



The Moral Compass of Baptist Christianity: Examining Specific Teachings and their Impact in Sakumono Zone (Ghana)

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the moral landscape of Baptist Christianity in the Sakumono zone of Ghana, focusing on specific teachings and their implications. Employing a phenomenological research design and purposive sampling technique, twenty participants from various Baptist congregations were interviewed to gain insights into the moral beliefs and practices within the community. Thematic analysis, using the Braun and Clarke Approach, identified key themes and patterns in the data, highlighting the role of individual interpretation of scripture in empowering believers to uphold their moral convictions. The research revealed that Baptist ethics are deeply rooted in scripture, emphasizing personal responsibility, adherence to traditional beliefs, and the embodiment of moral values in everyday life. Rituals such as adult baptism, abstention from alcohol, and strict adherence to biblical teachings on marriage exemplify Baptists' commitment to living righteous lives guided by religious principles. Furthermore, prayer, worship, and scripture play pivotal roles in shaping Baptist morality, alongside the emphasis on leading by example and holding oneself accountable to biblical standards. The findings shed light on the unique moral compass of Baptist Christianity in Sakumono, Ghana, and its significance in guiding believers toward virtuous living. Recommendations made included fostering dialogue and communication within Baptist communities, emphasizing relational ethics, encouraging flexibility in interpretation, and developing external outreach programmes to promote mutual respect and understanding. Through these recommendations, Baptist communities can strengthen their moral foundations and foster inclusivity within the congregation.

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INTRODUCTION

Baptist Christianity, rooted in 17th-century England and the United States embodies core values of grace, faith, and a deep reverence for the Bible's teachings. Founded by John Smyth in 1609, Baptists prioritize personal conviction over rigid doctrines, embracing scripture as their guiding light.¹ Roger

¹ Christopher J Ellis, "Duty and Delight: Baptist Worship and Identity," *Review & Expositor* 100, no. 3 (2003): 329–49; Uta Papen, "Hymns, Prayers and Bible Stories: The Role of Religious Literacy Practices in Children's Literacy Learning," *Ethnography and*

Williams further championed these principles by establishing America's first Baptist church in 1638, passionately advocating for religious freedom. In Ghana, the Baptist presence, established formally in 1963 with roots dating back to 1927, has flourished with 1,761 churches and 300,000 members. Ghanaian Baptists have left an indelible mark on the nation through outreach, cultural enrichment, and advocacy for social justice.²

Despite the significant presence and historical impact of Baptist Christianity in Ghana, there has been a paucity of systematic research examining how specific Baptist teachings shape the ethical and moral behaviors of adherents. This research gap is particularly pertinent in the Sakumono zone given the dynamic socio-cultural landscape, characterized by a blend of traditional beliefs, modern influences, and various Christian denominations. The study aims to explore the extent to which Baptist doctrinal teachings, such as the emphasis on individual salvation, community engagement, and ethical living, contribute to moral decision-making and societal norms within this context. Additionally, it explores how these teachings interact with and possibly conflict with other prevailing moral systems, including indigenous traditions and other Christian perspectives. Understanding this interaction is crucial, as it has implications for community cohesion, social justice, and ethical leadership in Sakumono.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Biblical Roots of Christian Ethics

Christian ethics, rooted in the Bible, provide believers with moral guidance. Gustafson et al. highlight the Bible's consistency in ethical judgments,³ with the New Testament crucial for Jesus' teachings and early Christian values.⁴ Principles like the Golden Rule and loving one's neighbor originate from these texts.⁵ However, diverse interpretations lead to debates on biblical ethics' relevance today, challenged by evolutionary perspectives.⁶ Despite differing views, the Bible remains foundational, shaping ethical perspectives and discussions in contemporary contexts.⁷

