



Inadequate pastoral training and insufficient ministerial formation within Neo-Pentecostal black churches may lie behind scriptural error and abuse

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Abstract

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit brought about revival and many conversions to Christianity in the black neo-Pentecostal stream of Pentecostal churches in South Africa. This revival exposed insufficient pastoral training. Both study duration and high financial costs, among others, became hindrances towards pastoral training in formal theological institutions like universities and Pentecostal Bible colleges. Many leaders in neo-Pentecostal churches are professionals with non-religious qualifications. In their attempt to enhance ministerial qualifications, they enrol on short online courses which provide inadequate training for ministry. This leaves them and their subordinates prone to error and abuse. There is, therefore, a need for proper intensive training for these ministers. The question that must be answered is how to necessitate and access the intensive pastoral training. This paper will contribute answers towards qualifying neo-Pentecostal ministers through theological pastoral reflection using literary research.

Keywords

neo-Pentecostal; black communities; pastoral training; error; abuse

Introduction

Pentecostal movement was conceptualised over Christmas holidays of 1900 in a Bible college after Charles Parham assigned his students to research the following: “baptism in the Holy Spirit or being filled with the Holy Spirit” (Burger and Nel 2008:17). Practices like speaking in tongues, visions and dreams, faith, miracles, and healings, that are experienced within the Pentecostal, Charismatic, and neo-Pentecostal movement are reported to have happened prior to 1900 during John Wesley’s Methodist’s movement and subsequently in holiness movement (Orogun and Pillay 2021:3). The propagation of Pentecostal movement placed great emphasis on the importance of training ministers for ministry (Resane 2018:2). Botha (2007:13) states that “Pentecostalism in its early days, perhaps because of its humble roots and virtually untrained leaders, relying mostly on only the Holy Spirit’s guidance, had an “anti-academic” or “anti-intellectual” culture where formal qualifications and university study were mistrusted”. Though this notion was initially adopted in South Africa, it changed as Pentecostal churches saw a need to train their leaders with the intention of sustaining the growth of the movement. Pentecostal churches like Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) (Burger and Nel 2008:238), Assemblies of God (Resane, 2018:4) resolved that theological training be prioritised for ministerial formation. Charismatic and neo-Pentecostal churches in white communities followed suit. Pastoral training in these churches bolstered their growth. Naidoo (2015:165) emphasises and confirms the importance of a trained ordained minister for the propagation of the church’s vision and inspiration.

The Pentecostal movement can be categorised into three main divisions, which are classical Pentecostal, Charismatic, and neo-Pentecostal. Classical Pentecostalism is the original Pentecostal movement of Charles Fox Parham and William Joseph Seymour from which other streams emanated (Bartos 2015:25). Charismatic churches are generally classified as mainline churches that embraced the Pentecostal belief of the baptism in the Holy Spirit without disassociating themselves from their denominations (Attanasi 2012:2). They subscribe to Pentecostal belief of baptism in the Holy Spirit with evidence of speaking in tongues. They further emphasise the operation of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit as outlined in 1

Corinthians 12. These churches differ from classical Pentecostal churches in that they embraced the Pentecost belief in the second wave of the Pentecost movement, which began after 1960. The neo-Pentecost churches are identified by their independent formation. Though they are African-founded, they are strongly globally oriented (Meyer 2004:451). Other scholars classify them as neo-Pentecostal Charismatic churches because of their ‘nondenominational Christianity’ (Anderson 2006:157). Burgess and Van der Maas (2002:286–287) define these churches as Christian bodies with Pentecostal-like experiences that have no traditional Pentecostal or charismatic denominational connections.

Neo-Pentecostal churches in white communities established in-house Bible colleges to train their members. Eugene Botha (2007:9) writes that these churches moved away from training their clergy through seminaries to raising leaders through volunteers, homegrown staff, and local Bible colleges. Neo-Pentecostal churches in black communities did not have Bible colleges. Those who could send their students to charismatic and neo-Pentecostal churches in white communities. Lack of proper and intense pastoral training in these black communities’ churches led some of their leaders into error and abuse. Kgatle (2021:86) affirms that it is this group of neo-Pentecostals that lagged in terms of the formal training of their leaders. It is therefore important to establish pastoral training centres within neo-Pentecostal black churches.

