

Contribution of Christian Theology to the Spiritual Growth of Christians

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Abstract

Original Research Article

The main objective of this study was to explore and analyze the role of Christian theology in facilitating the spiritual growth of believers within the Gishingano Free Methodist Church. This article explores the contribution of Christian theology to the spiritual growth of believers, with a specific focus on the Gishingano Free Methodist Church. The study's findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between Christian theology and spiritual growth. For example, based on the Data interpretation of results related to the first research question, the first research question seeks to understand the current state of spiritual growth among members of the Gishingano Free Methodist Church. To answer this question, out of 60 respondents, 48 (80%) indicated "Yes", meaning they understand the role of Christian theology in their spiritual life. 12 respondents (20%) said "No", meaning they do not understand or perhaps have a limited understanding of the role of theology in their spiritual walk. Finally, the fifth chapter of this work shows the Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations to the Church of Gishingano Free Methodist Church including church leaders and members and to further researchers.

Keywords: Contribution, Christian Theology, Spiritual growth, Christians.

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INTRODUCTION

The first chapter deals with the introduction and other main points such as context of the study, problem statement, justification of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, research hypothesis, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, exclusion of external factors, limitations of study, definitions of key words, and the conceptual framework. According to McGrath, the study of Christian theology plays a vital role in understanding the foundations of faith and the spiritual growth of believers. Theology, derived from the Greek word "theologia," refers to the study of God and religious beliefs, encompassing doctrines, ethics, and practices that shape the Christian faith (McGrath 2017, 3-5).-This research focuses on the contribution of Christian theology to the spiritual growth of Christians, specifically within the context of Gishingano Free Methodist Church. Gishingano Free Methodist Church serves as a microcosm for examining how theological teachings can influence individual and communal spiritual development. The church's mission emphasizes not only worship and community service but also theological education, which equips members with a deeper understanding of Scripture and its application in

daily life. The biblical reference from Hebrews 5:11-6:12 is particularly relevant to this study. In these verses, the author addresses the importance of maturity in faith, urging believers to move beyond elementary teachings and pursue a deeper knowledge of God. The passage highlights the necessity for Christians to grow in their understanding and application of theological principles, emphasizing that spiritual growth is not merely a matter of time but involves active engagement with God's Word. Hebrews 5:11-14 states: "We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish well from evil." (NIV 2011, 217).-This scripture underscores the call for maturity in faith, suggesting that a robust theological foundation enables Christians to discern truth and live righteously. The research will explore how Gishingano Free Methodist Church fosters theological education through its programs, sermons, and community engagement. It aims

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to analyze how these elements contribute to both individual spiritual growth and collective church health. By examining this case study, we hope to highlight practical applications of theology that encourage believers not only to deepen their faith but also to actively participate in their communities as agents of change. This research will provide insights into the vital role that Christian theology plays in nurturing spiritual growth among believers at Gishingano Free Methodist Church. It will demonstrate that a commitment to theological education is crucial for developing mature Christians who are equipped to navigate life's challenges with wisdom and grace. According to McGrath, the study of Christian theology plays a vital role in understanding the foundations of faith and the spiritual growth of believers. Theology, derived from the Greek word "theologia," refers to the study of God and religious beliefs, encompassing doctrines, ethics, and practices that shape the Christian faith (McGrath 2017, 3-5).

This research focuses on the contribution of Christian theology to the spiritual growth of Christians, specifically within the context of Gishingano Free Methodist Church. Gishingano Free Methodist Church serves as a microcosm for examining how theological teachings can influence individual and communal spiritual development.

The church's mission emphasizes not only worship and community service but also theological education, which equips members with a deeper understanding of Scripture and its application in daily life. The biblical reference from Hebrews 5:11-6:12 is particularly relevant to this study. In these verses, the author addresses the importance of maturity in faith, urging believers to move beyond elementary teachings and pursue a deeper knowledge of God.

METHODS

The sample is made up by 60 persons who were willing to share personal experiences related to their faith journey and theological understanding. The instrument used is questionnaire. Before taking it to the field it has been formulated and proposed to the research supervisor for confirming its reliability and validity to meet the target. Concerning the data collection procedure, the researcher has collected the data from the field for being analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The details on how data were gathered through structured questionnaires that assess theological understanding and personal experiences related to spiritual growth. According to Doe, the short survey of the research work will be distributed to collect demographic information and assess participants' baseline understanding of key theological concepts (Doe 1999, 52). This can also include Likert-scale questions regarding their perceived growth in faith. Distribution: Questionnaires have been distributed during the church service and members have been given the option to complete them on sheets of paper and take them home to return later. Data

Collection: Completed questionnaires have been collected and reviewed for completeness and accuracy. Data Analysis: Responses have been analyzed using tables for closed-ended questions and thematic analysis for open-ended questions.

