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ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Assessing the Integration of Digital and Print Bibles in Contemporary Christian Worship: A Case Study of Selected Churches in Greater Monrovia, Montserrado, Liberia

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Abstract

This study examined how digital and print Bibles are integrated, perceived, and experienced within contemporary Christian worship and personal devotional practices in selected churches in Central Monrovia, Liberia. Guided by Hybrid Religious Practice Theory, Material Religion Theory, and Practice Theory (Lived Religion), the study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining survey data from 100 congregants with qualitative interpretations of open-ended responses. Quantitative findings revealed that Bible engagement is predominantly hybrid, with nearly half of respondents using both print and digital Bibles equally during worship. While digital Bibles were valued for accessibility, speed, and the availability of multiple translations, particularly among younger congregants, print Bibles remained highly significant in terms of comfort, symbolic meaning, and spiritual authority. Qualitative insights from those interviewed (pastors and worship coordinators and regular congregants, particularly those actively involved in worship services and Bible engagement, as these groups are most directly engaged in the lived practices and meanings associated with Bible use in worship) further showed that print Bibles are associated with tradition, discipline, and reverence, whereas digital Bibles represent convenience and modern accessibility, though often accompanied by concerns about distraction. The study also found that church leadership generally permits both formats but provides limited formal guidance on their integration. Overall, the findings demonstrate that digital technologies have not displaced traditional Bible use but have instead fostered a context-sensitive hybrid model of Scripture engagement shaped by generational dynamics, worship culture, and lived religious practice. The study contributes empirical evidence from a Liberian context to the growing scholarship on religion and digital media, highlighting the resilience of material religious forms alongside emerging digital practices.

Keywords: *Digital Bibles, Print Bibles, Hybrid worship, Christian worship, Contemporary Church Worship*

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1. Introduction

The Bible has historically constituted the foundational text of Christian faith and worship, shaping doctrine, liturgy, moral formation, and personal devotion across diverse Christian traditions worldwide. For centuries, Scripture has been accessed predominantly through printed formats, which have occupied a central place in liturgical readings, preaching, catechesis, and private study. The physical Bible has not only functioned as a repository of sacred text but also as a material symbol of authority, reverence, and continuity within Christian worship practices (Morgan, 2010; Meyer, 2011). However, the rapid expansion of digital technologies in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has significantly altered the ways religious texts are produced, accessed, and engaged.

Globally, the proliferation of mobile devices, internet connectivity, and digital media platforms has transformed religious life, giving rise to what scholars describe as digital religion, a context in which religious beliefs and practices are increasingly mediated through digital

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technologies while remaining embedded within offline traditions (Campbell, 2013). Bible applications, online Scripture platforms, audio Bibles, and projected digital texts have become common features in churches across Europe, North America, Asia, and parts of the Global South. These developments have reshaped worship dynamics, enabling greater accessibility, personalization, and immediacy in Scripture engagement, while also raising questions about authority, embodiment, attention, and the meaning of sacred texts in mediated environments (Campbell, 2017). Rather than replacing print Bibles entirely, digital Scriptures often coexist with traditional formats, producing hybrid patterns of use that reflect both continuity and change in Christian worship.

Within the African context, the growth of digital religion has followed a distinctive trajectory shaped by rapid mobile phone adoption, youthful populations, urbanization, and expanding telecommunications infrastructure. Across sub-Saharan Africa, mobile technologies have become primary tools for communication, education, commerce, and religious participation (Adeleke, 2015). Churches increasingly utilize digital media for Bible reading, sermon delivery, worship projection, and devotional engagement, particularly in urban centers where access to smartphones and mobile internet is more widespread. At the same time, print Bibles remain deeply valued in many African Christian communities due to their perceived durability, ritual importance, and symbolic association with spiritual authenticity and reverence (Meyer, 2011). This dual engagement with digital and print Scriptures reflects broader African religious sensibilities that integrate innovation with tradition rather than privileging one at the expense of the other.

Theoretical perspectives such as Material Religion Theory and Practice Theory offer useful lenses for understanding this coexistence. Material Religion Theory emphasizes that religious objects, such as printed Bibles, mediate religious experience through their physical presence, sensory qualities, and ritual use, conveying sacred meaning beyond textual content alone (Morgan, 2010; Meyer, 2011). Practice Theory, on the other hand, highlights that religious meaning emerges through repeated, embodied, and socially situated actions, including reading, handling, displaying, or digitally scrolling through Scripture during worship (Schatzki, 2002; Orsi, 2005). Together, these frameworks suggest that the mode through which the Bible is accessed, digital or print, shapes how Scripture is experienced, interpreted, and enacted within worship contexts.

In Liberia, and particularly in urban settings such as Greater Monrovia, these global and regional dynamics are increasingly evident. The post-war expansion of mobile technology, improved network coverage, and the affordability of smartphones have facilitated the growing presence of digital media in everyday life, including religious practice. Many churches now encourage congregants to follow Scripture readings on mobile applications, while others project biblical texts onto screens during worship services. Nevertheless, print Bibles continue to hold strong symbolic and practical significance, especially among older congregants and church leaders who associate physical Scripture with spiritual discipline, reverence, and theological legitimacy.

Despite the visibility of both digital and print Bibles in Liberian church worship, limited empirical research has examined how these formats are integrated in practice, how different groups within congregations perceive and use them, and what meanings are attached to each mode of engagement. In Central Monrovia, where congregations are characterized by diverse age groups, educational backgrounds, and levels of technological literacy, the coexistence of digital and print Bibles presents a compelling site for scholarly inquiry. Examining Bible integration within worship in this context not only contributes to local theological and pastoral understanding but also enriches broader scholarly conversations on digital religion, materiality, and religious practice in contemporary Christianity.