Methodology

This study is a combination of two methods. First, it takes the literary analysis approach. Many scholars have researched and written on Pentecostalism in its different strands in the South African context. It is important to consult the already available data and analyse it to help find solutions and encourage formal training. Results from such consultation will help alleviate abuse within neo-Pentecostalism in black communities. The second method will rely on the personal observation of the author. The author grew up within the neo-Pentecostal movement in a white community and has since launched a church in a black community. His experience will, therefore, shed light in the research.

The study will further reflect on the New Testament theology framework. Leon Morris (1990) encapsulates New Testament theology as “understanding of matters relating to God, that is expressed by, or underlies, or may be deduced from New Testament”. The study will reflect the understanding that New Testament theology is descriptive, historical, and theological (Heringer 2014). Though Christians believe in and accept both the Old and New Testaments, they should fashion their practise according to the New Testament. It is therefore important that this study looks at the New Testament in formulating a pattern that churches and pastors could follow.

Background

The formation of neo-Pentecostal churches in Southern Africa was largely influenced by American movements like Word of Faith and Rhema. Young men in independent churches immersed themselves in books and tapes of American televangelists like Oral Roberts, TL Osborne, Kenneth Hagin, Fred Price, and John Osteen (Resane 2017:2). Some even went to their Bible schools in America. Some of these men started churches like Rhema of Ray McCauley, Christian Centres of Fred Roberts, Christian Family Church of Theo Wolmarans and Ed Roebert, of Hatfield Christian Community (Anderson 2005:11). These newly formed churches are not linked to the established classical Pentecostal churches. Hence, they are better classified as neo-Pentecostal churches, though they hold similar basic practises as classical Pentecostal churches.

The newly established neo-Pentecostal churches were in white communities since they had the financial means to connect with American Tele-Evangelists. Soon after starting their churches, they established Bible colleges, which were opened to all races. Black students who attended and graduated from these Bible colleges started similar churches in black communities. Examples of these churches are Grace Bible Church of Mosa Sono, Praise Tabernacle of Victor Mogotlhwa, and Victory Fellowship of Mandla Maphalala. Unfortunately, these newly formed churches in black communities did not establish proper training programs for their upcoming leaders. Untrained pastors were appointed to lead their branches. Those who could afford it sent their newly appointed leaders to attend Bible Colleges at neo-Pentecostal churches in white communities.

The cause of the lack of pastoral training in black neo-Pentecostal churches

Naidoo (2015:164) writes:

The time of theological training is crucial for ministers to encourage a mature development of occupational and personal identity and foster a coherent understanding of their role and function in ministry. Ministerial formation must involve training and equipping of pastoral leaders to do theology by involvement on a grassroots level and developing responsiveness to historical, biblical, and pastoral dimensions within its context in order to have relevance.

Pastoral training would prevent neo-Pentecostals from basing their faith on experientialism (Banda 2021:8). Their faith, instead, will be founded on a sound doctrine that has been prepared through robust biblical and theological development. Formal training will help avoid excesses and abuse of religion and further strengthen neo-Pentecostal ministers' beliefs (Kgatlle 2021:87, Resane 2017:6, Masenya and Masenya 2018:641-642).

The low level of pastoral training in black communities could be attributed to the following reasons:

1. Insufficient Bible Colleges

Neo-Pentecostal churches in black communities did not establish Bible schools to train their upcoming ministers, nor did they have formal in-house training programs for their leaders. They depended on their Sunday teaching for training their members. These churches frowned at the theology offered in formal universities. They refrained from sending their leaders to these universities even though they could afford it. The lead pastor would normally be the only one who attained formal theological training from Bible college. The upcoming leader would depend on the lead pastor's sermon and books that he would lend him. When an opportunity arose to start another branch, the lead pastor would release the upcoming leader to head the branch. In the process of time, the leader would be ordained as a pastor and released to be on his own without sufficient support from the main church.

