



## Contextualizing Ingratitude in Luke 17:12 – 18 Among the Members of Pentecostal Churches in Ika Land

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**Abstract.** There is no gainsaying the fact that appreciating good deeds done is a critical attribute of a civilized person. It boosts the morale of people to do more good to others and as a result, it promotes the culture of harmony and goodwill. Expressing thanks has the power in creating a deeper and stronger relationship among people. Sadly, we live in a society that is bedeviled with Ingratitude. There is a constant display of this vice. This attitude of Ingratitude is becoming progressively evident in these last days among some members of Pentecostal Churches in Ika land of Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. It is against this backdrop that the study aims to Contextualize the story of the nine ungrateful Lepers in Luke 17:12 – 18 among one of the Pentecostal Churches in Ika land, Ministry of Reconciliation Evangelism Explosion. Historical-critical approach was employed in the work. The study shows that Ingratitude is a state of not feeling or showing that you are grateful for something like the nine lepers that did not come to thank Jesus. The Paper further reveals the characteristics of Ingratitude which include pride, feeling of entitlement, and taking God’s blessings for granted and not being thoughtful. The findings include lack of regular emphasis on the importance of gratitude based on biblical teachings, which implies potential gap in spiritual education of gratitude among the church members. It reflects a missed opportunity to utilize gratitude as a powerful tool for sharing the Christian faith and attracting others to the church. The Study therefore recommends that biblical teaching on the unhealthy display of Ingratitude in Pentecostal Churches in Ika Land in particular and the Christian communities in general should be deemphasized.

**Keywords:** Ingratitude, Pentecostal, Churches, Lepers, Contextualize

### 1. Introduction

12. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance 13. and lifted up their voices, and said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us”. 14 When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the Priests”. And as they went, they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice, 16 and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. 17. Then said Jesus, “were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? 18. Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”

The story of the ten lepers in Luke 17:12-18 is one filled with emotions. In it, lessons on gratitude and Ingratitude are inter-woven. Ten lepers were healed but only one came to express thanks to Jesus. He expected the ten lepers to express gratitude to him. He therefore noticed lack of gratitude on the part of the nine lepers. We live in a culture that is obsessed with ingratitude. The church, which is the body of Christ, is not spared from this. Most members of Pentecostal churches are not appreciative of good deeds done, either by God or their fellow human beings. Why are humans ungrateful? It is tantamount to a display of Ingratitude to a friend who in a boundless exhibition of compassionate brotherhood decides to help us in time of need only for us to mock, and blackmail him. This attitude of Ingratitude has stopped most people from doing good deeds and this has increased an attitude of nonchalance to neighbours who are in need of help.

The failure of the church members in their practice of gratitude as expected despite Jesus Christ’s injunction is a serious cause for concern, particularly among the Pentecostal churches in Ika Land. Sparks

of Ingratitude in churches have continued to result in breakup of churches, conflicts, hatred, misunderstanding, poor social relationship, health related issues and even death in some cases. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine Luke 17:12 – 18 and Ingratitude and what obtains among the members of Pentecostal Churches in Ika land with the aim of stemming the increasing trend of Ingratitude among Christians in general. The Paper employed the exegetical, hermeneutical, historical and phenomenological approaches to achieve the objectives.

## 2. The Meaning and Impact of Ingratitude

Ingratitude is synonymous with un-thankfulness. It is the act of being ungrateful to anyone that has shown you kindness. It is a vice that dries up all the fountain of goodness. Ingratitude is lack of appreciation for something that has been done to you. Barclay (2019) avows that ingratitude is a rejection of God as creator and owner of all things. For him, Paul the apostle points to ingratitude as the main cause of the plethora of problems in the Corinthian church. As 1Corinthians 4:7 puts it, “For who sees anything different in you”? What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?” The Church at Corinth failed to acknowledge that everything they had was not of their own making but a gift from God. Okpalaunegbu (2022), remarks that the society is infected with ingratitude.

