is left with less than hundred members today, though she is trying to rise up again!



Chapter Six

CONFLICT AND CRISIS



OVER MONEY

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ore than any other issue in the church, money has been the major cause of conflict and crisis. Whether in young or old

churches, small or big ministries, the handling or mishandling of money have almost always led to conflict and crisis. People are suspicious of church leaders and leaders don't trust their members when it comes to the issue of money. Wrong attitudes to



money have become the breeding ground for all kinds of conflicts that have rendered churches weak and anemic from within.

A Pastor friend introduced some of his leaders to a good business scheme, which he too was involved in. Many got involved in the company that sells properties and manage homes. The beginning was good and many became instant millionaires over night. My friend even wrote a book about it. But soon, the bubble burst and the financial meltdown affected the company badly. Losses were recorded and the company declared bankrupt. Members began to react negatively and crisis of grave proportions was started that almost consumed the church. Six years after, the ministry of my friend is still battling with the crisis.

People are always emotional, unreasonable and disrespectful when it has to do with money. Most people hate to lose their hard earned money and will fight with everything in their arsenal when they sensed that they are being cheated financially. Here are factors that have encouraged money crisis and conflicts in churches:



1. Lack of Transparency In Handling Church Monies

When there is no proper record keeping of the income and expenditure of the church, then people will insinuate things. When secrecy is maintained concerning the contributions, donations, tithes and realizable incomes of the church and only the leader and few people are making all the expenditure, then murmuring will arise and it can degenerate into big crisis. People of today want to know the financial state of their church and when they are kept in the dark, rumors will start flying here and there.

2. Larger Than Life Lifestyle of Pastors When Pastors fail to disclose their source of income and wealth, people in the church will feel they are being shortchanged. Pastors that live in stupendous wealth and never disclosed how they made their monies will leave people confused and suspicious. People naturally don't trust Pastors of today and think they live off the monies of their churches and this has led to accusations and counter

accusations. Many are being sued in law courts by their members while some others will leave their churches, never to return.

3. Business Dealings With Members

When Pastors introduce business to members and they are doing it together, the end is usually not palatable. It will always end in crisis. A Pastor came to his church and asked people to contribute money into a new business that will yield fantastic returns. People contributed and the business was good initially. But because it was a multi-level



marketing, the business soon crashed. When the Pastor informed the church that they had lost their monies, they reacted angrily and took him to court. The court ordered the Pastor to pay back their hard earned monies because he broke trust with his people. Well, a church of 1,500 members reduced to less than 100 because the people felt



they could no longer worship with a Pastor that owed them money and that he is no longer trustworthy.

4. Cooperative Contributions

While there is nothing wrong with cooperative contributions if it is initiated and run by members among themselves, yet it must not have the official backing of the church. Such contributions have led to conflicts whenever a member or groups of members default. And if it has the official backing of the church, the people will hold the church responsible and leave enmass.

5. Lending Money To Members

Churches that lend out money to members have learned the hard way that it leads to losses and conflicts. Lots of members that borrowed money from churches on compassionate grounds don't usually pay back, even though they promise heaven and hell to pay. They will eventually get angry if they are being pestered to pay and they will leave the church with their

sympathizers. The churches usually lose in two ways: lose the money, lose the members.



6. Poor Pay And Remuneration

Though we have not seen Christian workers protesting and carrying placards demanding for better pay and working conditions, yet it is a simmering crisis in many denominations. The International Labour Organization has rated Christian workers as second to the lowest paid



workers in the whole world. Denominations and Christian organizations usually don't pay good remuneration or as at when due to their workers. And this has led to conflicts, crisis and unwholesome practices in the offices of the church.

7. Borrowing Money From Banks

This is one more mistake that has plunged many churches into money crisis. When you borrow money from banks or financial institutions to finance church projects, the debts will be too much of a heavy burden that will precipitate crisis. In the financial meltdown of 2008, many churches were being visited by Bank officials every service day to take away their offerings so as to offset their debt. Indebtedness to banks with their hidden charges and interests will be an albatross for any debtor church.

The Way Out

To stem the tide of financial crisis in the church, the leader and leadership must take steps to be clean and clear about money. The income of the

church must be judiciously handled by capable, honest and transparent people. The Pastor must not handle the money. There must be a



system of generating and reporting of church income in clear and open ways. There must be a marked difference between what belongs to the Pastor and what belongs to the church. No Pastor has the right to personally pocket the money of the church. The Pastor must be placed on



salary or emolument and proper record of this must be made. The Pastor must live clear, simply and frugally, so as to be a good example and stop the mouth of critics.

There must be yearly financial accounting that will report back to the church. People that want to see the income and expenditure of the church must be allowed without victimization. Stealing or any form of financial malpractices must be dealt with squarely and every avenue for fraud must be blocked.

The church is not a financial house that loans out money to the public. Therefore, lending church monies to members must be highly discouraged. While the church can give financial support to her needy members, borrowing from the church purse must be seen as illegal because it will breed crisis.

Churches and church leaders must never do business with members because it will lead to conflicts at the end. Some church leaders have been killed as

a result of this grave error.



Conclusively, church money must be spent for what people will see and relate with. The widows, fatherless, needy, evangelism, care and resources that will propagate the gospel of the kingdom should take large chunk of the church budget. It is then that conflict about money will be reduced to the barest minimum.

My classic book, *With Jesus in the School of Money*, will greatly help church leaders, Christians and churches to have the right attitude about money. You can get a copy at www.churchgrowthafrica.org

Chapter Seven

POWER OF CONFLICT AND CRISIS

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postle Paul warned that conflict and crisis in the church will lead to grave consequences.

**“For it hath been declared unto me of
you, my brethren, by them which are of
the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.” – 1
Corinthians
1:11**





“For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” – 1 Corinthians 3:3

“But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.” – 1 Corinthians 6:6

“For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:” – 2 Corinthians 12:20

In one of the most dynamic indigenous Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, a conflict arose about the personal and private ministry of Pastors and it was not maturely handled until it degenerated into great crisis that splitted the denomination into many factions. Physical quarrels and taking over of local assemblies, court cases and gimmicks have taken the center stage in that



denomination since then. All the efforts to reconcile the two main factions is yet to meet with resounding success after 25 years and many nasty incidents that have gravely tarnished the image of that denomination had continued to happen since then. Too many Pastors have lost their lives, lost their heaven and backslidden of members have been the outcome of this lingering crisis.

Another prominent spiritual church has also been brought to her knees as a result of crisis. In the 80's this church was so popular that everyone was going there, but their crisis arose shortly after the death of the founder and leader. There have been different factions and lots of individuals are

claiming to be the anointed successor of the late founder. Court cases, crisis and meetings have become the order among the leadership. It got so bad that whoever is anointed as the successor and installed will die suddenly and quickly. Until now, the crisis is still simmering and solution had remained elusive. The church has taken a backward step and stagnation is their daily experience till today.

What I am driving at by telling these two true stories is the fact that conflict and crisis have the power to stagnate, kill and destroy ministries. The power of crisis and conflict for massive damage of the church is real and awesome. When conflict is not properly, maturely and wisely handled, it will snowball into crisis of great proportions that will snuff life and growth out of the church. Our Lord Jesus Christ warned that internal strifes and division will ruin.



“And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house

divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast



out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?” – Matthew 12:25-26

Satan's kingdom cannot stand division, disunity and strife, how much more the kingdom of God? Internal squabble will always lead to the downfall of any kingdom.

