

USING DISCIPLESHIP MATERIALS AS VIABLE MISSION STRATEGIES FOR
CHURCH PLANTING WITHIN AWKA/ONITSHA BAPTIST HOME MISSION

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ABSTRACT

This study, titled "Using Discipleship Materials as a viable Mission Strategy for Church Planting within Awka/Onitsha Baptist Home Mission Field" aimed to find out the extent to which discipleship training of church members is a viable mission strategy for church planting. Based on this purpose, the researcher examined and compared the spiritual life, devotion, services, church planting and Christian life beliefs of church members who engaged in discipleship training and those who did not.

The study used ten Baptist Churches within Awka/Onitsha Baptist Home Mission Field. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire designed in two sets. The first set of questionnaire was for church members who have undergone discipleship training and those who did not, focused on the spiritual life, devotion, services and church planting, and Christian life beliefs. The second questionnaire was for church pastors, it focused on problems and solutions to the uses of discipleship materials by churches.

Therefore, the findings on the spiritual life, services and church planting, Christian life beliefs and the numbers of churches planted showed that, there was significant difference between churches who engaged in discipleship training and those who did not. The findings in all areas of the study showed that discipleship training helped participants to be committed to church planting more than those who did not. The result showed that language barrier was a common problem to the use of discipleship materials by churches and followed by others. The findings showed that majority of the pastors opined that conducive learning environment was the greatest solution and while others followed.

The following are parts of the major recommendations based on the findings of the study: 1. Pastors should take discipleship training serious by organizing it in those churches that did not receive it. 2. Church should not limit discipleship training to educated members alone, efforts should be made to organize it for illiterates, so that they will be involved in church planting and growth. 3. There should be locally made discipleship materials by Global Missions Board for churches in mission fields.

Using discipleship materials as a viable mission strategy for church planting within Awka/Onisha Baptist Home Mission Field churches was the focus of this study. It could be concluded from the research conducted that only five churches out of the ten studied are involved in discipleship training. They are: First Baptist Church Onitsha, Divine Grace Baptist Church, Ekwulobia, New Estate Baptist Church Amoabia, Miracle Baptist Church Okija and New Estate Baptist Church Awka. The remaining five churches: Glorious Baptist Church Ogidi, Macedonia Baptist Church Obosi, First Baptist Church Okija, New Heritage Baptist Church Awka and Messiah Baptist Church Ekwulobia are yet to have properly organized and regular discipleship training programme in their churches.

It was concluded that the findings of the study revealed that the objectives were being achieved. Discipleship programme is indispensable to spiritual growth, commitment to church planting and Christian maturity. It enables disciples to discover God given abilities in them. It is evident that churches with discipleship training have more workers and committed members who have taken responsibilities in church activities, mission and evangelism which result to multiple of church planting. It was concluded also that churches without discipleship training of their members encountered more difficulties in all these areas in their churches. They are weak, barren, and unable to plant more churches.

The study concluded that attention given to the evangelization and discipleship of the young people and those in their middle age are yielding result in church activities, such as reaching out and planting churches. It was agreed by church pastors who participated in study that though there are challenges facing discipleship training, however, there are possible ways out to overcome them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following are the recommendations.

1. Pastors should take discipleship training serious by organizing discipleship programme in those churches that do not have such programmes.
2. There should be a selective of teachers among those church members who received discipleship training to train other new converts.
3. Discipleship training should not be limited to educated church members alone. Efforts should be made to train the illiterates in discipleship through organizing of adult literacy class for illiterate members, so that they will be able to learn through local language and read Bible on their own.
4. There should be locally made discipleship materials e.g in Igbo language.
5. Global Missions Board in collaboration with Associations in each mission field should organize discipleship seminar for missionaries and church pastors quarterly.
6. All discipleship materials should be made available to churches in mission fields through efforts of Global Missions Board.
7. Global Missions Board should have means of assessing churches having discipleship in mission field by awarding certificates in order to encourage new churches to be devoted to effective discipleship training.