2. Methodology

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine the ways in which digital and print Bibles are incorporated into contemporary Christian worship services in selected churches in Central Monrovia, Liberia.
2. Explore church leaders' perceptions, attitudes, and guidance regarding the use of digital and print Bibles during worship and congregational activities.
3. Analyze the meanings, interpretations, and symbolic values that congregants attach to digital and print Bible formats.
4. Investigate how congregants across different age groups engage with digital and print Bibles during worship services and in personal scripture reading.
5. Identify the social, technological, cultural, and theological factors that influence congregants' preferences for reading, accessing, and owning digital or print Bibles.

2.1 Research Design and Method

This study employs a mixed-methods case study design, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the integration of digital and print Bibles in contemporary Christian worship. Creswell and Creswell (2018) explain that mixed-methods research combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem.

The case study design was appropriate because it allowed an in-depth investigation of complex phenomena within a real-life context, focusing on three selected churches in Central Monrovia, Liberia (Yin, 2018). The qualitative component consists of semi-structured

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interviews, capturing the experiences, perceptions, and practices of church leaders and congregants. The quantitative component involves a survey questionnaire to collect demographic information, Bible usage patterns, and preferences from a larger sample of congregants.

The mixed-methods approach ensures that both breadth (through surveys) and depth (through interviews and observations) of data were captured, aligning with the study's theoretical framework, which includes Hybrid Religious Practice Theory, Material Religion Theory, and Practice Theory.

Material Religion Theory provided a perspective for understanding the Bible not only as a sacred text but also as a material and symbolic object through which religious meanings and experiences are expressed. Morgan (2021) explains that material religion examines how religious meanings are embodied and communicated through physical objects, sensory experiences, and everyday practices. This perspective was relevant to examining the symbolic, spiritual, and practical significance congregants attach to printed Bibles and digital Bible devices.

Practice Theory, particularly Bourdieu's (1977) understanding of the relationship between social structures, habitus, and everyday practices, provided a framework for investigating how congregants develop and maintain particular patterns of Bible use within their religious environments. It helped the researcher examine how personal preferences, established worship traditions, social expectations, and technological access influence the selection and use of different Bible formats.

The study's examination of hybrid religious practices was informed by Campbell's (2013) scholarship on digital religion and the relationship between online and offline religious activities. Campbell (2012) explains that contemporary religious practices increasingly involve interactions between digital and physical environments. This perspective was useful in understanding how congregants combine traditional printed Bibles with digital Bible applications and electronic devices during worship.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives enabled the researcher to examine the material significance of Bible formats, the everyday practices associated with their use, and the interaction between traditional and digital forms of religious engagement.

2.2 Population

The target population for this study comprised church leaders and congregants from three selected churches in Greater Monrovia, Montserrado County, Liberia. These churches were purposively selected based on their active and observable use of both digital and print Bibles during worship services, making them suitable cases for examining Bible integration in contemporary Christian worship (Yin, 2018). The selected churches are

The selected churches belong to the same Christian denominational group, Abundant Life Ministries Liberia.

They include:

1. Abundant Life Ministries Liberia (Headquarters).
2. Abundant Life Ministries, Fendell Branch.
3. Abundant Life Ministries, Dixville Branch.

The membership distribution provided by the respective churches is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Membership distribution provided by the respective churches

Selected church	Estimated membership
Abundant Life Ministries (Headquarters in LPRC)	650
Abundant Life Ministries (Fendell Branch)	200
Abundant Life Ministries (Dixville Branch)	150
Total population	1,000

Source: Membership information provided by the selected churches.

The total estimated population was therefore 1,000 congregants. Within this population, the study focused on church leaders, including pastors and worship coordinators, and regular congregants who actively participate in worship services and Bible-related activities.

The congregants were particularly relevant because they directly engage with digital and print Bible formats during worship, while church leaders provide institutional and practical perspectives concerning the adoption, encouragement, and use of these formats within their congregations.

The inclusion of both groups enabled the researcher to examine the phenomenon from institutional and individual perspectives. This approach was consistent with the study's interest in lived religious experiences and the meanings that individuals attach to religious objects and practices (Orsi, 2005; Morgan, 2021).

2.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The study involved a total sample of 106 participants, comprising 100 congregants who completed survey questionnaires and six church leaders who participated in semi-structured interviews.

The 100 congregants were selected from the estimated population of 1,000 members across the three churches. The six church leaders consisted of two representatives from each church.

The study employed purposive sampling to select participants who possessed relevant knowledge, experience, and involvement in the use of digital and print Bibles during worship. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because the researcher sought information from individuals who could provide meaningful insights into the phenomenon being investigated.

Patton (2015) explains that purposive sampling enables researchers to select information-rich participants and cases that can provide detailed insights into a research problem. Similarly, Creswell and Creswell (2018) recognize that non-probability sampling strategies can be appropriate in qualitative research when the objective is to

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understand participants' experiences and interpretations rather than achieve statistical representation.

2.4 Sample Size Distribution

For the distribution of the 100 congregant questionnaires, the researcher adopted proportional allocation based on the membership figures of the three selected churches. This ensured that each church contributed respondents in proportion to its estimated membership.

The proportional allocation was calculated using the following formula:

The proportional allocation was calculated using the following formula:

$$n_h = \frac{N_h}{N} \times n$$

Where:

- n_h= Sample allocated to each church.
- N_h = Population of each church.
- N = Total population across the three churches.
- n = Total congregant sample size.