The following points will reveal the power of conflict and crisis to damage:

1. Crisis Arrests Growth

Too many churches have had their steady growth arrested by crisis. Conflicts that were mishandled have hindered and stunted the growth of many churches. Like I said in the first chapter, the growth of our ministry was laborious in the first 13 years simply because we moved from conflict to conflict. Internal squabbles usually hinder growth from happening.

2. Crisis Incapacitates God's Promises The promises of God for growth, increase and promising future cannot come to pass in the church when conflicts are not nipped in the bud. Crisis will not allow the



promises of God to come to pass and the church will never live to fulfill her potentials.

3. Stagnation and Retrogression

Lots of churches started with vision, passion and purpose, but soon, they allowed conflicts to become crisis and everything gradually grinded to a halt. Unresolved conflicts will ruin and bring retrogression to churches. Stories upon stories of church stagnation has been traced to contentions, arguments, strives and divisions among leaders and people.

4. Sectarian And Primordial Sentiments In the Corinthian church, people were divided among their leaders. While some followed Apollos, others are for Peter and Paul, while some said they were following Christ. That was

the outcome of internal strives. Lots of churches are also reeling to and fro today due to tribal considerations, ethnic bias and primordial sentiments and things have fallen apart.

5. Crisis Arrests Peace And Progress

Peace that brings progress will always be elusive where strives and conflicts reign supreme. Once the water is not quiet and still, the sheep will not come to drink. Troubled waters drive away sheep from drinking, because they are afraid of crocodiles that could trouble the water. Conflicts and crisis will ensure that there is no still water in the church for the sheep to come and drink from.



6. Premature Death And Calamities

Crisis always swallows the life of people, especially the leaders and instigators of the conflicts, if care is not taken. As wars consume people, so also conflicts and crisis consume people. Too many people will die prematurely



during crisis, whether they are wittingly involved or unwittingly involved. I remember a church founder who was engaged in a serious struggling for his church with his gifted associate. The strive was so much that it divided the church and unfortunately, the founder died in the struggle and his associate renamed the church and continued with the remnant.

7. Crisis Pollutes The Life And Tongues of Believers

Conflicts and crisis in ministry bring lots of pollutions to the lives and tongues of believers. While some will take side and speak unadvisedly with their mouths, others will backslide and go back from the faith. The roots of bitterness, hatred and evil speaking will go deep in many hearts. Hearts will therefore be divided, polluted and turned away from Christ.

8. Crisis Allows The Devil And His Cohorts To Work

The devil and his demons will have a nice time wrecking

havoc in the church and the lives of people when the church is in crisis. Once the church is distracted and



there's no more focused prayers, teachings and paying attention to vital things, the devils will have all the time and opportunity to kill, maim and destroy.

9. Downward Spiral And Death of Churches

Conflicts and crisis have led to the death of so many churches. I'm aware of churches that have locked their doors, sold the building to other churches or out-rightly scattered the people due to the emergence of conflicts and crisis. This is a reoccurring decimal in the ministry of the church in the world today.

10. Bad Spectacle To The World

Conflicts, strives, murmurings and misunderstandings that are allowed to

degenerate into crisis that scatter churches have always dragged the name of the church in the mud. The image of the church will become soiled and many will hiss at her. This is the story of many churches in some communities today. Internal crisis have rendered them useless to their communities.

In summary, the book of Genesis chapter 11 verses 1 and 4 to 8 show us the first glimpse of the power of 'confused language'. Though in disobedience and rebellion, yet we see what unity of purpose could do. Even the LORD acknowledged that their unity will make everything possible for them. He had to therefore confuse their



language. Once misunderstanding and friction came in, they stopped their grandiose project and scattered.

It is still true that unity, peace and commitment to a common goal helps groups of people to achieve their set



objectives, but misunderstanding, misrepresentations, conflict and strives will always be an albatross on the neck of any group of people.



Chapter Eight

THE LEADER AS SOLUTION, NOT THE PROBLEM

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once heard the true story about a Pastor that has the uncanny ability to cause crisis among his people. He would deliberately cook up unfounded

stories and tell lies about a member to another member to set them at loggerheads and advice them to slug it out in physical combat. Members then began to hate and detest one another as a result. A curious friend now asked the Pastor; “why





are you setting your member against one another?” He replied, “If I don't set them against one another, they will gang up to fight me”. What a devilish leader!

It is quite sad that this is not an isolated case today. Conflicts and crisis have engulfed many local churches and denominations today simply because church leaders have not acted as solutions but the real problems.

“For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed.” – Isaiah 9:16

Too many leaders are the harbingers of problems, rather than providing solutions in their churches. They use their leadership styles to lead people astray, into error and bring swift destruction upon the work.

God's Expectation

God wants and expects every one of His minister and leader to be the solution and not the problem of the church.



“Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.” – Isaiah 55:4

The leader after God's heart must not be the problem, but find and proffer solution to the problems and crisis in the church. The leader might not have

the answers, but he must know where to find the answers. As a leader, necessity is laid upon you to find solutions to the myriads of challenges confronting the church. If you don't tackle the problems, nobody will. If you dodge the problems, you will kill the church. If you don't confront the problem head-on, you will not have peace in the church. Sometimes, peace must be sacrificed for good progress and every progress in the church will come as a result of solving problems.

Leader As A Problem

It must be emphasized again and again that conflicts and crisis do emerge and continue to fester in churches principally because church leaders are part and parcel of the problems. Many church leaders show many characteristics of being the real problem of the church. In fact, many people have grouse with their leaders, not the church per say, and they have to leave one church for another.



As a church leader, you become the real problem to your church when you do the following:

- * Pacify and dance round issues without really solving them.
- * Being afraid to offend people and hit the nail on the head.
- * Favouritism and having sacred cows in the church. * Bending the rule for privileged few.
- * Closing your eyes to sins and faults of your favourites.
- * Hearing only one-side of stories and passing judgment.
- * Being prejudiced against the truth and praising 'yes men'.
- * Detesting gifted and anointed associates.
- * Unavailable to people and detesting suggestions and ideas.
- * Tacit encouragement for financial misappropriations.

As long as leaders display these traits, they will continue to be the main causative agents of conflicts and crisis in their churches. Sooner or later, church leaders whose leadership styles have these traits as features will always have to contend with one crisis or the other.

Leader As Solution

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt



to teach, patient”. -2 Tim 2:24

Conflicts and crisis will abate and be a thing of the past when leaders take up the challenge of being the solution, providing solution and looking for solution. This will be possible if these factors are taken into cognizance:

1. Develop Your Capacity To Solve Problems

Problems are part and parcel of life and ministry. You cannot do successful ministry without coming across various kinds of problems. Therefore, the onus is on every leader to hone, sharpen and acquire problem-solving skills. Every problem you solve gives your people another reason to trust your leadership. You must develop your capacity to solve problems. And you do that by, praying, thinking, reading, analyzing, masking your fears and tackling issues head on. The more capacity you develop, the more problem you will be able to confront and solve.

The more problem you confront and solve the more your people will trust you. And the more people trust you, the more you can influence them for Christ.

2. Have Solution-Mindset

A solution-mindset helps you to think positively. It helps you to always look for the way out of any crisis. It helps you to look at the brighter side of issues and challenges. Solution mindset helps you to look at issues dispassionately and see the way out of the logjam. Leaders with solution mindset have more ideas, wisdom and insight than leaders with problem mindset. Solution



mindset makes sure you have a positive mentality amidst a negative world. And it will serve you well in the days of conflict and crisis.



