*Text of the Goodwill Address by*

*His Excellency*

**Biodun Oyebanji**

*Governor, Ekiti State, Nigeria*

*As the Chairman at the*

**11th Public Lecture of the Foursquare Gospel Church in Nigeria**

***On the topic:***

**“LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA AND ITS IMPACT ON THE NEXT GENERATION”**

*Tuesday, October 08, 2024,*

**Protocols:**

1. Let me start by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to the leadership of the Foursquare Gospel Church ably led by the Rev. Dr Sam Aboyeji, the General Overseer, for inviting me to chair the 11th annual lecture of the Church. I thank you most sincerely for the honour.
2. It is my pleasure to share this platform with Mrs Ibukun Awosika, the Guest Lecturer for today. Mrs Awosika is an incredible woman, a great achiever and an influential figure within the Nigeria’s corporate world. She is not just an acknowledged entrepreneur, she is an icon and role model to many in and outside Nigeria.
3. I have listened to her at different fora, and each time, I have been awed by the sheer force of her intelligence, depth and mastery of her topic. She has this magnetic aura that makes her speech so enthralling, and her delivery so enchanting. With her on the podium, I am confident she would do justice to today’s lecture.

1. I hope you all could indulge me with a brief remark on the theme of this lecture as a way of sharing my perspective and enriching our knowledge from the political leadership point of view.

**Nigeria and the Leadership Question**

1. One of the dominant themes in public discourse that has continued to attract both academic or media scrutiny in Nigeria, is the leadership question. A lot has been written and many words expressed to describe the leadership situation in our country. It is the view of many that our major problem is “leadership”. Indeed, the legendary literary giant, Chinua Achebe once famously remarked in his book, *The Trouble with Nigeria* that “the trouble with Nigeria is simply a failure of leadership…”
2. It is to be noted though, that this “problem” of not having “good leaders” has been a generational accusation. In the colonial Nigeria, patriotic nationals of Nigeria, mostly young people but highly intelligent and courageous, worked tirelessly to confront the colonial leadership and the oppressive symbolism that it represented.
3. By the time their collective aspiration materialized and the lever of power fell in their hands, it was not long before they, themselves became victims of accusation of incompetence and corruption. The younger elements of their time were so impatiently pissed off with them, that, they staged a bloody coup to forcefully removed them from power. And of course, they too became a “worse version” of what they complained against.
4. The lesson to be noted in this, is that our search for good leaders and the proclivity for each generation to accuse the ruling class of their time as incompetent, corrupt and visionless is as old as this country.
5. This feeling of “lets do away with these ones” has been a constant motif in our national leadership struggle, but as soon as we do away with ‘them’ we soon become nostalgic of the “good old days” of their leadership. Thus, we have remained an experimental laboratory in search of the ideal leadership personality, system and model.
6. From all of these, it is sometimes difficult to really understand the nature of our leadership challenge, as it is clear that the dynamics of power struggle and oppositional politics can sometimes eclipse genuine leadership success.
7. Similarly, since leadership assessment in our clime is subjective and determined by sociopolitical or ethno-religious affiliations, the search for the ideal leadership has been made harder, if not illusory. Indeed, the leadership concept itself and its suppositions is as problematic as its ideation.

**Who is a Leader?**

1. One frightening thing about the conceptualization of leadership among Nigerians, especially from the standpoint of media narratives, is that the leadership of the country is often constructed as the people holding public offices. Our focus has always been to highlight the activities of public office holders as the ultimate and final generational leadership.
2. This is not only misleading but also dangerous. Leadership is basically the position of influence and authority to command compliance for the overall progress and development of a particular organization. Therefore, the national leadership of a nation and its character are essentially, the sum total of the leadership behaviors of the leaders at different layers of the society.
3. A nation’s leadership starts from the household to the larger society. Every father is a leader, every mother is a leader and every child is a leader. From being a class captain to becoming the president of a nation, the core values and skills of leadership are the same: responsibility, problem-solving, vision, fairness, firmness, prudence, transparency, temperance, resourcefulness, patience, responsiveness, creativity, accountability, fear of God among others.
4. These are the enduring values that a leader must possess. One doesn’t need to hold political office to have these values and skills, nor should they get to public office before possessing them.

**A Clamour for Leadership Education**

1. Therefore, I hold the view that leadership must be part of the basic everyday skills that every citizen should possess. Leadership training must be as important as basic education for literacy and numeracy. As a nation, we should have embedded curriculum that teaches leadership skills and principles, both as practical skills and indoctrinated values. For me, I believe if you want to change a people, teach them what you want them to change to.
2. There is no doubt that a major problem with leadership recruitment in Nigeria is that, people, sometimes, just find themselves in leadership positions without the right aptitude and attitude. For long, Nigerians continue to gamble with leadership selection through try by error system. We sometimes look for folk heroes or messiahs; at another time, we select leaders on the basis of geopolitics and ethno-religious considerations.
3. There are those who become leaders by default or by circumstances of privileged pedigree and not because of personal merits. Yet, the best of leaders are those who have been trained, tested and exposed to the nitty-gritty of leadership in addition to their innate ability.
4. Furthermore, the average person does not have the wherewithal to evaluate leadership competence because there is no widespread knowledge about leadership as a skill.
5. Leadership is such a serious thing that being certified should be one of the requirements to hold certain strategic positions in the society. Evidence abounds that technical skill on jobs are not enough for people to lead competently; there is the need for real and special training in the art and science of leadership for people to succeed today.
6. I therefore subscribe to the argument that people should, of necessity, first  go through intentional leadership training  before they can lead at some certain levels in the society. We all need to be well exposed to the call of leadership and how to manage a mass audience of people with differing characteristics, needs and tendencies.

**The Ekiti Example**

1. In Ekiti, we are already doing this. As a State that is serious about preparing the next generation of leaders from today, we have evolved a ’catch-them-young’ curriculum that prepares our future leaders for leadership position right from the primary school.
2. As a result, we currently run a compulsory subject called **Ekiti Values Education** (EVE) with a considerable module that focuses on leadership development. The subject aims to teach young Ekiti children comprehensive aspects of leadership, responsibility of a leader and practical leadership exposure. It aims to raise their self-awareness about their individual roles as a member of the future leadership and to prepare them to face the challenge of nation building.
3. Even as we grapple with the challenges of this generation, we owe the future generation, in addition to providing pedagogical framework, the responsibility of personal example. This is because it is in the nature of young people to emulate their leaders.
4. So, where we have found ourselves as leaders, be it as traditional rulers, community leaders, religion leaders, business leaders, union leaders, professional leaders, academic leaders, judicial, legislative or executive leaders, we have a duty to be the paragon of example for the next generation.

**Conclusion**

1. I want to thank the authorities of the Foursquare Gospel Church in Nigeria for providing this platform through which topical issues of relevance to national development are discussed. I am more than confident in our Guest Speaker to do justice to the topic at hand.
2. Let me conclude this remark with a quotation from the Maxwell Leadership Bible on our Lord Jesus Christ leadership model:

“*The best leadership simply expresses who we are . Jesus led from who He was: God incarnate, the perfect expression of the Father. As He pursued His divine mission, He influenced others. Similarly, as we pursue who God called us to be, our leadership will be most natural and effective*”.

Thank you for listening and God bless you.

**Biodun Oyebanji**

**Governor Ekiti State.**