Using this formula, the distribution was calculated as follows:

Headquarters: 650/1000×100 = 65

Fendell Branch: 200/1000×100 = 20

Dixville Branch: 150/1000×100 =15

Table 2: Sample Size distribution

Selected church	Population	Questionnaire sample
Headquarters in LPRC	650	65
Fendell Branch	200	20
Dixville Branch	150	15
Total	1,000	100

This proportional allocation ensured that the sample reflected the relative membership sizes of the three churches. However, because individual respondents were purposively selected rather than randomly selected, the allocation should not be interpreted as establishing statistical representativeness of the entire church population.

2.5 Data Collection Instruments

The study employs three main data collection instruments. The survey questionnaire is a structured tool designed to gather demographic information, Bible format usage, preferences, and perceptions, and it includes multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and short-answer questions (Dillman et al., 2014). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with church leaders to explore experiences, symbolic meanings, and hybrid worship practices, providing in-depth qualitative insights (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Together, these instruments complement one another, allowing for triangulation that strengthens the reliability, validity, and richness of the study's findings (Flick, 2018; Denzin, 2012).

2.6 Data Collection Procedures

Before commencing data collection, the researcher obtained permission from the leadership of the three selected churches to conduct the study. The purpose of the research, the nature of the information required, and the anticipated involvement of participants were explained to the appropriate church authorities.

The research instruments were reviewed and piloted with a small group of individuals from a congregation outside the three selected churches, where feasible, to assess the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the questions.

The researcher administered printed questionnaires to the 100 selected congregants across the three churches.

The questionnaires were distributed according to the proportional allocation of 65 respondents from the headquarters, 20 from the Fendell Branch, and 15 from the Dixville Branch.

Before completing the questionnaires, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the measures adopted to protect their confidentiality.

The researcher provided clarification where necessary without influencing participants' responses. Completed questionnaires were collected, checked for completeness, and prepared for quantitative analysis.

For observations, the researcher attended worship services, Bible study sessions, and other relevant church activities, using the observation checklist to systematically record behaviors, interactions, and engagement related to the use of digital and print Bibles.

2.7 Data Analysis Procedures

The quantitative data from the survey was entered into SPSS or Microsoft Excel for descriptive analysis, including frequencies, percentages, and cross-tabulations to identify patterns by age, church, and Bible format preference. The qualitative data from interviews and observations were transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically through coding and categorization, with themes aligned to the study's theoretical framework, including symbolic meaning (Material Religion Theory), practices and engagement (Practice Theory), and integration patterns (Hybrid Religious Practice Theory). To strengthen the credibility of the study, triangulation was employed, comparing and cross-validating data from surveys, interviews, and observations to ensure the reliability, depth, and richness of the findings. Triangulation is a research strategy used to enhance the credibility, validity, and depth of a study by combining multiple data sources, methods, or perspectives to examine the same phenomenon. It helped ensure that the findings are robust and not biased by relying on a single source or method. In the context of this study,

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triangulation strengthens the analysis of how digital and print Bibles are integrated in contemporary Christian worship.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Conducting research in religious settings, particularly with congregants and church leaders, requires careful attention to ethical principles to ensure respect, confidentiality, and integrity. All participants were fully informed about the purpose, procedures, and scope of the study, and written or verbal consent will be obtained. Participation is entirely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

To protect privacy, participants' identities were kept confidential using codes or pseudonyms, and all data collected through surveys, interviews, and observations were securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. Any potentially identifying information were excluded to prevent social or reputational risks.

The study was conducted with respect for church norms, worship practices, and cultural sensitivities. Approval was sought from church leadership before data collection, and interactions with participants were neutral and non-intrusive, avoiding judgment or criticism of beliefs or worship practices. Participants were informed that they may skip any questions or stop interviews at any point to minimize discomfort.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the appropriate institutional review board (IRB) or ethics committee, and permission letters from the selected churches will ensure transparency and adherence to protocols. The General Oversee of Abundant Life Ministries Liberia gave approval before the study was done. Finally, all data was used solely for academic purposes, and findings were reported objectively, without favoring any church or group.

3. Results

This chapter presents and interprets the data collected for the study on the integration and use of digital and print Bibles in contemporary Christian worship and personal devotional practices in selected churches in Central Monrovia, Liberia. The chapter focuses on organizing, analyzing, and explaining the empirical findings derived from the survey instrument and related responses, in line with the research objectives and guiding questions of the study.

The data are presented systematically using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency distributions and percentages, to highlight key patterns and trends in respondents' demographic characteristics, Bible format usage, preferences, comfort levels, and perceived challenges. Each set of results is carefully interpreted to explain its significance within the context of Christian worship and devotional life. Where appropriate, interpretations are linked to relevant themes emerging from the study and to existing scholarly perspectives, providing a coherent understanding of how congregants engage with Scripture in both digital and print formats.

Overall, this chapter lays the empirical foundation for the discussion and conclusions presented in the subsequent chapter, demonstrating how the findings address the study's objectives and contribute to broader conversations on hybrid religious practices in contemporary Christian contexts.

3.1 Data Presentation and Interpretation

Table 3: Age Range

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
15-24 years	56	56	56	56
25-34 years	28	28	28	84
35-44 years	12	12	12	96
45-54 years	2	2	2	98
55+ years	2	2	2	100
Total	100	100	100	

Field Data, 2026

Table 3 shows that the respondents were predominantly young, with over half (56%) aged 15–24 years and an additional 28% aged 25–34 years. This indicates that the sample is largely youth and young adults, suggesting that findings, especially on digital Bible use, are influenced by a younger demographic that is generally more technologically inclined.

Table 4: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	39	39	39	39
Female	61	61	61	100
Total	100	100	100	

Field Data, 2026

Table 4 reveals that female respondents constituted the majority (61%), while males accounted for 39%. This gender distribution suggests that women were more represented in the survey, which may slightly influence preferences and attitudes reflected in the findings.

