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## **JUXTAPOSING THE EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP STYLE IN THE CHURCH OF ACTS 15:1-5 WITH THAT OF CHRISTIAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH TODAY**

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### **Abstract**

This paper focuses on an examination of the Jerusalem Church Leadership style (Acts 15) and its relevance to Christian Evangelical Fellowship of Nigeria (CEFEN). It examines church leadership style from the first church to our modern church and an attempt to compare the former and to seek guide for the later. The challenge for the modern church is to look to the Bible for guidance in establishing a scripturally oriented effective leadership structure. Although the difficulty in this is that there seems to be no clear prescriptive pattern of leadership in the New Testament teachings. A better approach is to study the New Testament writings in order to discover what they did and why? From this, the principles that can be applied to our culture and time can be gleaned. A combination of Narrative and Comparative research method will be used in dealing with this topic. This paper has the potential of guiding and synchronizing the modern churches in their choices of leadership pattern and following these biblical principles on leadership we can see a united, strong, and healthy churches emerging in our society.

### **Introduction**

The place for leadership in all endeavors of human life cannot be overstressed. Effective secular leadership is equal to a well-being of the society more so spiritual leadership. We live in a time of rapid change, a time of progress for the church globally despite challenges from within and without which is necessitating the accurate, enduring and result-oriented leadership style. However, getting the leadership position is not just enough, the challenge ought to get the leadership style accomplished in the proper way with the aim of bringing positive development to the people being led, in the influence and power of the Holy Spirit. Leadership in general term could be described as the dynamic use of vision, authority, influence, and positive qualities to govern or lead a group successfully to achieve a goal. It carries management, control, guidance, headship, direction, and governance.

The fifteenth chapter of Acts of the Apostles stands as one of the most decisive moments in the history of early Christianity. Commonly referred to as the Jerusalem Council, it addressed the pressing question of whether Gentile converts were bound to Mosaic Law particularly circumcision. The manner in which the Apostles and Elders deliberated and resolved this controversy provides not only a theological turning point but also a remarkable model of Church



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leadership. The Council demonstrated a leadership style characterized by shared authority, dialogue, reasoning, discernment and a high level sensitivity.

The modern church struggles with balancing unity with diversity within the body of Christ. We also have issues of doctrinal disputes, cultural inclusion and biblical organizational structure which were practically answered in Acts 15.

This article seeks to examine the leadership style of Acts 15 and to explore their implications for the modern church, Christian Evangelical Fellowship of Nigeria. By considering the narratives, we can draw connections and recommend as necessary to the contemporary church practice of governance, this study argues that Acts 15 offers a pattern that can foster unity and guidance for the Church through history.

## Background

Acts of the Apostles is found in the New Testament, immediately after the Gospels. Acts continues the story from the Gospel of Luke. The Greek word (*praxeis*) means “Acts” which was often used to describe the achievements of great men. MacArthur sees ‘Acts’ as the spirit’s directing, controlling, and empowering ministry that strengthened the church and caused it to grow in numbers, spiritual power, and influence (351). The book does feature the notable figures in the early years of the church, especially Peter and Paul. The title of this book was of a great dispute within the late first century and second century. According to Hengel, Tertullian called it a “Commentary of Luke” while Irenaeus speaks of it as the “testimony of Luke regarding the apostles” (64-68). For Bruce, the book would have been better title as “The Acts of the risen Jesus” or “The Acts of the Holy Spirit” (21-22). These points to the fact that the book’s key topics concern major activities from heaven and the variations show that by the end of the second century there were ways to identify this book.

Darrell belongs to the view that sees Acts more of that of the Apostles because to him, “Acts of the Apostles” was intended to highlight that the characters God uses in Acts are to be seen as sent from God. Acts, however, is less focused on individuals than it is on the selective presentation of the growth of the community and its message. The book moves from locale to locale as God directs, starting in Jerusalem and culminating in the travels of Paul to Rome. In fact, the key character in Acts is God, his activity, and his plan (2).