Ingratitude can ignite dissatisfaction. When we do not show gratitude, we provide opportunity for discontentment to thrive. This can lead to a distortion in mental well-being. Delgado (2023) asserts that Ingratitude does not only condemn a person to bitterness but also has negative effect on his physical health. According to her, it has been proven that gratitude reduces the level of stress, anxiety and stress. A study carried out at the University of Michigan revealed that ungrateful people usually report increased levels of stress, and a higher number of physical symptoms (Delgado, 2023). People that are not grateful provide access for others not to be kind to them. When they do not receive anything again, they think that the society is a hostile place without goodness. An investigation carried out at the University of Manchester showed that unthankful people are more dependent and less autonomous. As a result, they are in deep need of others. They have challenge of self-acceptance and majorly lack purpose in life (Delgado, 2023). She added that unthankfulness creates an unhealthy psychological state pictured by cycles of impossible expectations and

disappointments in which the person is unable to appreciate in a fair state the positive that has taken place. A study conducted at Hope College in Michigan demonstrated that gratitude is an excellent predictor of the level of happiness, well-being and fulfillment in life. On the other hand, Ingratitude leads to a loop of chronic unhappiness and ungrateful people are more likely to feel perpetually dissatisfied. People that are not grateful are likely to be negative, judgmental, always finding faults with others. They tend to be pessimists who do not see good with others (Delgado, 2023).

Ingratitude has become an integral part of the society we live in. This vice is entrenched in the lives of some people, that they find it hard to admit that they are ungrateful. There is nothing so distressing and painful than to go out of your way to assist someone and receiving no appreciation at the end. It can be defined as not showing gratitude of what we have or have been given. Adults and children are becoming more ungrateful each passing moment. Paul the Apostle wrote,

But understand this that in the last days, there will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lover of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it (2Tim:3:1-5, RSV).

This attitude of Ingratitude is becoming progressively evident in these last days among some members of Pentecostal churches in Ika land. It is a characteristic of the apostasy in the last days. It is a deep character flaw that does not promote human relationship. It sticks out like a sore thumb. For Chuck (2018), Ingratitude reflects a heart that has been turned away from God toward something else. Luther (2019) opines that if there is one sin that is most common today, it is the sin of Ingratitude. God does so much for us, our indebtedness to Him is enormous and yet we rarely offer thanks for what He has done. An act of Ingratitude is an act of rejection of God as creator and owner of the world. Ingratitude is a key index that demonstrates why people are self-centered, self-sufficient, greedy, undisciplined, insincere, and dishonest. Gbinije (2018) supports this by stating that Ingratitude is a gross impotence to show appreciation, gratefulness and thanks in the face of apparent and clear assistance.

### 3. The Interpretation of Luke 17:12 – 18

#### Greek Text:

12. Καὶ εἰσερχομένου αὐτοῦ εἰς τινα κώμην, ἀπήντησαν [αὐτῷ] δέκα λεπροὶ ἄνδρες, οἱ ἕστησαν πόρρωθεν. 13 Καὶ αὐτοὶ ἤραν φωνὴν λέγοντες, Ἰησοῦ ἐπιστάτα, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς. 14 καὶ ἰδὼν, εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Πορευθέντες ἐπιδείξατε ἑαυτοὺς τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν, καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ὑπάγειν αὐτοὺς, ἐκαθαρίσθησαν. 15 εἷς δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν, ἰδὼν ὅτι ἰάθη, ὑπέστρεψεν μετὰ φωνῆς μεγάλης δοξάζων τὸν θεόν, 16 Καὶ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον παρὰ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ εὐχαριστῶν αὐτῷ· καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν Σαμαρίτης. 17-18 ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν, Οὐχὶ οἱ δέκα ἐκαθαρίσθησαν; οἱ δὲ ἐννέα ποῦ; οὐχ εὗρέθησαν ὑποστρέψαντες δοῦναι δόξαν τῷ θεῷ εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀλλογενὴς οὗτος;

#### English Translation

12. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance 13. and lifted up their voices, and said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us”. 14 When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the Priests”. And as they went, they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice, 16 and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. 17. Then said Jesus, “were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? 18. Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”

According to Luke 17: 12, Jesus was going to Jerusalem when he entered a certain village. Ellicott (2023) opines that the unnamed village laid on the border land of two provinces, Samaria and Galilee. A leprous Samaritan was in company of nine Jewish lepers. These men were socially unfit being kept away from the normal flow of society. This was in line with the Law of Moses in Leviticus 15:40 which says “He is unclean, he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be”. According to Lowe (2017), Luke seems to be the only gospel writer who reported on the healing of the ten lepers by Jesus. He added that leprosy was a disease which the Jewish people thought to have been brought by God as a result of punishment for some peculiar sin. The word εἰσερχομένου (eiserchomenou) is derived from the word εἰσερχομαι (eiserchomai), which literally means to enter or come into. It can be metaphorically used as entrance into any condition, a house or a city (Strong, 2006). The word with an implication of place appears majorly in the gospels and Acts.