3. Display Maturity And Stability

You can be a solution to the crisis of your ministry when you are able to maintain poise, calm, maturity and stability in the midst of all the crisis and conflicts going on. People will be won over by your calm and calculated mien. Not losing your head when others are losing theirs will send a strong signal to people watching that you know what you are doing and that will help their confidence in your leadership.

4. Pray Much And Get God's Leading It is important that you pray and pray very well if you truly want to be the solution and not the problem of your church. Genuine, sincere, heart-felt prayers, and seeking of God's face places you in good stead to operate with divine wisdom in problem-solving adventures. Prayer will draw down the divine infusion of grace to help you resolve the conflict, no matter how deep and how long it has festered. Profound prayers will allow the Holy Spirit to flow into your heart with the right wisdom to resolve the conflict.

Our ministry was called upon by a church to help resolve a 31 years old conflict. Both parties were holding



tenaciously to their arguments even after court cases. With wisdom, we started with the topmost leaders of the church. And the Holy Spirit helped me and my team to resolve the conflict to some appreciable degree. That is what we need to resolve the myriads problems confronting the churches of today.



Chapter Nine

HOW LEADERS HAVE HANDLED CONFLICT AND CRISIS

A

church Overseer decided one day to write his resignation letter and submitted it to the church Board as a result of conflict in their

meetings. He was ready to abdicate his responsibility to lead and handle the inevitable conflicts of ministry. It was another Senior Overseer he went to complain to that rebuked him sharply that he should not surrender his leadership to lower





f orces.

Unfortunately, he did not listen to the counsel of the Senior Overseer. He resigned and today, he is only the ceremonial leader of the church. Others have wrestled the control from him and when the real leader now speaks, the erstwhile Overseer must catch cold! This true story laid bare the fact that most Pastors and church leaders lacked the ability to handle conflicts and crisis competently.

Historically, many church leaders have not been trained or prepared adequately to handle conflict and they have snowballed into crises that have overwhelmed churches today.

Improper Handling

No matter the size, age and longevity of a ministry, conflicts will arise. What matters most is how they are being handled. Improper handling is leaving the crisis to fester, engaging in blame game and getting unnecessarily angry. You react to conflicts and handle them improperly when you become fearful, jittery, confused, lose your head, weeping, crying, downcast and discouraged.



Conflicts will fester when leaders threatened to quit, give up and magnifying the problem as impossible to solve.

When you delay, deny the problem, afraid to confront it and show lots of immaturity, then you are mishandling the conflicts and the crisis will totally consume the work. If you don't stop the drop of water, it will become a drizzle and more delays will make it become a flood that will destroy many precious and good things on its path.

Lots of little fires of conflicts have been allowed to snowball into raging fire as a result of improper handling. Such crises have consumed the peace, progress, growth, expansion, vitality, spiritual health and leadership of many churches. They lead to continuous manifestation of disunity, cold wars, suspicion, grudges, divisions, malice, infighting, envy, jealousies, abuses, strives, bickering and every evil work in the church.

“But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.” – James 3:14-16

“From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?” – James 4:1



Five Common Ways

In the last two decades that I have been privileged by the Lord to visit many churches and speak to hundreds of thousands of church leaders and ministers, I have noted these five common ways that conflict and crisis are being handled. Allow me to enumerate them here for you:

1. Total War

In this concept, Pastors, Associates and members take hard-line stand and talk tough whenever conflicts arise. They engage in fisticuffs and

breakdown of law and order. Properties are damaged and bonfire is made of the properties of the church. In total war, everyone goes his own way and takes along with him what he has contributed to the church. Injuries and hurts are inflicted on one another and people scamper for safety.

In one church, some went away with the chairs and seats; while others went away with the lectern, lights, generators and sign posts. In another church, the General Overseer secretly sold the building and the land to some people and bolted away with the money.

Total war makes leaders to shamelessly wash their dirty linen in the public and care less if everything is destroyed. Opposing camps form themselves into factions, camps and acquire weapons to destroy and ruin each other, not



minding their salvation experience or the mind of the Lord.

In another instance of total war, the Senior Pastor began to curse and pray that his people should 'fall down and die', if they continue to question his authority in the church. And the people scattered, never to return to that church again.

2. Civil or Cold War

Church leaders react to conflict with cold war approach by detestation and irritation of people. The conflict is simmering and yet it is being denied. Outwardly people are friendly and worship together, but internally there are lots of hatred, grudges, bickering and detestation of one another. People greet each other in the church on the surface, but underneath they backbite, devour and kill one another. The leadership will keep quiet about the crisis, hoping that it will go away by itself and refused to talk to nor give audience to those who are concerned about the situation.

3. Tribal or Inter-tribal War

In this mode, leaders begin to suppress those who are not from their tribe, lineage and area. They will deny them promotion; welfare and injustices are visited upon them. Communication with people will be selective and tribalistic. Only those who are their favourites, cronies and bootlickers are communicated with. The meetings are called based on ethnic lines and people of other tribes will be systematically called names and driven out of the church.



The outcome is that the church will fall into tribal cleavages, bias and ethnic ethos that will destroy the oneness of believers in Christ. In a particular denomination I know, there are local assemblies that you cannot take a 'Yoruba' Priest to and vice versa. These tribal and intertribal wars have ruined the church from within and led to deep division that has opened the gate for the enemies to strike and attack.

4. Guerilla War

In the church, there are people who felt that their grievances have not been addressed and therefore decide to act as spoilers within the church. They stay in the church to fight from within. They usually cause damages and destruction intermittently and yet join others to sympathize. When church leaders dance round issues and display favoritism, then they give room to guerilla warfare tactics to take place inside the church. When conflicts are allowed to lead to isolation of people, then it will result in guerilla warfare inside the church.

5. Jaw-Jaw

This is the only right way to handle conflicts and crisis in ministry. It has been said that it is better to jaw-jaw than to war-war. Interaction, communication and round table discussion is the best option to end any conflict and crisis. Even the best of wars are never settled on the battle field, but on the interaction round-table.



I sincerely hope that church leaders will take the fifth option to resolve all the conflicts and crisis of ministry today. This will lessen the negative impact of conflicts in churches. Of course, that is the last option for many leaders after they have dissipated their precious energy, resources and time on the first four wrong ways. I hope leaders can imbibe and apply the fifth option sincerely, honestly and transparently enough at the onset of conflict, then, it will not degenerate into big crisis.





Chapter Ten

PROPER HANDLING OF CONFLICT AND CRISIS IN MINISTRY

C

Church leaders can always count on two truths. First, they will face conflicts, criticism and crisis in ministry. Secondly, they can

handle them properly and maturely, and it will give them valuable lessons that will help the growth of the ministry.





Unhappy, jealous and hurting people tend to attack the point-leader. Moses was attacked by his own family. Here's how he handled it according to the Bible in Numbers chapter 12 verses 3 to 14:

- * Maintain your humility – verse 3
- * Face criticism squarely – verse 4

* Be specific about the issue – verse 5 * Lay out the consequences - verses 9-10 * Pray for the critics – verses 12-13 * Restore them when appropriate – verse 14

Hard to please, fault-finding, domineering and negativeminded people will be in your ministry. People that have personal ambition, ulterior motives and want to fester their own nests will query your call, teachings and leadership. Difficult situations will arise and we will have to deal with them. But how you handle them matters so much. You will need lots of maturity, wisdom, capacity and sincerity to properly handle them. Permit me to pinpoint principles that will help you to properly handle any kind of conflict and crisis of ministry:



1. Check Your Standing With The Lord

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” – 2 Corinthians 13:5

Make sure your heart and life is right with God. Make sure there are no sin, evil and unrighteousness hidden in your heart and life. Sin in your life and heart are holes in your armour and will leave you defeated by the enemy.