Bock and Cadbury reviews in detail that the tradition is tied to Luke. It is clear that the two volumes are the work of the same author, since the two prefaces are linked by the mention of Theophilus (4-6). MacArthur cited early church fathers such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome who affirm Luke’s authorship, and so does the Muratorian Canon (ca, A.D. 70). Because Theophilus is a relatively obscure figure, mentioned only three times in the New Testament (Col. 4:14, 2 Tim. 4:11, Philem. 24), it is unlikely that anyone would have forged a work to make it appear to be Luke’s. A forger surely would have attributed his work to a more prominent person (351). The debate that swirls around the authorship of Acts are the “we sections” (Acts 16:10-17, 20:5-15, 21:1-18). If these units are what they seem to be, then the author was a witness to some events recounted in Acts and was sometimes companion of Paul (Bruce 3-5). Therefore, from the internal evidences and the agreements within most New Testament scholars, it is most favorable that Luke wrote Acts of the Apostles. Therefore, we can sum up that traditionally it is believed to be written by Luke, the physician and



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companion of Paul (Colossians 4:14). Also the author of the Gospel of Luke. Evidence for Luke's authorship includes: Similar language and style between Luke and Acts. "We" passages (Acts 16:10–17; 20:5–15) suggest an eyewitness narrator.

## Textual Narratives of Acts 15

### (A) Acts 15:1-5 presents the problem:

This chapter began with a ritual that was established from the Old Testament which is the matter of circumcision occasioned by the spread of Christianity from the Jewish community to the Gentile world. The influx of Gentile believers raised tensions, particularly regarding circumcision and adherence to Jewish customs. It was a Jewish tradition which the word according to the custom of Moses in verse one is confusing. This confusion can be resolved as Moses was an important figure in the Jewish tradition of which laws and customs and formation of Israel's religion cannot be expressed fully outside him.

In taking a retrospective view of circumcision, it was established in the Old Testament in connection with the Patriarch Abraham as a divine command which his seed are expected to obey (Genesis 17:10-14). Wallace (699) opined that the concern was the command to be circumcised, the roots of which go back to God's command about the "sign" of belonging to God's people, a fundamental association independent of the laws given by Moses to Israel. In Don's view, circumcision was a sign of cleanliness, uncircumcision was the sign of uncleanness (Ex. 6:12, Lev. 26:41, Isaiah 52:1). Israelites prided themselves that, because they were circumcised, they were God's people. They called themselves "the circumcised" (Gal. 2:7-8, Eph. 2:11, Col. 4:11) and despised the Gentiles as "the uncircumcised". The Jews believed that the only people who are God's people were those who kept the Law of Moses. Since the Law commanded circumcision, they believed that a person had to be circumcised to be saved (Lev. 12:3, John 7:23, Acts 15:1, 5, 21:21) (68-69).

The phrase "some men coming down from Judea" coming to teach circumcision and imposing it on the new Gentile community deserves a critical study of these men. Bock came up with two plausible views on the identity of these men: (1) they may be messengers from James (Gal 2:12) who exceed their authority by insisting on circumcision or (2) they may be "false brothers secretly brought in" (Gal 2:4) to spy out Paul and company. Either way, they clearly are zealots when it comes to keeping the law, although there is a logical consistency in their view that had some appeal. In their view, without such covenantal faithfulness, salvation is not possible. This would be an issue only for the Gentiles having just come to faith because Jewish Christians would have already been circumcised. So must a Gentile become like a Jew to be a genuine Christian? This is a key question at this important Jerusalem Council (495).

This teaching on circumcision as the basis for salvation in Christ brought "tension" or "dissension". BAGD observed that there was division of opinion which runs deep; it refers to a serious lack of agreement (764). This matter was too important to be left for a local decision, therefore the need to meet Elders and Apostles in Jerusalem (*apostolous kai presbyterous*). This necessitated Paul and Barnabas to return to Jerusalem in order to get answers to this issue coming up among the Gentiles believers. Acts 15 follows Paul and Barnabas's missionary journey (Acts 16-18), where they preached to Gentiles and witnessed their conversion. This chapter precedes



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Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16-18), which benefits from the Council's decision. This passage serves as a bridge between the church's Jewish roots and its growing mission.