Some prominent neo-Pentecostal pastors in black communities never had a vision of expanding to other areas or having branches in multiple locations. This is evident in churches like Grace Bible Church, Victory Fellowship, and Praise Tabernacle that initially had one location church and transported people to that location. This paper admits that these churches later started multiple branches. The “one church mentality” hindered the vision of establishing Bible colleges to train more leaders. This mindset kept the pastor as the only leader of the church. An assistant pastor’s role would be to assist with duties where the lead pastor is unable or unavailable to do. In some cases, the assistant pastor would be the only one sent to Bible college for training. This limited responsibility did not challenge the lead pastor to establish a Bible college for training more leaders. Training more leaders would result in preparing and establishing them for new churches.

Insecurity among some lead pastors contributed to a lack of interest in establishing Bible colleges. The fear of competition, that their assistant pastors attain the same qualifications, played a role. This fear came into reality, where the more anointed and talented assistant pastor would break away from the main church, taking away some members to start his own churches. Potential leaders were kept untrained. The “one church mentality” and insecurity were an injustice to the growth of the church. The reluctance of the lead pastor to train other leaders in ministry kept the church stunted. Those who broke away to start their independent churches would go out untrained. Orogun and Pillay (2021:12) observe that “Neo-Pentecostal congregations are scattered all over Africa with theologically untrained general overseers and pastors”. According to Kojok (2007), “breakaways are common since the least divergence in doctrine or mode of worship easily leads to separation”.

Lack of Bible Colleges in neo-Pentecostal churches in black communities was exacerbated by government higher education’s stringent requirements for accreditation and quality control (Naidoo 2015:169; Resane 2017:4). Many neo-Pentecostal Bible colleges, like other non-Pentecostal Bible colleges, abandoned pursuing government accreditation because they could not meet the standard. It is important, therefore, that the South African government, through the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), add social services in their scope to accommodate and accredit short courses that churches could offer to give their leaders

some training, so that no new leader could be launched into ministry without an accredited qualification. Currently, the Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA), on behalf of the government, has only six services, which are personal care, real estate and related, management and business, labour and collective, communication and marketing, and cleaning and hiring services. Kgatle (2021:95), on the other hand, proposed that churches should have Bible colleges like Patmos Bible College, which was established by Elias Letwaba in Potgietersrus (now Mokopane) in 1924. Elias Letwaba did it as he saw a need to raise lay preachers and evangelists who would help him in ministry. He aimed to increase biblical knowledge and understanding among his followers (De Wet 1989:65).

Popular Christian leader from Ghana, Dag Heward Mills, at the pastors and leaders conference held at Grace Bible Church Soweto in January 2016, criticised the black neo-Pentecostal church in South Africa for having “one church mentality”. He referred to this mentality as inhibiting the growth of the church. As a neo-Pentecostal himself, he was encouraging fellow neo-Pentecostals to plant churches in many locations. He further offered potential students a scholarship to be trained at his Anagkazo Bible College in Ghana for ministry. His church, United Denomination (UD), is comprised of several denominations with a total of currently over six thousand churches around the world. He has both physical Bible college and online ministry training. The local church in his denomination has continuous training for different levels of ministry using his books as training material. South African neo-Pentecostal pastors must adopt this model. This model will evade the appointment of pastors without formal training.

2. Appointment of pastors without proper formal training.

The growth of Neo-Pentecostal churches in black communities would, in some instances, necessitate the appointment of more pastors to help in a local church. Some of these pastors would be appointed without proper formal training. The need for shepherding members would be greater than the spiritual growth of leaders. As a result, the church’s formal doctrinal training would safeguard their practices and beliefs (Banda 2021:8). Pentecostal movement theology has an inherent danger of hermeneutics of experience (Kgatle and Mofokeng 2019:8). The danger is in the belief

that since they have the Holy Spirit, they do not need to subject themselves to formal theological study. This can lead to error and abuse. Naidoo (2015:188) observes that formal pastoral training is well-suited to shape patterns of belief while educating ministers to serve their church and society well.