Baptist Christianity and Responsibility

In Baptist Christianity, responsibility is central, seen as both a life aspect and a moral duty. In Harare, Baptists believe everyone has moral responsibility, regardless of free will, challenging the idea that responsibility requires free choice.⁸ Theologian Barth says responsibility stems from God's commands, exemplified by Jesus.⁹ The Bible emphasizes taking responsibility for personal sins and others' actions, stressing shared responsibility.¹⁰ This promotes moral integrity and respect for others.¹¹ Critics worry that divine command focus might limit personal freedom and foster judgmental attitudes,¹² yet Baptists stress communal moral duty rooted in faith.¹³

Education 13, no. 1 (2018): 119–34; Paul A Richardson, "Worship Resources for Malachi," *Review & Expositor* 84, no. 3 (1987): 479–86.

² Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong, "An Examination of the Role of Public Theology in the Church's Efforts Toward National Transformation in Ghana.," *E-Journal of Religious & Theological Studies (ERATS)* 9, no. 6 (2023).

³ James M Gustafson, "The Place of Scripture in Christian Ethics: A Methodological Study," *Interpretation* 24, no. 4 (1970): 430–55.

⁴ Everett Tilson, "The Gospels and Christian Ethics," *Journal of Bible and Religion* 28, no. 4 (1960): 423–31.

⁵ Jack T Sanders, "The Question of the Relevance of Jesus for Ethics Today," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 38, no. 2 (1970): 131–46.

⁶ Satu Viertiö et al., "Factors Contributing to Psychological Distress in the Working Population, with a Special Reference to Gender Difference," *BMC Public Health* 21, no. 1 (December 29, 2021): 611, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-10560-y>; Taede Anne Smedes, *Chaos, Complexity, and God: Divine Action and Scientism*, vol. 26 (Peeters, 2004).

⁷ Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Kingdom and Cross: Christian Moral Community and the Problem of Suffering," *Interpretation* 50, no. 2 (1996): 156–68.

⁸ Leanne Williams Green, "Spacetimes of Sociality, Neighbourhood Others and the Immoralities of Self-Protection among Middle-Class Baptists in Harare, Zimbabwe," *L'Homme*, 2023, 31–60.

⁹ C. McKercher, *Disability in Popular Culture: From Pity to Power* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018).

¹⁰ Bruce Narramore, "The Concept of Responsibility in Psychopathology and Psychotherapy," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 13, no. 2 (1985): 91–96.

¹¹ William J Danaher, "Beyond Imagination: 'Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ' (1963) and the Reinvention of Canadian Anglicanism," *Anglican Theological Review* 93, no. 2 (2011): 219.

¹² Green, "Spacetimes of Sociality, Neighbourhood Others and the Immoralities of Self-Protection among Middle-Class Baptists in Harare, Zimbabwe."

¹³ William Schweiker, "Humanizing Religion," *The Journal of Religion* 89, no. 2 (2009): 214–35.

Baptist Christianity and Morality

In Baptist Christianity, morality is deeply rooted in faith and history, emphasizing both personal and community responsibility. Harare's Baptist Christians believe moral responsibility is a natural part of life, independent of free will, challenging the idea that it requires free choice.¹⁴ Baptist missionaries in India, like those in Serampore, promoted monotheism and moral values, influencing social reforms by moving away from local superstitions.¹⁵ However, controversies exist. The Westboro Baptist Church's extreme protests and harsh language have caused legal issues and backlash, showing tensions between religious freedom and societal morals. Theologian Barth stresses that moral responsibility comes from God's commands, not human choice, which can clash with personal freedoms.¹⁶ Narramore's work highlights both personal and communal sins, reinforcing shared responsibility in the Baptist faith.¹⁷ Thus, Baptist morality, rooted in faith, offers a strong ethical guide while prompting discussions about personal freedom and inclusivity in modern ethical debates.