Paul and Barnabas, as they were journeying to Jerusalem, both of them kept reporting on Gentile conversions, which was a topic of joy through Phoenicia and Samaria. The term "report" (*ekdiegeomai*) as it is used in this passage refers to the pivot that sets the tone for the Council to follow. The term "Gentile conversion" (*epistrophe*) in this context refers to a change of thinking, a turn in orientation, and so a conversion. For Polhill, this journey was almost a "campaign trip," which overstates the matter slightly, but there is no doubt that there is wide enthusiasm for what God is doing through them (324).

In verse 4 and 5, Moule (73) elucidated that by the Greek word (*apo*) as used in verse 4 indicates that the church (Apostles and Elders) received them with a good welcome. As Luke quickly notes, the positive reception is from most of the church, even as others rose up (*exanestesan*) in contending against them. Those contenders are from the group of the Jewish believers who had Pharisaic orientation. Don elucidated that Pharisees were one of the two main parties within Judaism in the New Testament times, the other being the Sadducees. The origin of the two parties go back to the second century BC, when Greek influence in Jewish affairs created divisions among the Jewish people. Most of the Pharisees came from the working classes and tried to preserve traditional Jewish practices from the corruption of foreign ideas and political ambition. Being members of such a strict party, many of the Pharisees regarded themselves alone as being the true people of God, and kept apart from those who did not follow their beliefs and practices. The name 'Pharisees' meant 'the separated ones' (Acts 15:5, 26:5, Gal. 2:12) (338-339).

This was the same orientation of Apostle Paul before his conversion but interestingly, he did not share the same view with these brothers. Verse 4 ended with the table set with the presentation of the demands of this group that; (1) the Gentiles are to keep to circumcision, and (2) to keep to the law. Verse 5 introduced the problem again just as it is stated in verse 1, emphasizing the need for circumcision on the Gentile community of believers.

### **(B) Acts 15:6-11; Peter's speech which shows Salvation by grace, not the Law**

The apostles and the elders (*apostolous kai presbyterous, idein peri tou logou toutou*) gathered to look at this matter in verse 6. It is interesting to take note on those who are deliberating on the affairs of the church (the Apostles and the Elders). Christopher, in his Dictionary of Theological terms, gives more understanding to who an Apostle is. To him, apostle is an eyewitness of the risen Christ, commissioned by him to spread the gospel. Building upon Christ the cornerstone, God made apostles a part of the foundation of the church (7). The term 'elder' is what the English versions of the Bible uses for Church leaders – 'Elders', 'Overseer', 'Guardians', 'Bishop'. These names are translations of only two words in the Greek of the original New Testament, *presbuteroi* and *episkopoi*, and both words seem to apply to the same office and person (106). Luke gave an interesting summery from verse 7 to 9, indicating the overview of Peter's key experience with Cornelius and keeps the emphasis on God's initiative. Stating that God *exelexato* (chose) him to deliver the gospel to the Gentiles. The important matter was that the same spirit that came on the Jews in Acts 2 does also come on the Gentiles that believed (He accepted Gentiles by His Spirit without circumcision). According to Bruce, if anyone should be blamed for this new departure, it



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is God (290). This decision and theology played important role in the formation of Paul's concept even in his discourse to the Galatians. He noted several evidences for justification which is by faith alone. The Apostle has made his propositions clear that justification is by faith alone.

A look at outlines of various proofs for his proposition to be acceptable before the judges who are at the same time his readers, the weight of his debate lies here. The apostle uses chapters one and two of Galatians to try to confront and give a proposition for his letter. His theme is clear throughout the letter, that man is not justified by the observance of the law but by faith which is trusting in God. He tries to give evidence as if he were in the law court. He really needs to drive the Galatians Christians to believe in the defense for his proposition. According to Tolmie, "The apostle uses a very effective series of accusative rhetorical questions in order to remind the audience of events they experienced".(99-100). Again, the play of words here must not go unnoticed.