Table 5: Church Affiliation

Church Affiliation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Abundant Life Ministries, Dixville	17	17	17	17
Abundant Life Ministries, Fendell	32	32	32	49
Abundant Life Ministries, HQ	51	51	51	100
Total	100	100	100	

Field Data, 2026

Table 5 depicts that more than half of the respondents (51%) attended Abundant Life Ministries Headquarters, followed by Fendell (32%) and Dixville (17%). This indicates that the data largely reflect the experiences and practices of members from the headquarters church.

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Table 6: How long have you been attending this church?

Range	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 1 year	20	20	20	20
1-3 years	17	17	17	37
4-6 years	15	15	15	52
7+ years	48	48	48	100
Total	100	100	100	

Field Data, 2026

Table 6 shows that nearly half of the respondents (48%) had attended the church for seven years or more, while 52% had attended for less than six years. This shows a strong presence of long-term members, suggesting that many respondents are familiar with church worship practices and traditions.

Table 7: Which Bible format do you primary use?

Bible Format	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Print Bible	32	32	32	32
Digital Bible	21	21	21	53
Both equally	47	47	47	100
Total	100	100	100	

Field Data, 2026

Table 7 shows that almost half of the respondents (47%) reported using both print and digital Bibles equally. However, 32% primarily used print Bibles, while 21% primarily used digital Bibles. This suggests a blended pattern of Bible usage rather than exclusive reliance on one format.

Table 8: How often do you use a print Bible during worship?

Frequency	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	29	29	29	29
Often	11	11	11	40
Sometimes	51	51	51	91
Rarely	7	7	7	98
Never	2	2	2	100
Total	100	100	100	

Field Data, 2026

Table 8 depicts that most respondents used a print Bible at least occasionally, with 51% indicating "sometimes" and 29% "always." Only 9% reported rarely or never using a print Bible. This reflects the continued relevance of print Bibles during worship services.

Table 9: How often do you use a digital Bible during service?

Frequency	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	30	30	30	30
Often	19	19	19	49
Sometimes	39	39	39	88
Rarely	2	2	2	90
Never	10	10	10	100
Total	100	100	100	

Field Data, 2026

Table 9 shows that digital Bible use was also common, with 30% always and 19% often using it during services. However, 10% reported never using a digital Bible, indicating that while digital use is widespread, it is not universal.

Table 10: Which Bible format do you prefer for personal devotional reading?

Bible format	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Print Bible	56	56	56	56
Digital Bible	21	21	21	77
Both equally	23	23	23	100
Total	100	100	100	

Field Data, 2026

Table 10 depicts that a majority (56%) preferred the print Bible for personal devotion, while 21% preferred digital Bibles and 23% used both equally. This suggests that print Bibles retain strong personal and spiritual value outside of corporate worship.

Table 11: Which factors influence your Bible format preference?

Factor	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Ease of Access	50	50	50.5	50.5
Habit\ familiarity	28	28	28.3	78.8
Symbolic\ religious value	9	9	9.1	87.9
Convenience on mobile devices	8	8	8.1	96
Other	5	5	5	100
Total	99	99	100	

Field Data, 2026

Table 11 shows that Ease of Access is the predominant influencing factor in the preference for the Bible format with 50% indicating respondents sought convenience in worship settings.

Table 12: How comfortable are you using a digital Bible during worship

Comfortability	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very comfortable	30	30	30	30
Comfortable	40	40	40	70
Neutral	12	12	12	82
Uncomfortable	14	14	14	96
Very uncomfortable	4	4	4	100
Total	100	100	100	

Field Data, 2026

Table 12 shows that a majority (40%) of respondents are comfortable using digital Bibles during worship services and 30% are very comfortable. This shows that congregants prefer digital Bibles during worship services.

Table 13 depicts more than half (51%) reported they are very comfortable using print Bibles and 33 % are comfortable, while 3% have issues. This suggests that many users adapt well to print Bibles.

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Table 13: How comfortable are you using a print Bible during worship?

Frequency	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very comfortable	51	51	51	51
Comfortable	32	32	32	83
Neutral	11	11	11	94
Uncomfortable	3	3	3	97
Very uncomfortable	3	3	3	100
Total	100	100	100	

Field Data, 2026

Table 14: Do you think it is helpful to use both digital and print Bibles during worship?

Perception	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	24	24	24	24
Agree	42	42	42	66
Neutral	11	11	11	77
Disagree	18	18	18	95
Strongly disagree	5	5	5	100
Total	100	100	100	

Field Data, 2026

Table 14 reveals majority (42%) agreed that it is useful to use both formats and 18% disagree

Table 15: What challenges, if any, do you face when using digital Bibles in worship?

Challenges	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No challenges	10	10	10	93
Technological issues	48	48	48	48
Difficulty in reading digital format	35	35	35	83
Lack of familiarity with digital tools	3	3	3	96
Other	4	4	4	100
Total	100	100	100	

Field Data, 2026

Table 15 shows that 48% of respondents identified technological issues as the main challenge when using digital Bibles during worship, while 35% reported difficulty reading the digital format. Additionally, 10% indicated that they faced no challenges, 4% reported other challenges, and 3% cited a lack of familiarity with digital tools. Overall, the results indicate that technological issues and reading difficulties are the most significant challenges, accounting for 83% of respondents.

Table 16 shows that the majority of respondents (79%) reported experiencing no challenges when using print Bibles during worship. However, 13% identified manual script issues as a challenge, while 4% reported difficulty reading the print format. Additionally, 3% indicated a lack of familiarity with print tools, and 1% reported other challenges. Overall, the findings suggest that print Bibles present fewer challenges to respondents, with 79% reporting no difficulties in their use during worship.