The Attitude of Baptists Toward Alcohol

Baptists generally discourage alcohol consumption, valuing temperance and moral integrity. This stance has health benefits, as those avoiding excessive drinking and smoking often have lower rates of chronic illnesses like dementia and Alzheimer's.¹⁸ Danish Baptists also show lower cancer rates due to restrained alcohol and tobacco use.¹⁹ Religious beliefs strongly influence drinking habits, with elderly Baptists in rural areas less likely to drink.²⁰ However, some research suggests alcohol use among Baptists doesn't always lead to negative health outcomes.²¹ In Russia, Baptists view alcoholism as a moral issue, focusing on spiritual solutions.²²

Baptist and Baptism

Baptists practice "believer's baptism," involving full immersion for those professing faith in Jesus, contrasting with infant baptism based on parental faith.²³ They interpret New Testament passages like Matthew 28:18-20 to mean baptism follows a personal faith declaration, symbolizing identification with Christ's death and resurrection.²⁴ Baptists argue that infant baptism lacks biblical support as infants can't profess faith.²⁵ Baptism incorporates individuals into the Church, emphasizing community,²⁶ and testifies to spiritual rebirth already occurring through faith.²⁷ Some now accept members without the believer's baptism, reflecting ecumenical shifts.²⁸

¹⁴ Green, "Spacetimes of Sociality, Neighbourhood Others and the Immoralities of Self-Protection among Middle-Class Baptists in Harare, Zimbabwe."

¹⁵ Shyamal K Chatterjee, "Rammohun Roy and the Baptists of Serampore: Moralism vs. Faith," *Religious Studies* 20, no. 4 (1984): 669–80.

¹⁶ Gerald McKenny, *Karl Barth's Moral Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

¹⁷ Narramore, "The Concept of Responsibility in Psychopathology and Psychotherapy."

¹⁸ Lau Caspar Thygesen et al., "Chronic Neurodegenerative Illnesses and Epilepsy in Danish Adventists and Baptists: A Nationwide Cohort Study," *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* 56, no. 4 (2017): 1429–35.

¹⁹ Thygesen et al., "Chronic Neurodegenerative Illnesses and Epilepsy in Danish Adventists and Baptists: A Nationwide Cohort Study."

²⁰ Marc A Musick, Dana G Blazer, and Judith C Hays, "Religious Activity, Alcohol Use, and Depression in a Sample of Elderly Baptists," *Research on Aging* 22, no. 2 (2000): 91–116.

²¹ Dan G. Blazer, J. C. Hays, and M. A. Musick, "Abstinence versus Alcohol Use among Elderly Rural Baptists: A Test of Reference Group Theory and Health Outcomes," *Aging & Mental Health* 6, no. 1 (2002): 47–54.

²² Igor Mikeschin, "'I'm Not Like Most Of You Here, I'm Just An ALCOHOLIC': A RUSSIAN BAPTIST Theory Of Addiction," *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* 10, no. 2 (2016): 19–32.

²³ Rady Roldán-Figueroa, "Βαπτίζω 'Signifies to Dip or to Wash, but Never to Sprinkle': London Baptists and Dipping as the Sign of Lay Supremacy, 1641–1645," *Church History and Religious Culture* 99, no. 2 (2019): 151–82.

²⁴ Oleksandr Geychenko, "The Church, Kingdom and Society in the Writings of Vasili V. Ivanov (1846–1919): Towards a Public Theology for Post-Soviet Baptists," *International Journal of Public Theology* 14, no. 3 (2020): 319–35.

²⁵ Oliver D Crisp, "Infant Baptism and the Disposition to Saving Faith," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 75, no. 4 (2022): 363–73.

²⁶ Jean-Louis Souletie, "Baptism, the Matrix of Tradition," *Studia Liturgica* 42, no. 1–2 (2012): 54–72.

²⁷ Crisp, "Infant Baptism and the Disposition to Saving Faith"; W Morgan Patterson, "The Role of Baptism in Baptist History," *Review & Expositor* 65, no. 1 (1968): 33–41.

²⁸ Paul Goodliff, "Baptist Theology Reconsidered," *Baptist Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (2015): 113–19.