Firstly, Apostle Paul gives experiential evidences to his readers in 3:1-5. One of the ways used in rhetoric to present a case is to appeal to events experienced by your hearers. This becomes so powerful a defense if the experience agrees with the views of your hearers. This section was set to challenge the Galatians if their present behavior is in sharp contradiction to what they have experienced spiritually. In other words, how could they doubt and deny their own experiences?

The beginning of this section seems to attract much criticism because of the use of the word 'ἄνοητοι' which some translations have rendered 'foolish'. The ἄνοητοι is being used as a vocative and serves as an adjective that modifies the noun 'Γαλάται.' This is one of the most emotionally charged addresses in all of Apostle Paul's letters.

Apostle Paul is referring not to mental incompetence, but to a lack of wisdom. Richards, also finds that the word used here indicate someone who has failed to exercise his power of perception. He believes that Apostle Paul probably designated his hearers this way because they were behaving as if they were put under a powerful spell. That is why he didn't use the word 'moron' but 'anoetos' for a person who did fail in exercising his power of perception (448).

Secondly, Apostle Paul provides evidence from the scripture to support his proposition in this section. This is covered in 3:6-14. Given the emphasis on Mosaic Law by the Judaizers, there was the need to use scripture to clarify these facts. Remember also that at the then dispensation, the Old Testament scriptures had already become documents that circulate around. Through the scripture, the Judaizers drew out Moses' template for salvation, which is 'nomos,' and so it was then necessary for Apostle Paul to use the scripture.

Apostle Paul used Genesis 15:6 to show to them scriptural arguments that God simply justified Abraham by faith. This was not because he kept the law. The scripture records that he simply believed in the promise that God would bless him, and God simply declared him justified, or righteous. One of the best references to supplement Genesis 15:6 would be Romans 4. If Abraham was justified by just believing in the promise by faith, the Galatians are also justified for they received the Spirit by faith.

Thirdly, he further expounded on Genesis 12:3; 22:18 to make his points clearer to his hearers. Galatians 3:6-9 brings the Gentiles as part of the children of Abraham. The use of the word 'ἔθνη' in 3:8 signifies a person from an ethnic group not aligned with or trusting the God of Israel. Picirilli resounded this in his work that by this statement in both Old Testament references, Abraham became the spiritual father of anyone anywhere that would believe in God. So, God's





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promise to Abraham is that he would gather a host of people to himself and not just of Israel as a nation. In Apostle Paul's defense and proof, faith is the only basis of inclusion into the covenant God had with Abraham (47). While 3:7 reveals that only those who have faith qualify, it is interesting to note that it is not all Jews that have faith. In the same way, 3:8, 9 reveals that all those who have faith qualify and this brings into the covenant those who are not natural Jews.

Fourthly, the apostle appealed his defense with logical arguments to prove his points. His point is to show the logical error in trusting in the law. One of the evidences for justification by faith-is in Galatians chapter three which is the heart of the whole matter. The Apostle has made his propositions clear that justification is by faith alone. It is now time to outline the various proofs for his proposition to be acceptable before the judges who are at the same time his readers.

This section could be seen as the theological hub of the defense of the author's weight of argument. It is the section where evidences have to flow in the rhetorical discourse. The weight of his debate lies here.

### **(C) Acts 15:12-21; Paul, Barnabas, and James responses, scriptural justification**

After Peter's speech verse 12 noted a relative silence among them, which was to ponder on the matter raised. Verses 13-14 shows that James who represent the Church community in Jerusalem support Peter by insisting that the audience should pay attention to what he was saying. Fitzmyer opined that James refers to Peter using his Jewish name, Simeon Niger of Acts 13:1, but some connection is not at all transparent (552). James concludes that what God has done is receive a people from among the Gentiles. Don gave some detail explanation to the term "Gentile" according to him, the Hebrew word translated as Gentile means originally 'a nation'. When Israel became a special sense God's people, Israelites used the expression 'the nations' (the Gentiles) to refer to all non-Israelites people (Deut 7:6, Gal.2:15). In the eyes of the Jews, Gentiles have no hope of salvation, because they were excluded from the covenant promises that God gave to Israel (Eph. 2:11-12). Only by becoming converts to the Jewish religion could they have hope of salvation. It is therefore easy to see why in the early days of the Church many Jewish Christians did not want to accept Gentiles into the Church unless they kept the Jewish laws (148).

