



Introduction

Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

Some people lay up money, houses, clothes, cars and other possessions as an inheritance for their children. But the greatest inheritance you can leave behind for your children is a good Christian upbringing.

The topic of child training is one of utmost importance, because once a man finds a wife and they are joined in holy wedlock, what adds colour to their union is the blessing of a child.

A child is a gift from God, a blessing to the Family and a unique blend of husband and wife.

Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord and the fruit of the womb is his reward.

Psalms 127:3

But a child is like plasticine soft, pliable and mouldable. He must be moulded skilfully and tenderly to become a battle axe in the hands of God.

God's purpose for giving you children is not only for replenishing and filling up the earth, but because He is seeking a godly seed.

And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed...

Malachi 2:15

The best environment therefore to raise a godly seed unto the Lord is the home.

When I discovered this truth some years ago, I made up my mind not to fail God in my responsibility towards my children. From then onward, after every church service, I return home to break into smaller pieces the message preached in church. I asked God to teach me how to break the principles in His Word down to my children's level of understanding. I then began to ensure that hardly a day passes by without time spent sitting down with them, opening up the scriptures and ministering to them.

I have found out that even when the children leave home and are in places where we as parents cannot be physically, the fear of the Lord implanted in their hearts and the knowledge of the Word of God keep them intact.

You must pay very serious attention to your children, as a Christian parent. Often, Christians are more interested in walking in divine health, operating God's principles on prosperity and success; but appear nonchalant about raising their children in the fear of the Lord. But God does not take lightly the issue of child training.

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

Some parents prefer to shift the responsibility of raising up their children to classroom or Sunday school teachers; but no matter how expensive the school or glorious the church, there is no better person to train your children like you.

Each child has a spiritual need. There is a need to establish a personal relationship with God and grow in his or her knowledge of Him.

Children also have emotional needs. They need to be shown that they are loved and that they matter to their parents. When you meet their emotional needs, they will have no cause to go out to seek for love and attention from strange sources.

As parents, know also that God mandates us to provide for our children's physical needs. Once we learn to order our priorities aright, we will find that the time invested in meeting their spiritual, emotional and physical needs is not in vain. It is the covenant responsibility of both parents (father and mother) to train up their children in the fear of the Lord. Many couples have succeeded, so you too will succeed!

In the Bible, for instance, people like Abraham and Sarah (Genesis. 18:17-19), Jochebed (Moses' mother, Exodus. 6:20), Jonadab (the father of the Rechabites, Jeremiah. 35:2-17), among others, raised up children God could use for His glory. If they could, under the old covenant, you can too, operating under a new covenant based on better promises.

Please don't make a mistake about this: your children are not accidents. No, they are gifts from God to you. When you fulfil your covenant obligations to train them up in the way of the Lord, they operate as signs and wonders upon the earth. *Isaiah 8:18* says:

Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders...

Therefore, God is counting on you as covenant parents to raise godly seeds unto His praise. You must be awake to your responsibility.

Raising Godly Children is written to deliver to you gems that will help you raise your children up in the fear of the Lord. As you go through it, may you be used in establishing God's plan in the lives of your children, in Jesus' name!





Chapter 1

Fundamental Truths About Child Training

There are certain basic truths about child training, which when you embrace and practise will enable you raise godly children. These basic truths form the foundation of child raising; and as you know, the foundation of a building is its most important part (Ps. 11:3).

Let's take a look at these key points.

God Owns Your Children

One of such truths is knowing that your children in actual sense do not belong to you, but to God. He has simply put them in your charge and made you their caretaker.

*Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.
Psalm 127:3*

I believe a day of reckoning will come for all parents, when each of us will stand before God, to render account for the lives of our children.

The only way to preserve the coming generation is to train the children today. We must understand that the little ones of today are the giants of the Christian faith tomorrow, they will constitute the Church of Jesus tomorrow. Thus, if the

present move of God must be sustained and increase, then parents must be awake to the call of God to raise godly children. The future of the Church depends, to a large extent, on what we do with our children today.

If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Psalm 11:3

This means if you lay a solid foundation for your children in the Word of God today, then there will be no vacuum tomorrow. Now that your children can be shaped and moulded, shape them and mould them according to God's standard.

It Is A Commandment

Another fundamental truth that you must understand about child training is it is a commandment from God. A commandment is a law or an order. So in case you previously thought child raising is an advice, a suggestion or a thing you do at your convenience, understand this: child training is a commandment! It is a must for you! It's a commandment from God, not from man.

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children...

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

Remember, however, that God's commandments are not grievous. My husband says His commandments are not to grieve you, but to groom you!

...And his commandments are not grievous.

1 John 5:3

A refusal to train your children in God's fear is absolute disobedience to God's commandment.

...Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

1 Samuel 15:22

In the same way failure to keep the ten commandments brings severe punishments on people from God, so does failure to raise up your children after God's laid down pattern incur His anger and punishment.

One such punishment is shame. God allows the disobedient parent to experience shame because he failed to instruct his offspring in the ways of God. Marilyn Hickey, in her book, *Break The Generation Curse* told this story.

