

Developing Spiritual Revival and Discipleship Program to Uplift the Spiritual Standards of Bamburi Great News Church Members

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Abstract

The study sought to develop a spiritual revival and discipleship program to uplift the spiritual standards of Bamburi Great News Church members. The study adopted a mixed method. Data was collected by means of random sampling. 10 people were interviewed on the topic. Among them were 2 youths, 3 elderly men, and 5 women. Questionnaires were also used to corroborate the findings of the interviews. Several members with email addresses were sent questionnaires, while others were given directly to the respondents on a particular Sabbath. There were 17 electronic respondents and 25 verbal respondents then; the rest were hard copy response totalling 148 people. The result of this program is that it has proved successful and, if implemented, can benefit other churches that would like to grow and revive spiritually. It resulted in reaching out evangelism to neighbours and an increase in membership. They have a strong culture of Bible study, intercessory prayers, intermediation, and fasting. Members have been acquainted with the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and are now well established in the church and its mission. As a result, there is a deeper renewal of commitment to God. Intercessory prayers should be encouraged at all levels of the church's activities. Additionally, Bible study should be encouraged at all program levels in the church. Also, there should be regular seminars held in the church to keep a reminder to believers of their weak points in faith.

Key terms: Discipleship, spiritual revival, spiritual standards.

INTRODUCTION

The Bamburi Great News SDA Church is one of the churches in the District of Bamburi and is situated along the old Mombasa-Malindi Road, approximately 2km. from the giant Bamburi Cement Company. It is constructed on a half-acre land owned by the Kenya Coast Field of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. With a membership of 570 in its official register, this local Church receives approximately 1,000 attendances during Sabbath worship. It is a cosmopolitan church. The majority of members are Women who constitute about 56 per cent, followed by the youths at 15 per cent, Men at about 10 per CENT and children in plenty. The compound is shared by the church, Kenya Coast Field Headquarters and a Primary school from kindergarten 1 to Standard 8. The spiritual climate of the church is cold and slow.

The members come very late to church whereby during Sabbath School, only about 50 to 100 members (5% to 10%) start services on time. The majority arrive after the Sabbath School Bible study program. In the afternoons, the number of attendances drops drastically, whereby out of the 1000 attendance in the morning, only about 150 to 200 members (15% to 20%) turn up for planned programs in the afternoon. During the midweek prayer, about 30 to 50 members (3% to 5%) attend, and only around 100 (10%) or less attend on Friday sundown worship. From casual interactions with the members, it was discovered that some members attend the Sunday churches claiming to find revival there. The casual interactions further revealed that some members were holding animistic worldviews. Such members visit spiritualists, witchdoctors, herbalists, and the traditional medicine men and women who use charms, divination, and invocation of the spirit world to seek solutions to the challenges they face in life. The result is low spirituality in the Bamburi Great News Church. Therefore, this study sought to develop a spiritual revival and discipleship program to uplift the spiritual standards of Bamburi Great News Church members.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Revival will always come after a serious study of God's word and intensive prayer, or when people accept to be led by the word of God and follow His instructions, failure to which there will always be an apostasy. White (2002) explains explicitly that;

A true godliness revival among us is the most urgent and the greatest of all our needs. Our first work should be to seek this. There must be an earnest effort in order to obtain the Lord's blessings, not because God's will is not to bestow His blessing upon us, but instead being unprepared to receive it. Our Father Heaven is very willing to give His Holy Spirit to those who ask Him than are earthly parents willing to give good gifts to their children. However, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, our work is to fulfil the conditions that God has promised to grant His blessing to us. A revival need be expected only in answering prayer.

This implies that God is waiting to hear from his children as they come to Him in humility and are read to get instructions from His word, which is the only way he communicates to his people in which when we keep it in our hearts (Ps 119), will not sin. White (2018) further states that "... He forgets not His representative people who are striving to uphold His downtrodden law..." The law is the word of God, which must always be adhered to. She further says, "He hears their prayers, presented in contrition and power, and Omnipotence cannot resist their plea for the salvation of any tried, tempted member of Christ's body..."

God, at all times, has been reviving His chosen ones in various ways and at various times in the history of the church after seeing His people fall into apostasy. To get the whole concept of spiritual revival, we will use the Bible to cite a few examples of revival and how they are used at different times in the History of the children of Israel and in the early church. The call for spiritual revival is not a new thing in the Bible because God has always wanted his people to live a life that would show that they are his chosen ones.

