

INCORPORATING RECREATION INTO RURAL MINISTRY IN OLORUNDA
BAPTIST ASSOCIATION IN OKE-OGUN BAPTIST CONFERENCE

AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES
OF THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, OGBOMOSO
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE
MASTER OF DIVINITY

BY

OLUKEMI ESTHER ADEJUWON

11/0003

JUNE 2016

ABSTRACT

Rural ministry keeps getting tougher and more challenging by the day in the 21st Century. There are so many issues about doing ministry generally while some are more peculiar with rural setting than the urban. For instance, the thinning down syndrome which has affected rural area churches in Olorunda Baptist Association (OBA) in Oke-Ogun Conference more than ever before leaves the churches almost empty on Sundays because members have left the village for the towns to socialize over the weekend. The reasons are not unrelated to the quest of rural dwellers to recreate and take time out for fun when and where they could. The two slogans; "all works without play make Jack a dull boy" and "the more we get together the happier we would be" are both real and applicable to the situation of ministry in OBA particularly in the rural area. As mainly farmer communities, rural area dwellers and churches want to experience fun, excitements and socio-cultural functions of life which are lacking in their churches.

This Study examined "Incorporating Recreations into Rural Ministry in Olorunda Baptist Association in Oke-Ogun Conference of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. It adopted a descriptive and historical approach. Data and information were collected through historical documents and narratives of current situations by those interviewed. It was discovered that recreational programs could be incorporated into the rural ministry work of OBA to encourage rural dwellers stay more in their churches and still enjoy worship, fellowship and general community life. This study affirms that recreational program as part of ministry would significantly enhance ministry work in OBA in the rural area. Contributions to the essay during interviews disclose that such activities as sports, games of various kind, vocational programs, music, drama, and Christian seasonal celebrations such as Easter, Christmas and harvest thanksgiving if conducted with recreational touches would help a great deal in ministry in the rural areas. In the overall, each church whether in the rural or town, the entire Association to the Conference and Convention levels should look into creating avenues for recreation in every aspect of church life.

5.2. Conclusion

Rural ministry is dynamic. The task keeps evolving in new outlook from time to time as with ministry generally. So is recreational ministry. For a long time, it was associated mainly with youths in sports, camping and various games. Then in a while when recreation begins getting popular as ministry avenue in and for the church, it seems to be exclusively an urban ministry affairs. Campfires are best in the rural and so are other activities of recreation to be applauded in the rural areas too.

The few recreational programs organized and practiced by the Olorunda Baptist Association have remained only in the town churches while the rural area churches are expected to come over to attend. The OBA would do well by planning for appropriate recreational programs to take place in the rural areas too. This way ministry in the rural areas would be enhanced. The church cannot keep doing the same things the same way expecting the same result over the years. If the contemporary society is recreation minded, the church should see it as avenue for ministry to all people whether they are in urban or rural setting.

Recreations should no longer be seen as the concern of the youths only. Church recreation should be designed and patterned to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Every opportunity for discipleship should be utilized to encourage growth and maturity of believers in every biblically approved way.

Every person particularly believers has received a measure of giftedness. There are different abilities, talents, skills and spiritual gifts in each member of the church through which other lives might be affected for Christ. It is the task of the church to help each person discover self and be useful in and for ministry. Through recreation program, some of these capabilities in the church could be discovered and become useful tools to bringing others to the faith in Christ.

As the custodian of instructions and worship service opportunities, the church through recreation activities can help believers come together in worship and bring others to worshipping God. In this way, the Great Commission is being fulfilled. Moreover, recreational activities help to remove some barriers and challenges faced by rural dwellers. For instance, barriers are removed when people of various languages come together to play in a novelty march or any sports game of such nature. The church has much to gain when recreational opportunities to reaching people in the rural areas are incorporate and appropriately utilized.

5.3 Recommendation

Rural ministry is bound to take new dimension if it must continue. It is obvious from observations that unless rural area dwellers are motivated, encouraged and appropriately ministered to many of the churches may be locked up on some Sundays because nobody would be around for worship service. A way of preventing such occurrence is to know the need of the people and find a way to meet such needs. Everyone enjoys socializing and being around other people. Recreational programs and activities would help to keep rural dwellers in their own churches because they could find what they looked for elsewhere within themselves.

The following are recommendations on how recreational programs could become part of church life and ministry.

1. **Recreation Committee at the Various Levels:** Every church should have a Recreations Committee which would see to recreational matters, plan general recreation program for the church, encourage and advice groups in the church on planning activities and including such in every Group's Week programs. Such committee would identify suitable activities and plan the program for church groups such as MMU, WMU, Youth, Children, Choir and Deaconate etc. At the Associational level, the committee should plan recreational programs which can include Sports Fest, Agricultural Show, Christmas/Easter Get Together and the Like. Each Organization at the Association level can also plan for recreations at least annually.
2. **Recreation Budget:** from local church levels to the Associations, recreations should be included in the budget so that the committee could work effectively and plan beautiful and purpose fulfilling programs.
3. **Recreation Centres:** Churches and Association should begin having projects on recreations facilities such as Recreation Camp or Resort Centre which can serve not only the church or association but the entire body of Christ. Other churches and Christian organizations can utilize such facilities for recreations.
4. **Sponsorship of Recreational Programs:** individuals, families, groups or churches can sponsor church recreational programs. For instance sport events such as football, inter church sports, craft fair, Agric Show, Talent Show, Christmas, Easter programs etc could be sponsored so that many people could get to participate. Activities as Bible Drill,

Quizzes, Drama and Musical Shows could be financially supported by individuals or groups for the church.

5. **Nature Environmental Camp Sites:** this would particularly be appropriate to be sited in rural areas. The church could acquire vast area of land, cultivate plantations of wood, fruit trees or Orchards and mini Zoos where rodents and other tamed animals could inhabit in the wood. Such facility would draw people from the town and urban.

6. **Intensify Awareness Campaign:** The Nigerian Baptist Convention should intensify awareness campaigns. Sensitizing churches of the necessity of recreations and sport which is ongoing among youths should extend to the entire church body. This ministry opportunity should be brought to the knowledge of more people and local churches of the Convention. This could be done by creating a column for recreation in the Nigerian Baptist Magazine, printing of newsletter or periodicals from the department with motivations for more involvement of the church.

7. **Seminary Curriculum Inclusion:** the Seminary should include recreation as ministry avenue in the curriculum of training pastors. This could begin as an elective Course and get included as a topic or subject of discussion in other practical ministerial courses such as Christian worship, Christian Education, Christian Ministry and the like. Pastors in training should be aware of the tremendous impact recreations can have on their ministry at any place.

As a Course in the Seminary, teaching of recreation should be both practical and theory. The Practicum aspect of the teaching should form at least fifty percent of the syllabus. It should include sporting events, indoor games, crafts, singing/dancing, talents shows of various kinds etc.