Theological and pastoral training is necessary for every minister of the gospel. Anderson (2005:3) observes that leaders in new churches in West Africa are often university graduates who came into faith and the experience of the Holy Spirit in interdenominational campus organisations. Often, these new leaders would not be under any pastoral mentorship. The same could be said of South Africa. Churches with such leaders celebrate that they are not under any denominational restrictions. Unfortunately, it is such leaders that are prone to error and abuse since they do not answer to anybody. Though their academic achievements are commendable, those achievements cannot replace theological and pastoral training.

The scenario is also true in some churches where pastors are under pressure to appoint leaders to take care of new branches without proper training. Dag Heward Mills saw this need among neo-Pentecostals, that exacerbated him to offer free scholarships for training. Every church must have a training program for its leaders. Every promotion in leadership should have a training standard that a member achieves.

3. The high cost of living

The apartheid system deprived black communities of a decent standard of living. Blacks were economically disadvantaged because of the laws that were enshrined to affect every sphere of a black person (Badat 2008:2, Modiri 2017:406). This manifested in a lack of economic opportunities for blacks. Their salaries were low compared to the salaries of their white counterparts. The standard of education was low in such a way that it was difficult to attain higher education and good careers. The ultimate purpose of the apartheid system was to keep blacks poor and financially disadvantaged. The low standard of living had a direct bearing on blacks accessing pastoral training in Bible colleges of white communities. Lack of resources in black communities coerced neo-Pentecostal churches to attract mainly middle-class, modernising, and upwardly aspiring young Africans (Anderson 2005:14). This was so, most especially, in the wake

of the prosperity gospel. Hence, these churches were established in semi-urban settlements that were near towns. Neo-Pentecostal churches did not, at first, venture out to rural areas because people in those areas were of a low socioeconomic class.

Theological and ministerial training were not prioritised since they did not guarantee employment. Black parents would sacrifice their resources to help their children move higher in education. This was with the hope that they would get better employment and, as a result, help them financially. Theological and ministerial training did not guarantee a better standard of living; as a result, parents would not put their limited resources into them. In many instances, parents discouraged their children from pursuing such training. Indeed, ministry should not be seen as a career but a calling. Those who felt the call of God to go into ministry should be assisted financially. The onus is also on churches to minimise the cost of ministry training. In cases where churches are running their own Bible colleges, tuition and student accommodation should be kept affordable.

4. Mistrust of neo-Pentecostal religious training in formal institutions

Formal institutions like universities offered religious training that was denominationally focused. Neo-Pentecostal churches were not keen to enrol their leaders in these universities since they were lectured by professors from mainline churches. The curriculum did not include Pentecostal and Charismatic theology. Neo-Pentecostal pastors and prospective students felt that the curriculum from these institutions would dampen the Holy Spirit's zeal and fire (Resane 2018:2). This would be true since theology in universities focused on the 'analytical, rational study of religions or theology with little attention paid to spirituality and practice' (Naidoo 2015:172). These pastors also regard theology as something disadvantageous to their practices and beliefs (Banda 2021:6). This trend is gradually adjusting to accommodate Christians from different backgrounds, including Pentecostals.

Naidoo (2015:166) observes that "theological institutions must determine how to take on the difficult task of forming leaders with fewer resources within the changing landscape of higher education in South Africa". Theological institutions within neo-Pentecostal churches should reduce

their overhead expenses. They can do this by compacting class time into fewer days a week. They can run their institutions as part-time studies instead of full-time. Kgatle (2018:2) observes the declining numbers of those studying theology in formal institutions. Among other reasons, he cites a lack of resources and socio-economic illnesses. The South African government is doing well in providing the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) to students from poor families. The challenge remains, however, that institutions of higher learning should align their curriculum to accommodate neo-Pentecostals.