"Max Jukes was an atheist who married a godless woman. Some 560 descendants were traced:

Three hundred and ten died as paupers, 150 became criminals, seven of them murderers, 100 were known to be drunkards and more than half of the women were prostitutes.

The descendants of Max Jukes cost the United States government more than \$1.25 million in 19th century dollars.

Jonathan Edwards was a contemporary of Max Jukes. He was a committed Christian who gave God first place in his life. He married a godly young lady, and some, 1,394 descendants were traced:

Two hundred and ninety-five graduated from college, of whom thirteen became college presidents and 65 became professors, three were elected as United States senators, three as state governors, and others were sent as ministers to foreign countries. 30 were judges, 100 were lawyers (one the dean of an outstanding law school) 56 practiced as physicians (one was the dean of a medical school), 75 became officers in the military, 100 were well-known missionaries, preachers and prominent authors, another 80 held some form of public office, of whom three were mayors of large cities, one was the comptroller of the U.S. Treasury and another was vice president of the United States.

Not one of the descendants of the Edwards Family was a liability to the government!"

You therefore have no excuse to send your children off to a "rich" relative to train for you. You have a responsibility to train them up in the fear of the Lord by yourself. It is a personal, non-transferable responsibility.

*...A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.
Proverbs 29:15*

Look at drug pushers and other evil doers in the society, for instance. They have parents, but those parents for shame would never identify with them. They hide away in shame at the mention of their names, simply because they didn't hearken to the command to raise their children in the fear of God.

Eli was a man who tasted shame because of his children. Although he was a priest in Israel, he failed in the area of child training. His two children (Hophni and Phinehas) became very notorious and were dreaded by the people. They ultimately died and Eli himself broke his neck and died also, all in one day! Not only that, the ark of the covenant was taken from Israel. (1 Sam. 4:11,18.)

How I wish you would embrace child training as a commandment from God and practise it with the same seriousness with which you pay your tithe or flee fornication. It's that serious!

Being a parent is an awesome responsibility, as well as a fantastic privilege! But in spite of the demands it places upon you, you still need to keep at it with dogged determination. God commands you to train up your children, and He also supplies you with the grace required for the assignment.

Please realize that although child training is a commandment, it is also a process which must be continued over a period of time. So, don't give up when results do not come forth immediately. If you faithfully train your children, you can then expect God to fulfil His part. God never commands the impossible, He is faithful.

The fruits of a seed that has just been planted doesn't come forth immediately;

but with the farmer's patience of continuous watering and watching over it, what was formerly a seed soon becomes a plantation, with plenty of fruits to show. Parents need to be patient in training their children.

*If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:
Isaiah 1:19*

It requires Diligence

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

God specifically instructed Israel to mind the words of His command and pass them down to their children with all diligence. So child training is no small responsibility, it must be done carefully and purposefully. Successful farmers do not scatter their seeds on the highway as they travel. No, they acquire a piece of fertile soil and sow diligently and deliberately, expecting a bountiful return.

...When thou sittest in thine house...

Children spend a greater percentage of their time at home with their parents. So, Christian parents need to sit down and teach their children the scriptures. "Sitting down" connotes being purposeful. I ensure that my children set aside time to praise God, pray, study the Word and share fellowship everyday . One of them leads the opening session of prayers, another leads the worship and yet another preaches the message of the day and everyone is adequately involved!

I ensure that I'm always present at our children's devotion time, or else their daddy is, or both of us are. It is so important that I don't attend to guests then, because I realize that I have a primary responsibility towards my children. Sometimes when I listen to them share from the scriptures I'm amazed at their

insight. I note the reference made and read it later at my own time.

Spiritual substance is without doubt the greatest investment a parent can make in the life of his child. All my children have their personal Bibles and notebooks, including the youngest one. And when they go to church, they go with their offerings in hand and they all pay tithes. I love to make Christianity a way of life for them.

It's serious business raising children. But just as in every labour there is profit, the business of child training will bring invaluable profiting to your life, both now and in future.

The words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him...

Proverbs 31:1

King Lemuel (possibly Solomon) could not forget the instructions of his mother even after ascending the throne. His mother had been wise enough to sit down and instruct her son in the path of wisdom. And when he grew up, he became a wise man. I believe she must have enjoyed rest, having laboured to raise her son in the way of the Lord (Prov. 29:17).

Parents, create time to sit down and train your children in God's ways. Don't pretend or claim to be too busy for that, else you will groan tomorrow.

...When thou walkest by the way...

There are many times that invaluable messages are passed across to children outside times of personal devotion. Particularly when something occurs and you let them know what God's Word says about that issue. For instance, talking casually one day with my children many years ago, I asked who their friends in school were.

My second son, who was just about 3 - 4 years old then mentioned a name, which I immediately recognized as a non-Christian. When I asked him why he

should have a friend who was not a Christian, he said, "God said we should love everybody." Well, although that was a casual moment, I did not let it slip by. I corrected his impression and later called him aside to explain in greater detail and with scriptural back-up why he could not have unbelievers as friends (2 Cor. 6:14).

Seeing it from God's Word, he understood it better, and acted immediately to correct the situation. Today, to the glory of God, all their friends are born again, and spirit-filled Christians.