Table 16: What challenges, if any, do you face when using print Bibles in worship?

Challenges	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No challenges	79	79	79	79
Manual script issues	13	13	13	92
Difficulty in reading print format	4	4	4	96
Lack of familiarity with print tools	3	3	3	99
Other	1	1	1	100
Total	100	100	100	

Field Data, 2026

Table 17: How often does your church encourage or provide guidance on using both digital and print Bibles in worship?

Frequency	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rarely	17	17	17	17
Never	83	83	83	100
Total	100	100	100	

Field Data, 2026

Table 17 shows that the majority of respondents (83%) indicated that their church never encourages or provides guidance on the use of both digital and print Bibles during worship, while 17% reported that such encouragement or guidance is provided rarely. Overall, the findings suggest that churches provide limited or no guidance on the use of digital and print Bibles in worship. This may indicate a need for churches to offer more education, encouragement, and practical support to help worshippers use both Bible formats effectively during worship services.

Table 18: How important is the physical (print) Bible to your worship experience?

Importance	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very important	59	59	59	59
Important	30	30	30	89
Neutral	7	7	7	96
Less important	3	3	3	99
Not Important	1	1	1	100
Total	100	100	100	

Field Data, 2026

Table 19: How important is the digital Bible to your worship experience?

Importance	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Important	25	25	25	25
Important	44	44	44	69
Neutral	12	12	12	81
Less important	11	11	11	92
Not important	8	8	8	100
Total	100	100	100	

Field Data, 2026

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Table 18 shows that Print Bibles were considered highly significant, with 89% rating them as important or very important. This underscores the enduring spiritual and symbolic value of physical Bibles in worship.

Table 19 reveals that a majority (69%) also viewed digital Bibles as important or very important, though this was lower than for print Bibles. This indicates growing acceptance of digital Bibles, albeit with slightly less perceived significance than print versions.

3.2 Findings of the study

1. Age Distribution: Most respondents were aged 15–24 years (56%), indicating a predominantly youth-based sample.
2. Gender: Female respondents (61%) constituted the larger proportion of the sample.
3. Church Affiliation: Most respondents attended Abundant Life Ministries Headquarters (51%).
4. Length of Church Attendance: Nearly half of the respondents had attended the church for 7 years or more (48%), reflecting a strong presence of long-term members.
5. Primary Bible Format Used: The largest group reported using both print and digital Bibles equally (47%).
6. Use of Print Bible During Worship: The most common response was "Sometimes" (51%), indicating moderate but consistent use of print Bibles.
7. Use of Digital Bible During Worship: The highest proportion of respondents reported "Sometimes" using a digital Bible (39%).
8. Preferred Bible Format for Personal Devotion: A majority preferred the print Bible (56%) for personal devotional reading.
9. Factor Influencing Bible Format Preference: Ease of access (50.5%) was the most influential factor shaping Bible format preference.
10. Comfort Using Digital Bible During Worship: Most respondents felt comfortable using a digital Bible (40%).
11. Comfort Using Print Bible During Worship: A majority felt very comfortable using a print Bible (51%).
12. Perceived Helpfulness of Using Both Formats: The dominant response was "Agree" (42%), indicating support for blended Bible usage.
13. Challenges Using Digital Bible During Worship (First Measure): The highest proportion reported no challenges (48%).
14. Challenges Using Digital Bible During Worship (Second Measure): An overwhelming majority again reported no challenges (79%).
15. Church Guidance on Using Both Formats: The highest response clustered around limited or no structured guidance (42%), suggesting weak institutional direction.
16. Importance of the Physical (Print) Bible: Most respondents rated the print Bible as very important (59%) to their worship experience.
17. Importance of the Digital Bible: The largest proportion rated the digital Bible as important (44%).

3.3 Thematic Analysis of Interview Responses

The general objective of this study was to examine how digital and print Bibles are integrated, perceived, and experienced within contemporary Christian worship and personal devotional practices in selected churches in Central Monrovia, Liberia.

Theme 1: Complementary Use of Print and Digital Bibles

Across all questions, respondents consistently reported using both print and digital Bibles, rather than relying exclusively on one format. Participants emphasized that combining formats allows them to benefit from the strengths of each, such as speed, multiple translations, and ease of navigation from digital Bibles, alongside the depth, focus, and reverence associated with print Bibles. This theme indicates that Bible usage during worship is increasingly hybrid and integrative, rather than competitive. The preference for dual usage suggests that congregants perceive print and digital Bibles as complementary tools that jointly enhance understanding, study, and participation in worship.

Theme 2: Digital Bible as a Tool for Accessibility and Efficiency

Digital Bibles were frequently associated with speed, ease of access, portability, and research advantages. Respondents highlighted the convenience of digital Bibles when traveling, during Bible study, and when searching for scriptures quickly in worship services. The availability of multiple translations was repeatedly cited as enhancing clarity and comprehension. Digital Bibles are valued primarily for their functional and practical advantages, especially in fast-paced worship contexts and personal study environments.

Theme 3: Print Bible as a Symbol of Tradition, Discipline, and Spiritual Depth

Participants strongly associated print Bibles with church culture, discipline, tradition, trust, and spiritual authenticity. Several respondents described the print Bible as "ideal," "most trusted," and spiritually meaningful. The tactile experience of holding a physical Bible was linked to reverence, focus, and personal devotion. The print Bible retains deep symbolic and spiritual significance, functioning not only as a text but also as a sacred object that reinforces identity, continuity, and worship discipline.