The lepers in their predicament made a common plea. Their suffering has brought them to a common level, making them to ignore their racial hatred. Brown

(2023) supports this by stating that the lepers who were regarded as outcast forgot the fierce national antipathy of Jews and Samaritan and came together as a result of their common misery: ἤραν φωνὴν (eran phone) “lifted up their voices”, ἤραν (eran) is derived from αἶρω (airo) meaning to lift up or raise up (Strong, 2006). The ten lepers lifted up their voices in order to express their dire need of being cured by Jesus of leprosy. Adam (2023) argues that as the ten lepers were companions in their suffering, so also they were companions in lifting up their voices to cry for help. Luke 17:12: οἱ ἕστησαν πόρρωθεν, ‘they stood at a distance’ also rendered as “those in the distance”. It is also possible to say πόρρωθεν in Heb. 11:13 means “from afar” or “from a great distance” (Strong, 2006).

Luke 17:13; προς τινά, Acts 4:24; φωνὴν, ἐπαίρειν, Luke 11:27. φωνή (phone) occurs more than six hundred times in the LXX and one hundred and thirty-nine times in the New Testament (Thayer, 2006). According to Blight (2008), the ten lepers referring to Jesus as Master, meant submission, instead of the close relationship of being disciples. Master was equivalent to Rabbi and it was a term of great respect for a person. Ellicott (2023) remarks that the Greek word of “Master” is again that which has been discovered as Luke’s normal equivalent for “Rabbi”. ἐπιστάτα is peculiar to Luke which suggests editorial revision of the story. For kohler (2003), the word master is derived from the Greek work διδασκαλος (didaskalos), which means “master”, Teacher, Rabbi, Rabboni. The word ἐλέαν can be interpreted to mean have pity, help, be merciful is found in the Synoptic Gospels in narratives where it implies the coming of the divine mercy into the world of human misfortune as in Mark 5:19.

In this verse 14, the turning point of the story is being introduced. The Greek word ἰδὼν is derived from εἶδω (eido), a primary verb, solely used in some past tenses. It means to see, behold, look on or perceive (Strong, 2006). It could also mean to notice, discern or discover. Jesus saw the ten lepers which means that he responded to their plea favourably. Πορευθέντες (poreuthentes) is aorist passive participle. It is derived from the Greek word Πορευῶ (poreuo) meaning to cause to go, pass from one place to the other, to go away or depart. It is a verb. According to Thayer (2006), it is in line with the oriental way of describing an action circumstantially. The participle Πορευθέντες is placed before a finite verb which implies some other actions. Collins (2015) avows that Jesus responded to the request of the ten lepers in the form of a command, “Go, show yourselves to the Priests. He commanded them to

go". Lazar (2019) added that the command to "Go" would have come as a disappointment to the lepers that needed healing. In commanding them to "go", Jesus was invariably telling them to observe the Mosaic Law. On the other hand, Ellicott (2023) opines that the meaning of the command "Go" had no accompanying touch as a sign of healing, it therefore means that the command was in a greater degree than it had been before, a trial and test of their faith. It did not however mean a journey, perhaps to Jerusalem.

Jesus said to the ten lepers, "Go and show yourselves to the Priests". ἐπιδείξατε is derived from the word ἐπιδείκνυμι (epideiknumi) meaning to exhibit physically or mentally (Strong, 2006). It could also signify to prove or bring forth to limelight, or to acknowledge. The significance of the word can be seen in the action of the ten lepers in setting forth themselves before the Priests for examination. The visit to a Priest was important after being cleansed in order for the leper to be readmitted to society and also as clear evidence that the leper was cured. Jesus told the ten lepers to go and show themselves to the Priest and to perform the required sacrifices, so that they could be accepted into the society again. This is supported by Muggi (2022) who said that the cleansing of lepers by Jesus is informal. Leprosy was a social position as well as a skin blemish. To deal with the status and restore them to good standing, they had to show themselves to the Priest and be pronounced formally clean. This is further buttressed by Cook (2014) who notes that the local Priest apart from conducting worship on each Sabbath, also performs the role of a health officer. If the person was miraculously healed of leprosy, it was up to the Priest to inspect the body, to test for a complete removal of the disease and to declare the person cured. With that, the person could be reunited to the family and community.