If your children are to walk uprightly, they must not walk in the counsel of the ungodly (Ps. 1:1). And for them not to do that, you have a responsibility of feeding them with godly counsel anchored on definite scriptures. And when they grow up, they won't forget what they were taught.

...When thou liest down...

While your children are in bed at night, just before they sleep off, expose them to God's Word. Tell them Bible stories, carefully drawing out the lessons in them. Buy them Bible story books and other relevant materials.

If they go to bed that way, making God's Word the first thing they hear in the morning and the last thing at night, there will be no room for bad dreams, nightmares and the likes. The reason some children have nightmares, horrible dreams, and even bed-wet is because of the ungodly films and programmes they watch before going to bed.

Sitting down, walking and lying down are all symbolic of man's daily activity. So, there's the need to teach your children the scriptures all the time.

The process of child training, however, goes beyond teaching by words of mouth alone. You need much more to teach them by examples, as examples stay with them much more than the words of the mouth. Sometimes parents say one thing but do the exact opposite. They preach on forgiveness, but are full of bitterness

and quarrelling. Such parents cannot deceive their children. Soon these children in turn begin to quarrel and fight among themselves. Parents, please be warned!

The words of your mouth and your actions must tally, if you are to make a tangible impact on the lives of your children. Children learn better by instructional aids, and your pattern of life is an instructional aid; whatever you do best demonstrates what you preach. Don't underestimate your children. They know when you are preaching one thing and doing another.

You must make your life a worthy example for your children to follow, a life that speaks, a life worthy of emulation.

A wise man once said, "In practising the art of parenthood, an ounce of example is worth a ton of preaching." This is very true.

Being diligent in raising your children requires that you are an observant parent. Who are your children's friends? What is their testimony before their friends? My children know that they are not permitted to associate with just anybody. These are all part of being diligent in child training.

The hand of the diligent shall bear rule ...

Proverbs 12:24

It is a Seed

Successful farmers pay close attention to the quality of seeds they sow, particularly as they want to make good profits from the harvest. Child training God's way is a seed with promises of great reward. Understanding this dimension of child training enables you go about it as a labour with profit.

While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

Genesis 8:22

This scripture guarantees that you stand to reap in later years whatever you sow

into the lives of your children today. If out of ignorance or laxity you sow nothing tangible into them, then a vacuum is created and the devil fills it up with junk.

In the natural, a man sows only a few grains into the earth per time. But when the corn springs up, what one finds is three or more cobs per stalk and about four hundred grains per cob! This also has a spiritual parallel: you are a spiritual farmer, the Word of God is your seed, the heart of your child is the good ground. If you, as a wise farmer takes time to invest the Word in the lives of your children, what you reap is joy, peace and fulfilment in later years.

The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him.

Proverbs 23:24

One Family among many others that gives me great joy is the Hagin Family. As I see generation after generation of the Hagins serving God, I applaud the investment of Papa and Mama Hagin in the lives of their children. Their children are not only a blessing to their parents, but also to the body of Christ. This too can be your portion if you purposefully invest the Word into the hearts of your young ones.

Sometime ago, a wealthy man called my husband on the telephone and said the only problem he had was his son. The boy who is now a grown man had so troubled his father that the man wished him dead. He was a big pain in the neck and thorn in his flesh. Not even the wealth of the man could straighten him out. That's why I'm sounding the alarm that: "It's better to train a child than to repair an adult"!

In Jeremiah 35 there is the story of a wise man called Jonadab. He invested in the lives of his children, instilling the Word of God into their hearts and lives. Generations after, his name and instructions were still fresh in their hearts, they could not disobey his instructions.

...I said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us saying, Ye shall drink no wine...

Jeremiah 35:5-6

There is profit in sowing the seed of a sound Christian upbringing in your children. Personally, there were certain positive instructions that were sown as seeds in my life as a little girl, that I will forever be grateful to my parents for. I didn't enjoy the rigour of the training then, but now I have good fruits to show for their labour of love.

This reminds me of Timothy. Every time his name is mentioned in scriptures or you read the epistles written to him, it's the sound Christian upbringing of his mother and grandmother, Eunice and Lois we are partaking of (2 Tim. 1:5). Just as his life is an inspiration to many today, the lives of your children can become a source of great joy to you and the body of Christ, if you consciously invest the Word of God into their lives today.

If you sow the seed of good child training today, you will reap the fruit of peace, joy and fulfilment tomorrow.





Chapter 2

Arrows In The Hand Of A Mighty Man

*Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.
As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of thy youth.
Psalm 127:3-4*

This scripture portrays the power of parenting. It's an eye opener to another dimension of child training.

The word "heritage" means inheritance, possession, blessing or gift. Your children are an heritage of the Lord, they are a blessing or gift from God, and you must see them as such.

Children of Christian parents are described as "arrows". An arrow is a fighting instrument with a pointed head, usually shot from a bow. It can also be used in hunting. In the hands of a gifted marksman, it is a lethal weapon. Likewise, well fashioned children in the hands of God are lethal weapons for destroying the works of the devil, and establishing God's dominion on the earth, as the scripture in *Psalm 127:5* says: *"They shall speak with the enemies in the gate."*

Here is a testimony that reveals the potentials in our children.

