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ENCOURAGING QUALITY CANDIDATES TO ENTER THE MINISTRY

Jesus came into the world to reconcile man to God. In his early ministry he recruited twelve quality men except for one (Judas who betrayed Him) whom He trained for a period of three years. The ultimate aim of the training was to reveal the kingdom of God to them and His redemptive plan for humanity. To climax the task of redemption, Jesus died on the Cross. Though he declared the act of redemption ended on the cross, Jesus realized the huge unfinished task of ensuring that the millions of men and women among the nations of the world accept Him as Lord and Saviour. He therefore commissioned his apostles to go into the world to let people know about His redemptive work (Mt. 28:18-19). In turn the apostles instructed their various congregations to choose quality persons to serve in various ministries in the Church (1 Tim. 3:1-16). Today the Church continues in the business of identifying quality candidates for ministries.

Candidates who are chosen to ministry are called servants (1 Cor. 4:1), ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20), stewards (1 Cor. 4:1) and defenders of the faith (Phil. 1:7). Candidates for ministries have a crucial role in the ministry of reconciliation as they are called by God (Heb. 5:4) and are sufficient in Him alone (1 Cor. 3:5-6). Their role is critical in that they have the responsibility to preach and teach the gospel to all, feed and build up the Church, watch for souls, comfort, exhort and rebuke. It will therefore be expected that persons to be

entrusted with such responsibilities should possess spiritual, academic, and social qualities.

Spiritual qualities are primary to the enlistment of candidates for ministry. The following are some spiritual qualities a minister must possess: humility, purity, patience, gentleness, self-denial, sober-minded, prayerful, example to the flock and willing to serve.

By way of encouraging Timothy to achieve maximum progress in ministry, Paul encouraged

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him to be studious and meditate on scripture (1 Tim. 4: 13, 15). Ministry requires candidates who are trained in the matter of Scripture and other disciples.

Social qualities show how the candidates relate with members of their family, the Church and persons outside the Church. In meeting these qualities Paul admonished Timothy to ensure that those enlisted to special offices in the Church have good relationship with their families by having one wife and obedient children and other members by not being violent, quarrelsome, greedy for money and covetous. Outside the Church the candidates

must have good testimonies so that they will not fall into reproach (1 Tim. 3:1-7).

The matter of encouraging quality candidates for ministry is essential for successful ministry for many reasons:

- The negative attitude of young people towards ministry. Many young men and women are no longer interested in pursuing theological education as a basis for preparing them for full time ministry. In Sierra Leone for example many young people have declared the present age as the age of commerce and computer rather than the age of theology.
- To face the challenge of the diluted gospel message as evidence in the preaching of the Health and Prosperity messages. One big challenge the Church face today is the gospel of health and prosperity propagated by many ministers. Quality candidates are therefore needed to provide sound counter teachings to this theological threat.

- To provide appropriate theological preaching and teaching to many who think they are wise in their foolishness and have been blinded by the gods of this age (2 Cor. 4:1-5). There are still billions of people who need to hear the truth about God’s redemptive work through Jesus.
- To uphold the integrity of the Church. Remember, a candidate for ministry is an ambassador for God. This means we must live according to God’s standard and when this is achieved the whole world will know that we are His ambassadors.

CONCLUSION

The Lord Jesus concerned himself with the quality of candidates to carry on his assignment. This he demonstrated by training his disciples for three years on what one may call the “Mobile Bible College.” If you are available and willing, no matter your condition, he will contribute in making you a quality candidate.



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# ENSURING THAT BIBLE COLLEGE GRADUATES ARE SPIRITUALLY PREPARED FOR MINISTRY

## Introduction

In the society in which we live we observe a tremendous degradation of moral laws; in some cases the lack of moral laws is caused by cultural issues. For instance in Nampula I have learned that a husband can divorce his wife if he wishes to marry another and it is known that a wife can have at least one spare husband to supply groceries.

In the northern part of Mozambique children are forced to participate in initiation rites that usually take part during the holidays. During our visit to the churches in the Northern provinces of Mozambique in November last year we came across a large group of children being taken to the bush to be initiated. We could read on their faces that they were sad. The most negative side of it is that after training, the children are told that they are ready to get married. Therefore most girls under age that get married are found in the northern provinces of Mozambique.

As theological institutions what do we need to do to ensure that our graduates are spiritually qualified for God's ministry?

To get the answer to the above question, one needs to define 1. Graduates, who are they? Where are they coming from? 2. What do we mean by ministry? 3. What are the spiritual qualifications for graduates?