2. Check Your Attitude

Sarcastic, negative, critical and judgmental attitudes will make crisis to blow out of proportions. Prejudiced and biased mind will never help you to handle conflicts rightly. Your attitudes will either help you to be proactive or reactive to conflict and crisis of life and ministry. If you purge yourself of negative attitudes, then you can properly handle conflicts before they fester to crisis.

3. Welcome The Conflict

Stop being afraid of conflict in the church; accept them, welcome them but tackle them head-on with the word of God and prayers. Make every conflict a learning experience. Stop running away or fidgeting about conflicts; face them; fight them until you finish them,



knowing full well that if you fail to handle them rightly, they will mishandle you and your ministry.



4. Don't Over-React To Conflict And Disagreements

Your actions and reactions matter a lot. Whenever a conflict blows into the open, your first reaction will speak volumes. If you become hysterical, jittery and overwhelmed, then you have lost the battle. But if you remain calm, composed, prayerful and thoughtful, then you have seized the initiative. If you refuse to be intimidated, despite your inner fears, then you can dictate how the conflict will be handled.

5. Use The 101% Principle

This means that you find out the 1% you agree with and give it your 100% attention and effort. You must show commitment to resolving the conflict. That might mean that you have to shift ground and look for common areas of agreement and start working from there.

6. Love People More Than Policies



People are much more important than policies, but love truth more than people. Find out the truth about the issues at hand and stay with the truth and be on the side of the truth. The truth of God's word must supercede any person. Address the core truth, not personalities.

7. Initiate The Contact

Call and invite people to make things right. Be proactive and reach out to the other party. Identify the arrow-head of the conflict and call them for amicable settlement. Don't be rigid and inflexible in your position and demands. Don't wait for them to call or until they are threatening, initiate the peace process.

8. Admit Your Faults And Apologize Where Possible

It is necessary that you display humility and tenderness. Wherever you are wrong, admit it and apologize. Rather than demean you, sincere apologies

will disarm people and lift up your respect. Compromise on opinions and not on principles Be flexible with everything except the truth of God's word.

9. Ask For Help

You must prayerfully ask for God's help in resolving conflicts in your ministry. You need to pray much and bind



the spirit that causes crisis. You must also not fail to ask for counsel, advice and insight from experienced and Spiritfilled mentors in the ministry. Their counsel can be invaluable in handling conflicts the right way in ministry.



Chapter Eleven

HEALTHY CONFRONTATION AND SOLUTION TO CONFLICTS

T

he best way to solve many conflicts and problems in the church is to confront them. Sometimes these problems are people.

Apostle Paul displayed great courage in confronting Apostle Peter to resolve the Gentile and Jewish error.





“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?” 14

Apostle Paul also confronted Philemon concerning the issue of Onesimus;



“Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ. I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:” – Philemon 8-10

While courageous leaders will take time to confront problems, fearful leaders will shrink from it.

To properly resolve conflicts, they must be confronted. The problem person must be addressed squarely and issues must not be swept under the carpet. However, it will take a courageous leader to do that, just like Apostle Paul.

Fearful Leaders

Fearful leaders are harmful to their churches or ministries because they are afraid to confront issues. They dance round problems, afraid to offend

people and want the status quo to remain. They hate to take risks but love to pacify situations. They avoid the problem but will blame others in private.

The fearful leader is a people-pleaser and he is worried about what people will say. He therefore procrastinates from taking decisive actions until the small fire will become a raging fire. He is afraid to release people that



are no longer making good contributions to the cause of God in the church. He would rather keep them until they become the clog in the wheel of progress.

Fearful leaders fear decision making and constantly plead for patience until things will go bad beyond measure. They don't change and will not improve themselves and this will eventually lead to their inability to lead the church further.

Fearful leaders do not take risk but always play safe so as to cover their weaknesses. And these weaknesses will allow strivers and ambitious people to gain foothold in the church.

Courageous Leaders

Clearly, I did not start out as a courageous leader. I had lots of fears and delayed in taking decisions and confronting problematic persons. But over the years as I invest in my leadership ability, I gained some measure of courage to handle conflicts and confront the problematic persons. It is then our ministry moved forward. I can even recollect a meeting where I had to face my critics and those who wanted the ministry dead! I had to put up courage to tell them the truth to their faces and asked them to step aside, if they cannot follow the culture of loyalty of the ministry. Since then we have been making progress.

Courageous leaders usually mask their fears and move on decisively. They are not afraid to confront issues head-on



and face the problematic person squarely, though with lots of prayers and maturity.

What are the healthy ways to confront people?

1. Pray Through Your Own Anger

Don't let emotion lead you. Wait until you can be objective and put issues in proper perspective.

2. Initiate The Contact

Don't wait for the other person. God calls us to make things right.

3. Begin with Affirmation

Encourage and appreciate first, then receive permission to talk candidly.

4. Admit You Have A Problem

Don't say it is the other person's problem; admit you are struggling.

5. Bring Up The Issue

Explain that you don't understand what happened. Aim to clarify.

6. Let The Person Respond

After you have laid out the issue, let the person speak from his or her angle.

7. Narrow The Focus

Identify and prioritize the issues. Go after one change at a time.

8. Establish Forgiveness And Repentance If needed, don't stop until change occurs.



9. Compromise On Opinions, Not On Principles Be flexible with everything except the truth.

10. Pray And Affirm Your Love As You Close Never let the person doubt God's love or yours.







Chapter Twelve

HOW TO HANDLE DIFFICULT BUT GIFTED PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

I



n my years of interacting and sharing with church leaders of various affiliations, one reoccurring decimal I've always come across is the issue of

wrong handling of gifted and anointed underleaders. The issue of insecurity and inferiority complex has contributed greatly to this crisis.

Young, dynamic, gifted, anointed, educated but inexperienced and sometimes, irresponsible people have been lost due to insecurity by top church leaders. Denominations, ministries and church leaders have continued to lose top quality people simply because they handled them in the wrong way. We have a history of mishandling the stars around us. Churches and ministries that could have made major impact are still struggling simply because of this problem. It's time we examine this issue much more critically and dispassionately for the benefit of all.

The Number One Purpose of Leadership

“And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” - Matthew 4:19

“Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” - 2



Timothy 2:1-2

When God calls a leader, He usually places gifted and anointed people under him. Leaders are meant to be brokers of gifts, talents and graces of people. Leaders are to encourage the weak, strengthen the feeble, empower



the young and enable the strong to blossom.

Poor teams have little or no talented people; average teams have average talents; outstanding teams have people with outstanding gifts and talents. Good leaders that want to build great works always search for talented, highly gifted and anointed people to work with. And when they see one, they celebrate them.