"I was formerly attending a nearby church, where I was an Elder. But a friend, who worships here invited me, but I refused, telling him that I was okay with my

church. Another woman, also invited me here.

I gave their invitations no further thought until one day, when my son was sick. He was unable to eat properly, he couldn't swallow solid food except little rice or pap. I took him to the clinic, where after some tests, the doctor prescribed five injections for five days, including other tablets. My son took all these, but there was no change. I took him back to the doctor, who prescribed 10 more injections to be taken in five days. This boy took everything, but there was still no change.

That night, I went to my friend who had invited me here and told her my problem. She told me to take him to Winners' Chapel, that he would be healed. On the third day, which was a Sunday, I brought this boy to the church. When we got here, the ushers told him to go to the children's church upstairs, while I joined the adults in the main church.

After the service, my son came to me and said, `Daddy, when I got to the classroom, one of the boys there asked me what was wrong with me. When I told him that I couldn't eat properly, he laid his hands on me and prayed. Immediately, I went down to the gutter and vomited a substance which was like a thick stick.'

He took me there to show me. I was very happy, thinking that, if a little boy prayed and performed a miracle like this, what would the elders do? That was how I began to worship here. And since then, my son has been eating properly."

Parents are therefore expected to prepare their children as skilled craftsmen fashion arrows. The blacksmith's arrow fashioning process is often demanding, but if he wants that arrow to become an asset in the hands of a warrior or a hunter, he must sit down and spend time and care among other things to "fashion" or "give form and shape" to it, making it ready for use.

Similarly, for your children to become arrows in the domain of business, education, legislature and gospel advancement, you have a job to do. So, accept the responsibility to fashion them into obedient, faithful and responsible adults.

Daniel was not a preacher, but a politician, yet he was righteous and upheld the name of Jehovah (Daniel. 5:11-12). Joseph, though a Prime Minister was also a man of integrity (Genesis. 39:8-9; Genesis. 41:38-41); likewise Samuel, whose words never fell to the ground (1 Samuel. 3:19). Timothy as a Bishop was full of ministry grace (1 Timothy. 4:14). All these men were brought up in homes where God's laws were taught them. They were well fashioned, no wonder they became arrows in God's hands.

Since your children belong to God, if you in obedience instil His fear into them, then you will produce a godly generation, which God will use to ravage the works of the devil, and establish His will on the earth.

Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

Psalm 8:2

The fashioning tool

Child training is the process of equipping your children to still the enemy and the avenger, and the Word of God is the fashioning tool. According to scriptures (Hebrew. 11:3), the world was moulded and shapened into the beauty we see now just by the Words spoken out of the mouth of God. You can do the same in the lives of your children by speaking the Word of God to them and over their lives.

Until you fashion your children according to God's Word, they can never become arrows in your hands and in the hand of God. God was lamenting in ***Ezekiel 22:30:***

And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap ... but I found none.

God could not find faithful men at the time He needed them because their parents had neglected to prepare them for His use. Remember that the children of today

are the men of tomorrow, just as those who are men today were children yesterday.

Therefore, in order to prepare your children for His use, you need to create in them a hunger for God and His Word. Teach them to seek after God. The absence of this hunger for God is what makes children wayward.

It's Your Responsibility

The fashioning of your children as arrows is your personal responsibility as a parent. It is a non-transferable responsibility. No one else can do this for you. In some parts of the world, like Africa, it is culturally acceptable for parents to look for rich uncles, relatives and the like, to raise their children for them. This encourages irresponsibility on the part of such parents and at times, improper upbringing of the children; because child training requires your personal involvement.

Personal involvement entails feeding your children with the Word of God among other things. However, you cannot give what you don't have. If the Word is not inside you, how can you feed your children with it? If your faith is low for instance, you will run to the hospital as soon as your child coughs, simply because you do not know God's provisions for divine healing; and because you have not discovered how to stand your ground against sickness yourself, you can't stand in faith on their behalf.

Sometimes, fathers leave the responsibility of moulding the destiny of the child to mothers alone. This ought not to be. Child training is a joint responsibility of both father and mother. It is their covenant responsibility to raise up their children in God's fear. Both parents have a distinct, yet complementary role to play.

As a father, don't be too busy to confess the Word of God over your children and be a part of investing into their lives. Often when the child is well behaved and intelligent, fathers proudly say, "That's my son". But when it's the opposite, the

child then belongs to the mother.

There are good examples to draw from in scriptures, of fathers who took time to be involved in training their children Abraham (Genesis. 18:19); Jonadab (Jeremiah. 35:6); Jacob (Genesis. 49); Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:8,9), to mention a few. There are, however, some who failed to do so and they, their families and generations after them, reaped the fruits of their negligence. A very good example is Eli.

Wives, if your husband is the busy type, use the wisdom of God to get him to create time for the children. Time is a very important thing you should invest on your children, not only money.

For instance, there was a time when our children would come to me with questions that I felt their father should hear and be the one to answer. I would walk them to his study door and leave them to go in and meet him. Afterwards, they would come back excited and smiling, having had their questions answered. And now, they can confidently go to him and freely discuss matters in their hearts.