## Definitions:

### I. Graduates

The graduates are Christians who have been called by God to His ministry and they accepted the call by coming to the Bible College for

training. Some of them are recently converted Christians, thus they are immature spiritually. Some of them are less educated; they are coming from different backgrounds, different cultures, and different tribes. The graduates are the ones who have completed their theological training and now are ready to go back to their churches and do God's ministry.

### II. Christian ministry

To define Christian ministry one should firstly know who God is. 1. He is the Creator. This means that God is the one who created heaven and earth and everything in it including man in His own image (Gen.1:26, 27). 2. God is omnipresent. He is everywhere, even in the hidden places where there is no one. 3. He is omniscient. He knows everything. He knows us, even our thoughts. He knows our situations and our problems. 5. He is omnipotent. That is, He is all powerful. He can do everything according to His will. He is greater than all other gods. No one can be compared to Him. 6. He is the One who calls believers to serve in Christian ministry. Therefore, to be involved in ministering for Him is more important than any job that we can do.

### III. Graduates' spiritual qualifications

To define graduates' spiritual qualifications one should ask the question: Are they spiritually mature enough to meet the needs of the society in decay; to be the light and salt to the world?

For graduates to be qualified for ministry they should have good theology and apply it in their lives. They must be men and women of prayer, with the good habit of reading the Word of God

and Christian literature, and living a Christ-like life.

Theological institutions exist to train and equip efficiently men and women to do God's ministry mainly in their churches.

### **How can theological Institutions help their graduates achieve the spiritual qualifications they need for ministry?**

Some theological institutions focus on academic excellence and they undervalue practical and spiritual formation.

Recently on Facebook Dr. Jim Lo said "Training must not focus on academic – knowledge but spiritual formation as well". One agrees with Dr. Lo that it is not enough for the servant of the Lord to have knowledge, given that after training the student will be facing different situations than being in college. He will face financial crises and family problems whereby knowledge alone won't help. The graduate will have to exercise his faith; he will need to trust in the Lord. The graduate will face people of different cultures, different beliefs, different religions, different lifestyles, and demon possessed people. Moreover, the world is hungering to hear the Word of God. They want to see the minister's life and they question: "Does he put into practice what he preaches and teaches?"

#### A) Designing or drafting a holistic curriculum that is conducive for spiritual growth

Such a curriculum should include 1. Devotions, 2. Spiritual warfare, 3. Outreach ministry, 4. Compassionate ministry, 5. Worship, 6. Other religions, 7. Cults.

These courses and the like will help to build up the students' faith. Because of the urgency to train pastors, some of come to the Bible College campus without having gone through an adequate discipleship process. Therefore, these

courses will make it possible to identify the strength and weakness of the students and help them to grow spiritually.

#### B) Assigning suitable lecturers to the courses

In some occasions the lecturer is assigned to teach a course is not familiar with the subject matter and he gets to know it through limited sources. The end result is that the student is not helped. In other words there is no life transformation taking place in students.

Maura Manoel (2012) asserts that the lecturer needs to be qualified in three dimensions: he needs to know the theology very well; he needs to know his own culture very well; and he needs to know the biblical culture and the culture of the people to whom he is assigned to minister. Maura adds that when the lecturer has less knowledge about the culture, he will treat cultural issues superficially. It is crucial to get to know the culture so that we can go deeper when dealing with the cultural issues which students face.

#### C) Living by example (Christ-centered lifestyle)

"'Watch me,' he told them. 'Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do.'" (Judges 7:17). The educator should be able to tell his student to "imitate me" as Paul

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said to the Corinthians (1Cor.4:16). Christians should be imitators of Christ regardless of suffering (1 Thess. 1:6). The student should learn this from his lecturer inside and outside the classroom.

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#### D) Monitoring students' lives

The Bible College should structure ways to monitor students' spiritual development. This could include

- a) Assigning them to prayer groups,
- b) Holding them accountable for personal Bible study
- c) Assigning them for practicums in local churches
- d) Involving them in an intentional discipleship program

It is the theological institution's responsibility to revise the curriculum by getting in contact with their stakeholders asking them if they are

satisfied with their product (graduates) to find out what they need to change in order to meet the stakeholders' current needs. The college needs to be culturally updated as culture itself is dynamic. The college must promote the lecturers' ongoing training as the college and its programs develop.

