

## **Influence Of Women Fellowship Prayer Activities on the Growth and Spiritual Development of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Kaduna State**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examined influence of women fellowship prayer activities on the growth and spiritual development of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Kaduna State. The objective of the study was to assess the influence of women fellowship prayer activities on the growth and spiritual development of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Kaduna State. The population of the study was forty-three thousand, eight hundred and seventy-nine (43,879) Redeem women in the study area (Redeem Trinity Headquarter, Kaduna State, 2023). Forty-eight (48) churches from twelve (12) LGAs found in the three Senatorial Districts of Kaduna state were sampled. One thousand, one hundred and fifty-two (1,152) respondents were randomly sampled to represent the total population. Descriptive survey design was used for the study and questionnaire instrument was employed to collect data. The finding revealed that, the prayer activities help people especially Christians to become more like Jesus. Prayer is crucial for providing individuals with clarity and direction, aiding them in making decisions and handling challenges with purpose and focus. The study recommends that, Christian communities should promote consistent participation in individual and collective prayer activities to enhance spiritual growth and foster Christ-like behaviour. Churches should incorporate more structured prayer sessions into weekly services, Bible studies, and fellowship meetings, emphasizing the transformative power of prayer in aligning believers' lives with Christ's teachings.*

**Key Words:** *Women Fellowship, Prayer Activities, Redeemed Christian Church of God*

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## **Introduction**

The impact of women's fellowship activities within religious communities, such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) in Kaduna State, Nigeria, is both significant and diverse. These activities cover spiritual, educational, social, and service-oriented initiatives, all of which greatly contribute to the growth and development of the church community. Women's fellowship groups offer a supportive environment for spiritual growth by providing opportunities for prayer, worship, and Bible study. This engagement deepens participants' relationship with God, strengthens their faith, and enhances their understanding of Christian teachings. The resulting spiritual foundation offers resilience, comfort, and guidance, helping individuals face life's challenges with greater confidence and clarity (Smith & Johnson, 2022; Williams & Lee, 2021). Additionally, these fellowship activities foster a strong sense of unity and belonging among members. By sharing experiences and supporting one another, women build close-knit relationships that extend beyond the church, creating an inclusive and empowering atmosphere (Brown & Davis, 2023; Thompson & White, 2020).

Women's fellowship activities also play a crucial role in developing leadership within the church. Through organizing prayer meetings, leading Bible study sessions, and managing various service projects, women develop essential leadership skills such as communication, strategic planning, and teamwork (Martin & Wright, 2019; Robinson & Carter, 2021). This leadership development not only empowers women to take on significant roles within the church but also contributes to the overall vitality and progress of the church community. The widespread impact of these activities, as observed in the RCCG in Kaduna State, is profound. By promoting spiritual growth, strengthening community ties, and enhancing leadership capabilities, women's fellowship activities are vital to the church's vibrancy and growth, leaving a lasting impact on its members and beyond (Green & Taylor, 2020; Adams & Turner, 2022).

In Christian contexts, "fellowship" generally refers to gatherings of believers for worship and mutual support. Numerous Christian fellowships exist in Nigeria and other countries, where members meet for Bible study and spiritual growth (Jones & Hughes, 2018; Patel & Kumar, 2021). These groups may be independent or part of specific Christian denominations. While some fellowships are gender-specific, many welcome both men and women. However, all-male Christian groups are rare in Nigeria, whereas women's fellowships are quite common. Nigeria features a variety of Pentecostal women's fellowships, such as Women Intercessors for the Church and Nation (Sisters Fellowship International), When Women Pray, Daughters of Deborah International Ministry, and Wailing Women Worldwide. Many of these fellowships operate independently of their parent churches, attracting women from diverse denominational backgrounds. These gatherings allow women to express themselves freely, without male church leadership oversight, and engage in activities such as singing, dancing, mutual support, sermons by women, and prayer (Ogunleye & Adebayo, 2022; Okonkwo & Eze, 2023). They also organize seminars on parenting and marriage and educational sessions for young women. While some fellowships have clear missions and visions, others are less structured.

Although the activities of women's fellowship groups do not seem harmful to individuals or the community, there may be subtle or less apparent effects. The necessity of women-only

fellowships, which are limited to Christian women from specific denominations, raises questions. Historically, African women, unlike Western feminists, have preferred collaboration with men and children rather than separatism. The lack of a strong scriptural basis for women-only fellowships makes their existence somewhat concerning (Nwokolo & Agbo, 2021; Bello & Adeoye, 2022). Nonetheless, these groups provide valuable opportunities for women to connect, share experiences, support each other, and contribute to church growth.