In verse 15, the Greek word ἰδὼν (idon) is derived from Greek word εἶδῶ (eido) meaning "having seen". It is a primary verb that is used in particular past tenses. It is translated as "be aware", "behold", "perceive" in KJV. As soon as one of the lepers realized that he was perfectly sound and has been restored to his health and saw with his eyes that the dreaded illness, leprosy was gone from his body, he came to Jesus to thank him. The word translated 'Praising' is Greek doxazon. Δοξάζων (doxazon) is derived from δοξάζω, meaning to render esteem glory. It is rendered in KJV as "glorify" "full of glory", "magnify". Δοξάζων means glorified.

Jesus was marvelled at the nine healed lepers that did not return to give God thanks. He noticed the lack of

gratitude. He asked questions here as to prove the significance of gratitude. The Greek word ἀποκριθεῖς (apokritheis) is derived from the Greek word ἀποκριομαὶ (apokrinomai) meaning having answered. It is a verb – to answer, reply or take up a discussion. In the New Testament, the aorist middle ἀπεκρινάτο (apekrinato) is found only in Matthew 27:12; Mark 14:61; Luke 3:16; 23:9; John 5:17; 12:23 and Acts 3:12 (Thayer, 2006). The root word of the Greek term is κρινω (krino), which is informative in relationship with "answer" as a considered reaction to a statement. Apokrinomai is found majorly in the gospels and Acts with a total number of two hundred and thirty appearances. Seventy eight occurrences in John which show slight prevalence, followed by Luke with Acts and Matthew. Nevertheless, the verb is found only in Col. 4:6 in a persuasive context and Rev. 7:13. The usage is divergent and itself revealing of a number of possible meanings. In each of the instances, the type and manner of the answer is informative of its context and purpose. According to Luke in particular, Jesus expresses himself as disappointed (17:17) that out of the ten lepers cleansed, only one came back to express gratitude to him. In Mark, Jesus answers restrictively (3:33), commandingly (6:37), questioningly (10:3).

The various examples and diverse usages display the principal emphases for apokrinomai, a term that belongs to the colloquial speech of Jesus, as an expression of his self-consciousness and his knowledge of his having been sent, less regularly in miracle pericope. The word usually attains a decidedly more intense meaning whenever "critical" points are at stake which require a deliberate and careful response, whether on the part of Jesus or other people (Balz and Schneider, 1990). "Were not ten cleansed" indicates that Jesus was expecting gratitude from the ten lepers. ἐκαθαρίσθησαν (ekatharisthesan) is a Greek word derived from the word καθαρίζω (katharizo), which literally means to cleanse, purify, make clean from physical stains. Reiling and Swellengreble (1971) argue that oil δέκα (oi deka), "the ten" is being viewed as a class in its entirety, οἱ δὲ ἐννέα ποῦ; (οἱ de enneapjou?). "Where are the nine? When introducing a question, such as "Is that truly true?", the weight of the question might be highlighted. "Can it really be true that.....?" It is obvious according to Brizo (2022) that Jesus was not happy because only one of the ten cleansed lepers came back to express gratitude. He further stated that there must have been an argument because it is hard to understand that without revealing his purposes, the Samaritan had suddenly left the group to come back to Jesus. The possibility is that he must have asked the nine to return with

him, but they did not agree. Unhappiness seems to have been the controlling emotion as Jesus contemplated the lack of gratitude of the rest nine lepers or it be that they waited for their healings to be real before coming to show gratitude (Coffman, 1999).

ἐκαθαρίσθησαν (Ekatharisthesan) means “were cleansed”. It is a verb, aorist passive indicative, third person plural. Nicoll (2023) asserts that Jesus was asking a question that needed an affirmative answer. He ordinarily desired explanation of the lack of expression of gratitude from the nine lepers, ten of them were cleansed. Οὐχ (ouch) εὑρέθησαν (Eurethesan) is verb aorist passive indicative, third person plural, meaning “they were not found”. This is best taken as another question – that the rest nine were nowhere to be found. Lack of gratitude was the crux of the matter with regard to the nine lepers. According to Blight (2008), the phrase “was no found to return” is meant, were there not found, having turned back, “were not any of them found to return” were no one found who would return”, cannot be that none has been found to come back. This is best seen as a question, but the structure is better taken as a statement, ‘they have not been found returning’. The verb does not refer to a search rather, it is a substitution for “to be”.