**In conclusion:** For theological institutions to ensure that the graduates are spiritually qualified for ministry they should design a curriculum that gives priority to the spiritual formation of the students. They should aim to help their students grow spiritually by experiencing life transformation while being trained for ministry. The student should know the One that has called him in order to trust him and know how to call on Him in difficult and challenging times. The graduate should know clearly that the ministry that he/she is called to is God's ministry not a human endeavor. This will come to fulfillment if the theological institutions have qualified lecturers and assign them to teach in their area of gifting or at least to subject/course content known to the lecturer. Also, this is more likely to take place if the learning process takes place both inside and outside classroom with students being assigned to the churches for practical ministry and being assigned to other activities that will help them to grow spiritually.



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ACCREDITATION: HOW IMPORTANT IS IT?

Accreditation is the process by which an educational institution and its programs are examined by an independent evaluating body to determine whether the institution provides a quality education to its students, and whether the graduates of the institution possess the knowledge, skills, and attitudes the institution promises to deliver. Educational institutions in Africa are coming under increasing pressure from government agencies and other bodies to seek accreditation. How important is it for Wesleyan colleges in Africa to become accredited?

BENEFITS OF ACCREDITATION

1. Accreditation helps assure potential students that the institution they are hoping to attend will provide them with a quality education. Because of the thirst for educational opportunities, Africa is inundated with educational scams where students are promised a valuable education but after paying their fees are provided with an inferior product. Many “international” universities offering online programs to Africa are guilty of failing to provide the education they promise for the fees they have collected. Accreditation helps a student have confidence that an institution is a reputable one and not merely a scam.

It is particularly difficult to determine whether an “international” institution is truly accredited. Unfortunately, many of them, knowing that potential students are increasingly interested in knowing their accreditation status, claim to be accredited by unknown accrediting bodies – bodies that they themselves established for the sole purpose of giving themselves the perception of credibility. Other “international” Bible Colleges and seminaries will try to explain

away their lack of accreditation by stating that they are accountable only to God and should not subject their institution to human scrutiny and standards. However, if an institution is unwilling to let its programs be assessed by unbiased evaluators it is a good indication that the institution and/or its programs would not measure up to what potential students would expect.

2. Accreditation helps assure future employers of graduates of an institution that those students should have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that the institution professes to produce. It is common practice to submit certificates and diplomas earned when a personal is applying for a position within a company or organization. Those academic credentials mean little unless the employer has a way of verifying the legitimacy of the education that those credentials represent.

For example, some years ago I hired a secretary who has just graduated from a one-year program in a secretarial school. The report from the school indicated that the student had learned the skills necessary to fill the position for which I was hiring her. Much to my dismay, after giving her the job, I discovered that she was unable to do some very basic secretarial responsibilities such as typing and filing. The secretarial school had taken her fees and in return had given her a nice looking certificate, but they did not teach her the things they had promised.

3. Accreditation makes it easier for students to move from one institution to another in order to continue their studies. For example, if a student applies to enter a master’s degree program, the institution to which he/she has applied will want to make sure they have the necessary background and

foundation in order for him/her to study at the master's level. It is not enough that the student has a diploma indicating that they have been awarded a bachelor's degree. The institution will need to determine whether the education represented by that diploma is of adequate quality to enable the student to study successfully within their program. Accreditation is a means by which institutions can have confidence in the academic credentials potential students bring with them.

Accreditation also helps when students move from one institution to another and they ask to be given credit for the work they did in the first institution. How can one assign the value to be given to the work from the first institution unless there is an objective verification of the credibility of the first institution? For example, one of our Wesleyan colleges just enrolled a new student who had completed a fair number of courses in another Bible College of another denomination in another country. Many of the courses the student took have similar names to the courses in our college but how can we be sure they have covered the same amount of material and done the same amount of work at the same academic level as they would have if they had taken the courses in our school? Since the institution is unaccredited, our Academic Dean is now faced with an immense task of evaluating the courses one by one in order to determine how much advanced credit can be given to the student.

4. The accreditation process helps institutions keep focused on continual improvement. It is easy for institutions to become stuck in a rut of doing the same things over and over again rather than looking for and implementing ways in which the institution and its programs can continue to grow and develop

over time. The standards established by the accrediting association serve as a measuring stick by which the institution can see the areas it needs to focus on improving in order to deliver a quality education. The accrediting association helps hold the institution to its plans for improvement. The power of the accrediting body to either grant or refuse accreditation becomes a strong external motivator for the school to actually take the action needed for the needed improvements to be realized.