The term "people" (laos) in verse 14 according to Polhill, is significant because it often refers to the people of God (Acts 7:34; 13:17), as it does. In the Old Testament, this term refers to Israel (Deut 26:18-19), although Zach 2 :11 uses it to refer to Gentiles as part of renewed Israel (329). Dahl (1957-58) observed that the phrase "people for my name" is not in LXX but is common in the Palestinian Targum, so there may be traces of an idiom common in Jewish contexts. Regarding the remarks of James, Bock strongly believes that there are full of theological terms and ideas (503). It is interesting to see how the concept of the people of God now encompasses both the Jews and the Gentiles in the discus. The Greek term *symphonousin* which is literally translated as "share the same sound", "match" or "agree" can now be applicable to the new community of believers both Jews and Gentiles.

The summary of James argument is that the Gentiles who turn with faith to God should not be burdened with issues of the Law. The Law in this context refers the binding codes on the Israelites. The Law applied to the whole of their lives and made no distinction between moral, religious and civil Law may have been in the form of absolute demands that allowed no exceptions (Don 255). BDAG further elucidated that the Greek word *parenochleo* which means "cause unnecessary



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trouble or difficulty” is the response to God’s dealings among the Gentiles (775). This is applicable to the inclusion of the Gentiles into the Christian fold, unnecessary trouble and difficulty should be taken from the ways of the Gentiles. The Jerusalem Council asks the Gentiles to be sensitive and refrain (apecho) from four things which are; pollution of idolatry, immorality associated with pagan worship, strangled things, and blood matter (103).

The pollution of idolatry which appears to mean eating of food dedicated to idols just as in Daniel 1:8, suggest a kind of desecration. Again it seems that pollution is associated with idols and their rituals. Secondly, association with sexual immorality appears also to have a cultic dimension where it is entertained within the Gentile world. Thirdly, on the strangle things, just like how Gaventa explained that it is likely a description of what happens with sacrifices or meals among Gentiles. The result of this form of death is that blood often is not drained from the animal (222). Finally, on the matter of the blood, what may have been particularly offensive were the Gentile priests tasting the blood of the sacrifice (Witherington 464). Darrel sums it up that in all likelihood; this is a request to be faithful to the one true God, to be moral in worship, and to have sensitivity to issues of unclean animals and eating strangled animals without draining the blood (506)

Merkle in arguing about the Jerusalem Council included nonbinding decisions by observing the problem of interpreting Acts 15. To him Acts 15 is a pattern of Church hierarchy in that the decision made by the council (and presented by James) that the Gentiles need to avoid certain foods is best understood, not as a binding decree set by an ecclesiastical authority, but as a plea for sensitivity to the Jewish people. The decision that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised was not open dispute (Acts 15:19). The question needed to be answered clearly because it involved one’s salvation. Were the four prohibitions, however, given as binding law for the churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia? If so, are these “decrees” binding on Christians today? The difficulty of answering these questions has to do with the nature of the second prohibition – abstaining from sexual immorality. Of course, this prohibition was binding. We know this because other texts in the New Testament clearly teach that sexual immorality is a sin (Rom 13:13, 1 Cor. 6:9, 13, 18, 10:8, 1 Thess. 4:3). The other three prohibitions, however, should be viewed as a plea for sensitivity to the religious scruples of Jewish people because it is clear that Christians are not bound by certain food laws (Acts 10:15, 11:9, Rom 14:14, 1 Cor. 6:12-13, Col 2:16-17) (34-35)