ὁ ἄλλογενής: Foreigner in classics, it means an alien. Myallis (2022) opines that this term is used only once in New Testament, which literally means “other genes”. It means a non – Israelite. This foreigner is especially grateful. Hembekides (2020) remarks that Luke, the writer of this gospel was also a foreigner, from a Gentile environment. The fountain of the gratitude that welled up from him was the flame that kindled this story. They were not all Jews, one of them was a Samaritan and the disease broke the hostility and chauvinism. Jesus therefore singled out this grateful Samaritan. It was not his ethnicity, class or race, his aim was to draw attention on the need for gratitude (Hembekides, 2020). The lack of gratitude by the other healed lepers was a clear demonstration of the rejection of Jesus’ ministry by the Jewish nation. He expected thanks from the nine lepers who were Jews.

#### 4. Characteristics of Ingratitude

**Not Being Thoughtful:** The nine cleansed lepers that refused to thank God were not thoughtful. For Hastings (2022), it did not occur to them that they owed everything to Jesus. They had the feeling that God had been kind to them. If any of them was asked to recall how they were healed of leprosy, he would

have said that they were walking along the way when suddenly they realized that they were healed. They might have told the story that it was as a result of their own good fortune that they were cured. Or possibly as an instance of God's inherent kindness working in people's lives. They did not think to give God thanks. Walton (2022) buttresses that sadness seemed to have taken charge over the emotion of Jesus when he considered the ingratitude of man. To him, why would the nine be so thoughtless and not grateful of God's favours? What could have made the nine not to come back to thank God? Could it be because they wanted to wait and the result of their going to see the Priests? They begged Jesus to heal them; he did, but did not return to thank him. This ingratitude by the nine cleansed lepers was a slight to God.

**Pride:** This is another possible reason why the nine cleansed lepers were ungrateful. They were haughty, but the Samaritan returned to worship God because he humbled and regarded himself as a stranger. He was not ashamed to express gratitude because his heart had been humbled. The other nine probably Jews were proud. This finding agreed with numerous other accusations against the Jews during the ministry of Jesus. As a proof, Jesus pointed this out in the parable of the tenants in John 20:9 – 19, how the people of God have rejected his choice son, Jesus. It is also reflected in John 1:11 – 12 “He came to his own home, and his own people received him not”. Spurgeon (2022) argues that Jesus came to his own people, the Jews but they did not accept him. Even though he kept on performing miracles in their midst which no other prophets have done. This was a serious act of ingratitude as a result of their pride. Gratitude requires humility to operate. The Jewish were chosen people among other nations of the earth. And when Jesus appeared among them, they were much better regarded. On this premise, they ought to have received him with great honour. Instead they did not accept him. This was a high level of national ingratitude. The nine lepers were recipients of his healing power, yet they refused to express gratitude to him.

**Feeling of Entitlement:** The Jewish people during Jesus’ days were ready to receive anything that came their way as a matter of right, not privilege. They sometimes marveled that they did not get more being the special people of God as descendants of Abraham. Any blessing a Jew received was considered as one of the “sure mercies of David”. If Jesus was the Messiah, the Jews had every reason to expect the demonstration of his power, even to heal lepers. The Samaritan leper felt a sense of

undeserving; hence he showed a profound sense of gratitude. Shenalyn (2023) supports this by stating that right from their patriarch Abraham, the Jewish nation had been the object of God's treasured possession. His special care for them led Him to protect and made them to flourish. Their ingratitude to God made His heart to break. They were filled with religious pride. The nine lepers who were not grateful like their fellow Jews allowed spiritual pride to take hold of them, and therefore robbed them of their valuable gifts.

Urijah (2011) opines that the nine may have thought within themselves that they merited the healing. Therefore why should they be grateful for what they rightfully deserved? Their feeling of entitlement made them not to come back to give praise to God. The root of gratitude is humility and it is one of the principles of gratitude. This feelings leads to self-importance, self-admiration, self-righteousness, not having regard to authority. The nine cleansed lepers found their hearts rooted in pride because they felt that they were entitled to the healing, the reason being that they were Jews. Ferris (2018) argues that the disciples frequently engaged in feeling of entitlement-based conflict, noting that on one occasion they were debating who was the greatest. They had extreme importance that they began to ask Jesus the question.

