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AN INVESTIGATION OF MEMBERS' PREFERENCE FOR PRAYERS TO BIBLE
STUDIES IN THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST CHURCHES.

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ABSTRACT

This study is titled “An Investigation of Church Members’ Preference for Prayers to Bible Studies” to enhance balance Christian life in the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC) churches. It was aimed at finding out the causes of church members’ preference for Prayers to Bible Studies. The study was carried out in twelve churches, which were sampling from North-West Baptist Association of the Ogbomoso Baptist Conference. The attitude of the church members towards Prayers and Bible Studies was evaluated through the responses from the research instrument (Questionnaires).

The questionnaire termed A, B, C and D was designed for the purpose of the research. The section A of the questionnaire comprising researcher’s introduction and bio-data of the respondent, section B consisting of 15 questions of Yes or No, Section C makes up 12 questions of Agreement and Disagreement, while section D consist of 8 questions of space-filling, all the questions were designed for both church pastors and members.

Data was analyzed by the use of simple percentages. Based on the findings, it was discovered that ignorance and poverty are the major causes of church members’ preference for Prayers to Bible Studies. Hence, there is the need for the Nigerian Baptist Convention to emphasize on the effectiveness of Prayers through the use of the word of God to enhance equal interest in Prayers and Bible Studies.

Conclusion

From the findings, the following conclusions are reached: Churches engage and promote Prayer programmes at the expense of constant Bible Studies which would have enabled the church members to know the truth of the word of God. This is a weakness, such weakness points to ignorance in the church, which cannot promote healthy, physical and spiritual development in the life of the church. The expectation to bring each member of the church to attain spiritual maturity is not met. This indicates that the quest that Baptists are people of the book (Bible) within the Nigerian Baptist Convention is yet to be fully obtained. Some of the church pastors and laities lack an in-depth knowledge of the word of God and ability to apply it to correct wrong practices in the church. Such ignorance has caused a lot of heresies in Christian community today.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Pastors and leaders in the field need to go for refresher programmes on educational ministries of the church. They should be exposed to correct teaching of the word of God through periodic seminars and workshops.
2. Church pastors and leaders should learn more about the dynamics of teaching so as to stir up the interest of the members for Bible Studies.
3. Pastor of each local church should start series of teaching to correct the wrong attitude of the members towards Bible Studies by using pulpit advantage on Sunday morning worship.

4. A Discipleship programme can be organized by the church pastors to treat how church members ought to handle or deal with their Prayer lives and Bible Studies so as to marry the two together without neglecting each other.
5. Enlightenment programmes on Bible Studies should be embarked upon so that church members can be well educated on the need for studying the word of God.
6. Every teacher of the word of God must be regenerated lived a new life, and well rooted in the word of God so as not to be a stumbling block to others.
7. Pastors/Leaders of the church should not for whatever reason organize a programme to satisfy the selfish interest of the members rather than satisfying God they are representing.
8. Periodic evaluation of the church's programmes should be encouraged. As such areas of poor performance can be addressed.
9. The basic truths of the word of God should be put into practice in the life of the church as more as possible so as to prevent avoidable heresy going around the churches nowadays.
10. Church members should be encouraged and mobilized for personal study of the word of God so that the truth could be revealed unto them.
11. Bible Studies' teachers should be well and thoroughly equipped in the word of God and opened various methods of teaching in order to enhance their teaching performances.
12. The Nigerian Baptist Theological Institutions can also assist in emphasizing and encouraging the pastors in training on the necessity and efficacy of the word of God and it could be used to enhance balance Christian living.

13. The Nigerian Baptist Convention should make a clear stand and policy to regulate the conduct of the programmes of each local church so as to limit excesses in the worship pattern through convention publications and during Ministers' Conference programmes.
14. The Nigerian Baptist Convention should of necessity put in place machinery to maintain the distinctive Baptist beliefs and practices so that the Baptist heritages would not be thrown into dust-bin.