Theme 4: Context-Driven Switching Between Formats

Respondents reported frequently switching between print and digital formats depending on context, such as location (home, church, travel), purpose (worship vs.

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study), and Bible version needs. Ease of access and clarity were the dominant factors guiding these decisions.

Bible format choice is situational rather than ideological, reflecting pragmatic decision-making shaped by environment and worship demands.

Theme 5: Institutional Integration Through Optional and Supportive Practices

Church integration of Bible formats was described as flexible and optional, with the use of print Bibles, projectors, and screens (TVs) to support sermon following. Respondents generally viewed this integration as helpful for comprehension and participation, though not always formally structured. Churches function as facilitators rather than regulators, allowing congregants to choose formats while providing basic technological support.

Theme 6: Enhanced Worship Engagement and Understanding

Many respondents reported that using both formats improved their engagement, understanding, and participation in worship. Digital Bibles supported quick referencing and contextual understanding, while print Bibles encouraged focus and reflection. Together, they were seen as strengthening active involvement in teaching and preaching.

Hybrid Bible usage positively influences cognitive engagement and worship participation, especially during scripture-heavy services.

Theme 7: Distraction as the Primary Challenge of Digital Bible Use

The most frequently cited challenge was distraction, particularly from phone alerts, calls, and other non-worship digital activities. While respondents acknowledged that these distractions could be managed (e.g., silencing alerts, charging devices), they remained a significant concern, with some even suggesting abandoning digital Bibles altogether. Digital Bibles introduce attention-related risks that can undermine reverence and focus if not properly managed within worship settings.

Theme 8: Generational Differences in Bible Format Preference

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that age influences Bible format preference. Younger congregants were described as more inclined toward digital Bibles due to technological familiarity, while older members were perceived to prefer print Bibles. Children were often associated with print Bibles for learning and discipline. Bible format preference reflects generational patterns of technology adoption, highlighting the need for inclusive worship practices that accommodate diverse age groups.

Theme 9: Need for Intentional Teaching and Structured Integration

Participants suggested that churches could improve Bible integration by educating congregants, encouraging balanced use, installing visual aids (TVs/projectors), and providing guidance on responsible digital use. Training and intentional instruction were viewed as essential for minimizing distractions and maximizing benefits. Effective integration requires intentional pastoral leadership, digital literacy, and teaching, rather than informal or ad hoc practices.

4. Discussion

4.1 Survey Findings Discussion

The survey findings reveal that Bible engagement in selected churches in Central Monrovia is characterized by a predominantly hybrid pattern of use, with nearly half of respondents (47%) reporting that they use both print and digital Bibles equally during worship. This finding strongly confirms earlier studies on religion and digital media, which argue that digital technologies tend to supplement rather than replace traditional religious practices (Campbell, 2013; Hutchings, 2017). Similar patterns have been observed in studies conducted in North America and parts of Africa, where congregants adopt digital Bibles for convenience while retaining print Bibles for symbolic and ritual purposes (Ukah, 2016; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015). However, what distinguishes the present study is its empirical grounding in a Liberian urban church context, a setting that has received limited scholarly attention in digital religion research. Unlike many Western studies that report a gradual decline in print Bible use, this study demonstrates the continued centrality of print Bibles in worship, with 59% of respondents rating the physical Bible as “very important” to their worship experience.

Age distribution data further illuminate this hybrid pattern. With 84% of respondents aged between 15 and 34 years, the frequent use of digital Bibles during worship (30% “always” and 19% “often”) aligns with existing research that links youth and young adult populations to higher adoption of religious technologies (Campbell & Garner, 2016). Prior studies have consistently shown that younger worshippers are more comfortable navigating digital scripture due to familiarity with mobile technologies. However, the present study nuances this relationship by showing that even within a youthful sample, print Bibles remain highly valued, particularly for personal devotion, where 56% of respondents preferred print over digital formats. This contrasts with some earlier studies that suggest personal devotion is increasingly digitized, thereby highlighting the cultural and theological significance of print Bibles within Liberian Christianity.

Gender and church affiliation findings further contextualize Bible usage patterns. With females comprising 61% of the sample and over half of respondents affiliated with a central headquarters church, the results reflect worship environments where communal norms and institutional culture remain influential. While previous research often treats Bible format preference as an individual choice shaped primarily by technology access (Pew Research Center, 2014), the present study suggests that institutional worship culture continues to

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shape how scripture is accessed, especially in congregational settings. This underscores a key difference from many Western studies that emphasize individualized religious consumption over communal worship norms.

The frequency of Bible use during worship services also confirms existing literature on the functional differentiation of media. The fact that 51% of respondents reported "sometimes" using print Bibles during worship, while 39% reported "sometimes" using digital Bibles, reflects a situational approach consistent with Practice Theory. Earlier studies have noted that worshippers tend to select media based on immediacy and task efficiency, such as rapid scripture location during sermons (Hutchings, 2017). This study confirms that trend but adds an important contextual insight: digital Bibles are often used for navigation and comparison, while print Bibles are associated with attentiveness, discipline, and reverence. This duality is less emphasized in prior quantitative studies, which often measure frequency of use without probing perceived spiritual function.

Comfort levels reported in the survey further reinforce this distinction. While a majority of respondents felt comfortable using digital Bibles during worship (70% comfortable or very comfortable), comfort levels were descriptively higher for print Bibles (83%). This finding aligns with Material Religion scholarship, which emphasizes that physical religious objects foster embodied familiarity and ritual confidence (Meyer, 2011; Morgan, 2010). What differentiates this study is its demonstration that technological comfort does not equate to symbolic preference. Even among digitally competent congregants, print Bibles retain a superior affective and spiritual status.