**Taking God's Blessings for granted:** The nine cleansed lepers may have taken God's healing for granted. It was so easy for them that they refused to come back to express gratitude. Because of this attitude displayed by the nine cleansed lepers, they wanted to take the credit for the very mercy of God they encountered. For Emmons (2013), gratitude is the acknowledgement that life owes us nothing and all the good we have are as a result of God's favour and they are gifts. Realizing that everything good in this world is totally a gift is a fundamental truth of reality. Ungrateful persons have the tendency of taking things for granted. They tend to be critical and judgmental. Being in this condition can be detrimental on the person well – being. Probably, the nine were asking for more from Jesus, hence they were not interested for the healing they had. Because they took the healing for granted, they were not interested in the feelings of Jesus who made them to be healed. May be, they were not ready to interact with Jesus again. Though Jesus did not deny them his healing, even though they were not grateful to him, but he made it a point of duty of noticing their lack of gratitude. The Ingratitude of the other nine lepers attracted severe rebuke in the face of God's mercy.

Thus verses 17 and 18 reflect a picture of prevalent ingratitude in our contemporary society.

**Unbelief:** Ingratitude is a mark of unbelief. Paul the Apostles brought this out clearly in Romans 1:21 "For though they knew God they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened". Ingratitude enables people not to believe and obey God. The Israelites murmured against God in the wildness. They did not believe in God, therefore they refused to express gratitude to him. God delivered them from bondage in Egypt, divided the Red Sea for them to pass on dry ground. Still, in the wake of this overwhelming benevolence of God, they still complained against God, refusing to enter the Promised Land. "And the LORD said to Moses, How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs which I have wrought among them? (Numbers 14:11, RSV). Unbelief shut the people of Israel out of the Promised Land. They were not ready to trust God (Camarin, 2010).

## 5. Pentecostalism in Ika Land

Ika is one of the ethnic groups in Delta State of Nigeria. They occupy an area of approximately 564 square kilometres. The Ikas live in thirteen separate clans in North East and South Areas of Delta North Senatorial District. They are Akumazi, Idumuesah, Igbodo, Mbiri, Otolokpo, Umunede, Owerre - Olubor, Oza -Nogogo, Ute - Ogbeje, Ute - Okpu, Abavo and Agbor clans. The Igbo and Edo people had a great influence in the culture of Ika people. The Igbo influence is clear, which may be as a result of strong missionary and commercial role of Igbo people whose presence and impact were seriously and deeply felt among Ndiowa (part of Ika people). The Edo influence had to do with the language and culture. For example, Idumu (Owa), Idumwun (Bini). Edo influence is also quite pronounced in the area of festivals (Iguen) and titles such as Iyase, Adolor and also with the use of certain concepts with important social and metaphysical connotations (Echenim, 2009). According to Mokuwye (2017), the Ika community is a location with a homogenous population that strongly shares or respects core values connected to place, customs, and ethics. Pentecostalism came into Ika land as a result of the activities of the Scripture Union. According to Okobia (2022), the Scripture Union group that came from Ibadan organized a crusade that heralded great revival in Ika Land 1970. Those that gave their lives to Jesus in that crusade started a Bible study group at Anglican Primary School, now Orogodo Primary

School, Agbor. As people came, they were engaged in Bible Study and prayers. The revival broke off from Scripture Union and gave birth to other Pentecostal Churches in Ika land. The modern Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria, and especially those in Ika, took their cues from American Pentecostalism. The Ministry of Reconciliation Evangelism Explosion is one of such Pentecostal Churches.

The Church was founded by Revd. Emmanuel Mgbejume in 1993 from Owa – Alizomor in Ika Land. The Church is situated at 121, Tete Street, Boji Boji Owa in Ika North East Local Government Area of Delta State. Revd. Mgbejume heard the call to leave the Baptist Church; he was a resident Pastor with the Nigerian Baptist Convention in Owa Alizomor. He had the first service at his sitting room in a cool evening on 9<sup>th</sup> of October, 1993. From there, the Church moved to a Bamboo booth. Revd. Mgbejume had his first crusade in 1994 at Ngala Primary School, Boji Boji Owa where many people gave their lives to Jesus.

Prophet Baba Moses held a colorful foundation-laying ceremony in 1996 to begin construction of a church building. In 1997, the Church moved from the founder's house to the permanent site where it is presently. Two branches of the Church were given birth to in 1997, Abavo and Alibuba respectively. In 1998, the church had its ordination service where Pastor Uche Meniwan and Pastor Jude Owabor were ordained. The church continued with more branches being opened (Interview with Elvis Mgbejume).

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of November, 2019, Revd. Mgbejume handed over the church to Pastor Elvis Chukuemeke Mgbejume, one of his sons to continue with the vision, which is winning souls for Jesus Christ. The church has an Executive Committee, which is composed of the President, Vice President, Board of Trustees, the General Secretary, the Treasurer, the Financial Secretary, the Auditors, the Missionary Advisers and Welfare Committee.

