

Weekly Column
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Melvin University
and Me

Planting church of the first graduate

A student who graduated from Melvin University for three years has informed me that he planted the church. Three years have passed since the school opened (inaugurated 2021), and now the direction and career problems of graduates emerge. In fact, there are three main possible choices for students who have graduated from seminary. These are similar phenomena in Korea and here in Africa: entering graduate school, church planting, and para-church.

All three are not easy. Personally, I won't be able to start doing this now that I am old, but it is a matter that can be touched by actual skin for just-graduating students.

Firstly, let's talk about [going to graduate school]. This seems to be the final goal of becoming a professor at seminary. In Kenya, they can become a university professor with a master's degree. Melvin University is also being hired as a professor, even with a master's degree. However, it is not easy to study for master's programs because tuition is expensive. It is very cheap compared to Korea, but it is actually impossible with the income of Kenya families. For example, our Melvin University students are studying with almost 95% scholarships. It is impossible to complete an BA without external help. I was looking at other universities and saw a university where there are public schools (Kenya is also national, public, and private universities). Wow, there are many admissions! They are a public school, and how can it be admitted so many students? Upon closer look, 7 out of 1,000 students paid at their own expense. In the end, 993 students were paid by the city (because it is a public school). In this case, the mayor becomes the president of the university, and the president

is elected by the mayor. So I thought about making our university public, but it was said that it was impossible to become public because our area is very rural. In the end, we have no choice but to keep going to a private university.

Second, the students' career path is [church planting]. This is actually not easy. Like Korea, in Kenya there are many churches. It is said that Kenyan churches were in the same situation as in Korea in the 5-60s, so if they were eager for church activities and praying hard, they would be ordained without theological studies, and they would start planting churches and church pastoral work. So there must be many churches. However, now it is not easy to rent a church building due to rising costs in Kenya. That is why they lease the land for a long time to make a temporary building and ministries for years.

Therefore, it is very difficult for students who have studied without paying tuition to prepare for church planting again. Some churches pastorate for years with only brick walls built. They cannot afford to hang windows or roofs.

Third, I would say that [parachurch ministry] is one option. So in my case, I emphasize this parachurch ministry to students. Parachurch begins with pure "vision." Of course, There are a lot of training centers, but I don't think they have learned how to do parachurch ministry properly. And since they didn't have the opportunity to learn, their expertise is weak. That's why I often introduce the meaning, philosophy, and strategy of parachurch to students.

In addition, one may think of career paths such as establishing seminary and becoming a missionary. Establishing a so-called accredited seminary is almost as difficult as picking stars from the sky, so it seems to be a way to start lightly in accordance with the current situation in Africa. These seminaries are easy to set up and give them the opportunity to study without money, so it is appreciated that many students gather, and even so, they will be given the opportunity to study. Of course, it is not connected to ordination, and they are satisfied with receiving a certificate and a diploma for pure theology study.

Anyway, I pray that the grace of the Lord will continue to be with the future of the graduating students.