The survey also highlights an important tension identified in earlier research: digital distraction. Although 48% of respondents reported no challenges with digital Bible use, a substantial proportion (35%) cited technological issues, including device problems and distractions. This finding confirms prior concerns raised by scholars who argue that mobile technologies introduce competing attentional demands into worship spaces (Campbell, 2013). However, unlike some studies that frame distraction as a reason for rejecting digital scripture altogether, respondents in this study largely viewed distractions as manageable rather than prohibitive, suggesting a more pragmatic and negotiated approach to digital worship in the Liberian context.

Finally, perceptions of institutional guidance reveal a notable divergence from previous research. While studies in technologically advanced church settings report structured digital worship policies and media ministries (Hutchings, 2017), this study found that guidance on using digital and print Bibles is relatively limited and informal. This difference underscores the contextual specificity of the Liberian church environment, where hybrid practices are sustained primarily through congregational habit rather than formal leadership regulation. This finding represents a significant contribution to the literature by illustrating how hybrid religious practices can emerge without institutionalized digital strategies.

In summary, this study confirms a broad body of scholarship that identifies hybrid Bible use as a defining feature of contemporary Christian worship. However, it extends existing research by demonstrating that in Central Monrovia, Liberia, hybrid engagement is deeply shaped by cultural reverence for material scripture, communal worship norms, and pragmatic adaptation to technology, rather than by technological determinism. By foregrounding both statistical patterns and contextual meaning, the study contributes a distinct African empirical perspective to the global discourse on religion and digital media, highlighting the persistence of print Bibles alongside growing digital adoption in contemporary Christian life.

4.2 Interview Findings Discussion

The findings indicate that digital and print Bibles are incorporated into worship services in selected churches in Central Monrovia through a flexible and non-exclusive approach that allows congregants to alternate between formats according to context and need. This pattern of incorporation strongly aligns with Hybrid Religious Practice Theory, which emphasizes the negotiated coexistence of traditional and digital media within religious life rather than a displacement of older practices by newer technologies (Campbell, 2013). Worshippers' use of physical Bibles alongside mobile applications and projection screens reflects a hybrid liturgical environment in which Scripture is accessed through multiple media to enhance understanding, participation, and immediacy. From a Practice Theory perspective, these integrations are enacted through routine embodied actions, such as switching between formats during sermons or using digital tools for rapid scripture location, demonstrating that incorporation is sustained not by formal policy but by repeated congregational practices that normalize blended Bible use in worship.

The study reveals that church leaders generally adopt a permissive stance toward the use of both digital and print Bibles, allowing congregants autonomy while providing minimal formal guidance on their use. This leadership posture reflects the dynamics described by Hybrid Religious Practice Theory, in which religious authorities function as mediators who negotiate the boundaries between sacred tradition and technological adaptation without fully institutionalizing either (Hutchings, 2017). While leaders recognize the benefits of digital accessibility, concerns about distraction and reverence reveal an ongoing tension between innovation and liturgical discipline. Practice Theory further explains how leadership influence is exercised indirectly, as congregants model their behaviors on observed norms rather than explicit instruction. Consequently, leadership attitudes shape hybrid Bible use through tacit approval and example rather than structured regulation, resulting in organically sustained but loosely governed practices.

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Congregants' interpretations of Bible formats demonstrate a clear symbolic differentiation that is best explained through Material Religion Theory. Print Bibles are consistently associated with sacred authority, tradition, discipline, and spiritual authenticity, reflecting their status as material objects that embody religious meaning beyond their textual content (Meyer, 2011; Morgan, 2010). The tactile engagement of holding and reading a physical Bible reinforces embodied devotion and ritual reverence, anchoring worship in material continuity. In contrast, digital Bibles are interpreted primarily through their functional symbolism, representing modern accessibility, convenience, and interpretive plurality. Hybrid Religious Practice Theory helps explain how these differing symbolic meanings coexist without conflict, as congregants integrate both formats into worship in ways that preserve the sacred authority of print while embracing the pragmatic benefits of digital media.

The findings demonstrate that engagement with digital and print Bibles varies significantly across age groups, with younger congregants favoring digital formats and older members preferring print editions. This generational differentiation reflects the principles of Practice Theory, which emphasizes that religious preferences emerge from habitual and socially embedded practices rather than abstract belief systems (Orsi, 2005). Younger worshippers, socialized within digitally mediated environments, naturally incorporate Bible applications into their worship routines, while older congregants maintain print-based practices that emphasize attentiveness and material reverence. Hybrid Religious Practice Theory further contextualizes these differences as negotiated expressions of communal worship, where generational diversity is accommodated through flexible media practices that allow multiple forms of engagement with Scripture to coexist within a single worship space.

The study identifies a complex interplay of technological, cultural, social, and theological factors shaping congregants' preferences for digital or print Bibles, a pattern that is effectively explained through the combined lenses of the three guiding theories. Practice Theory accounts for how convenience, ease of access, and habitual use influence format choice, while Material Religion Theory explains the continued affective and symbolic attachment to print Bibles as sacred objects. Hybrid Religious Practice Theory integrates these influences into a cohesive framework, demonstrating how congregants navigate technological innovation without relinquishing traditional forms of religious meaning. Concerns about digital distraction further illustrate how preferences are moderated by the need to maintain reverence and focus in worship, reinforcing the conclusion that Bible format choice is situational, negotiated, and grounded in lived religious experience rather than rigid doctrinal positioning.

Taken together, the alignment between objectives, findings, and theory demonstrates that Bible engagement in Central Monrovia churches is best understood as a hybrid, materially grounded, and practice-based phenomenon. The coexistence of digital and print Bibles reflects an adaptive worship culture that preserves theological continuity while responding to technological change, offering a nuanced contribution to scholarship on religion, media, and lived Christian practice in African contexts.