In fact, when they come into his study, he sets them at ease by asking, "How was school today", "What did you do at breaktime?", "Did you eat your school lunch?" etc. This type of intimacy and open communication is very useful for their emotional stability.

Those who visit our home are so blessed when they see my husband playing or discussing with our children, in spite of his busy schedule. Sometimes, he puts our youngest daughter on his back and runs round the living room with her. I believe he does so because he understands that despite his own busy schedule, he has a great role to play in their welfare and upbringing. He also understands that the success of the Family will also affect his success in life and ministry.

Fathers, please, don't neglect your children! Many children are growing rebellious today because their parents are not there to love them. They need your

love, care and attention.

It's A Spiritual Investment

It must be clearly understood that the greatest legacy you can leave for your children is a good and sound Christian upbringing; not money, clothes or even houses. While these things are not unscriptural, they must not become the priority. I tell people everytime I have the privilege to do so that keeping their clothes for their children in future is unnecessary. Rather than heaping those things up for your children, bless members of the body of Christ with them; because when your children grow, your present clothes would have become outdated!

Material things are not the greatest inheritance you can leave for your children. The Christian upbringing you give them today will remain with them for life, and they can impart the same to their children's children.

A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children...
Proverbs 13:22

What inheritance means in this scripture is a sound Christian upbringing for your children. You cannot leave clothes, money, or the like for your children's children, but you can leave sound, godly training for generations after you. Christian parents must not undermine the importance of saturating their children's lives with the Word of God.

When I lay emphasis on the need for spiritual investment in the lives of your youngsters, someone may ask about other aspects, such as the physical and emotional. These are also important and I will talk about them later; but I find that the most important and longer lasting is the spiritual. When you centre on the spiritual aspect you have made a good investment because:

...Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

1 Timothy 4:8

Thus, even if you don't leave behind houses or cars, but have brought them up in the fear of the Lord, that training will enable them to acquire all those things, as well as durable riches.

A great woman of God, Evelyn Roberts (Oral Robert's wife) made this comment in the book, *Raising Children*:

"If I had to do one thing over again, I would saturate my children even more with the Word of God. For a child can only think what he has in his mind. The world will desperately bid for your child's mind, and you can't stop this. But while they are in your care and under your control, you can build an arsenal of scriptures and Christian thinking in them, that the very gates of hell cannot prevail against. We learned early that Satan was out to get our children, but we were determined that he would not.

I'm so grateful for Oral's part in instilling the scriptures. From the time the children could talk, Oral took them on his knees and told them Bible stories. And he had them learn and recite scriptures."

What a testimony! Moslems do not joke with loading Koranic verses into their young ones as soon as they can talk. They often hire teachers to instruct them. Why then should we joke over training ours therefore? You must help your children keep their focus on God and learn to respect His Word, even if it means employing someone to teach them in addition to what you do as parents.

Right From the Womb

You can begin to fashion, mould and shapen the life and destiny of your children right from the womb. Right from when the child is in the womb begin to confess the Word of God over it. Fathers, rise up each day and prophesy to the baby! Rise up each morning and speak the comforting Words of God to them. Mothers, do the same too.

Scientists tell us that the human foetus can hear and understand by sound vibrations things going on outside the mother's body. But this should not be new to us Christians, because it is recorded in the scriptures that:

*.When Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb...
Luke 1:41*

An Adventure Of Joy

Accepting the responsibility of fashioning your children as arrows is not all, you need to do it with joy. Child training can either be an exciting adventure or a terrible burden, depending on your perspective. Someone once wisely said, "Lay aside life-harming heaviness and entertain a cheerful disposition."

Sometimes, it may not be the easiest to retain your joy when your child does repeatedly what you have warned him against, just to see your reaction. At such times, no matter what disciplinary measure you adopt, never lose your joy; don't give in to frustration. Remember, "the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Consciously create time for fun and laughter in the Family. You can go out together as a Family to a recreational centre once in a while, eat together, laugh and relax. Learn to create an air of excitement in the home. You can make child training fun and a thing of joy by not being under pressure. I sometimes take my children to the beach, and we all have lot's of fun!

Joyfulness does not mean that when a child misbehaves you laugh over it without correcting or disciplining him. No! It's dangerous if you cannot control your children, and if they cannot tell when you're serious over an issue or not. At times though, you can relax and learn to overlook some tiny things they do.

Being joyful simply means having an optimistic outlook, having the right attitude, which automatically finds expression on the outside. It is a smile on the inside that produce a smile on the outside! This is very important, particularly when you feel stretched by Family demands and other concerns. Stay joyful, stay

praiseful, stay thankful. It works!

Ministers of the Gospel especially, are sometimes so concerned about our children being examples that we put them in a straight jacket and don't let them have fun when required. This makes life difficult for them. We want to dominate them, so that they smile at the nod of our heads or sit down all day in their rooms. For healthy growth, children also need time to play. Remember, there is a time for everything under heaven, including a time to laugh (Eccl. 3:1,4)!