Baptist and Other Denominations' Views on Prayer

For Baptists, prayer is a profound spiritual connection, guided by the Lord's Prayer as a model for personal and communal devotion.²⁹ They draw inspiration from biblical accounts like Elijah's miracles and the resurrection, affirming prayer's tangible impact.³⁰ Prayer gatherings are central to Baptist worship, emphasizing unity and collective spiritual support. In contrast, Catholics view prayer as reinforcing doctrinal convictions through worship (*lex orandi, lex credendi*),³¹ while Anglicans integrate prayer with historical and societal issues to shape their public witness. Pentecostals, like Baptists, emphasize prayer for healing and divine intervention, grounded in biblical promises.³²

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a phenomenological research design. It was chosen to investigate the moral beliefs of Baptist Christians in Sakumono Zone, Ghana. This method is suitable because it allows for a thorough examination of individual experiences and viewpoints within the social and religious context. By using this approach, the study aimed to gain a deep understanding of how specific teachings are interpreted and applied, shedding light on their impact on community morals and values.³³ This research design facilitated the study of a small sample taken from Sakumono Baptist Churches.

Study Sample and Study Area

Twenty participants who are parents, followers of Jesus, and members of the Baptist Church in Sakumono were carefully chosen for this study. Those who did not want to join were not included, and participants could decide to leave during the interviews, ensuring the researchers heard from people with relevant experiences.

The focus on Tema Sakumono came from the importance of the First Baptist Church there, though the researchers didn't know much about other Baptist churches. Tema, Ghana, started as a city in 1952, planned by Theodore S. Clerk and the Tema Development Corporation (TDC). It grew quickly into a lively city, helped by a harbor built in 1961, which made it an important place for trade. In February 1966, the 'New Life for You' event, led by the Ghana Baptist Convention and Mission, led to many people becoming Christians in Tema. This prompted bible classes at Akodzo Middle School. By June 1966, Rev. James Annis started trying to find a place for people to worship. In October 1968, the First Baptist Church started, first known as the Tema Baptist Bible Class, and later as the Tema Baptist Church – English Speaking under Rev. Annis's leadership. The church worked hard to share their faith and help their community, helping their members to grow closer to each other and to God.

Data Collection and Procedures

This study explored the moral principles of Baptist Christianity in Ghana's Sakumono zone, focusing on specific teachings and their societal impacts. Twenty participants were purposefully chosen from congregations like Victory Baptist and Triumphant Grace Baptist. Data collection spanned three months (March to May), with semi-structured interviews conducted on Sundays from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM to accommodate participants' availability, encouraging open dialogue and participation. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and allowing participants to withdraw at any time. Despite logistical challenges such as scheduling conflicts, proactive measures like flexible scheduling and clear communication were implemented. Approved by Kwame University of Science and Technology, the study used tape recorders for interviews to ensure accurate data capture and enrich the depth of findings.

²⁹ David M May, "Saying the Lord's Prayer in Baptist Bibleland," *Review & Expositor* 118, no. 4 (2021): 442–59.

³⁰ Danice B Greer, "The Power of Prayer," *Journal of Christian Nursing* 32, no. 1 (2015): 57.

³¹ Mary-Anne Plaatjies-Van Huffel, "Patristic Ecclesiology in Africa," in *The Routledge Handbook of African Theology* (Routledge, 2020), 443–61.

³² Marius Nel, "Petitionary Prayer for Healing and South African Pentecostals," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 31, no. 2 (2022): 295–312.