- * Under a Potiphar, you have a Joseph
- * Under a Moses, you have wise Beezalel and Joshua * Under a Joshua, you have a Caleb
- * Under an Eli, you have a visionary Samuel
- * Under an Elijah, you have an Elisha
- * Under a Saul, you have a dynamic David
- * Under a David, you have Joab, Solomon and mighty

men

- * Under a Nebuchadnezzar, you have Daniel,

Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego

* Under a John the Baptist, you have a Jesus * Under Jesus, you have a Petulant Peter

* Under the Apostles, you have a Paul

* Under a Paul, you have Timothy, Titus and Demas



It is a divine rule that under a leader, there are greater and more anointed leaders; it is a mark of God's mercy. When you are praying for power, gifts and Holy Ghost manifestation, God may not pour it on you alone God, who is no respecter of persons, usually blesses leaders with people of outstanding wisdom, gifts, talents, age, class, experience and anointing. They are not meant to make the leader look inferior, but to strengthen his hand and make the work easier. Unfortunately, many leaders have not been very comfortable with this divine order and they have literally driven away those who could have made their work better.

How Leaders Have Handled Gifted People

“And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants. And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his



thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can



he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul's hand. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice.” - 1 Samuel 18:5-11

'It is he that is no longer growing that is afraid of the growth of others'. Sadly, that is the reality of the life and ministry of very many leaders. They operate with the mentality that nobody will be more gifted or rise above them in their church or ministry. Across denominations, church leaders have handled gifted and anointed people just as king Saul handled young and popular David:

- * Suspicion and secret fear.
- * Veiled jealousy and envy.

- * Attempt to muffle and keep him quiet.
- * Public rebuke, castigation and dress down on flimsy excuses.



- * Accusation of pride, ego and boasting.
- * Hearing from one side and passing judgment. * Discipline and suspension for breaking unknown rules of the church.
- * Refusal to recognize his gifts, ministry and talents. * Transfer to far and unknown places.
- * Plotting and planning to eliminate and discredit him.
- * Using every excuse to nail him or send him away. * Placing a ban on others just to get at the gifted

people.

Unfortunately, these are true and real ways leaders and churches have wrongly handled gifted and anointed people today. And churches have become dwarfs as a result. Since they are wrongly handled, gifted people have left and since giants have left, we are left with dwarfs.

When leaders cannot tolerate highly gifted, popular and anointed people, they will only gather dwarfs around themselves and they won't be able to make any major impact. When you continually lose your most gifted, anointed and capable people, then your ministry will remain as a dwarf. Yes, some leaders are happy with that, but you need to know that it is limitation of the highest order!



How To Handle Gifted And Anointed People

“And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was

not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.” - John 3:23-30

“Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee



up against me, let him accept an offering: but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the LORD; for they have driven me out this

day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods. Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains. Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly. And David answered and said, Behold the king's spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it. The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the LORD delivered thee into my hand to day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed. And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation. Then Saul said to David, Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail.



So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.” returned to his place.” 25

Your church or ministry cannot rise above all limits without the ability to handle your gifted and anointed people well. Churches and leaders that rise above all limitations are those that have learnt how to maximize the gifts and graces of their people. In fact, they pray for more anointed and gifted people to help them make major impact in life and across the world. The more gifted and anointed people you have, the more profound and widespread will your impact be in the world. As a John the Baptist, you must know how to behave when your Jesus comes to the front.

1. Recognize that God will send gifted and anointed people to you.
2. Be secure in God and in your calling You are secure in Him.
3. Don't remain stagnant in your leadership, grow and improve your skills.
4. Teach your heart to be free from petty jealousy and envy.
5. Be broadminded, flexible, accommodating and personable. Be a father and mentor indeed to them.



6. Seek to contribute, equip, empower and enable your people.
7. Seek personal approach and relationship with your gifted people; don't let people push you against them.
8. Give them room to perform and shine without hindrance.



9. Have policies and guidelines in place to handle gifted people
10. Pray and intercede for them and sincerely wish them well; don't ever curse.
11. Even if they have to go, release them joyfully and celebrate them – they are the extension arm of your ministry, wherever they go, no matter the name.

Your gifted people today are the future of your life and ministry. They are the ones that would take care of you tomorrow. If you have the habit of trampling upon the head of your gifted people, then you are writing the letter of suffering to your old age. I know of many church leaders today who are suffering because they have mishandled and oppressed those who could have taken care of them in old age in ministry.

Dear leader, be wise and grow into maturity in the way you handle those gifted and anointed people that God directs under your church and leadership.





Chapter Thirteen

HANDLING CHURCH DEPARTURES

D



Deserting churches by people is not a new phenomenon. It is only that it is gaining more ground everyday. Along the streets

you see people who were once strong church members but today are no longer going to churches and would rather sit at home on Sundays. In another instance, you notice people that frequently change churches for one reason or the other.

Church deserters are people that leave churches for one reason or the other. Some of the reasons are genuine, ugly and absurd, but they leave anyway. In the light of strife; conflict and crisis, many people, including top officers at one time, have departed churches. While some move to other churches, some backslide from the faith. Some people who depart a church due to one conflict or the other have gone ahead to start their own churches and today, we have the alarming trend of church leaders who are holding grudges, detesting one another and doing everything possible to run the ministry of each other down!

One Pastor was overhead speaking about another Pastor in town, “I will run him down and ruin his ministry in this town”! Why would a Pastor do that to a fellow Pastor? Because they broke away from each other's church and carry on the ministry without resolving the conflict.

Well, there is a good example for us to follow in the early church. Apostle Paul and his mentor, Barnabas, had a sharp disagreement over Mark.



“And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John,



whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;” - Acts 15:36-39

They could not see from the same view point and they departed from each other. However, they reconciled and Paul later had good use of Mark and had good word for Barnabas.

“Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.” – 2 Timothy 4:11

“Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?” – 1 Corinthians 9:6



“Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)” – Colossians 4:10



Yes, conflict might come and cause us to depart from one another as a result of tension and strong feelings about the issue of contention. However, it must be temporary, not permanent. And we must do everything to resolve it and not allow it to cause anger, resentment and long-time grudge among us. Let us look at some facts about church departures:

1. People Depart From Churches Regularly

The church is a free society and no law binds people to any church. People have the freewill to stay or depart when they are no longer interested. Only few people stay in a church for life. Physical mobility seems to affect spiritual mobility also. As people change accommodation, cities and places they live so also they change churches for one reason or the other.

2. Departures Is Part And Parcel of Ministry

Close associates, mutual friends and ministry partners do choose to depart from each other in this work. Even our Lord Jesus had people departing from Him.



“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?” – John 6:66-67

His close disciples left Him, deserted Him and departed from Him for reasons best known to them. Apostle Paul also experienced people departing from him in ministry.

“This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.” 2 Timothy 1:15

**“At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.”
– 2 Timothy 4:16**

Their ministry did not come to an end simply because some people left. They built on those who remained faithful and continued to grow.

3. Not All Departure Is Evil

Leaders need to realize this cogent truth that not all departure that you experience is evil. While carnal tendencies and work of Satan might instigate some, others



were allowed by God for your good. Some growth and open doors will not be available to you until some people depart from your life and ministry. Take the case of Abraham as an example. Some promises of God never got fulfilled in his life until Lot departed from him.

“And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they

separated themselves the one from the other. And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.” – Genesis 13:8-9, 11, 14-15



Know full well that some people will have to leave your ministry for the promises of God to be fully fulfilled. Therefore, you must focus on your ministry and build up those whom the Lord allows to remain and stay with you.