Child raising may be an awesome responsibility, but taking care of your children must never be seen as a burden. Be assured that those children were intended to be a source of blessing to you, not a source of sorrow. Remember, the blessings of the Lord make rich and He adds no sorrow with it (Prov. 10:22).

In case you are experiencing any sorrow from any of your children now, know assuredly that it is not from God. By the time you have read through this book, I believe the grace and wisdom required to deal with any sorrowful situation and overcome it will be handed over to you, in Jesus name.

You can begin right now on the basis of Psalm 127:3-4, to reject those negative qualities in your children. Pray concerning them, declaring that they are blessings from God to enrich your life.





Chapter 3

Meeting Spiritual Needs

Man is a tripartite being, meaning, he is composed of three parts: spirit, soul and body (1 Thessalonians. 5:23). This automatically means that man has spiritual, emotional and physiological needs which have to be met. Children are no less human. They too are spirit, soul and body. It follows therefore that they have needs in these three realms which must be satisfied.

Arranged in order of priority, man is first and foremost spirit, then soul and body. If man is first a spirit, then the part of him that requires the greatest attention is his spirit. God is a Spirit (John 4:24) and He made man in His image (Genesis. 1:26); so man is a spirit as He is. It is the same with every child.

In the world this order is reversed and the spirit is given the least attention, while the body and soul are paid the greater attention; but this ought not to be.

What are the spiritual needs of Children?

Personal relationship with Jesus

A personal relationship with Jesus is the cornerstone of life. Before your child gets to the age where he can make a personal commitment to Christ, however, it's your spiritual responsibility to confess the Word of God over him, shaping his destiny by the Word of God.

And as the child attains pre-school age, I believe you need to demonstrate your personal relationship with Jesus more. That means you let him see that you are a genuine Christian who loves Jesus. That way, he will want to know Jesus too!

Take time to pray over him and with him; sharing the word of God in simple language. There are so many colourful story books which tell Bible stories in pictures that you can use to explain kingdom truths to him. This invariably prepares him for a personal relationship with Jesus.

However, to stop at this point is not good enough. Once your child is old enough to understand that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of the Lord, lead him in a personal confession of faith to accept Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour.

Parents often leave this responsibility to Sunday school teachers, who usually have a lot of other children to attend to. Don't assume that your children are going to heaven simply because they are born into Christian homes or because they attend Sunday school. No, they must confess Jesus as personal Lord and Saviour. And it's your responsibility as parents to lead them to do this. Here are some tips:

Choose a good time to talk with your child about salvation.

Prepare the ground ahead of time by praying for a responsive heart.

Present Jesus to him. Emphasis Christ's death, resurrection and all that happened at Calvary. Present it clearly, simply and as an act of love.

Let the child pray aloud, inviting Jesus into his heart (Romans. 10:9-10), as you lead him.

Explain that the Christian life is not lived by human strength, but by the help of the Holy Spirit. Personally follow up the decision made by the child and ensure he grows in the faith.

Being Baptized with the Holy Spirit

When Jesus said, *"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me..." (Acts 1:8)*, He did not limit it to adults only. Once a child is old enough to understand the infilling of the Holy Spirit, then lead him to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit from that point on is given the licence to instruct, guide, help and strengthen that child in his day-to-day activities and to reveal more of God to him.

When confronted with knotty questions at school, the Holy Spirit will be right there to assist him. All my children are born again and are baptized in the Holy Spirit before the age of 10.

Developing Christian Character

Simply defined, character is that quality that makes up a person's behavioural pattern. Such qualities as honesty, discipline, diligence, integrity, etc. Where do these qualities originate from?

*For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil...and defile the man.
Mark 7:21,23*

This then is a spiritual need because, whatever character traits you see your child manifest is coming from the spirit. Thus when you invest the Word of God into your child, you are using the most powerful instrument to mould his character. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word of God is quick, powerful and sharper than any sword. It is so strong that it can reach to the spirit, soul and marrow, exposing the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Character building is a process accomplished over a period of time. It takes time to develop a good and strong Christian character. Your child is not a mature Christian simply because he has given his life to Christ. You groom him by teaching him certain basic things.

Primary among which is teaching him to be courteous and obedient, and to have respect for the possessions of others. This also means instructing them not to take what is not theirs.

The ten commandments are summarized into two verses:

...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Matthew 22:37,39

After teaching your child to love the Lord, teach him how to treat his neighbours — his friends at home and at school.

Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Romans 13:10

Teach your child how to forgive when wronged and to ask for forgiveness when he offends someone else. These things are better learnt from childhood. It's a common adage that a dried fish is difficult to bend. Adults who find it difficult to say, "I am sorry" today never learnt it as children. But you can start now, to train up your child in the way of the Lord.

Giving is learnt. The language of children is "give me, give me" and "it's my own"; this is a product of the fall. But now we who are born again have the nature of God, no longer the Adamic nature. Therefore, you need to consciously teach your youngsters the importance of being generous from scriptures, and practically demonstrate the art of giving by example.

An adage says, "Charity begins at home." Permit me to add that so does honesty, mercy, obedience, integrity, etc. Most bad habits like cheating, lying, fighting, all begin at a tender age and when left unchecked become life-threatening vices.

