

AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTS OF *MASTERLIFE*
DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAMME ON THE SPIRITUAL
LIFE OF THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION
CHURCH MEMBERS

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ABSTRACT

This study, titled "An Evaluation of the Effects of *MasterLife Discipleship Programme* on the Spiritual Life of the Nigerian Baptist Convention Church Members" aimed at investigating the impact of the present discipleship programmes on the spiritual life of the Nigerian Baptist Convention church members. The problem of this study was, to determine if the content of "MasterLife Discipleship" programme affected the spiritual life of the Nigerian Baptist Convention church members, who have undergone the programme through answering questions such as:

1. To what extent has the "MasterLife Discipleship" programme affected the spiritual life of the participants?
2. Which of the following church member groupings benefited more than the others (a) senior or middle adults, (b) male or female participants?

This study had six research hypotheses, which were:

1. There would be no significant difference in the level of impact of "MasterLife Discipleship" between old adults and young adults who have participated in the programme.
2. There would be no significant difference in the level of impact of "MasterLife Discipleship" between old male and old female adult members who have participated in the programme.

3. There would be no significant difference in the level of impact of "MasterLife Discipleship" between young male and young female adult members who have participated in the programme.
4. There would be no significant difference between male and female level of impact of "MasterLife Discipleship" programme.
5. There would be no significant difference between the old male and young male adults level of impact of "MasterLife Discipleship" programme.
6. There would be no significant difference in the level of impact of "MasterLife Discipleship" between old female young female adult members who have participated in the programme.

The study used ten (10) Baptist churches in Lagos State Baptist Conference. The six areas of the "MasterLife Discipleship" materials covered in this study were (1) Spending time with the Master, (2) Living in God's Word, (3) Praying in faith, (4) Fellowshiping with believers, (5) Witnessing to the world and (6) Serving others.

A self-report questionnaire including an achievement test section was used. A number of items were posed to which appropriate answers were provided based on the data collected. All the returned questionnaires were carefully collated and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for the t-test. Six null hypotheses were stated and all were retained.

The findings of the study revealed that the objectives of the programme are being achieved. The programme has helped to develop the

participants greatly in the five areas with the exception of witnessing to the world. It came out clearly that the participants' performance was not encouraging on personal witnessing which is an essential part of the Great Commission. And, from the groupings, the results showed that young male adults benefited most from the programme and male performance was higher than that of the female.

These are part of the major recommendations based on the findings of the study:

1. Churches should be more sensitive to the issue of personal evangelism, visitation and quiet time.
2. Churches should develop a programme which will sensitize church members to personal evangelism and visitation, which will enable believers to grow spiritually.
3. Some of the *MasterLife* materials should be made relevant to the participants or adapted to their understanding and use.

Conclusion

An evaluation of the effect of the "MasterLife Discipleship" programme on the spiritual life of the Nigerian Baptist Convention church members was the focus of this study. Discipleship programme is indispensable to spiritual growth. It enables disciples to know where they fit in (David 2002, 11-15). It was concluded that those who had participated in the programme spent time with the Master daily.

Similarly, it was concluded that those who had participated in the programme lived in God's word. Therefore, they lived in the Spirit (Huegel 1997, 38- 40). It was also concluded that the participant of this study prayed in faith, agreed with Adeniyi (2000) on the type of faith God requires (11).

The study concluded that the participants had time for fellowshiping with believers. The researcher was surprised by his findings on prayer meeting and Bible study. The participants attended Bible study more than prayer meeting. This finding is different from what is happening in some churches. Nowadays, people just want prayer; first day of the month prayer, the first three-day prayer or the last three-day prayer.

Rick Warren (2002, 190) said that the people who have time for the word of God live a transformed life into His likeness with ever-increasing

glory and this agrees with the findings. If every local church can have enough time for Bible study, it will help the church members to grow spiritually, and especially in Christian living. Also, Bible study should be taught on Christian living not on self-centered teaching that is common in our society today.

It was discovered that personal evangelism of the participants was not encouraging. The participants were not doing personal evangelism very well. However, they prayed for lost persons. This finding supported the mean score on witness to the world and the view of Akinsola on the same issue (72).

It was also concluded that those who had participated in the programme performed very well in serving others. Similarly, giving to the poor and mission had good result, which was encouraging.

The findings agreed with Goldsworthy's view (2000) that discipleship training helps believers to end well in the Christian race, because it strengthens believers (96). This study concluded that "In Christian life, it's not how you start that matters. It's how you finish" (Farrar, 1995, 19). Farrar moved further to say that God is looking for "some finishers" that is those who work out their salvation with fear and trembling (Php 2:12).

It was also concluded that the findings of the study revealed that the objectives were being achieved. The programme has helped to develop the participants greatly in the five areas with the exception of witnessing to the world. It came out clearly that the participants' performance was not encouraging on personal witnessing which is an essential part of the Great Commission. Also, performance on quiet time needed more attention. The

grouping results showed that young male adults benefited most from the programme and male performance is higher than that female.

The findings showed that the participants have improved in their spiritual life, and that heterogeneity should be retained.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are, therefore, made based on the findings of the study:

1. Churches that are yet to have discipleship programme in their activities should do so.
2. Churches should be more sensitive to the issue of personal evangelism visitation, and quiet-time.
3. Churches should develop a programme, which will sensitize church members for personal evangelism, visitation and quite-time.
4. Churches should have God-centered Bible study which will enable the believers to grow spiritually.
5. There should be locally made discipleship materials.
6. Groupings should still be heterogeneous.

Suggestions for Further Studies

1. Researchers can study why more people attend prayer meeting than Bible study.
2. Researchers can study why some Baptist members are not faithful in their tithes.