5. Independence syndrome

Upcoming Leaders in black neo-Pentecostal churches started independent churches. Some of these leaders broke away from their pastors unceremoniously. Reasons for breakup range from offence, being led by God to start a new church, to seeking freedom. Lack of organisational culture in the initial Pentecostalism and anti-institutionalism based on the hermeneutic of experience (Kärkkäinen 2007:6) has contributed to the freedom of starting churches without accountability. Though this freedom of spirit has helped the spread of the Pentecostal movement (Botha 2007), it has also created a vacuum of theological training and formation. This made it difficult for the newly established churches to seek training from their mother churches. It is important not to generalise that all neo-Pentecostal churches are anti-institution (Kgatle 2020:2). There are neo-Pentecostal churches like Grace Bible Church, Victory Fellowship, and God's Tabernacle Christian Family Church that have formal structures. The anti-institution tendencies have led to ministry-untrained leaders.

Kgatle and Mofokeng (2019:1) affirm that some of the independent churches are established by theologically untrained leaders. Some of these pastors are qualified in secular fields (Resane 2017:1, Birds and Thumma 2011:11). They are also employed in secular jobs, thus making it difficult for them to enrol as full-time students in Bible colleges. Their schedule does not allow them to attend classes. Some resort to online classes for their convenience in accessibility, duration of the course, and simplicity of the curriculum (Resane 2017:5). This, unfortunately, limits the quality of training.

Masenya and Masenya (2018:652) are of the view that some of the breakaway churches happen because of the commercialisation and commodification

of the gospel. This phenomenon arises when ministers of the gospel use their platform and influence primarily to generate finances from their congregations. Instead of focusing on helping congregants spiritually, their purpose becomes centred around how much they can benefit financially from their congregations. This is underlined by poor pastoral training. Proper pastoral training, on the other hand, enhances spirituality more than material gain. It fosters stronger relationships among ministers, where no one seeks their own interests but rather prioritises the welfare of fellow ministers and congregants. In this context, unity within the body becomes a shared pursuit.

The impact of globalisation has further shaped theological education, especially in Africa. Global interconnectedness and the globalisation of knowledge have led African theological education to absorb traits from Western models. However, it is essential to recognise and respond to these homogenising forces by emphasising African identity and context.

In summary, addressing commercialisation and commodification requires a shift away from consumer-oriented approaches toward character-building and genuine spiritual care for congregants.

The independence of these churches exposed several needs in their formation. This includes a lack of training colleges for their leaders. Pastoral training is vital for the success of pastoral leaders to carry out their duties (Naidoo 2015:164). Empowered church leaders stay true to their biblical course. It is important, therefore, that new churches that are established should stay connected to and draw wisdom and guidance from their mother churches. This can be done by establishing intense, comprehensive pastoral training. Refresher courses should be offered intermittently to new leaders who have been launched into new churches.

6. The need for qualification

Some of the unqualified pastors in new churches feel the need to have qualifications to give their ministry credibility. Resane (2017:3) observes that they do this to balance their divine calling with 'authentic ministerial training'. Naidoo (2015:166) correctly points out that while many Christians are doing theology, few are studying theology. Acquiring a low standard of training or having no training at all endangers the authenticity

of the ministry. An honorary degree cannot replace the knowledge that comes from studying. Difficulties inhibiting pastors from attending Bible colleges drive them to seek a “quick fix” solution. This, unfortunately, leads them to bogus institutions that offer fake degrees. The qualification is no longer out of studying but is because of ‘the commodification and commercialisation of theological education’ (Naidoo 2015:171). The degree becomes a commodity that can be bought. The transaction is completed as the institution concerned offers a degree at a cost, while a candidate pays money for that qualification. The current rate is about one thousand American dollars.

Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, as amended, gives guidance to the establishment of higher education institutions in South Africa. Public institutions are established by the Minister of Higher Education or an act of parliament, while private institutions must be registered with the Department of Education through its Registrar. Any institution that is not registered with the Department of Higher Education is deemed illegal and is committing an offence. Such an institution is bogus, and its qualifications are fake. Legal institutions can offer honorary doctorates; however, such doctorates do not entitle the holder to practice any profession. Honorary degrees are only recognised within the institution that offered them (Ditsele and Motsaathebe 2023).

These bogus qualifications are misleading because the pastor has not received proper training. These qualifications can also hinder a pastor from pursuing proper training since he has been “certificated”. It is important to discourage people from being certified without being educated. The purpose of achieving a qualification is to acquire knowledge and skills to function in the relevant field. Lack of proper training easily leads to teaching errors and abuse (Banda 2021:5).

The early church used common and functional terms like brother, labourer, fellow worker, servant, and beloved to describe themselves and their relationships (Acts 9:17; Rom 1:1; 16:5,8,9,12,26; 1 Cor 16:16). They did not use their ministry offices like apostle, prophet, teacher, elder, bishop or evangelist as honorific titles. They instead used them as functional descriptions. Church leaders who want to honour their protégés should

honour them by biblical standards and biblical qualifications. Titles like doctors and professors should be left to the academic field.

A look at some New Testament examples

The ponderous section of the pastoral training curriculum must be from the Bible. Though other aspects of training, like leadership, accountancy, public speaking, and management could be added, the spiritual aspect of the curriculum should carry much weight because the field is spiritual. It is therefore important to look at some of the examples that the Bible wrote about ministry. The Bible illustrates a pattern of how a new ministry should be launched and relate to the mother church. Implementing patterns from the Bible assists in curbing scriptural error and abuse. It further helps in establishing good relations between mother and daughter churches. Luke, in his book of Acts, emphasises the spread of the gospel through multiplication of churches (Acts 8:4, 40; 9:32; 13:6; 14:24; 15:3, 41; 16:6; 18:23; 19:1; 20:2). Mother churches were not a hindrance to such multiplication (MacArthur 2007). This study will shed light by analysing patterns from churches in Samaria, Antioch, and Ephesus.

1. Church in Samaria

Acts 8:4-25 shares about the ministry that Philip started in Samaria. The formation of the new church in Samaria was circumstantial. It was not planned. Apostles in Jerusalem did not send Phillip to start it. Philip fled the persecutions that were in Jerusalem. This led to starting the work in Samaria. What is encouraging is that Philip did not remain independent from the church in Jerusalem. After hearing of the new church, the apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to strengthen the work. The church in Samaria remained connected to the church in Jerusalem.

It is also important to note that there were no natural relations between Jews and Samaritans. The animosity between Jews and Samaritans is demonstrated in the following Scriptures. In John 8:48, Jews degraded Jesus to the level of a Samaritan and that he had a demon (Manser 2010:1781). This animosity could further be seen in the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:4–42). Jews would avoid the shortest route between Jerusalem and Galilee because it goes through Samaria, in

fear of being contaminated by Samaritans (Barker and Kohlenberger III 1994:307). Jews did not relate to the Samaritans (Jn 8:9). On their return from buying food, Jesus' disciples were not pleased to find Jesus speaking to a Samaritan woman (vs 27). This was not in keeping with their customs (Barker and Kohlenberger III 1994:308). Jesus was breaking barriers of animosity between Jews and Samaritans. When Jesus was challenged by a Jewish lawyer about who was a neighbour to be loved, Jesus shared a parable of a good Samaritan (Lk 10:25–37). Barker and Kohlenberger III (1994:250) share that the characters of the parable must have had significance to the original hearers. Neither a Levite nor a priest who was a Jew could help an injured man. Since this injured man was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, he was probably a Jew. A foreigner, Samaritan, helped. When the lawyer was asked who among the three men who saw the injured man was a real neighbour, he could not admit directly that it was a Samaritan (Barker and Kohlenberger III 1994:250). He just said, “the one who showed him mercy” (Luke 10:37). The animosity was deep between the two nations. Regardless of this animosity, the Jerusalem church continued to support Phillip's work in Samaria. Mother churches should work harmoniously with their daughter churches and *vice versa*.

