

Thousands Saved as Revival Sweeps Nigeria: The 'Gospel Classroom'

If you have not traveled overseas much, or not lately, make sure Nigeria is one of your first destinations when you do. It is simply shocking to witness a modern revival as it is unfolding and to see its far-reaching implications.

As a backdrop, let me describe for you what has happened in the past 30 years. Nigeria has a population of 205 million people, by far the largest in Africa. 30 years ago, Christianity was about 20% of the population. Today, more than 50% of the population identify as Christian (some leaders say substantially more, but the data is repressed by the government in fear of Muslim animosity). As a result, there are now tens of millions more believers, and tens of thousands more churches, than 30 years ago!

Let me give a couple examples:

Bishop Oyedepo leads Winners Chapel, which seats 50,000 people, and he fills it eight times each weekend. I have been there, and it is overwhelming to see so many people worshipping!

Bishop Adeboye leads a Nigerian denomination called the Redeemed Christian Church of God. When he became the leader over 30 years ago, there were about 1,000 people in the entire denomination. Today, there are upwards of 15 million people—40,000 churches in Nigeria with 8,000 more around the world! For his annual church conference, he hosts 3 million people for a week, where the pastors come in advance for training and inspiration. All 40,000 pastors come every year!

Then there is Dr. Paul Enenche. He and his wife, Dr. Beck

Enenche, (both are medical doctors) lead a church called Dunamis Gospel Center. The main sanctuary seats 100,000 people! He does three services each Sunday: 6, 8 and 10 a.m. His auditorium is called the Glory Dome and is a sight to behold, and tens of thousands stream in for each service.

Watch this clip to see for yourself.

I recently returned to Nigeria at Dr. Paul's invitation to train his staff on effectively reaching and discipling the next generation. It seems that although revival had been in process for 30 years, it has not impacted the younger generation (much like the revival in South Korea—which, at its height, had 33% of the population, but today only 1.7% of the youth are Christian).

Despite filling his auditorium each week, Dr. Paul, instead of basking in that success, wanted to learn the best practices curated from churches around the world, which I present in a master class, Exponential 101. As I presented the content of the master class to 400 of his staff and 100 other pastors under his umbrella, they were so filled with hope. Like many pastors, they know they are not reaching the younger generation but do not know what to do, or if anything can be done, to make significant impact. They were so excited to hear the stories of pastors around the world who are growing their churches by reaching and discipling those most likely to come to Christ, the youth. The hope in the room was palpable as they contemplated their future.

I am struck by so many dimensions of the phenomena in Nigeria; it seems all of us can benefit by their revival and navigating their future to sustain the movement. Let us all go to the classroom and pull up a desk and glean from their example:

Humility

Every time I travel to Nigeria, I am struck by their humility. Bishop Adebayo, who leads the massive RCCG, is so self-

effacing and God-honoring with his words and actions, whether in private or in front of 3 million people. It's as though he realizes (and acknowledges repeatedly) that this whole explosion of growth is an act of God and not his own skill.

Bishop Oyedepo, even though filling his massive structure numerous times each weekend, talked to me about the person he was sharing Christ with along the roadside recently. He was the first to exclaim, after he heard the result of the South Korean revival not reaching the young generation, "We need to make sure this does not happen here." He is now building a 100,000-seat church like Dr. Paul and will use the 50,000-seat church as an overflow room.

The humility exuding through Dr. Paul can be seen in his personal interaction with me as well and the respect he shows to the many who come for healing each week or to share about their miracles. The time he takes to interact with them personally and pull the congregation into the moment reveals the respect he has for people and his genuine love for them.

I think most profound is that fact that he would invite me to train him and his team about reaching and discipling the next generation in the midst of his roaring outward success. This speaks the loudest. Instead of putting the next generation in a department, or subcontracting it to a "youth pastor," he is taking the responsibility of passing the gospel to the next generation as a personal mandate for himself, his team and his church. I have no doubt that the Glory Dome will soon be filled with masses of youth, who after they come to Christ, will be enlisted in a clear pathway for growth discipleship process. This is exactly what is needed to sustain the revival to the next generation.

Joy

If you have the opportunity to submerge yourself in a Nigerian explosive praise celebration with tens of thousands dancing

and singing, on and on and on, then you might get a foretaste of what heaven will be like. In fact, during one service, the praise leader had to tag-team another leader since he was dancing for an entire hour and needed backup to continue the worship celebration.

I am reminded of Jesus' words, "Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little loves little" (Luke 7:47)—but in this case, "He who is delivered from much, celebrates much!" If you are not happy, you will get happy with the contagious joy of the masses who have been set free as it spontaneously erupts in every service! Despite their less-than-optimal circumstances in life such as poverty and persecution, they are so full of joy, we would all do well to learn from them.

Sacrifice

You may have wondered if it was a misprint when I mentioned earlier a 6 a.m. service each Sunday? You did read it correctly. When I arrived at about 5:45 a.m. on Easter Sunday, I saw hoards of people streaming into the auditorium and was shocked when I learned many start lining up at 4:30 a.m. each Sunday to attend.

In addition, you may have seen many headlines of Christians killed or taken captive over the past few years in Nigeria. The believers there live under the constant threat of Muslim extremists who sometime burn and kill an entire village with everyone in it if they discover most of them are Christians. Following Christ is synonymous with sacrifice in Nigeria. Even though evil looms large, people are willing to follow Christ unflinchingly because they realize what He has done for them. We would do well to embrace this disposition as well. {eoa}

Ron Luce *studied strategic foresight during his doctoral training at Regent University. After curating best-practices from churches all over the world that are thriving, he*

assembled a master class called Exponential 101 to help leaders and their teams discover how these best-practices could be utilized in their own church. For more info go to

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