Daniel developed a strong Christian character from his youth. He must have

learnt godliness, self-control and integrity from home.

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine, which he drank...

Daniel 1:8

Even when others gave in, Daniel and his comrades remembered perhaps what they had been taught at home. Looking also at the life of Joseph, we easily see the importance of a godly upbringing. No one was there to supervise Joseph, yet he refused to commit adultery with Potiphar's wife (Genesis. 39:9).

As mentioned earlier, the first step to a life of consecration is the new birth. Once your children are born again, they receive power to live godly lives (John. 1:12).

Laying a foundation in obedience is also crucial. Children need to obey the Lord first and learn to obey their parents, school authorities, community leaders and societal laws (Ephesus. 6:1-2). If your children disobey and disrespect you, it is a sure indication that they will disobey and show disrespect to their teachers and the laws of the society. God regards rebellion as witchcraft and stubbornness, He equates it with iniquity and idolatry (1 Samuel. 15:23). God would rather receive obedience, than a fat offering. The offerings of a disobedient person as no rewards, it's like sowing a seed on a concrete floor! You must teach your children how to diligently obey the Word of God and you.

Creating the fear of the Lord

That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God... which I command thee, thou, and son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

Deuteronomy 6:2

Creating the fear of the Lord in the hearts of youngsters is as vital as getting them to commit their lives to the Lord. Personally, I sit with my children, opening up scriptures to them almost daily. I open my Bible and they theirs, and

we sit down to share with one another.

They see for themselves what the Word says about life's day-to-day situations. This is of great importance, because it instils the fear of the Lord into their hearts. This makes it impossible for them to be hypocritical. I let my children see from the Word that whether I or their father is present with them or not, God is there. Creating a God consciousness is not to make them terrified of God, but to create a holy reverence for His ever-abiding presence.

As your children grow and get out into the world, mixing up with all kinds of people, it is this fear of God in their heart, this holy respect and reverence for God, that will preserve them in the way of the Lord.

Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

Child training calls for vigilance and diligence. The devil, our adversary is roaming about as a lion, seeking who to destroy. But those whose hearts are deep in the Word and consumed with the fear of the Lord cannot fall prey to his attacks.

But you and I must take child training as a once-in-a-life-time responsibility. Life is an opportunity that must not be wasted. Make the most of your opportunity today, as children do not remain children for long. A time comes when they must leave home, then it's what you have built into them that speaks for them. Jonadab instilled the fear of the Lord into the hearts of his children such that 200 years later, the impact of that training was still being felt. Yours will be the next testimony!

Understanding God's will for their lives

Every child is born with a mission. Perhaps that's why children come with their hands clenched they come clutching God's plan in their hands! Jeremiah was

definitely a child with a mission.

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

Jeremiah 1:5

He was ordained a prophet from the womb. Every child is created for a purpose. It is therefore important for that child to be brought up to fulfil that purpose. This is a crucial spiritual need, because parents are often carried away by sentiments. They want their children to be lawyers, doctors, etc; not minding God's plans for them.

You have a responsibility to locate your child's "ordination" and propel him along that path. When you are not sure, watch out for his strengths, gifts and talents and prayerfully allow him to pursue a career, and the plan of God will undoubtedly unfold in his life.

Finding a place Of Service

Another area of spiritual need for children is in the area of service. They must be made to get involved in the house of God. They can sing in the choir or serve as children ushers, if your church has such provisions. Doing things with their peers is very important, as they are strengthened and have a positive environment to expend their youthful energy.

And being let go, they went to their own company ...

Acts 4:23

My children, for instance, belong to the Teenage Church and Junior Sunday School. They find much fulfilment serving in church. Remember, service is a key to God's blessings:

And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread...

Exodus 23:25

How to meet Spiritual Needs

When you are hungry you eat food to satisfy that physical need. Likewise, when your spiritman is hungry, you need to feed it; but rice and beans cannot satisfy that hunger. There is a spiritual food for the spirit of man.

...That he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.

Deuteronomy 8:3

We have said that man is a spirit, living in a body. So the real man is spirit and its proper food is not physical, but spiritual. Jesus said *"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life"*(**John 6:63**). So God's word is the spiritual food for man's spirit.

Your child is also a spirit being and must be fed with the milk of the word (1 Pet. 2:2). God, who is a parent to us all realizes that not every believer can digest the same calibre of revelation, so he breaks the word down to milk (1 Peter. 2:2), meat, strong meat (Hebrew. 5:14) and honey (Proverbs. 24:13-14).

This is to show us that no matter our depth spiritually, we can help our children understand kingdom mysteries. Don't claim to be too spiritual that you cannot come down to their level to bless them. If God can come down to your level, why can't you?

Here is a simple pattern on how to feed your children spiritually:

Proceed from the known to the unknown

If for instance, you want to explain the concept of sin and the need for repentance, you might say something like this: "Supposing you have a beautiful dress which you like very much, but which is really dirty, you need to wash out the dirt to be able to wear the dress again, not so? No matter how much you like that dress, if it's dirty you can't use it until it's clean. Sin is like that dirt and you

are like your dress. When you give your life to Christ, the blood of Jesus washes away the sin and leaves you clean and beautiful, ready for the Master's use."