5. Summary and Conclusion

5.1 Summary

This study examined how digital and print Bibles are integrated, perceived, and experienced within contemporary Christian worship and personal devotional practices in selected churches in Central Monrovia, Liberia. Using survey data and interpretive analysis, the study revealed that Bible engagement among congregants is predominantly hybrid, characterized by the complementary use of both print and digital formats rather than exclusive reliance on either medium. Quantitative findings showed that while digital Bibles are widely used, particularly among younger congregants for convenience and accessibility, print Bibles continue to hold strong spiritual, symbolic, and ritual significance, especially in corporate worship and personal devotion.

The findings further demonstrated that congregants' preferences are shaped by a convergence of age, worship context, ease of access, church culture, and perceived reverence. Although digital Bibles enhance speed, portability, and interpretive clarity through multiple translations, concerns about distraction remain salient. Nevertheless, these challenges are generally viewed as manageable rather than disqualifying. The study therefore presents a nuanced understanding of Bible use in Liberian churches, emphasizing lived religious practice over technological determinism.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that contemporary Christian worship in Central Monrovia reflects a context-sensitive hybrid religious practice, in which digital and print Bibles coexist as mutually reinforcing resources. Rather than signaling a decline in traditional religious forms, the rise of digital Bible use represents an adaptive response to changing technological realities, particularly among younger worshippers. At the same time, the continued dominance of print Bibles in terms of symbolic importance, comfort, and devotional preference underscores the enduring role of material religious objects in shaping worship experiences.

Importantly, the findings affirm that Bible format choice is not primarily theological but practical, generational, and experiential, emerging through everyday worship routines and institutional culture. The coexistence of digital and print Bibles thus reflects broader dynamics of continuity and change within African Christianity, where innovation is embraced without abandoning deeply rooted spiritual traditions. This study therefore contributes to the growing scholarship on religion and media by

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providing empirical evidence from a Liberian context that complicates linear narratives of religious digitization.

5.3 Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings from Tables 15, 16, and 17, the following policy recommendations are proposed to promote the effective integration of print and digital Bibles in worship experiences.

1. Develop a Church Policy on the Integration of Print and Digital Bibles

Although 79% of respondents indicated no challenge in using print Bibles, 48% of respondents identified technological issues with the digital Bible, while 35% reported difficulty in reading the digital format. Therefore, churches should develop guidelines to promote the use of print and digital Bibles in their worship services. This policy should adopt an inclusive approach that considers worshippers' needs, preferences, and circumstances.

2. Provide Training and Guidance on Digital Bible Use

Considering how technology could be distractive if handled improperly, church leadership should organize periodic training sessions to guide members on the usage of digital Bible applications effectively. The report that 83% of respondents indicated that their churches have no written policy about this matter gives rise to this policy formation/development. Besides, 17% reported that they rarely formulate policy about this issue; therefore, this study recommends that digital training on downloading digital applications and working with them properly to reduce distraction in worship should be conducted for worshippers at their convenience.

3. Improve Technological Support During Worship

To practically address some of the technological issues reported in the use of digital Bibles (48%), churches should establish helpful measures to curtail or eliminate these barriers. For example, worshippers should have access to constant and available electricity, and charging facilities should be created to help them charge their devices before or during the worship service. Worship leaders should encourage worshippers to use online Bible applications to avoid using the internet during worship. They should download them before the service begins. Worshippers who may have phones, iPads, or tablets with or without SIMs are encouraged to turn their devices on silent to mute the sounds of alarms or any notifications.

4. Maintain Print Bibles as an Accessible Alternative

Churches are advised not to impose on worshippers who prefer the print format over the digital format; instead, they should encourage and educate them about the digital format of the Bible as an alternative. This policy is not an attempt to replace the print format but to promote integration and encourage the knowledge of worshippers in technology.

5. Promote Reading Comfort and Accessibility

Based on the report that respondents have difficulty reading digital tools and print tools, church leaders should encourage worshippers to purchase print Bibles with large font sizes and also educate worshippers to increase the text font size on their digital devices for accessible and comfortable reading. These measures would ensure that a wider range of readers are participating during the scripture reading, teaching, and preaching sessions.

6. Encourage Flexible Use of Both Bible Formats

The flexibility of the use of Bible formats should be demonstrated during the worship based on the nature of the service. For quick accessibility or scripture or passages, perhaps, church leaders could encourage worshippers to adapt the digital format and other reading or study purposes could be attributed to the print Bible. Alternatively, worshippers could be permitted to use whatever they prefer during the service. Also, if some churches have a translation preference, it would be good to inform the worshippers so that they could purchase and download a translation that fits their requirements. Otherwise, during public reading, readers should constantly announce the translations they would be reading from so they can be in agreement with worshippers.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

Future research should consider conducting comparative studies across urban and rural churches in Liberia to explore how access to technology and local culture influence Bible format preferences. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable in examining how digital Bible use evolves over time and whether younger congregants maintain digital preferences as they age. Additionally, qualitative studies involving in-depth interviews with pastors, church leaders, and media teams could provide deeper insight into leadership perspectives, doctrinal considerations, and policy development regarding digital worship practices.

Further studies could also explore the relationship between Bible format use and spiritual outcomes, such as attentiveness, comprehension, memory retention, and devotional consistency.

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Data availability statement. The interview data are not publicly available because participants were promised confidentiality. All cited evidence in this study comes from publicly available sources listed in the References section.

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Author Contribution. Author 1: Conceptualization, research design, Literature review, data collection, and data analysis. Author 2: Manuscript drafting, Interpretation of findings, manuscript review, editing, and final approval. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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