³³ K Peter Kuchinke, "Phenomenology and Human Resource Development: Philosophical Foundations and Implication for Research," *Human Resource Development Review* 22, no. 1 (2023): 36–58.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

This study involved twenty participants from diverse congregations. Members of Victory Baptist Church (VBC) included Parents 1 and 3 (aged 37-46) and Parents 2 and 4 (aged 40-55), representing a range of ages and educational backgrounds from diplomas to degrees. Similarly, Triumphant Grace Baptist (TGB) participants, aged 34-50, had educational qualifications from diplomas to tertiary degrees. Abundant Grace Baptist (AGB) members, aged 33-59, also showed diversity in age and education levels from diplomas to tertiary degrees. In contrast, Hallelujah Temple Baptist (HTB) participants, aged 32-49, were mostly degree holders and relatively uniform in age. Grace Baptist (GB) members, aged 34-55, uniformly completed Senior High School (SHS). Grace Community Baptist (GCB) participants, aged 40-58, presented varied educational backgrounds from SHS to degrees. Redemption Baptist (RB) and Goodnews Baptist Church (GBC) participants, organized in family groups (FG), ranged in age from 30 to 57, with educational levels spanning SHS to degrees.

Moral Teachings of Baptist Christianity and Its Impact

This research explored the moral teachings and diverse perspectives within Baptist Churches in Sakumono, highlighting their unique practices and beliefs. By comparing Baptist traditions with other denominations like CATHOLIC, the study illustrated the diversity within Christianity and the varied interpretations among believers. It examined how Baptists' adherence to specific practices, such as adult baptism by immersion, strict avoidance of alcohol, and tithing, shaped their identity and community. The research also investigated the perceptions of Baptists both within and outside their community, revealing a complex picture of disciplined doctrine and perceived rigidity in moral principles.

Baptist Ethics: Core Moral Compass Points

Baptist Christianity is deeply rooted in scriptural teachings, emphasizing personal faith and ethical decision-making. *Respondent One* underscores Baptists' dedication to the Bible's authority, such as through adult baptism symbolizing renewal and faith in Jesus:

"Baptists focus on scriptural teachings, like adult baptism..."

Their stance on social issues, particularly same-sex marriage, reflects adherence to traditional beliefs based on their interpretation of scripture:

"...Baptists view same-sex marriage as against scripture and believe in lifelong marriage."

Respondent Ten highlighted unique Baptist practices like immersion baptism and strict ethical codes, demonstrating their commitment to biblical principles:

"Baptists believe in baptizing people by putting them in water like Jesus was baptized. They don't support drinking alcohol, follow specific dress codes, reject having multiple spouses, and practice tithing."

Respondent Twelve emphasized Baptist values of discipline, responsibility, forgiveness, and love derived from biblical teachings, shaping their ethical conduct:

"In the Baptist church, we take moral values seriously, like being disciplined, responsible, accountable, forgiving, and loving. We follow these rules very strictly."

Respondent Fourteen underscored the integration of prayer, worship, and scripture in Baptist life, reinforcing ethical behaviour rooted in faith:

"Baptists emphasize prayer, worship, and scripture, ensuring followers understand and apply biblical teachings to daily life..."

Moreover, their strong opposition to activities like gambling, fornication, and cohabitation reflects a commitment to uphold moral standards:

"...The Baptist fraternity strongly opposes activities like gambling, money laundering, fornication, cohabitation, maintaining a strict stance based on scripture."

In daily life, Baptists prioritize authenticity and integrity, living out their faith as role models:

"Baptists practice what they believe, showing their Christian life through actions, not just in their hearts. They focus on leading by example and living what they learn from the Bible."

From the comments, Baptist ethics are grounded in biblical teachings, emphasizing personal responsibility, traditional values, and ethical conduct integrated into daily life through prayer, worship, and adherence to scripture.

Living Out Faith

According to respondents, Baptists stand out for their proactive integration of moral beliefs into everyday life, demonstrating how their convictions shape actions and behavior. *Respondent Twelve* highlighted the core values within Baptist teachings:

"In the Baptist church, we take moral values seriously, like being disciplined, responsible, accountable, forgiving, and loving. We follow these rules very strictly."