The Old Testament has several examples of revival from the beginning of creation immediately after the fall of man, "...and Adam and his wife hid from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. 9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where [art] thou?" (Gen 3:8-9). In this verse, God is seen in the process of reviving the fallen man by calling them back to him. God did not let them perish but instead revived them from the pit back to life, thus preventing instant death. They were naked and hopeless, but God, who is loving, covered them with clothing from animal skin just to give them a second chance. "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them" (Gen 3:21).

According to Walsh and Olam (1996), there is a confrontation between Elijah (Representing Yahweh) and Ahab (representing Baal) in this narrative. God sends Elijah the prophet to the king with a declaration that "There shall be neither dew nor rain throughout these years" (1 Kings 17:1) except at the command of Elijah. The encounter with rain must have been provoked by the prerogative of Baal's prophets that Baal was a god of the storm. "Baal claimed to be the god of storm and fertility. That is why Yahweh directly challenges him on the matter of rain to demonstrate that He is the one who provides water. DeVries (1995) fittingly states that Elijah's name was symbolic of his mission, which was to demonstrate that Yahweh is God. Therefore, the claim as Elijah does in Chapter 17:1 that he a servant of Yahweh who controls the rain was to blaspheme Baal."

After the many days that the land stayed without rain, God arranges the meeting of Elijah and Ahab and reveals to them that it was because they had drifted from serving God to worshipping foreign gods that now God wanted to bring revival to them. This is seen in the conversation in chapters 18:1-18, where Ahab accuses Elijah of troubling Israel, but Elijah responds by accusing him and the entire community of abandoning God. "Elijah throws the accusation back in Ahab's face, charging the entire house of Omri with abandoning Yahweh's commandments and specifically blames Ahab for serving the baals." The narrative in vs 41-46 shows Elijah challenging Ahab to bring the prophets of Baal and 18:20 to assemble all people to

make a grand revival by making a choice on whom to follow vs. 21 "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD [be] God, follow him: but if Baal, [then] follow him."

That was the start of a great revival call from Elijah after a long spell of drought. The idea of wavering between two opinions is in the essence, worshipping Baal instead of God. "While they are weighing up the odds in their heads, they are in practice worshipping Baal as their god and neglecting the worship of Yahweh." (Provan, 1995). This implied they had ignored the word of God, which should have led them towards knowing the truth and guiding their paths. When Elijah erected the altar of God, it was a symbol of independence upon the word of God, and in his prayer, he wanted the people to see how God answers His people when they pray to Him and make a decision to come back are be led by His word.

Another example of revival is the one for King Josiah. He started his work as a king when he was eight years old (2 Kg 22:1) when he gave command of the temple's renovation (Vs 3-7). During that time, the book of the Law was discovered (vs 8), and they held a great Passover "No Passover like it had been kept in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet. None of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as was kept by Josiah, the priests and the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Evans, 2018). King came from a background in which his predecessors were not a good example, and it was unlikely that he would do any good thing. However, God especially used him as it is rightly stated, "Yet the grace of God made him an eminent saint, cut him off from the wild olive and grafted him into the good olive" (Henry, 1991).

While repairing the Temple, the book of the Law was found preserved safely by the hand of God; after that, there is no more mention of the repairing of the Temple; instead, the discovered book is brought before the king. Upon reading it, the king rents his clothes "The renting of his clothes signified the rending of his heart for the dishonour done to God and the ruin he saw coming upon his people" This was coming to God in prayer and supplication seeking the face of God. King Josiah gathers all the elders to him in

an effort to bring revival to the nation. “A public reformation was the thing resolved on; if anything could prevent the threatened ruin, it must be that; and here we have the preparations for that reformation” Henry goes on to say that “they all joining in it, ... the business might be done with the more solemnity, that they might all advise and assist in it.”

When they gathered, they expected a speech from the king. Instead, he ordered the book to be read to them, and this touched all the people and revived their interest in knowing and doing the will of God. This compelled them to spread the knowledge of it. He further explicitly remarks that “we have here an account of such a reformation as we have not met within all the history of the kings of Judah, such thorough riddance made of all abominable things and such foundation laid of a glorious good work.” The book of the law that was opened and read was the genesis of revival that inspired the king to bring a change and revival took place.

Fenshan (1982) posited that Ezra was a scribe who was anxious to acquaint his people with the sacred writings “He was a secretary, versed in the Law of Moses”, and he is considered to be the “inspired author of the books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah” (Nichol, 1955). Ezra and Nehemiah Joined hands to bring revival, each coming from different places where they were in exile. “Ezra came from Babylon and Nehemiah from Susa.” Fenshan (1982) records the homecoming of the Jewish nation from exile under the supervision of Zerubbabel. He also registers the recognition of the sacrificial services and the reconstruction of the Temple. There were decrees that were issued by Cyrus and had been kept for quite a long time before being carried out, most probably because of the instability of the country, which was under attack. “Returning to the Judea, the Jews found hostile neighbours and were continually harassed by the Samaritans.”