4. Never Begrudge Those Who Depart From You

Whenever people or close associates depart from a leader, either by peaceful or forceful means, the normal reaction of the flesh is to curse, abuse and begrudge such people. Time and time again, this has been the

case in many Pentecostal and indigenous churches across Africa. This is against the scripture.

“And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.” – Luke 9:49-50

The disciples of Jesus thought they had done the right thing by stopping someone doing ministry in Jesus' name, but who is not following Jesus. The Lord rebuked them and said it is wrong to do such. We need to realize that not everyone will be together in one place, under one vision to do this work. God will want people to do His work in different ways and we must never begrudge them. Those



who leave us must not be hindered from doing the work, either with good or negative intentions.

5. We Must Reconcile With Deserters

There is no way we can get to heaven when we do this work with grudge, malice, strive and anger in our hearts against our fellow brothers and sisters. Those who abandoned or deserted us in whichever way must never be cursed but prayed for and with all possibility be reconciled with.

Pa Josiah Akindayomi, the founder of The Redeemed Christian Church of God, left the Cherubim and Seraphim church to start the small group that metamorphosed into this great denomination today. Obviously they had issues and unresolved conflict together. After many years, he died but God brought him back to life. He said the gate of heaven was not opened to him and he was asked to go and settle with the former church he left. He sent for them and their conflict was amicably resolved and weeks later, he died peacefully in the Lord!

This true life story must be a great lesson and a reminder that we can never get to heaven with unresolved strives and conflicts in our hearts against our brethren. Therefore, if you have departed from a church unceremoniously, you



need to go back and reconcile. If your former associates have left you without blessing, you need to call them back for reconciliation and proper send forth. Failure to do this might close the door of heaven against you. If our love for one another is not real and deep from the heart but cosmetic and only in tongue, then our heaven is not sure.

“So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” – Matthew 18:35

You must keep your heart free from animosity towards those who left you and those you left. Teach your heart to love, forgive and wish them well in the Lord.









LAST WORD

I

n the mid eighties, there was a big church conflict and crisis that was hugely reported in the Newspapers then. It was the case of an Associate

leader that left his leader acrimoniously. The Associate went away with one of the branches of the church, the people and the properties of the church in Warri, South-South Nigeria. Five people were sent with the church bus from the headquarters of the church in Benin City, to Warri in order to recover the church property from the breakaway Associate.



Unfortunately, those five people have not been seen till today. Nobody knows whether they are dead or alive! The matter remained unresolved and

has been swept under the carpet. Years later, the main leader died and that Associate has risen in the ministry, but that case is still an albatross hanging on his neck. I am telling this story to reemphasize the scriptural truth that we must resolve our conflicts. No matter the conflict that arises in our ministries, we must follow the command that our Lord Jesus gave to us.

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” – Matthew 18:15-17



Unresolved conflicts will do much damage to our lives here, the image of the church and our heaven. Apostle Paul rebuked the Corinthian church for

her failure to amicably settle their differences but rather resorted to the law courts.

“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?” – 1 Corinthians 6:1-7



He took strong exceptions to that. In the rhetorical question he asked them, “Why don't you rather allow yourself to be cheated?” That is what will be peace to our lives and ministries. We must stop claiming our rights and rather allow ourselves to be cheated. When we hand over



our case and life into God's hand and not fight for ourselves, it is then God can defend us.

There is no place to resolve conflicts in heaven, it must be done here. And when we are intransigent or trying to sweep them under the rug, we are only postponing the evil day. The conflicts we don't resolve here amicably will surely close the gate of heaven against us and our work will get burnt up in flames. All the ministry we do with strife and conflicts in our hearts will not be rewarded by the Lord!

The time to seek for reconciliation and restitution of our conflicts is NOW! Delay is dangerous!



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INTERNATIONAL CHURCH GROWTH MINISTRY was founded in 1994. The vision of the ministry is to provide current and reliable Church Growth principles in African context to Leaders, Pastors and Ministers that will lead to better and faster growth of their churches.

We do these through books, materials, VCD and audio cassettes at relatively low cost to people engaged in leading the church.



We equally organise seminars and conferences on various aspect of Church Growth and Health. We also accept invitations from churches to help analyse them, motivate their people and generally help the growth potentials of churches.



So far we have ministered to over 20,000 Pastors and Christian Workers across many denominational lines and independent churches. The results have been tremendous and the testimonies have been wonderful and interesting.

The ministry also saw the need to really raise the growth consciousness in the Continent and decided to pioneer an Institute on Church Growth. The response has been overwhelming as so many Pastors, General Overseers, and Church Leaders have enrolled to learn more about how to practically lead their churches to growth. The impact of the Institute on these Pastors' lives have started manifesting in the phenomenal growth of their churches and expansion of their ministries.



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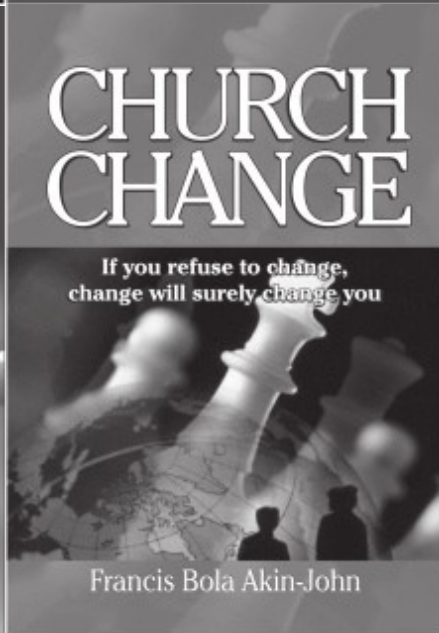
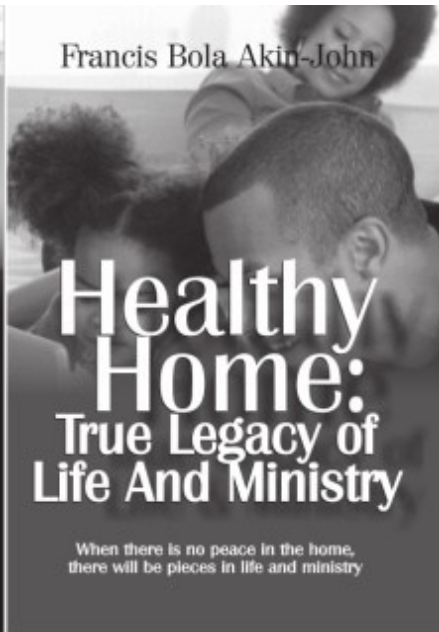
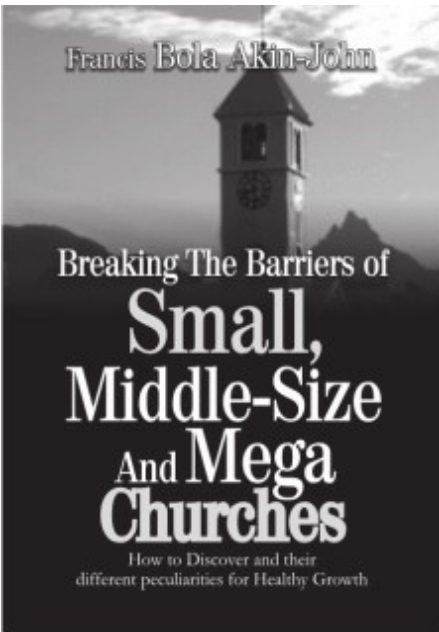
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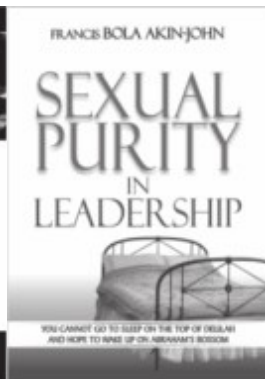
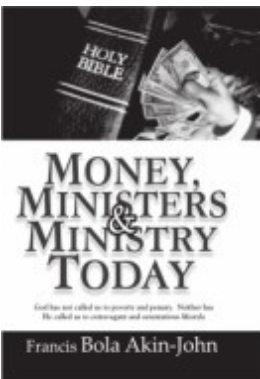
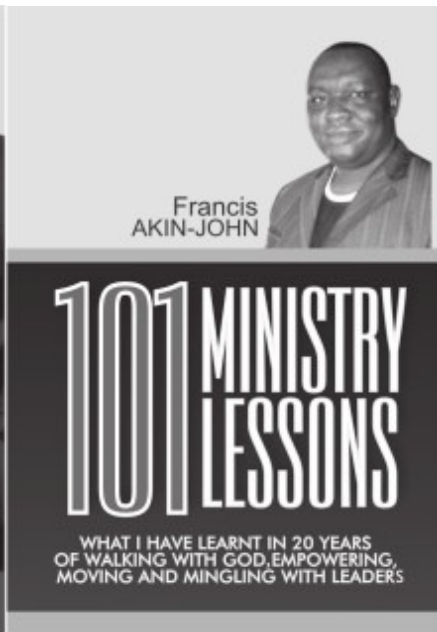
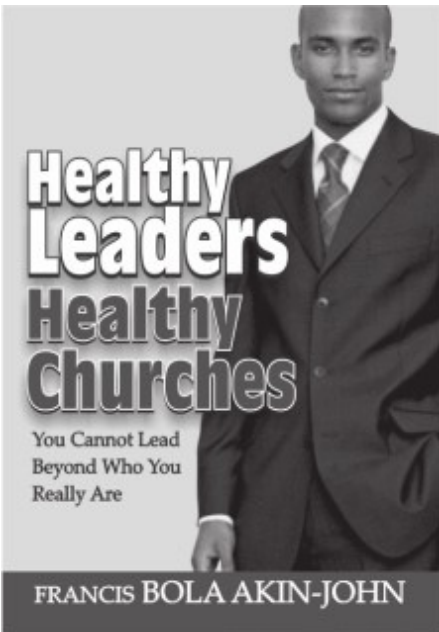