2. Church in Antioch

Christians who fled persecution in Jerusalem went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (Acts 11:19). Luke focused on the church that was established in Antioch. When the church in Jerusalem heard about it, they sent Barnabas to give spiritual support. After assessing the situation in the church of Antioch, Barnabas collected Saul from Tarsus, whose gift was suitable to help the church grow and be strengthened (25-26). The Antioch church continued to work with the Jerusalem church. They collected and sent financial help after hearing the prophecy of famine that would befall the Jerusalem church (27-30). The two churches stayed connected.

The way Barnabas and Paul were released from the Antioch church to go start new churches in a mission field should be an example to neo-Pentecostals of how to release new pastors in ministry. The leadership of the Antioch church was in prayer when the decision was taken. There was consensus on the decision among those remaining and those leaving

(Acts 13:1-3). This made it easy for Barnabas and Paul to report back on the success of their mission (Acts 14:26-27).

Barnabas and Paul consulted with the leadership in Jerusalem when they were confronted with a question of circumcision of new Christians in relation to the law of Moses (Acts 15:1-5). This action shows the interconnection that these churches had. The question was theological in nature. As new leaders with inadequate knowledge on the matter, Barnabas and Paul sought help from the Jerusalem church, from where they were launched. New pastors must always consult with their mentors. This consultation will protect new pastors from falling into error and abuse. Proverbs 11:14 shares, “Where there is no guidance, a people fall, but in an abundance of counsellors there is safety” (ESV).

3. Church in Ephesus

The integrated ministries of different believers played a critical role in establishing the church in Ephesus. Though Luke reported more on the ministry of Paul, John the Baptist’s disciples, Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila, and Timothy contributed immensely to the success of the Ephesian church. Priscilla and Aquila were impressed as they listened to Apollos expounding the gospel (Acts 18:26). They noticed some gaps in his understanding of it (Bruce 1988:360). Gifted as Apollos was, he allowed Priscilla and Aquila to enrich him in areas where he was lacking (Acts 18:26). This showed the mutual respect they all had for one another. It is admirable to give private correction rather than public rebuke (Bruce 1988:360). Apollos was a proficient speaker, yet he saw the need to enhance his knowledge privately (Manser 2010:1960). John’s disciples subjected themselves to Paul for Pentecostal experience (Acts 19:1–6). They did not let pride inhibit them from receiving greater knowledge and Christian experience (Manser 2010:1961). When Paul was in prison and could not physically look after the Ephesian church, he assigned Timothy (1Tim 1:3; 2 Tim 4:12) and Tychicus (2 Tim 4:12) to be pastors at the church. Pastors who serve in the same church should complement each other for the sake of the ministry.

Conclusion

This study has highlighted some of the reasons that stunt spiritual growth in neo-Pentecostal churches within black communities. Established churches should have their own Bible colleges to train all their members in the basic work of ministry. Churches must assist those who want to pursue pulpit ministry and make it their vocation to enrol in credible institutions. When church leaders are proactive in developing their own protégés, training will remain within scrupulous institutions. They will not fall victim to bogus institutions that offer fake qualifications.

Lead pastors should be available to mentor the upcoming ministers who are undergoing formal training. Kgatle (2021:91) confirms that they not only need knowledge, but they also need mentorship. Resane (2017:6) attests that the lack of mentorship produces fatherless leaders. Leadership in Jerusalem saw it fit that one of the qualifications to replace Judas was that the candidate must have been with them from the beginning (Acts 1:21-22). He must have been mentored by Jesus. It was easy to suggest names because Jesus mentored on a large scope, beyond the twelve disciples. Bible schools assist in developing a pool of leaders for different ministries.

Pastoral teams need to work together as demonstrated in the New Testament. Networking of churches under the same umbrella accelerates numerical growth and strengthens individual Christian maturity.

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