James was emphatic the sensitivity of the Gentiles to the reading of Moses in verse 21. Johnson notes that the practice of reading Moses is long-standing, widespread, and regular. The remark makes one of two points; (1) Moses is read every week, so be sensitive to those who read him; or (2) as a Gentile, if you need more guidance as to Jewish concerns, these can be determined by hearing Moses who is read regularly in the synagogue (267). For Merkle, God’s word requires obedience to these Old Testament food laws. Rather, the reason given is that there are Jewish people (including Jewish Christians) in cities all over the world who still feel bound to the Law of Moses. After all, the two elements of Gentile lifestyle that greatly offended the Jewish population were their sexual immorality and their diet. What James, and the council, are saying is that while Gentiles do not need to be circumcised to be saved, it would live sexually moral lives and be sensitive to the Jewish food laws. “The four requirements suggested by James were thus all basically aimed at making fellowship possible between Jewish and Gentile Christians (35-36). Bruce accurately summarizes; therefore without compromising the Gentiles’ Christian liberty,



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James gave it as his considered opinion that they should be asked to respect their Jewish brethren's scruples by avoiding meat which had idolatrous associations or from which the blood had not been properly drained, and by remaining content with the lower pagan standards of which they had been accustomed (311)

**(D) Acts 15:22-35 – The Council's decision and the letter to the Gentile believers.**

The Apostles and Elders select some men, leaders to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to report matters raised at the Jerusalem consultation and the decision from Jerusalem Elders. Polhill gave detailed explanation on these other men assigned by the Apostles and Elders. To him, the identity of the Judas also called Barsabbas which means "son of the Sabbath" is not known. Silas probably Silvanus of 2 Cor. 1:19 who ends up traveling with Paul to Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth, so a Jerusalem presence on Paul's journeys from Jerusalem also exists (333). The Jerusalem elders saw that the matter was not just a local problem, therefore, a letter that carries the addresses of churches within that region (Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia). After a standard greeting, the problem was reviewed in verse 24 which gave the outlines of the problem that led to the decision. It can be observed from the council's decision that the group that caused the problem overstepped their authority as they have been given no instruction on the topic that caused the trouble as observed by Rengstorf (592).

Verses 25-29 show the esteemed nature of how the Elders and the Apostles at Jerusalem saw Paul and Barnabas. Both are referred to as "beloved" (*agapetois*). In turn, the character of these two men emerges from the fact that they risked their lives for the Church. Barrett summed up that the term "give over" in this context meant that they are willing to lose their lives or dedicate their lives for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ (742). The letter commends the men from Jerusalem as worthy witnesses on behalf of the council. The decision and items listed in verse 20, were also repeated in verse 29 in the letter which refers to the Gentiles cultic activities of which the new community forbids. These elements listed according to BDAG were prohibited not only to prevent offense to the Jews but also to prevent offense to God in worship (358). Therefore, verse 29 asked the Gentile community to avoid these necessary items. Schneider summed up that in doing so, they do well, that is, they perform what is right (123). These men arrived Antioch and share the letter with the multitude (*plethos*) of believers and was read loud and the people were filled with joy and comforted. The term "*parakleseis*" means 'comfort' or 'encouragement' shows the tempo of the people as the letter from Jerusalem was read, Berrett opined that by the letter, Luke is claiming that Gentile Christianity is free from the Law and that the unity of the Church had been preserved (749). Jervell however, overstates the cause of the joy when he limits it to the announcement of the duties noted in the decree and the conditions for Gentile incorporation. He excludes the issue of circumcision as event on the promise that the letter says nothing about it (402).

In summary, Bock opined that we see the church in deliberation about a disagreement whose resolution paved the way for the church's future. Several points emerge. First, however deep the original disagreement, the meeting allowed both sides to speak and relied on what God has done, as well as what Scripture teaches. The result, a compromise, led to an understanding that may not have completely satisfied anyone. Nevertheless, each side agreed that it could live with this agreement and that it would be wise to be sensitive to all the groups, given the differences in the cultures that made up the new Church (508).





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Stott summarizes two additional, complementary lessons. On the one hand, salvation by grace is an issue of Christian truth that is not to be compromised. No particular work of the law was added as the requirement for salvation or membership in the new community. Salvation cannot be a matter of human works. It is about receiving God's grace from start to finish. On the other hand, Christian fellowship means that grace should be shown for differences that are not central to the truth of salvation, as an expression of love (257). James takes the lead in seeking harmony with a point of view that the gospel is not compromised and diversity of expression can be tolerated. The implication is that the Jewish believers are free to practice the faith in their way, just as Gentiles are not required to come under the law to profess their faith in Christ.

