

Leadership Letter #1 – August 25, 2996

To my dear Nigerian pastor friends,

Greetings to you. I am looking forward to being with you again this November. Pastor Nolen Rollins, Pastor Stephen Bowe, and I will be flying from Florida to Abuja on November 3, 2006. As you know, Living Spring Ministries is hosting a conference for church planters and pastors ... it will be in Jos on November 7-10. We will be speaking in local churches in Jos on Sunday, November 5, then Nolen Rollins will be leading a Leadership seminar on the evening of Monday, November 6. He will be repeating that seminar on Friday morning, November 10. I will also be doing a parenting seminar Friday night through Saturday at noon in Jos., then hopefully traveling to Jalingo to be with Olu and his wonderful congregation on Sunday November 12 and staying for several days.

Pastor Ken Eze has been with us here in Florida for almost two weeks and we've had a great time. I took him to a church planter's conference where I was speaking ... plus he's been able to visit a number of our churches and church plants in this area.

One of the ideas that we have come up with is that I will be sending a "leadership letter" to each of you -- I'll do that once a week between now and our conference in November. In this, the first leadership letter, I want to address two issues.

WHY HAVE A CHURCH PLANTING CONFERENCE IN NIGERIA?

First is the purpose of our conference in November. I believe God wants us to reach every man, woman and child throughout Nigeria with the gospel of Jesus Christ. I truly believe that God wants everyone in the world to hear the gospel. He has told us to go into all the world and proclaim the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20). He has also said that people cannot believe without someone who is sent to proclaim the gospel to them (Romans 10:13-17). God wants EVERYONE to have at least one opportunity -- and hopefully multiple opportunities -- to hear the gospel and respond to Jesus Christ in saving faith. I ask myself the question, "What is the best way to reach the world with the gospel?" I believe it is through church planting. Planting missional and reproducing churches throughout a country that will effectively reach their towns, villages, cities and regions for Jesus Christ. Missiologist Peter Wagner has said, "The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches."

Here's an interesting statistic: Evangelical churches that are between 0 and 3 years old win an average of ten people to Christ per 100 members per year. Churches that are between 3 and 15 years old win 5 people to Christ per 100 member per year. Churches that are over 15 years old win only 3 people to Christ per 100 members per year. That tells me that new churches are much more effective in reaching lost people for Christ.

PLEASE NOTE: our goal is NOT church planting. Church planting is only the vehicle to accomplish our objective. Our objective is reaching every man, woman and child in Nigeria for Jesus Christ. That's fulfilling the Great Commission.

Now think about this ... remember Ken's vision? To plant 100 churches throughout Nigeria and having each of those 100 churches plant ten other churches (for a total

of 1,000). Now where are we going to get the young, visionary leadership necessary to plant those churches? God must raise up young leaders. We must share the "Vision of One Thousand" and call people to give their lives to planting churches. That's why we are having this conference. I truly believe that if we get 150-200 pastors and church planters to Jos in November, God will burn in their hearts a vision to come along side of us and plant churches to reach Nigerians for Christ.

Ken and I have planned out our conference thoroughly. I believe it will be one of the best things that has ever been presented in Nigeria because it represents a vision that He planted in Ken's heart years ago. And I believe God will use it to change people's lives and accelerate our church planting efforts there.

Please do all that you can encourage pastors, church planters, and potential church planters to be with us in November. I trust that it will be a God-inspiring, life-changing time.

WHAT DOES JESUS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT CHURCH PLANTING?

The second thing I would like to cover with you in this letter is a Bible study I have just put together on how Jesus trained His men (the original disciples) for church planting. I have attached that study to this email in a pdf file. You should be able to download it and print it out for your study purposes. I would like each of you to take one hour this week and go over this material. How did Jesus prepare His men for church planting? There are study questions and other resources at the end of the study. I hope it is helpful to you. Please write back to me with any questions or observations.

Finally,

Please keep in touch with me. Let me know any prayer requests that you have as our time in November approaches.

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