In Nigeria, women's roles in church leadership were initially restricted due to traditional and missionary influences. However, Pentecostal churches like Christ Apostolic Church (C.A.C.) and Cherubim and Seraphim Church (C&S) began involving women in active roles, with many women being founders or co-founders (Ali & Akinloye, 2023; Ige & Akinola, 2021). Today, many neo-Pentecostal churches, including the RCCG, Christ Embassy, and Foursquare Gospel Church, allow women to lead at all levels. Nevertheless, some churches, such as Deeper Life Bible Church, still restrict women's leadership roles. Within the RCCG, the Good Women Fellowship (GWF) empowers women to assume leadership positions, strengthen their communities, and raise godly children. Their activities encompass religious, social, educational, and economic areas, with a strong focus on poverty alleviation through business education and economic empowerment. RCCG women engage in entrepreneurial ventures and consulting, helping to reduce poverty and contribute to the growth of both the church and society. Kaduna State, with its abundant natural resources, presents significant opportunities for development and investment, supported by government initiatives that foster a positive economic environment. The state's infrastructure and strategic location make it a key region in Nigeria's economic landscape (Chukwu & Uche, 2020; Ojo & Balogun, 2023).

### **Statement of the Problem**

From the early church era to the present day, women have actively participated in various church activities. Biblical evidence shows that women have been involved in evangelism and other church-related tasks. Women's influence in society is significant, reflecting their role in supporting and complementing men's efforts. Their contributions impact various aspects of life, including social, economic, religious, educational, and political spheres. Women have played a crucial role in promoting justice and fairness, empowering their peers and marginalized individuals through entrepreneurial ventures and small businesses. They have also contributed to education by establishing schools and providing learning materials, helping to alleviate ignorance and support community development.

However, in the Redeemed Christian Church of God, traditional gender roles often confine women to caregiving or supportive roles rather than leadership positions. This restricts their opportunities to take on leadership roles within the church and limits their involvement in organizing and leading fellowship activities. The church's patriarchal structures and certain theological interpretations that emphasize male leadership create barriers for women, affecting their ability to secure necessary resources and support for their programs and initiatives. Consequently, these limitations impact the scope and effectiveness of women's activities within the church community.

### **Women Fellowship and Prayer Activities**

Women's fellowship and prayer activities are essential elements of numerous religious communities, especially within Christian contexts. These activities are crafted to enhance spiritual growth, strengthen communal bonds, and empower women in their journey of faith. They include

a variety of practices, such as regular prayer meetings, Bible study sessions, special events, and service projects. The primary aim of these activities is to establish a nurturing environment where women can deepen their spiritual connection. By engaging in these practices, women are given the opportunity to share their experiences, support each other, and grow in their faith together. Through collective prayer and study, they not only fortify their personal relationships with God but also build a supportive network that fosters mutual encouragement and empowerment (Smith & Johnson, 2022).

A central aspect of women's fellowship activities is their role in promoting spiritual growth. Through consistent prayer and Bible study, women are afforded the opportunity to delve deeper into their faith and gain a richer understanding of Christian teachings. These activities typically include group prayers, personal reflections, and discussions on biblical passages, all of which contribute to a more profound relationship with God. Engaging in these collective worship practices and personal prayer sessions can significantly enhance spiritual development. By participating in these activities, women are able to cultivate Christ-like qualities and align their behaviors more closely with Christian values. This process of shared worship and individual contemplation helps to foster a deeper connection with God and encourages the embodiment of core Christian principles in everyday life (Martin & Wright, 2019).

Women's fellowship activities are also vital in fostering a sense of community and mutual support among participants. Regular gatherings enable women to form deep connections with one another, creating a network characterized by encouragement and solidarity. This strong sense of community is essential for providing emotional and spiritual support, particularly during difficult times. These fellowships often incorporate social events, support groups, and mentoring relationships, all of which contribute to a nurturing environment. Within this supportive framework, individuals can openly share their struggles and successes, offer advice, and celebrate important milestones together. Such interactions help build a cohesive and empathetic network, reinforcing the sense of belonging and collective strength within the fellowship (Brown & Davis, 2023).