PATHWAYS TO ACCREDITATION

The ways in which an institution in Africa can pursue accreditation varies from other parts of the world (especially the United States) and may differ significantly between African countries. However, three general paths to accreditation can be identified.

1. Governmental Accreditation. In some countries government agencies have been set up to accredit institutions of higher education. Where that is the case, institutions normally need accreditation from the governmental agency in order to award degrees, and in some cases even to operate legally in the country.

Such agencies normally exist to accredit all types of higher education programs, not just theological education. As a result, some of the accrediting criteria are not really relevant to the Bible College setting, leading the institution to do things simply to satisfy the accreditor even though it doesn't add to the quality or credibility of the school. Also, Bible Colleges could find themselves at the mercy of a government bureaucrat who is not favorably inclined or even is antagonistic toward the church and its institutions.

Because such agencies accredit institutions of all sizes and types they may established

standards that are reasonable for large universities but that are difficult or impossible for smaller institutions such as Bible Colleges to reach. Also, government bureaucracies tend to develop processes that become increasingly complex and expensive over time – putting it beyond the reach of institutions with limited administrative and financial capacity.

Despite the difficulty, Wesleyan institutions are well advised to seek governmental accreditation if it is possible in their situation. Such accreditation puts the institution in good standing with educational authorities of the country and assures graduates that their education will be readily recognized by other institutions in the country and beyond, including secular institutions.

2. ACTEA: The Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA) was established in the mid 70's as an initiative of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa. "The mission of ACTEA is to promote quality evangelical theological education in Africa, by providing supporting services, facilitating academic recognition, and fostering continental and inter-continental co-operation. Serving theological education in Africa for excellence and renewal." (Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa, 2013)

Because ACTEA's sole focus is on accrediting institutions focused on theological education it has established accrediting standards that are especially relevant to such institutions. For example, its standards include the requirement that institutions include an intentional discipleship component to their programs, something that governmental agencies would not care about at all. Consequently, ACTEA is the best path to accreditation for helping our Bible

Colleges to fulfill their mission to adequately equip believers for ministry.

Graduates from ACTEA accredited schools will find their education readily accepted by other institutions of theological education in Africa and beyond. However, ACTEA accreditation may not necessarily be recognized by secular institutions.

Because of the great help they can give to theological institutions in Africa, Wesleyan Bible Colleges offering degrees should seek ACTEA accreditation even if they have governmental accreditation. Wesleyan Bible Colleges which teach at an academic level below the degree level should carefully consider whether they should seek ACTEA accreditation; if a college already has governmental accreditation then perhaps it should simply apply for affiliate status (a step below accreditation) with ACTEA. At the very least, all Wesleyan Bible Colleges in Africa should have affiliate status with ACTEA.

3. Affiliation: At times institutions which cannot gain accreditation on their own will affiliate with an accredited institution in order to offer their programs under the umbrella of the recognized institution. The details of such relationships are negotiated on a case by case basis and vary considerably. At times it's as simple as the sponsoring institution choosing to recognize the quality of all the programs and credentials awarded by the sponsored institution. At other times the sponsoring institution will closely monitor the programs and academic assessments before giving its seal of approval. In some cases the sponsored institution has to purchase and use the curriculum prepared by the sponsoring institution. In some arrangements graduates actually receive their diploma/degree from the sponsoring

institution while at other times institutions issue their own credentials but include the sponsor's name as standing behind the credibility of the credential.

Affiliate relationships should be seen as temporary solutions for schools who are still developing to the stage where they can stand on their own. The benefit of such relationships is that students can earn recognized diplomas/degrees even while the college is developing sufficient institutional strength so as to become accredited in its own right.

THE COST OF ACCREDITATION

The accreditation process costs a lot – both financially and in terms of the amount of work required to achieve accreditation. Accrediting bodies generally depend on the institutions they accredit to cover the cost of maintaining and operating the organization so normally require

the payment of annual fees to the organization. Furthermore, the costs of evaluating the institution, including having a team of educators make an on-site visit, are borne by the institution. Accrediting standards may call for improvements such as increasing library holdings, developing internet capacity, or upgrading facilities that will require the significant funding. Besides the financial cost, the process of evaluating an institution, writing reports, and corresponding with relevant parties can be a very time consuming task, one that is unlikely to be accomplished if delegated to a staff member or administrator who is already overloaded with his/her current work load in the institution.

Despite the high cost of the accreditation process, it is a price well paid. It is an investment in the future of our institutions that will yield benefits in higher quality training programs and better equipped graduates.

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