## **6. Ingratitude in the Ministry of Reconciliation Evangelism Explosion**

Reverend Lucky Agbotin (interview), a clergy man with the above named church defines Ingratitude as lack of appreciation or thanks for something done or helpful act. It is also forgetfulness for kindness received. For him, when we forget to express gratitude for all the blessings in our lives, we became weighted down by our problems. He went further to explain that Ingratitude causes anxiety and promotes unhealthy relationships. The impact of ingratitude in

the church includes conflicts among members, disloyalty in the congregation and disunity. He opined that greed, seeking personal interest and failure to acknowledge someone as provider are some of the factors that can promote ingratitude in the church. He observed that ingratitude hinders evangelical work of the church in the sense that they will not be unity in the church. Lack of co-operation thrives in an atmosphere of ingratitude. He tried in his interview to proffer ways that un-thankfulness in the church can be handled. These include not taking things for granted, not to murmur or complain and refusing to be thoughtless.

Lucky Okoh (Interview) corroborated the above explanation by stating that ingratitude is lack of thanks. She mentioned pride and envy as factors that promote ingratitude in the church. For her, the way to overcome this is for us to count our blessings and shun complaint. Goodluck (Interview, 2023) avowed that Ingratitude is linked to human will and self-worship. He added that ingratitude can hinder evangelistic mission of the church because ingratitude is ultimately a rejection of God, a denunciation of his sovereignty and also a denial of his goodness. To overcome ingratitude, the golden rule must be put in place which says "So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them, for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12, RSV). He added that ingratitude takes the centre stage in church when there is bitterness, complaint, discontentment and envy. As a result of all these, the church can no longer fulfill her mandate of winning souls to Christ.

Victoria Kaliku (Interview) opined that ingratitude hinders evangelistic mission in the church. We can overcome ingratitude by being appreciative for what we have received from God and people, no matter how little it is. Victory Kaliku (Interview) further argued that Ingratitude can hinder our relationship with God and one another. In overcoming ingratitude in the church in particular and the society in general, Christians should always practice thanksgiving and be grateful, even in little things. Rev. Felix Ijeamaka (Interview), remarks that ingratitude has adverse effect on human relationship and also causes a crack in the strength of love amongst members of the church. He therefore proffered solution that ingratitude can be overcome by deliberately living a lifestyle of appreciation

Apostle Elvis Mgbejume, the General Overseer (Interview), remarked that ingratitude is the inability to reciprocate gesture done to you as a result of pride, or self-gratification. He therefore encouraged that

Christians should always speak of good done towards them no matter how little it may be. Humility and simplicity can foster gratitude among members in the church, he added. According to him ingratitude can hinder evangelistic mission and growth of the church.

Mgbejume (Interview) shared his experience of a display of ingratitude to him and his church he pastors. He taught a particular boy who used to be a member of his church how to play musical instruments. The ones he could not teach him, he employed the services of a professional in that area to teach him. The boy was now skilled in keyboard, drums, violin, saxophone and voice training. He used the church instrument to learn them. At the time the boy was able to operate the musical instruments, he left the church on the grounds that another church, and very close to the church he learnt the musical instrument has invited him to become their music director. The church promised to put him on a monthly stipend. The painful part of the experience of the General Overseer was that he left the church on the week of their Annual Thanksgiving service without notifying the pastor that he was leaving so that arrangement could be made for another person to play the keyboard for the Annual Thanksgiving. As a result, more than half of the choir members refused to attend the service because nobody to play the musical instruments. The attitude of ingratitude exhibited by this young man negatively affected the church.

Ijebor (Interview) avowed that ingratitude brings discouragement in doing God's work. He added that when an individual, family or church is not grateful to God, his presence cannot be evident in such a life. He gave a practical experience that anytime he is not grateful for any gesture done to him, he sees himself operating under a closed heaven.

Egun (Interview) noted that ingratitude is the unwillingness to pay back good done to someone. He opined that the Bible records that ten lepers were healed by Jesus, but only one came back to appreciate the good deeds. He added that an ingrate cannot relate well with people, he lives in negativity. He gave an experience he witnessed in the church. People were prayed for by the founder of the Rev. E. O. C Mgbejume who had different challenges. They were delivered after the prayers but did not come back to express gratitude to God.