RESULTS

The largest group (33.3%) has been attending church for 26 years or more, indicating a strong base of long-term, committed members. 16–20 years is the second-largest group with 26.7%. Combined, these two groups represent 60% of the respondents, showing that a majority have over 15 years of experience in the church. The newer members (0–10 years) make up 16.7% (11.7% + 5%). Mid-term members (11–25 years) make up the remaining 23.3%. Table 4 reflects a church with a strong core of long-standing members a strength in terms of continuity, tradition, and stability. However, the relatively small percentage of newcomers suggests a potential need for revitalization strategies, outreach efforts, or stronger integration pathways for new believers.

The data also indicates that discipleship programs should cater to both mature believers with decades of experience and newer members who are still growing into the church community. Out of 60 respondents, 48 (80%) indicated "Yes", meaning they understand the role of Christian theology in their spiritual life. 12 respondents (20%) said "No", meaning they do not understand or perhaps have a limited understanding of the role of theology in their spiritual walk. The fact that 80% of respondents affirm their understanding suggests that Christian theology is meaningfully integrated into the spiritual lives of most members of Gishingano FMC. This could reflect effective teaching, discipleship programs, or leadership within the church that emphasizes theological education. The 20% who responded negatively highlights that there is still a segment of the church that might not fully grasp the significance of theology in their faith journey. This group may benefit from targeted theological education, Bible studies, or mentoring to deepen their understanding. A majority of 54 respondents (90%) agree to some extent that Christian theology plays a role in their beliefs. 40% (24 respondents) agree. 35% (21 respondents) strongly agree. 15% (9 respondents) say theology always plays a role. However, 6 respondents (10%) express disagreement: 5% (3 respondents) strongly disagree. 5% (3 respondents) disagree. No respondents chose "Never," meaning even among those who disagree, none completely deny theology's relevance.

With 90% affirming its importance, there is a strong foundation to build on. However, the 10% who express disagreement suggest the need for: Clarified theological teaching,

More contextual or experiential approaches to theology, and Opportunities for dialogue to bridge

possible gaps between theological instruction and personal belief. This insight provides church leadership with a path to strengthen theological understanding across the congregation while addressing areas of disconnect or uncertainty. 60% (36 respondents) agree or strongly agree that there is current theological understanding among congregants (30% agree + 45% strongly agree + 5% always). 20% (12 respondents) disagree or strongly disagree that theological understanding is present.

No one responded with “Never,” indicating some level of theological understanding is at least present or recognized. The remaining 15% (9 respondents) neither strongly agree nor strongly disagree, indicating some level of uncertainty or moderate acceptance. This highlights the need for ongoing theological education efforts, possibly through: More inclusive teaching approaches, Practical application of theology, Regular assessments of congregants’ understanding, and encouraging open dialogue to identify and address theological questions or doubts. This balance suggests a healthy but improvable theological engagement within the church community.

No respondents chose “Never”, indicating universal acknowledgment that Christian theology has at least some role in strengthening faith. 35% (21 respondents) said “Sometimes”, showing occasional influence of theology on their current faith life. 30% (18 respondents) said “Often”, reflecting a more regular impact. Another 35% (21 respondents) selected “Always”, indicating theology has a constant and strong role in their faith experience. Table 8 confirms that Christian theology strengthens the faith of believers at Gishingano FMC, with 100% agreement in varying degrees. While 65% experience this impact regularly or always, the 35% who only experience it sometimes highlight the need for more intentional efforts to connect theological teaching with real-life challenges and spiritual needs. This could include: Interactive Bible studies, Faith-and-life application sermons, or mentorship programs to help believers internalize and live out theology more fully. Overall, the data presents a strong case for theology being a faith-building pillar in the current lives of church members, but also points to areas where deeper engagement is still possible. However, the findings also highlight a need for continued teaching and reinforcement, as no single area reached full understanding across the congregation.

The church leadership has a strong base to work from, but intentional efforts to disciple the remaining portions of the congregation will be necessary to ensure widespread theological maturity. Strong Theological Foundations Evident

Affirmation of the Trinity and Christ’s dual nature each received 55% agreement, indicating that a

majority of congregants hold to core orthodox Christian doctrines.

