

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMME
TO INFLUENCE MEMBERS' ATTITUDE TO GIVING
AT INFINITE GLORY BAPTIST CHURCH, LAGOS

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ABSTRACT

This project was conducted to address the problem of poor attitudes of the church members to giving and overall stewardship lifestyle at Infinite Glory Baptist Church, Meiran, Lagos. The project was designed to evaluate whether effective stewardship programme would improve members' attitudes to giving. Moreover, it is intended to provide solutions to such questions as (1). Are members of Infinite Glory Baptist Church faithful in supporting the Church with their tithes and offerings? (2). What are the reasons for members' unfaithfulness in their stewardship of possessions? (3). Are they faithful in discharging their stewardship responsibilities in other areas of life such as the use of time, talents and spiritual gifts. (4). Will teachings on stewardship have any effect on giving attitudes and overall stewardship lifestyles of members?

The project was carried out by designing a manual which consists of five basic lessons aimed at exposing the church members to discover the joy of Christian stewardship. The lessons were also prepared to lead the church to be good steward of the members' contributions. Two sets of questionnaire were designed-the pre-test and the post-test questionnaires. The pre-test questionnaire was administered before the teaching of the five lessons to evaluate the current giving attitudes of the church members. This was followed by the teaching of the five lessons to the church members and then, the post-test questionnaire which has almost the same contents with the former, but with a little modification was administered to test whether the attitudes of the members to giving and stewardship lifestyles have been improved.

The result of the pre-test as well as the interaction with the church members during the teaching sessions affirmed that majority of the church members have not discovered the joy of biblical giving and consequently, they were exhibiting poor stewardship lifestyles. It was further revealed that budgeting process and financial guidelines which could aid accountability and members' attitude to giving have not been put in place by the church financial officers. It was discovered that after the teaching sessions, majority of the church members have renewed their commitments to be good stewards of time, talent and spiritual gifts. Majority of the members also renewed their commitments to be generous givers. The financial officers were also able to formulate financial policies and procedures for the church; and present to the congregation the financial statements for 2011 and the church budget for 2012.

Based on the findings of this project, it was recommended that since generosity is a way of life that touches one's attitude to time and relationship with God beyond money management, believers should develop good relationship with God by spending the qualitative part of their time with God in prayer and personal Bible study. It is also recommended that Christians should not have the mentality of only going to the church to get a blessing but they should also develop the habit of giving in worship to God and service to others. Moreover, it is recommended that sound biblical based financial empowerment programmes and seminar on book-keeping and accounting for Small Scale Entrepreneurs should be organised for church members to boost their income level. This may also be a way of assisting the church to be freed from her current financial distresses. It is also recommended that local churches should prepare their budget prior to their fiscal year and also put in place sound financial policies and procedures to build members confidence in the officers who are managing the church financial resources.

Conclusion

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn.

It is observed that when church members do not have adequate knowledge on Christian stewardship, it will adversely affect their attitude to giving. This may eventually lead to lack of enough funds to carry out the church ministries effectively.

It is also suffice to note that generosity is a way of life that touches ones attitude to

time and relationship with God beyond money managements. Bearing this in mind will spur believers to develop good relationship with God by spending the qualitative part of their time with God in prayer and personal Bible study. As Burkett and Moore advised, ones chequebook and the Bible should go hand in hand(33).

Another salient point to be well noticed in this project is that Christian giving should be motivated by the example of God's kind of giving. God calls Christians to be generous because that is the way he is. He gives mercy and grace freely to all believers in Christ. Christian giving should thus reflect a love response to what God did for them in Christ Jesus. They should not have the mentality of only going to the church to get a blessing. Instead, they should willingly give in worship to God and service to others.

This project also emphasised that God beckons believers to grow beyond minimum standard of giving such as tithing although many believers are still struggling to achieve such standard. It is, however, wrong to live one's life at the expense of what rightfully belongs to God (the tithe). Christians should willingly pay a minimum of tithe accurately, promptly, and consistently to support their church ministry. If not, the church will be weakened for lack of resources.

Good budgeting and sound financial stewardship is also important in motivating church members to give generously in support of their church ministries. When church members are awared that their contributions are channelled towards a worthy course, they will be inspired to give more generously. There may also be spiritual impact as they see money they gave being used to achieve God's purpose on the planet earth.

The purpose of this project, as earlier stated, was to sensitise the believers at Infinite Glory Baptist Church Meiran Lagos to discover the joy of biblical giving. One of the ways planned to achieve this was to evaluate the present giving attitude of the church members and then conduct teaching on stewardship to develop the right attitudes to giving and responsible lifestyles among members. It was also aimed that budgeting process and sound financial policies and procedures that will safeguard the church funds and build members' confidence on those who are responsible for managing the church funds would be developed. The analyses of the pre-test and the post-test questionnaires as well as the summary of findings made in this project suggested that these objectives were met.

Finally, the researcher observed that the teaching has produced positive impacts among the members of Infinite Glory Baptist Church, Meiran, Lagos. Many members as could be seen from the findings of this project have renewed their commitment to be good manager of their time. Many others have renewed their commitments to use their talents and spiritual gifts to serve the Lord in the church while majority of the members have also renewed their commitments to be generous givers. Not less than twenty members pledged to give their one month salary in support of the landed property project that the church has intended to acquire. The financial officers were also able to present year 2011 financial statements and the proposed budget for 2012 at the end of the teaching sessions. In addition, the financial officers in collaboration with the researcher were able to come out with a working draft of the Church Financial Policies and Procedures (see Appendix D) that could guide the church in the managements of its financial affairs.