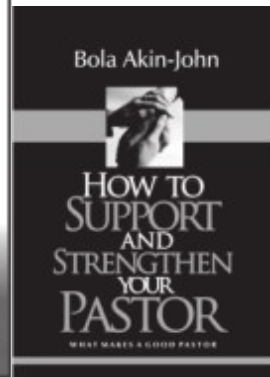
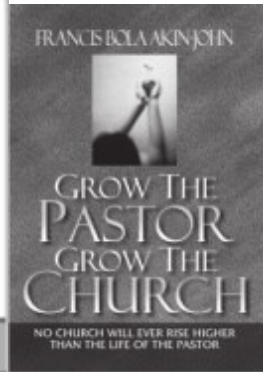
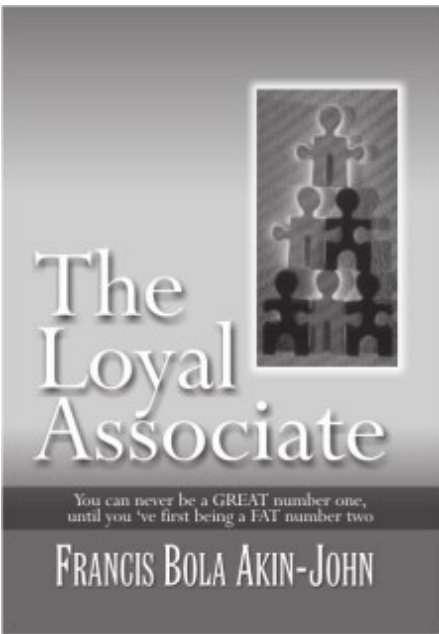
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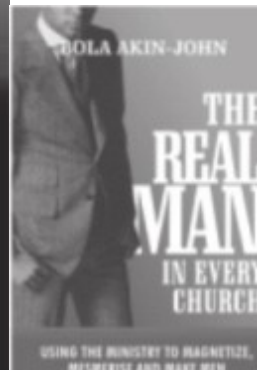
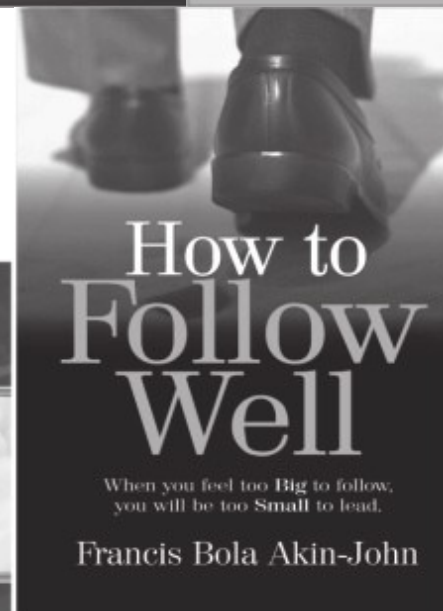
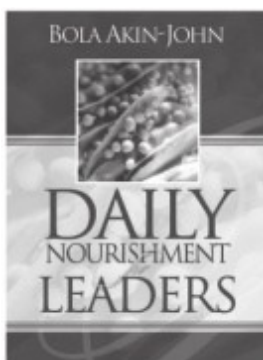
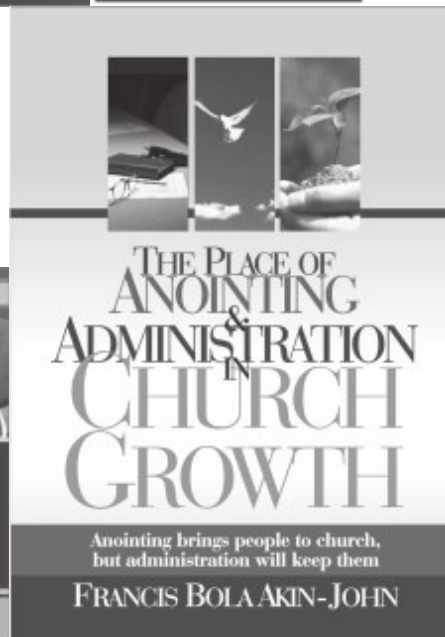
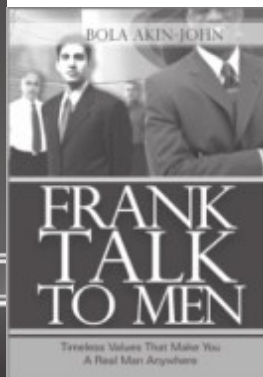
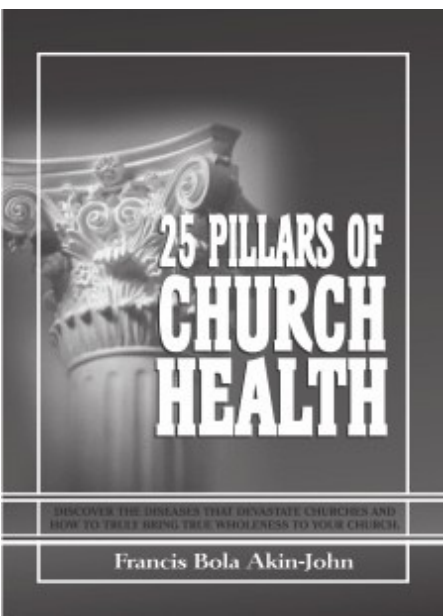
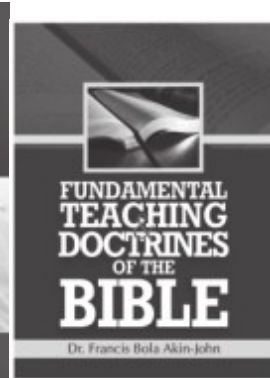
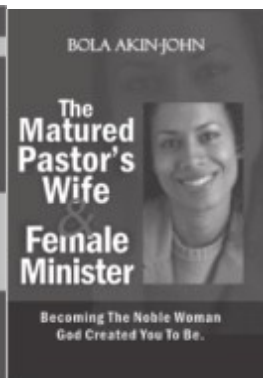
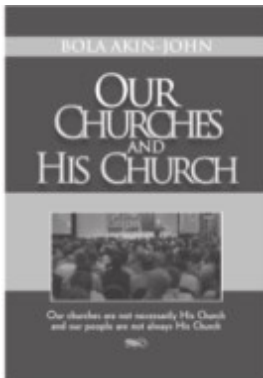
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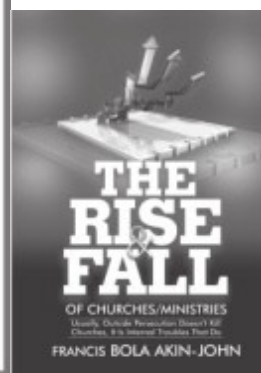
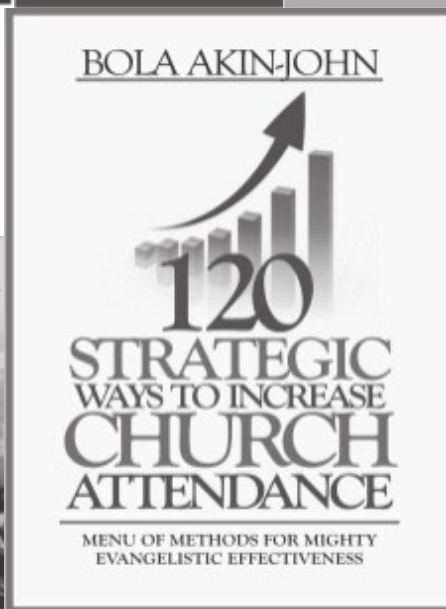
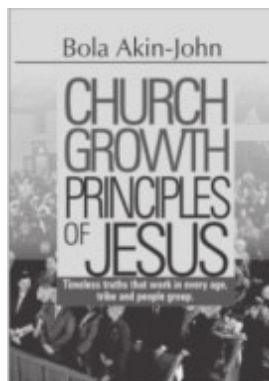
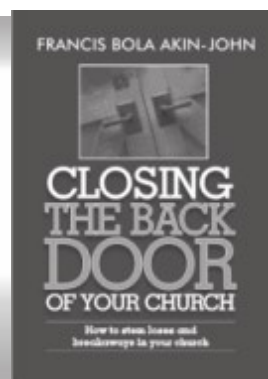
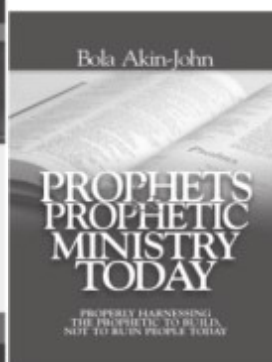
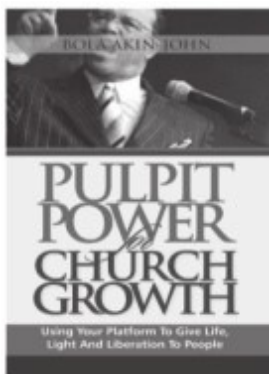