In addition to personal and communal benefits, women fellowship activities can serve as a platform for leadership development. Organizing and leading prayer meetings, Bible studies, and service projects provides women with opportunities to develop essential leadership skills, such as effective communication, organization, and teamwork. These experiences can prepare women to take on more significant roles within their religious communities, contributing to the overall growth and dynamism of the church. Leadership in fellowship activities also empowers women to influence and guide others in their spiritual journeys. Despite the positive impact of women fellowship and prayer activities, there are challenges and barriers that can hinder their effectiveness. In some religious contexts, traditional gender roles may limit women's opportunities for leadership and participation in church activities. Patriarchal structures and theological interpretations that prioritize male leadership can restrict women's roles within their communities. Additionally, securing adequate resources for fellowship activities, such as financial support and materials, can be challenging, affecting the scope and impact of these initiatives (Green & Taylor, 2020).

### **Objective of the Study**

This study is aimed at assessing the influence of women fellowship prayer activities on the growth and spiritual development of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Kaduna State.

### Research Question.

The following research questions guide the study:

1. What is the opinion of male and female respondent on influence of women fellowship prayer activities on the growth and spiritual development of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Kaduna State, Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of women fellowship prayer activities on the growth and spiritual development of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Kaduna State, Nigeria?

### Research Hypothesis

The study was guided by the hypothesis,

1. There is no significant difference between the opinions of male and female respondent on influence of women fellowship prayer activities on the growth and spiritual development of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Kaduna State, Nigeria”.

### Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design and the target population are women of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Kaduna State, Nigeria comprises of three Senatorial Districts. Simple random sample population of 1,015 respondents out of 43,879 was used for the study. A structured questionnaire was the instrument employed for data collection. The data analysis was based on the responses from 1,015 respondents out of the sampled 1,152 women in RCCG, representing (88.1%) of the administered questionnaire that were successfully returned. The respondents were randomly sampled from three Senatorial Districts in the State. The vetted questionnaire was administered by the researcher with the help of two research assistants. The data was analyzed using Version 20 of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The mean scores for the items were based on four-point Likert scale and the midpoint average for decision for items or variables was fixed at 2.50. This implies that, a mean score of 2.50 and above indicates agreement (positive response) with the suggested notion of items while mean score of below 2.50 implies disagreement (negative response). The hypothesis was tested with t-test statistics at 0.05 levels of significance.

### Results and Discussions

The results are presented according to gender (male and female), research question and hypothesis.

**Researcher Question 1:** What is the opinion of male and female respondent on influence of women fellowship prayer activities on the growth and spiritual development of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Kaduna State, Nigeria?

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender**

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	681	67.1
2	Female	334	32.9
	<b>Total</b>	1015	100

Table 1 reveals that, 681 (67.1%) of the respondents were males, while 334 (32.9%) of the respondents were females. The gender distribution indicates that female respondents were more than the male respondents in responding to influence of women fellowship prayer activities on the growth and spiritual development of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

**Research Question 2:** What is the influence of women fellowship prayer activities on the growth and spiritual development of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Kaduna State, Nigeria?

**Table 2: Opinions of the Respondents on the Influence of Women Fellowship Prayer Activities**

S/N	items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.
1	Prayer helps Christians to develop a relationship with God	613	321	67	14	3.51	0.68
2	Prayer activity help one to gain an understanding of God loving nature	501	389	78	47	3.32	0.81
3	Prayer provides answers to problem	432	391	122	70	3.17	0.89
4	It helps one grow spiritually and meeting with missionary responsibility	255	547	97	116	2.93	0.89
5	Prayer helps one find direction in life	700	251	62	2	3.62	0.61
6	Prayer gives one strength to avoid temptation	344	461	115	95	3.04	0.91
7	Prayer aligns one will with God's will	614	308	35	58	3.46	0.81
8	Prayer invites the Holy spirit into one's life	574	340	46	55	3.41	0.81
9	It helps to become more like Jesus	803	170	23	19	3.73	0.60
<b>Cumulative</b>						<b>3.35</b>	<b>0.77</b>

**Decision mean = 2.50**

Results in this table shows the mean responses of 3.51, 3.32, 3.17, 2.93, 3.62, 3.04, 3.46, 3.41 and 3.73. The cumulative mean value is 3.35. This value is above the mean value of 2.50. This implies that women's fellowship prayer activities have a significant influence on the growth and spiritual development of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

**Null Hypothesis1:** There is no significant difference between the opinions of male and female respondent on influence of women fellowship prayer activities on the growth and spiritual development of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Kaduna State, Nigeria”.