Ihiator (Interview) observed that there is interaction between ingratitude and human relationship, in the senses that ingratitude exposes the basic vices inherent in people which include pride, blackmail, hatred, feeling of entitlement and self-centeredness.

Ingratitude further brings out the individual differences in man across geographical boundaries. He shared his personal experience of ingratitude displayed to him. According to him, in 1992, he was a Government Establishment in Asaba, when he was the officer in charge of recruitment in the State Civil Service. There was this young man who was a graduate looking for job. After the screening interview, the man was not appointed. He therefore decided to help the young man through a commissioner. When the supplementary list was released, he was still not appointed. He went further to meet his immediate boss, who now assisted him and eventually the young graduate was employed as Administrative Officer II, grade level 08. He rose to the rank of a Director, grade level 17 and retired.

This same officer that was helped refused to assist the man that gave him helping hand to employ another person of lower cadre. He kept telling him that it was different to render assistance. This was a high level of ingratitude, using evil to pay good.

#### **7. Contextualizing Lessons from Luke 17:12-18**

Ingratitude is a human malady, even among members in Pentecostal churches. It is a basic fact of life in human interactions which cannot be totally eliminated. This is against the backdrop that in human relationships there are diversities of behaviours with different opinions. Ingratitude has the propensity to fuel dissatisfaction and negatively impact our relationships in the sense that it can sever our interactions with families, friends and colleagues. It aids in promoting an attitude of entitlement. Without the habit of showing thankfulness, it then follows that whatever we get in life, we are entitled to it.

Ingratitude has negative consequences as revealed in the story of the nine lepers (Luke 17:17 – 18). They displayed the attitude of ingratitude to Jesus which he vehemently frowned at. As a result of this, they were only healed bodily but not saved. Jesus established the church with the intention of using thankfulness to bring people and God together. The church was established with the intention of expressing thanks to God. Therefore, it is important for the church, which serves as a symbol of what Christ stood for by giving thanks to God, to be receptive and proactive in expressing thankfulness. This will help to stem the tide of ingratitude in our churches in particular and the society at large. It is imperative therefore, for church leaders to confront any act of ingratitude in their congregations. People that are appreciated are

more goals oriented, socially engaged and perform better in life.

### 8. Findings

The Christians in this church fail to embody gratitude fully. It implies a lack of consistent joy, love and happiness among the members, which is attributed to a deficiency in expressing gratitude.

They fall short in regularly emphasizing the importance of gratitude based on biblical teachings. It implies potential gap in spiritual education of gratitude among the church members.

It reveals a missed opportunity to utilize gratitude as a powerful tool for sharing the Christian faith and attracting others to the church.

It shows that ingratitude can affect the growth of any organization negatively.

### 9. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes by affirming the importance of gratitude in the lives of Christians. Jesus Christ condemned the ingratitude of the nine Jewish lepers. It is clear that Jesus expected gratitude from anyone who receives favors from fellow human beings. From the study of the role of ingratitude in the lives of the members of The Ministry of Reconciliation Evangelism Explosion, it is clear that the spirit of ingratitude among Christians is a retarding factor in the evangelistic mission of the church.

The conclusion, the paper recommends the following:

- Biblical teaching on the unhealthy application of ingratitude to the Pentecostal churches in Ika in particular and the Christian communities in general should be emphasized.
- Negative attitudes of ingratitude should be discouraged in the society.
- Church leaders and members should be made to understand that gratitude is a moral cardinal principle in the teaching of Jesus Christ.
- The Church and the Nigerian society should be made to know that ingratitude inhibits positive inter-personal and community relationships.

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**Interviews**

Name	Age	Sex	Place	Occupation	Date
Mgbejume Elvis	35	M	Owa, Ika	Clergy	15/5/23
Nkechi Okoh	23	F	Owa, Ika	Schooling	15/5/23
Ifeoma Kaliku	43	F	Owa, Ika	Trading	15/5/23
Rev. Lucky Agbatia M.	34	M	Owa, Ika	Clergy	15/5/23
Pastor Goodluck Samuel	37	M	Owa, Ika	Clergy	15/5/23
Victory Kaliku	23	F	Owa, Ika	Schooling	15/5/23
Rev. Felix Ijeamaka	41	M	Owa, Ika	Clergy	15/5/23
Ijebor Favour	45	M	Owa, Ika	Business	15/8/23
Egun Ephraim	76	M	Owa, Ika	Pensioner	15/8/23
Ihator. D. S.	65	M	Owa, Ika	Rtd. Public Officer	15/8/23