The examples of Ezra and Nehemiah showed how few people could bring revival and reformation when led by God-fearing people who are determined to bring change that strengthens faith. “Under the spiritual leadership of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, they finished the Temple.” It was the favour of God that

enabled them to find success because God wanted to revive the Israelites and bring them back to rebuild Jerusalem, as can be seen in chapter 7 verse 28. The hand of God was in it. “The author wants to show that in this important matter, the Lord, the God of history, influenced the Persian king to react sympathetically to the overtures of Ezra.” A close look at the book of Ezra reveals that God intervened on behalf of His people for reviving them. Gaebelein (1988) uses any possible means to bring such revival to His chosen ones. “Moves even the heart of a pagan ruler to fulfil His will, He accomplishes the refining of his people through calamities like conquest and exile.” Gaebelein (1988) further asserts that it is God who stirs the hearts of his people to respond and raises men of God to lead his people; this is the type of revival that God requires in his church today.

Gaebelein (1988) has established that in order to achieve revival, there should be unity of purpose, leadership that is obedient to God’s word, courage in the face of opposition, offerings and funds, and an organised division of labour. He further establishes that while doing the work of God, there will be a lot of opposition in “the guise of proffered cooperation from those who do not share our basic theological convictions.” Hence, he advises that we need to be watchful and forceful, knowing that “by God’s grace we can triumph over all opposition and accomplish his will with rejoicing.” He further argues that the confidence that Ezra had was as a result of God’s assurance of his call. “The assurance that God had called him and had opened the doors gave Ezra the courage and strength to undertake this great task.” This made him travel with a caravan in a very dangerous place without the security from the king and being vulnerable to attacks from enemies and bandits along the way “Ezra had gone out on a limb by proclaiming his faith in God’s ability to protect the caravan.”

After Ezra had experienced the hand of God, he involved others “he enlisted others and assigned trustworthy men to their task” That revival was done, and the priests joined in after the bold steps from Ezra and Nehemia. Fenshan (1982) notes that “It is also interesting to note that the priests formed about a tenth of the total number of returnees” In comparison

to the Levites that returned, it is noted that only a small number accepted the call for revival and returning back to Jerusalem. "A minority of the Levites returned in comparison with the priests." The revival saw the institution of several sacrificial festivals that had been forgotten, as could be seen in chapter 3 of the book of Ezra, where it pictures a reformation in which worship was re-instituted. "This chapter pictures the beginning of a legitimate worship." Fensham further explains that it was mandatory for every Israelites to attend the three festivals of the Lord. The revival saw the rebuilding of the altar of God and breaking down the ones which were considered not built according to the pattern of Moses. "This alter was not regarded as being built in accordance with the description of the Law of Moses. Thus, it was felt necessary to build a new alter." This also followed the revival of the regular sacrifices as they were described in the Law of Moses, as can be seen in verse 6, "the first part of this verse clearly refers to the fact that all the sacrifices, except those connected to the Feast of Tabernacles, were instituted on the first of the seventh month."

The Jews who went back to Jerusalem from Babylon for revival did so in three groups. Evans (2018) says that "The first came about 536 BC, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, who was also known as Sheshbazzar. The second group came in 457 BC, under the leadership of Ezra the Scribe, and the third group came in 445 BC, under the leadership of Nehemiah." At that point, the most significant revivals of this period took place. Nehemiah was a faithful Jew who served in the Persian court and held the trusted position of royal cupbearer. "The book of Nehemiah, perhaps more than any other book of the Old Testament, reflects the vibrant personality of the author" He must have served during the time of Ezra and even when the enemies destroyed the walls of Jerusalem. "Ezra continued on in Jerusalem into the time of Nehemiah."