The final matter was the matter discussed at the Jerusalem Council needed to be interpreted to the community. It should be basically clear that every agreement of the entire Church should be communicated to the community or those concerned without been biased.

### **Implications Christian Evangelical Fellowship of Nigeria (CEFN)**

In evaluating the mode of the leadership style as pictured in the Early Church as narrated in Acts of the Apostles chapter 15. It is obviously clear that most scholars in observing the scenario concluded that the style exhibited by the Jerusalem Church Council is nothing less than the Presbyterian system. This system encompasses the coming together of elders and apostles to deliberate on the issue of inclusion that was at stake. This Presbyterian system of the Early Church (Acts 15) denotes a Protestant Church governed by Elders all of equal ranks. From all indications, we saw the shift of leadership from the Apostles under Peter to the Elders under Apostle James. Most betiding issues confronting the Early Church were left for the Jerusalem Church Council to decide e.g. the issue of the circumcision of the Gentiles that necessitated the Council of Acts 15. Surely, the Early Church in Jerusalem possesses a beautiful leadership structure of which churches down the line should emulate. The Church from her foundation through the lenses of the Jerusalem Early Church was not a single Pastor Church, but a combination of several people with James as the head.

Most New Testament scholars are at home with the Presbyterian (Eldership ruler-ship) nature of Church leadership in the Early Church; nevertheless, James (the Pastor) served a prominent position in her decision making by considering the nature and the proceeding of Acts 15.

Christian Evangelical Fellowship of Nigeria (CEFN), in looking at her leadership style through the background of Jerusalem Church Leadership style (Acts 15), has a lot to be commended, and at the same time there are lots to be corrected. If these corrections are not effected in the leadership style of CEFN, the dichotomy of Pastors and Laities with the struggles associated with such system which the ending seems invincible. As Achile noted, that there are rivalries among officers, there is unhealthy rivalry between the Local Church Chairman and the Pastor as to who has more power or say in the affairs of the Local Assembly, Area Council and the Zonal Council. Having said this, it seems difficult however to conclude in a definite form the pattern of Church leadership the CEFN runs.

In observing Achile's position, which states that "CEFN runs a mixture of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism" system. (167). In contrast to the Early Church Leadership style in Jerusalem as exhibited by the proceedings in Acts 15, Haenchen elucidated that the writer of the Acts of the Apostles presupposes the Presbyterian form of government for the Early Church (68).



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Further research into the Congregational and the Presbyterian forms of Church governance rolls into one needs deeper explanation to see the privileges and the consequences thereof. Ahistrom described a combination of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism as a “Hybrid System” or a “Mixed Polity” (163-166). This paper therefore is a call to adopt one stand, preferably the pattern used in the Early Church as documented in Acts 15 against the current hybridization system.

## Conclusion

The leadership style as exemplified in Acts 15 offers timeless guidance for the modern church. The Jerusalem Church Council demonstrated that effective spiritual leadership that does not rest on the authority of a single individual but in collaboration rooted in scripture and dialogue. For the church today, Acts 15 calls leaders to accept and adopt a collaborative structure with prominence given to the teaching Elder (Pastor) at the council preceding. It must be a system that listens to the community by trying as much as possible to avoid an imposition of authoritarianism. The teaching Elder (Pastor) should know that he is expected to work in collaboration with other Elders, in the same way, the rest others should know that the teaching Elder deserved to lead the team as pictured in Acts 15. Adopting the Presbyterian system is the sure way for the modern church to be more biblical and collaborative.

Therefore Acts 15 reminds us that true church leadership is not about power but about service, wisdom to handle theological and administrative matters regarding the expanding nature of the church and the demands that are associated with such growth. This paper recommends such structure for Christian Evangelical Fellowship of Nigeria, and any other modern Church seeking expansion.

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