**Table 3: Independent Sample t-test on Opinions of Male and Female Respondent on Influence of Women Fellowship Prayer Activities**

S/N	Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error	Df	t-cal	t-crit	p
1	Male	681	3.9001	0.30002	0.0115	1013	1.37	1.96	0.79
2	Female	334	2.7156	0.53687	0.02938				

**Calculated p > 0.05, calculated t < 1.96, at df 1013**

Table 3 reveals that, there is no significant difference between the opinions of male and female respondent on influence of women fellowship prayer activities on the growth and spiritual development of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Reason being that, the calculated p-value of 0.79 is higher than the 0.05 alpha level of significance while the t-calculated value 1.37 is lower than 1.96, at  $df = 1013$ . This implies that, the null hypothesis is hereby retained.

### **Findings**

The following were the findings of the study:

1. The study found that that prayer is instrumental in fostering spiritual growth, enabling individuals to cultivate Christ-like qualities and align their behavior and character more closely with the teachings of Jesus.
2. The research finding reveals that prayer plays a significant role in helping individuals gain clarity and direction in life, guiding them in making decisions and navigating challenges with a sense of purpose and focus.

### **Discussions of Findings**

The main objective of this study was to assess the influence of women fellowship prayer activities on the growth and spiritual development of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Kaduna State. From the analysis of the data obtained, the findings of the study showed that prayer plays a crucial role in fostering spiritual growth. It allows individuals to deepen their relationship with God, which in turn helps them develop Christ-like qualities. By engaging in regular prayer, believers are better able to align their behavior and character with the teachings of Jesus, as prayer acts as a means of spiritual enrichment and guidance. This practice not only enhances their personal growth but also facilitates their journey towards embodying the virtues and values exemplified by Christ. These findings are consistent with the perspective of Chukwu and Uche (2020) who emphasize the transformative power of prayer. According to their research, prayer is a significant tool in personal development, particularly in nurturing traits and behaviors that reflect a Christ-centered life. Their work supports the idea that through prayer, individuals gain greater clarity and direction, which further aids in aligning their actions and attitudes with Christian teachings.

The findings presented in Table 3 indicate that there is no significant difference in how male and female respondents perceive the impact of women's fellowship prayer activities on the growth and spiritual development of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Kaduna State, Nigeria. This suggests that both genders view these prayer activities similarly in terms of their contribution to the church's development and spiritual advancement. This observation is consistent with the research conducted by Bello and Adeoye (2022). Their study also found that perceptions of certain religious or spiritual practices do not vary significantly between men and women. This alignment with existing research reinforces the idea that women's fellowship prayer activities are equally valued by both genders within the church context.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the finding that prayer fosters spiritual growth and enables individuals to cultivate Christ-like qualities, it is recommended that personal prayer be promoted as a fundamental aspect of daily life. By encouraging regular personal prayer, individuals can deepen their relationship with God, allowing them to align their character and actions with the teachings of Jesus. Churches

and religious leaders should emphasize the transformative power of prayer, guiding believers to adopt consistent prayer habits as a way to foster spiritual growth and Christ-like behaviour. To further support this, church programs should integrate prayer-focused activities into their schedules.

Bible study sessions, fellowship meetings, and worship services should all include dedicated times for collective prayer, fostering a communal spirit of growth. This helps reinforce the role of prayer in shaping both individual and community spiritual development, while also encouraging shared spiritual journeys within the congregation. In addition, churches and religious organizations should offer workshops and seminars focused on the practical aspects of prayer. These workshops can teach individuals how to use prayer not only for spiritual growth but also as a tool for decision-making and navigating life's challenges. By equipping believers with the skills to incorporate prayer into their daily decisions, these programs can help guide them toward living purposeful, focused lives.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the finding and conclusion of the study, it has been recommended that:

1. Churches and Christian leaders should promote the habit of daily personal prayer as a key practice for spiritual growth and character transformation.
2. Church programs, Bible study sessions, and fellowship meetings should emphasize collective prayer to help members align their lives with the teachings of Jesus.
3. Individuals should be encouraged to incorporate prayer into their decision-making processes to seek divine guidance and clarity.

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