When Nehemiah got visitors from Jerusalem, he was curious to know what was going on back at home; his first question "I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem" (Neh 1:2). The news he received dismayed him, and he was not happy because

the walls of Jerusalem were broken down. Gaebelein (1988) describes Nehemiah as a person who was responsible, a man of vision, a man of prayer, and a man of action and of cooperation, a man of compassion, a man who triumphed over the opposition, and a man with the right motivation. These qualities must have contributed to his ability to bring the drastic revival as is seen in his work. He then developed a plan to revive and rebuild the walls; he prayed earnestly about the matter; he was fearless and determined. Under his organisation, the wall was rebuilt amidst threats from the enemy. "Although the work on the wall proceeded rapidly, it was beset with many difficulties, which included lack of interest in certain of his people (Neh 4:10; 6:10-12). This act of Nehemiah was viewed as a revival strategy for the Israelites since he did not end in the rebuilding of the wall only. However, he brought drastic spiritual reforms to Judea by eradicating many oppressive rules (Neh 5:1-19). "The religious needs of the people were met by great mass meetings." (Neh 8-10). Nichol (1955) further states that Ezra and other leaders took the initiation of reading and explaining the Law to the people. This resulted in a radical spiritual revival, which eventually led to the signing of the covenant by the laity and Ministers. All promised to follow the Law of Moses.

Jeremiah lived in Anathoth, about three miles north of Jerusalem. He was of priestly descent. His ministry covers a period of 40 years whereby he worked under the reign of five kings, namely, Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. "By every means at Jeremiah's command, he sought to halt Judah's rapid descent down the declivity of moral depravity to ruin." The prophet Jeremiah is seeking to convince the people of Judea to come back to God with real heart reformation of faith. The call to the faithless people of Israel to return "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; [and] I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I [am] merciful, saith the LORD, [and] I will not keep [anger] forever" (Jer 3:12, 14, 22).

The renewal calls to both houses of Israel to repent, with promises of reunion and restoration (3:12-20), was a spiritual revival expected to be seen in the nation because God was bringing them back to him.

Jeremiah receives the word of God, and he communicates to them for them to make amendments and come back to their God. It is the word of God that comes to him; hence, revival was to take place because of receiving the word and responding positively to it. Apart from using individuals to effect spiritual revival, the Old Testament also highlights offices, systems, and events that God established to ensure revival. Among these offices, systems, and events include the priestly office, the sacrificial system, and the Day of Atonement.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Spiritual Formation

It is important that members should grow spiritually and guide members into becoming mature Christians who are not easily swayed by all types of waves, just like Paul warned in Ephesians 4:14, “that we henceforth are no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” Such spiritual formation has several examples drawn from the Bible Characters who were spiritual leaders for the edifying of the body of Christ. This was aimed at building a church that is spiritually mature.

Spiritual Gifts

Many of the church members have no idea how the church is well equipped with spiritual gifts, and they fail to use them and even seek assistance from other quarters where there are no spiritual gifts as the church has. Members should be led into discovering their spiritual gifts such as explained in the Seventh-day Adventist church's 28 fundamental Beliefs “According to the Scriptures, these gifts include such ministries as faith, healing, prophecy, proclamation, teaching, administration, reconciliation, compassion, and self-sacrificing service and charity for the help and encouragement of people” General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (2005). Fundamental belief number 17. When these spiritual gifts are well utilised, the ministry of Christ will be enhanced rapidly, and the church will accomplish its mission. On the second day of the seminar, which was the 23rd of December 2017, we handled two very important topics dealing with Christian growth and close ministering to others.

When our growth is steady, it will urge us to get out and minister to others who are also in need.

Spiritual Growth

When dealing with spiritual growth, we notice that it starts with death, not birth. Christ's death on the Cross is the one that gave each one of us a new life away from the reign of the devil, freeing us from the condemnation of sin. This is where we start our lives by first dying to ourselves as Jesus said that in order to be His followers, we must deny himself (Matt 16:24) and take up the life that Christ has offered to us by grace so that we start growing having come from the great darkness where He took us from. As Peter puts it *Moreover, giving all diligence adds to your faith virtue, virtue knowledge, knowledge temperance, temperance patience, patience godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and brotherly kindness charity. For if these things are in you, and abound, they make [you that ye shall] neither [be] barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pe 1:5-8).*

As we grow into the knowledge of Him, so do we grow into becoming more like Him, just as it is outlined in the Seventh-day Adventist 28 fundamental beliefs, number 11 “In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church.”

Personal Ministry

When spiritual formation and spiritual growth have been experienced, the community of believers with the knowledge of Bible study done regularly have to express it as they move out to witness to their neighbours who urgently need redemption. Believers are always urged to serve and witness because growing in Christ compels us to grow in the service in accordance with the great commission of our Lord stated in Mathew 28:19. This experience can be seen in the Bible by the early believers who went from house to house doing visitation and witnessing for Christ and teaching about Him “And daily in the temple, and every house, they ceased not to teach and preach

Jesus Christ” (Acts 5: 42) Visitation to each house in the neighbourhood is encouraged for all believers as White (1995) says “Gaining people’s confidence through personal visitation will have greater influence than preaching.” Through visitation, people get to know the conditions of fellow Christians and even their neighbours; it shows that a person cares and is very willing to share burdens or experiences. Through this personal ministry, a close connection with one another is achieved. It is able to bring a closer bond between individuals and thereafter increase the membership and bring new souls into the church. It is a very effective source of spiritual revival. The third day, the 24th of December 2017, was our final day of the seminar, and this became the most interesting day where participants were now eager to get started. With such a fire burning, we decided to close up but not before dealing with the three important lessons that were ahead.