Rather than treating faith as merely personal, Baptists emphasize the importance of living out their beliefs in practical ways, as emphasized by *Respondent Eighteen*:

"Baptists prioritize practicing beliefs, unlike some who see Christianity as internal."

This commitment extends to their approach to discipleship, where the focus is on cultivating a comprehensive faith that impacts every aspect of life. *Respondent Eighteen* elaborated:

"Discipleship and leading by example are crucial for Baptists, setting them apart. Training is valued, nurturing believers for a balanced life."

Beyond rituals and personal devotions, Baptists actively demonstrate their Christian values through tangible actions, distinguishing themselves as moral exemplars, as noted by *Respondent Seventeen*:

"Baptists practice what they believe, showing their Christian life through actions, not just in their hearts."

Prayer, worship, and scripture study are integral to Baptist life, serving as a means to deepen understanding and application of moral teachings. *Respondent Fourteen* underscored their significance:

"Baptists emphasize prayer, worship, and scripture, ensuring followers understand and apply biblical teachings to daily life."

Moreover, Baptists adhere to specific behavioral standards such as abstaining from alcohol, adhering to modest dress codes, rejecting polygamy, and tithing. These practices reflect their commitment to living in accordance with biblical principles. *Respondent Ten* explained:

"Baptists believe in baptizing people by putting them in water, like Jesus was baptized. They don't support drinking alcohol, follow specific dress codes, reject having multiple spouses, and practice tithing. These rules shape how they see things and give them confidence during tough times."

In essence, Baptists are distinguished by their proactive approach to embodying moral values through concrete actions rather than mere beliefs. This active engagement shapes their worldview and provides resilience in adversity. Their commitment to prayer, worship, and scripture study deepens their understanding of moral teachings, while their adherence to behavioral norms underscores their dedication to living a righteous life guided by their faith.

Baptist Accountability and Personal Responsibility

In Sakumono's Baptist Churches, the emphasis on personal responsibility strengthens believers' connection to Scripture, fostering a profound moral clarity. According to *Respondent Seven*, individual interpretation within Baptist Christianity allows direct engagement with God's Word:

"Individual interpretation within Baptist Christianity allows believers to have direct access to Scripture. This personal connection with the Word of God facilitates a deep understanding and application of moral values."

This personal approach also empowers believers to uphold their moral convictions confidently, guiding their actions even in challenging circumstances, as highlighted by *Respondent Nine*:

"Individual interpretation provides confidence and authority. It shapes our actions, helping us stand firm in challenging situations by anchoring our decisions in the Word of God."

Central to Baptist doctrine is the belief that everyone, guided by the Holy Spirit, can comprehend and apply the teachings of the Bible impartially, as noted by *Respondent Twelve*:

"Baptists believe everyone has the right to understand the Bible with the help of the Holy Spirit, creating a fair and equal approach."

Respondent Thirteen underscored that Baptist teachings emphasize using grace to lead a righteous life, not as a license for irresponsibility:

"Baptist teachings focus on personal interpretation guided by Scriptures. It's not about living recklessly with grace but using it to empower a holy life."

Similarly, *Respondent Fourteen* highlighted the Baptist commitment to individual interpretation of scripture with the Holy Spirit's guidance, distinguishing their approach:

"The Baptist system's commitment to individual interpretation of scripture, guided by the Holy Spirit, fosters a unique approach compared to other circles."

In the focus group discussion, *Respondent Eighteen* stressed the importance of personal engagement with the Bible and the Holy Spirit's guidance in Baptist practice:

"Reading the Bible personally and understanding with the Holy Spirit's help is essential for Baptists." (Focus Group - Respondent Eighteen)

In conclusion, in Baptist Churches in Sakumono, personal interpretation of scripture is pivotal. It fosters a close relationship with the Word of God and bolsters believers' confidence in their moral convictions. This approach equips them to navigate challenges while remaining true to biblical principles. Baptist teachings underscore personal responsibility and affirm that everyone, regardless of background, can grasp moral values through the Bible with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Diverse Perspective on Baptist Christianity

The research highlighted distinct moral teachings within the Baptist Churches in Sakumono, revealing a range of perspectives on Baptist Christianity. *Respondent Sixteen* contrasted baptism practices, noting:

"Catholic baptizes by sprinkling, while Baptists wait for maturity and baptize by putting people in water."