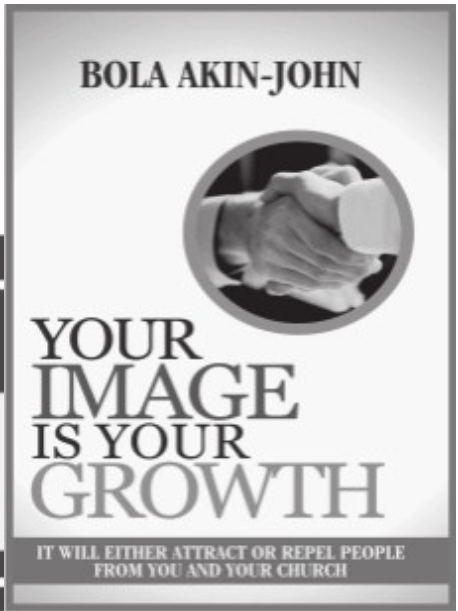
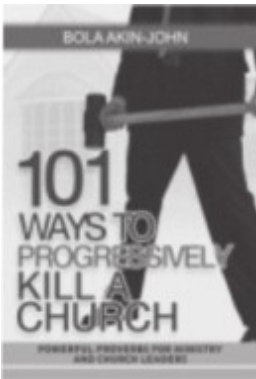


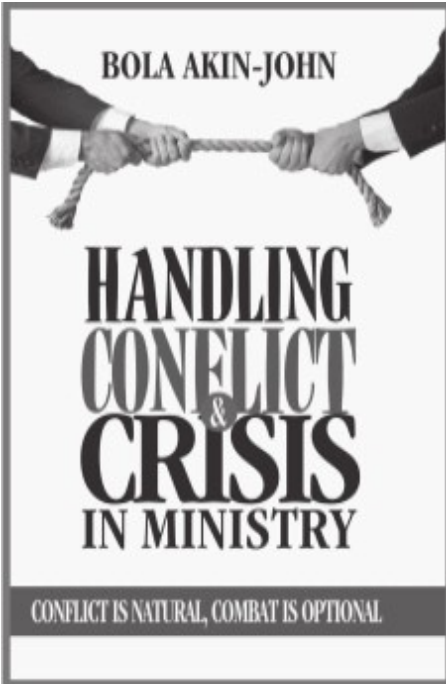












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THE AUTHOR

1994 after hearing God said “Go and strengthen pastors and support churches to grow and be healthy”.

- * Has held hundreds of conferences across Nigeria, Africa and Europe with combined attendance of many Thousands of church leaders.
- * Has written over 40 books that has sold thousands of copies.
- * Founded International Institute of Church Growth that has trained over 5,000 pastors and leaders with attendant growth testimonies.
- * Has written and produced hundreds of materials on various aspects of

church growth, leadership and health that are being used by thousands of church leaders.

- * Has mobilized and equipped men to become real men through seminars, resources and tapes.

- * Has sold thousands of tapes - audio, DVD, CDs that continued to bless and edify thousands of ministers and church leaders.

- * Has consulted and helped many denominational and independent churches to overcome stagnation, crisis and breakaways.



- * Has been used by God to raise and grow thousands of ministers, churches and ministries across the nations.

- * He is trying to live his major passion of “Empowering Leaders to Grow Healthier Churches and Ministries” across the world.