The Priesthood of All Believers

Church members have always been termed or referred to as the laity. This term has brought a sharp rift between the clergy and the church members; when it comes to matters of spiritual matters, the members would draw back and say that it belongs to the clergy. This is neither correct nor biblical. When we try to look at its origin, Edwards (1979) states that it started with a priest by the name Clement of Rome when he first used the term in “AD 95 when he was concluding his brief reference to participants in the liturgy with the assertion that the lay ordinance binds the layman.” He further clarifies that “it must be understood that Clement in assigning the ‘layman’ a subordinate role in liturgy is reflecting the general Greek usage of the word ‘lay’ and turning it in a specifically Christian direction.” He further says that it was used to distinguish the mass from their leaders, and later when translating the Old Testament Hebrew into Greek, it was used to distinguish the secular from the sacred.

Moreover, “Clement used the term in such a way as to insist upon the liturgical competence of the laymen, however, limited it might be.” The members should be brought into the realisation that they are co-workers with Christ and that in the eyes of God Peter declares all believers’ priesthood (1 Pet 2:9) The call for the

priesthood is for all believers. It is intended for all members of the church to make an intervention for fellow humankind and all the backsliders. Therefore, it is important for members to understand their calling and realise that they are fellow labourers in God’s vineyard.

Small-Group Ministry

Small group ministry has been going on in the church and is not so new because it is done in the Sabbath school units every Sabbath. In this seminar, we concentrated on discussing how the existing small units have succeeded or have failed and the way forward for them. It was discovered that even the teachers for the small groups are not committed to work, and they do it as a normal routine, thus leaving a gap in nurturing new members who are in the church. With the knowledge of personal ministry already discussed in this seminar, we decided to give it another approach by engaging the leaders who had attended this seminar to teach the Sabbath school classes for one quarter using the new approach. They fostered a sense of belonging and unity of purpose. This was not just to end with the classes. However, each leader was to report the challenges he /she encountered every week and how they were solved and report activities of the group and its progress towards unity done by visitation. Robert (1989) notes that “the church is depended on narrow organisation functions for survival.” He quotes Paul Yongicho’s definition of small groups as “the smallest church in the world has the biggest... because every member is part of a home. A cell group consisting of 15 families or fewer.”

Nurture and Retention

Nurturing members in the church has been one of the greatest challenges the church has faced in years. There has been a dwindling number of members who cannot be traced simply because they come, and within a short time, they left again. This is mostly because there is no strategy in place to nurture them. In this course, the leaders were made aware that it would have a financial implication, which would need an extra mile to dig deep into their pockets. In a church, there are different classes of people; those who come burdened with many of life’s challenges and others who are well off. However, all of them

come with the aim of fellowshiping. From the previous survey, we saw that the attendance of members in the church in the afternoon dwindled drastically. A get-together, which entails the church financing a potluck for all members, has proved to put people from both classes together. They should be encouraged to come together to be served at a central place. Members can also bring their own food to share with others. If this succeeds well, there will be an increase in the afternoon attendance, and the fellowship will be achieved easily. Another thing is the reception of visitors. There is a tendency for people to socialise with the ones they already know and are used to; they forget that the new members are still looking for how to get assimilated. If this is neglected, then it is likely that this person may not return to the church again because they did not feel welcome. Therefore, it is essential to make friends with the new members and let them feel part of the family of Christ. It has been discovered that small group evangelism is a very

effective tool for nurturing members because of the close relationship between people. This creates stronger bonds among members.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: The researcher set out to untangle the reasons for spiritual decline in Bamburi Great News S.D.A. Church and find a conceivable corrective measure to ensure the situation was halted. It established that spiritual decline had been the foremost hindrance to the church's mission.

Recommendations: Intercessory prayers must be encouraged at all levels of the church's activities. In addition, organised Bible study should be encouraged in the church at all levels of the program. In addition, there should be regular seminars held in the church to keep a reminder to believers of their weak points in faith. Finally, Small groups' ministry should be encouraged to enhance fellowship closer to members.

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