Focus group discussions reveal varied perceptions of Baptist identity, acknowledging both admiration for doctrinal discipline and concerns over perceived rigidity in moral standards. *Respondent Fifteen* illustrated differing attitudes towards alcohol consumption:

"Baptists are more strict about avoiding drinking, but I've seen some people in CATHOLIC who do drink."

Unique Baptist practices such as tithing and ethical standards like abstinence from alcohol and polygamy distinguish their beliefs and foster community cohesion based on shared values. *Respondent Sixteen* underscored these distinctions:

"In Catholic, they sell things like holy water and dough in the church, but Baptists don't."

In essence, Baptist Churches in Sakumono exemplify unique moral practices, including baptism by immersion and adherence to specific ethical guidelines, setting them apart from other denominations and strengthening their communal bonds.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In the vibrant heart of Sakumono, the Baptist Churches stand as beacons of faith, each with its unique practices and beliefs. This study delves into their moral teachings, revealing how these shape the Baptist identity, community dynamics, and perceptions both within and outside their congregation.

Central to Baptist ethics is a profound reverence for the Bible, which guides their values of personal responsibility, accountability, and traditional practices like adult baptism by immersion, abstinence from alcohol, and faithful tithing.³⁴ The commitment to biblical teachings is practical, steering their everyday choices and ethical decisions.³⁵ Personal responsibility is not just a concept but a cornerstone of their faith, influencing how they navigate moral dilemmas and interact with others.³⁶

Baptism, symbolizing a public declaration of their commitment to follow Jesus Christ, is deeply rooted in biblical teachings and early Christian tradition.³⁷ This ritual marks their spiritual journey and unity within the community.³⁸

Discipline among Baptists is more about mutual support and spiritual growth than strict rules, nurturing a strong sense of accountability.³⁹ Their disciplined approach, drawn from biblical teachings, aims to uphold their doctrinal integrity and moral principles.⁴⁰

Tithing, seen as a heartfelt expression of faith and stewardship, demonstrates their commitment to supporting the church's mission and community welfare.⁴¹ Despite debates on its biblical basis, many Baptists view tithing as a spiritual act that honors God and strengthens community bonds.⁴²

Prayer, a cornerstone of Baptist spirituality, serves as a channel for communion with God and seeking divine guidance in life's challenges.⁴³ This reliance on prayer underscores their dependence on God and reaffirms their faith commitments.

Insights from this study reveal varied perceptions of Baptist practices, particularly regarding discipline and attitudes toward alcohol consumption.⁴⁴ Comparing these findings with previous research

³⁴ Jamie Pitts, "Christian Ethics, the Bible, and the Powers of Reading," *Scripture, Tradition, and Reason in Christian Ethics: Normative Dimensions*, 2019, 17–43.

³⁵ Cahill, "Kingdom and Cross: Christian Moral Community and the Problem of Suffering"; Gustafson, "The Place of Scripture in Christian Ethics: A Methodological Study."

³⁶ Green, "Spacetimes of Sociality, Neighbourhood Others and the Immoralities of Self-Protection among Middle-Class Baptists in Harare, Zimbabwe."

³⁷ Brenton Kevin Cross, *Southern Baptist Expository Preaching Homiletic Theory: Biblical Interpretation, Values, and Politics in Twentieth-Century America* (The University of Texas at Dallas, 2019); Geychenko, "The Church, Kingdom and Society in the Writings of Vasilii V. Ivanov (1846–1919): Towards a Public Theology for Post-Soviet Baptists"; Susan O Griffin et al., "Changes in Older Adults' Oral Health and Disparities: 1999 to 2004 and 2011 to 2016," *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 67, no. 6 (2019): 1152–57..

