

TOWARD A MODEL FOR TEACHING THE RIGHT PRAYER ATTITUDES
TO THE MEMBERS OF ARAROMI OKE-AWO BAPTIST CHURCH
OGBOMOSO

A PROJECT
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ABSTRACT

This research project was conducted to solve the problem of wrong prayer attitudes noticed in Araromi Oke Awo Baptist Church, Ogbomoso. It was intended to provide solution to such problems as: (1) members' seeking for prayer support in 'Aladura' churches; (2) non-observance of personal quiet time; non-observance of family altar; (3) the closing down of the church's weekly prayer meeting; (4) and the non-existence of church's prayer band. Could the teachings on the Lord's Prayer as a model correct these wrong attitudes?

A manual containing five lessons was developed from the model. These included the Preparation for Prayer, Prayer as an Expression of Homage to God, Prayer as an Expression of Human Needs, Doxology, and Quiet Time. The lessons were presented within three weeks in the church auditorium. The levels of the church members' understanding of the right prayer attitudes were assessed before and after the presentations with the use of pre-test and post-test questionnaires respectively. The responses to the two questionnaires were analyzed using simple percentages.

It was discovered, among other things, that the people were giving priority to themselves rather than to God in their prayers; in addition, they were experiencing confusions as to where their prayers could be directed —whether to God, or to Jesus, or to the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, not many of them were waiting for reflections after prayer; and many prayed with malice in their hearts. So, they could not pray for their enemies. Comparing the pre-test and post-test responses of church members to the questionnaires revealed that the model was very effective. As a result of the teachings, daily family prayer started in every home; the prayer band of the church took off with eight members; and members going about to seek prayer support from 'Aladura' churches stopped. In addition, there were indications of positive changes concerning the individual quiet time, praying with submission to the will of God, importunity, and forgiveness for the enemies.

The researcher, therefore, recommended that lay leadership should be discouraged in Baptist churches; financially weak churches should be assisted by the financially strong churches, Associations, Conferences, and the Nigerian Baptist Convention; pastors should make it a point of duty to teach regularly the Bible doctrines, most especially, prayer; and that churches should institute prayer programmes that could meet the needs of the members. Furthermore, village pastors should stress the need for family altar to their members. They should ensure that their members observe individual quiet time daily. In addition, private and secret prayers should be emphasized to the members. The Lord's Prayer should be recited occasionally during worship on Sundays. This would serve as reminder to the church members in order to guide against unbiblical attitudes. Praying in the 'Aladura' fashion should be discouraged in Baptist Churches.

Conclusion

The investigation of the prayer attitudes of the members of Araromi Oke Awo Baptist Church revealed that in most cases their attitudes to prayer were not correct in biblical terms. However, the application of the Lord's Prayer teaching manual brought an improvement to the prayer attitudes of the people. Their responses to the post-test questionnaire revealed the willingness of the people to adjust to the biblical

understanding received from the teachings. In addition, before the end of the teaching sessions, the individuals had started to observe personal prayer time as they were taught by the researcher; their association with the prayer programmes of the Aladura church and prophetess had stopped; family prayer had started in every house at five o'clock every morning, at the first sound of the church's big bell; the church's prayer band had started with a group of eight men and women; and the church had started holding monthly night vigils, led by the researcher as their pastor. The vigil was well attended by the members. No doubt, this new orientation brought about a new life to the church and her members.

The above revelation was an indication that the Lord's Prayer was effective in correcting the wrong prayer attitudes of the church members. One should remember that the prayer was initially given to correct the wrong attitudes of the Jewish worshippers of Jesus' day. Jesus intended it as a model to be adopted by the disciples in their prayers. Therefore, both the themes and the principles taught by Jesus in the prayer are as valid today as it was when Jesus initially gave the prayer to his disciples. It is therefore certain that if the principles are understood and applied in any prayer situation, there should be positive results.

Recommendations

The successful application of the Lord's Prayer model to correct the wrong prayer attitudes of the members of Araromi Oke Awo Baptist Church, Ogbomoso, should lead us to some recommendations that could make the fruits of the lessons to abide. Such recommendations could also be useful to other churches that might be undergoing the same problem. In this regard, the researcher hereby recommends that:

1. Since the role of a pastor in a church cannot be overemphasized, every church should have a pastor, who could give the needed spiritual leadership. Small churches should be assisted by big churches.
2. The Nigerian Baptist Convention should discourage lay leadership in all Baptist Churches.
3. The Convention should have a programme of pastoral assistance for financially weak churches. The associations and conferences should do the same.
4. The pastors should make it a point of duty to feed the flock. The various Bible doctrines, most especially, prayer should be taught from time to time in order to keep the members informed of the biblical stand on the issues facing them.
5. Beside the daily quiet time, the pastors should set time apart every day to commune with God in prayer.
6. Churches that could afford it should make provision available for their pastors to be alone before God, fasting and praying, all Saturday nights in preparation for Sunday worship.
7. The increase in wickedness in our society should bring about increased prayer programmes in our churches. Like Timothy Warner said, "Prayer is where the action is". A church without a well organized and systematic prayer program would simply be operating a religious treadmill.
8. Every church should have a standing prayer band that could intercede in preparation for church programmes, and for members that might be in trouble.
9. Every church should create a monthly period of waiting on the Lord for the needs of the members. This might be in form of spiritual retreat. In such a

situation, the principles of intensity, importunity, and tenacity in prayer as taught by Jesus could be cultivated.

10. A church may be magnanimous enough to have a praying ground like the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomoso, for her members. This would take care of those who might want to be in the presence of the Lord for some time. It could still encourage the church members to pray on their problems. It could also discourage them from going to the mountain prayers organized by people of doubtful characters and theologies.
11. Village pastors should stress the need for family altar to their members. Many villagers are not taking this serious. A family that pray together stay together.
12. Pastors in the villages should ensure that their members observe individual quiet time daily. In addition, private and secret prayers should be emphasized for the members. Private prayers should be a means of walking with, and thereby becoming his friend.
13. There should be arrangement whereby copies of *Daily Encounter* devotional guide, could be distributed free to the villagers.
14. The Lord's Prayer should be recited occasionally during worship on Sundays, though with a style. It could be used to close the prayer of thanksgiving. This would serve as reminder to the church members, to guide against unbiblical attitudes.
15. Praying in the Aladura fashion should be discouraged in Baptist Churches. Even if anybody should bring a wrong doctrine, from anywhere, it should not be allowed to germinate.