This is a promising sign of doctrinal soundness in the teaching and understanding at Gishingano FMC. Emphasis on Experiential Faith and the Holy Spirit (50%)

Half of respondents recognize the importance of personal faith and the Holy Spirit’s active role, which shows a vibrant, relational aspect of their theology-not merely intellectual belief. This aligns with Wesleyan-Holiness traditions, which value spiritual experience and sanctification. Valuing Scripture, Worship, and Fellowship (50%)

The same proportion (50%) highlighted biblical authority, worship, and fellowship, reflecting a communal and Scripture-based expression of theology. This suggests a balanced theological understanding that includes both doctrine and practice. 0% selected “Never”, indicating universal belief that theological education has some impact on spiritual maturity. 50% (30 respondents) say it often impacts their spiritual maturity, showing it is a regular influence. 35% (21 respondents) say “Always”, meaning for them, theological education has a consistent and strong influence on their spiritual growth. 15% (9 respondents) say “Sometimes”, showing that for a smaller group, the impact is less frequent or situational. With 85% experiencing regular or constant impact, the church has a strong educational foundation. However, the presence of 15% with only occasional benefit signals an opportunity to improve inclusiveness, relevance, and accessibility of theological instruction. By doing so, the church can help ensure that all members, regardless of background or maturity level, are growing spiritually through theology. 85% (51 respondents) answered “Yes”, indicating a strong consensus that theological education at Gishingano FMC places emphasis on spiritual maturity. 15% (9 respondents) answered “No”, showing a minority who feel this emphasis is lacking or unclear. However, the 15% who disagree highlight the need for greater inclusivity, clarity, and relevance in theological teaching. To maintain a spiritually mature and growing congregation, the church should:

Reinforce the connection between theology and everyday faith, ensure teaching methods reach all educational and spiritual levels, and involve congregants in shaping a more effective and engaging theological curriculum. For more clarification, 51 respondents, (85%) who said “YES” explained How Theological Education Emphasizes Spiritual Maturity among Christians of Gishingano FMC. Theological education has played a central role in deepening the faith and spiritual maturity of Christians at Gishingano Free Methodist Church (FMC).

Its impact is observed through both personal transformation and communal growth, as described below: Revealing God's Will and Guiding Spiritual Growth

Theological education demonstrates the good will and the will of God, helping Christians at Gishingano FMC align their lives with divine purpose.

It sustains their spiritual life through emphasis on prayer and obedience to the Bible, forming the foundation of a mature faith.

Promoting Repentance and Transformation

It helps Christians to repent from sins, an essential step toward spiritual maturity and holiness. The transformation is visible, as we see the absolute change among Christians, reflecting true inner renewal and growth. Fostering Deep Understanding and Discernment

Theological education increases understanding, enabling Christians to grasp the Scriptures more deeply and to grow in their walk with God. As a result, they understand better to obey God and serve Him with sincerity and commitment. It helps them understand what seems difficult, providing clarity on complex biblical and spiritual matters. Encouraging Spiritual Disciplines and Fellowship.

Christians are encouraged to read the Word of God, engage in prayer, and gather with others in worship (cults)-key disciplines that cultivate spiritual growth.

These practices strengthen individual faith and build a spiritually mature community.

Producing Spirit-Led Lives. Christians are led by the Holy Spirit in love and support, indicating growth in character and sensitivity to God's presence. In all forms of service-whether financial or physical-they are led by the Holy Spirit, showing maturity in stewardship and obedience.

Building a Spiritually Strong Church

As believers grow, the church increases in number and in strength, not just in quantity but in spiritual quality. We now have equipped leaders who are ready and capable of guiding others in spiritual matters, ensuring the church continues to thrive.

The Christians show generosity, diligence in work, and support for one another, clear signs of a spiritually mature and united body. Living out Faith in the Community

Theological education teaches Christians how to behave in the community, living as salt and light in their surroundings. They also understand God's will for the church, helping them serve with vision and purpose. Centering on the Word and Faithfulness

The education emphasizes the Word of God as the ultimate authority and source of truth. It calls believers to know God, believe in Him, and remain faithful, which are key outcomes of spiritual maturity.

In conclusion, theological education at Gishingano FMC has not only strengthened individual believers but has also equipped the church with Spirit-led leaders, committed servants, and a united, mature Christian community. It is clear that where sound theological training exists, spiritual maturity flourishes.

Alternative Views: Concerns Raised by Respondents about Theological Education and Spiritual Maturity at Gishingano FMC. While many affirm the positive impact of theological education on spiritual growth, some respondents expressed concerns and disagreed with the idea that it truly emphasizes or results in spiritual maturity among Christians at Gishingano FMC. Their viewpoint is based on the following observations: Overemphasis on Pluralism across Denominations and Ethnic Groups. According to these respondents, theological education seems to focus more on pluralization-that is, promoting unity among various Christian denominations and ethnic groups. While inclusivity is valuable, they argue that this broad focus may distract from personal spiritual development and deep biblical discipleship, which are necessary for true maturity. Misunderstanding about what Spirituality Truly Means. Some believe that there is confusion or lack of clarity about the meaning of spirituality within the teaching and practice of theological education. As a result, Christians may equate emotional experiences, church attendance, or surface-level knowledge with spiritual maturity, without developing deeper personal convictions and Christ-like character. Lack of Real understanding among Church Members. It was observed that many Christians come and go from church services or classes without truly understanding the teachings.