³⁸ Jonanda Groenewald, "The Foundation, Value and Meaning of Baptism in the New Testament," *HTS: Theological Studies* 59, no. 2 (2003): 367–83.

³⁹ Jewel L Spangler, "Becoming Baptists: Conversion in Colonial and Early National Virginia," *The Journal of Southern History* 67, no. 2 (2001): 243–86.

⁴⁰ Rachael Powell et al., "Psychological Preparation and Postoperative Outcomes for Adults Undergoing Surgery under General Anaesthesia," *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, no. 5 (2016).

⁴¹ Kasiatin Widiyanto and Johannes Augustinus, "The Influence Of Spirituality On The Giving Of Tithing," *Journal Didaskalia* 5, no. 2 (2022): 84–102.

⁴² H.W. Provence, "Tithing in the Bible." *Review & Expositor* 39, no. 4 (1942): 432–438.

⁴³ Siegfried Kreuzer, "The Septuagint South of Alexandria—in Antiquity," in *The Septuagint South of Alexandria* (Brill, 2022), 3–27.

⁴⁴ Musick, Blazer, and Hays, "Religious Activity, Alcohol Use, and Depression in a Sample of Elderly Baptists"; Lau Caspar Thygesen et al., "Cancer Incidence among Danish Seventh-Day Adventists and Baptists," *Cancer Epidemiology* 36, no. 6 (2012): 513–18; Laian Z Najjar et al., "Religious Perceptions of Alcohol Consumption and Drinking Behaviours among Religious and Non-Religious Groups," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 19, no. 9 (2016): 1028–41.

highlights the importance of cultural context and dialogue in bridging understanding and promoting ethical living within Baptist teachings.

In conclusion, Sakumono's Baptist Churches exemplify a community deeply rooted in biblical teachings, shaping their ethical identity and community perception, fostering disciplined and responsible behavior, and emphasizing the importance of cultural dialogue and understanding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study on Baptist Christianity's moral compass in Sakumono Zone, Ghana, several recommendations emerge to foster community cohesion and inclusivity. Firstly, there should be proactive efforts within the Baptist community to engage in open dialogue and communication, both internally and externally, to address misconceptions and promote a more inclusive image. Secondly, there is a need to further emphasize the relational aspects of ethics within Baptist teachings, encouraging a culture of understanding and acceptance within the community. Thirdly, greater flexibility in interpreting and applying traditional values should be encouraged, allowing for adaptation to contemporary contexts while maintaining core principles. Finally, external outreach programs could be developed to engage with non-Baptist individuals and groups, fostering mutual respect and understanding while showcasing the positive aspects of Baptist ethics and lifestyle.

CONCLUSION

The study in Sakumono delved into how Baptist moral teachings shape community identity and perception. It uncovered a Baptist identity defined by steadfast adherence to biblical principles, personal accountability, and practices like adult baptism by immersion and abstention from alcohol. These principles nurtured a community deeply committed to ethical living, guided by prayer, worship, and scripture. Yet, external perceptions of rigidity among Baptists highlighted challenges in fostering broader acceptance and inclusivity. Emphasizing community and relational ethics, Baptists were respected for their disciplined lifestyle and moral integrity, yet there was a call for greater openness and dialogue within and beyond their community to bridge misunderstandings. This research offers profound insights into Baptist moral frameworks in Sakumono, Ghana, illuminating their cultural and religious landscape. It advocates for dialogue to enhance mutual understanding and respect, promoting inclusivity while honoring Baptist traditions and values.

Limitation of the Study

The study focused on Baptist Christians in Sakumono, Ghana, using a small group of 20 participants. This might limit how much the findings can be applied to other places. Also, because people were asked about their personal experiences, there is a chance their own beliefs could affect what they said, which could make the results less reliable.

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