This leads to shallow faith-people participate outwardly, but there is no deep spiritual transformation or maturity. This may point to gaps in teaching methods, discipleship follow-up, or individual engagement with the theological content. In conclusion, these concerns highlight the need for greater clarity in defining and teaching spiritual maturity, and for ensuring that theological education is not merely academic or inclusive in focus, but deeply transformative. For theological education to be truly effective, it must: Be contextualized to the spiritual and cultural needs of the community; Foster deep personal understanding, not just group unity; and equip believers not only with knowledge, but with habits of prayer, obedience, and Christ-like living. The data analysis of Table 20, identifies the most effective approaches for teaching Christian theology to members of Gishingano Free Methodist Church (FMC): Biblical Theology (90%). Most Preferred and Effective.

54 out of 60 respondents (90%) consider biblical theology to be the most effective approach for teaching Christian theology. This reflects a strong desire to ground all theological understanding directly in Scripture, rather than abstract systems or traditions. Biblical theology resonates well in contexts like Gishingano FMC because it: Focuses on the narrative and message of the Bible, Allows teaching to be accessible and applicable, and encourages a direct relationship with God's Word. Practical theology and intergenerational learning (15% each). Both practical theology and learning across generations were selected by 9 respondents (15%). These approaches emphasize: Living out theology in daily life, applying it in areas like service, ethics, and community life, and promoting knowledge transfer across age groups, which is especially valuable for discipleship and sustainability in ministry. Historical and systematic theology less emphasized (10% and 5%).

Historical theology (10%) and systematic theology (5%) received the fewest responses, suggesting: These more academic or abstract approaches may be less familiar or less accessible to the majority of congregants. They may still be valuable for leaders and educators, but not the preferred tools for general congregational teaching. Theological teaching at Gishingano FMC is most effective when it is: Biblically grounded (90%), Practical and lived out (15%).

And inclusive of intergenerational learning (15%). This suggests that contextualized, Scripture-centered teaching is key to engaging and growing the faith of church members. For further development, leadership could:

Introduce simplified forms of systematic and historical theology for deeper understanding, while keeping the focus on biblical and practical instruction that resonates with everyday life.

DISCUSSION

Analysis of how the results aligns with or challenge existing literature on theology and spiritual growth and the discussion on the implications of these findings for both individuals and the church community. Connection to Hebrews 5:11-6:12

The reflection on how the teachings from this passage relate to the findings, particularly regarding the call to maturity in faith. 60% (36 respondents) agree or strongly agree that there is current theological understanding among congregants (30% agree + 45% strongly agree + 5% always). 20% (12 respondents) disagree or strongly disagree that theological understanding is present. No one responded with "Never," indicating some level of theological understanding is at least present or recognized. The remaining 15% (9 respondents) neither strongly agree nor strongly disagree, indicating some level of

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CONCLUSION

This article deals with the Contribution of Christian Theology to the Spiritual Growth of Christians within the context of Gishingano FMC. This article explores the significant role Christian theology plays in fostering spiritual growth among Christians, with a specific focus on the Gishingano Free Methodist Church. The article aims to investigate how theological teachings and practices within the church contribute to the spiritual development of its members. Based on the title of the article: "The Contribution of Christian Theology to the Spiritual Growth of Christians: Case of Gishingano Free Methodist Church", the objectives and research questions mentioned above, I assessed each hypothesis accordingly: H1: The understanding of Christian theology among congregants of Gishingano FMC is shaped more by cultural practices and personal experiences than by formal doctrinal teaching. This hypothesis relates directly to RQ1 and sub-question 12, which explores cultural influences on theological understanding. H1 is affirmed. It was possibly discussed, but lacked strong empirical evidence of cultural dominance. H2: Theological education has a positive impact on the spiritual growth of believers at Gishingano FMC by enhancing their biblical understanding, deepening their faith, and encouraging active Christian living. This directly aligns with RQ2 and several sub-questions (e.g. 2, 3, 8, 9, 18, 19). The thesis shows measurable or clearly described growth in spiritual maturity due to theological education. H2 is confirmed. It was directly supported by the core findings related to spiritual growth from theological education.

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Competing interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Contributions from authors

All the authors contributed to the conduct of this work. They also state that they have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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