You can use any other similar illustration that they can identify with.

Get the child to repeat what you just taught him.

Ask him stimulating questions such as, "How can you become free from sin?"

Repetition. The fact that you taught something a while ago does not mean it can not be taught again. Keep at it until it is cemented in the child's spirit.

Be imaginative: use expressions that the child will find interesting. Your actions and the tone of your voice will drive home the lesson faster. Help the child visualise what you are saying or use teaching aids.

Don't overdo it. Give the child small doses at a time. If he is bored, leave it off and continue another time.

Allow your child ask questions, and take him seriously.

The primary tool for teaching children how to overcome their enemies Satan, the world and the flesh, is the Word of God. Don't allow your children become victims of circumstance, rather make them masters over situations by loading them with God's Word.

A Chinese proverb says, *"If you give a man a fish, you feed him today; but if you teach him how to catch fish by himself, you have provided him his lifetime source of livelihood."* Teach your children how to succeed in life by saturating them with God's Word and you would have equipped them for life.

If you are a minister of the gospel, I would have you know that your Family is your first congregation. Until you succeed with your children and spouse, your ministry cannot really be said to be successful. As a preacher, no matter the corners of the earth your ministry takes you to, you will ultimately return home.

If your home is in chaos then you have no real place to return to. Stop trying to win the world when there's guerrilla warfare in your home!

It's in view of this fact that I hired a Bible lesson teacher to teach my children the Word of God in addition to the time I spend with them. I see the need for a lesson teacher of the Word above the need for one to teach them Maths or English. That is not to say they do not take lessons in school subjects. No, but I place a higher value on the spiritual upbringing of my children, so I am prepared to pay a little extra for it.

To complement the lesson teacher's efforts, I draw up assignments and lessons for them from the scriptures, giving them memory verses. What I am doing is deliberately saturating their minds with God's Word, laying a solid foundation for the time to come.

Prayer Power

For balanced spiritual growth you also need to teach your children how to pray aright, the types of prayer, and the rules governing each type of prayer. For instance, there is the prayer of adoration, which is prayer focused on God's goodness, and then there is also the prayer of agreement, which involves two or more people asking for something in unity of purpose, as well as other types of prayer.

Somebody once said, "Daily prayers will diminish your cares." Therefore, introduce them to their heavenly Father, and teach them to talk with Him daily; explaining to them that prayer is a means of communicating with Him.

Then ye shall call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

Jeremiah 29:12

Leading By Example

Another way to raise your children is by example. Your children's spiritual need for character moulding, the fear of the Lord, active Christian service, etc. can adequately be taught by example.

...be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

1 Timothy 4:12

Children are natural mimics. No matter what you teach them, they learn better by example. It is not enough to instruct your child on what to do or what not to do, the child must see you do what you are preaching. Remember, an ounce of example is worth a ton of preaching. Children want to follow the examples of their parents.

You can hide your real self from your friends and brethren in church, but it's impossible to do so before your "congregation" (your children) at home. So whatever character trait you don't want to see in your children, ensure it has been dealt with in your own life first.

Children are a reflection of their parents. Murmuring, grumbling and complaining parents will definitely have murmuring, grumbling and complaining children. Stingy parents will have stingy children. Your child will prefer to do just what you do than do what you preach. Simply ensure that what you speak and what you do are the same. You should live a life worthy of emulation.

First Timothy 4:12 instructs Christians to be examples in word. I believe this means the words of the mouth. Parents, you need to watch your words. Many times, out of anger, you may want to abuse your children, but if you let those words escape out of your lips, you have sown a negative seed.

If you call your child an idiot, soon he will begin to act like one! Words are powerful. Don't speak carelessly, not even when you are angry. Let your words be gracious, life-transforming and destiny-moulding.

Jacob, while pronouncing a benediction on his children, declared to Reuben:

Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might...unstable as water, thou shalt not excel...

Genesis 49:3

And it happened exactly like that! ***1 Chronicles 5:1*** is a fulfilment of those words:

Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright.

Also, 1 Timothy 4:12 stresses the need to be an example in conversation. Conversation here is not dialogue, but behaviour and conduct. Until you are able to deal with certain negative traits in your character, it is useless trying to flush them out of your child. He will only imitate you.

It's like looking into the mirror and you see ink on the cheek of your image, and you pick up a handkerchief, attempting to wipe it off. Where the real work lies is on you! If you can wipe off the ink on your cheek, that on the image in the mirror will automatically disappear. Your child is like that reflection on the mirror, and what reveals your flaws is the Word of God (2 Cor. 3:18). If you clean up the spots on your character, it will disappear in your child.

The Blood Weapon

The blood of Jesus is also a veritable spiritual weapon against character flaws. Plead the blood of Jesus in faith or sprinkle it against all such defects in your character and that of your child. You can also take the communion, to flush out all the garbage from within.

In summary, your child has spiritual needs; accept the responsibility of meeting

those needs, with the help of the Holy Spirit. You will not fail!





Chapter 4

Meeting Emotional Needs

And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, Permit the children to come to me ... And He took them in His arms and began blessing them, laying his hands upon them.

Mark 10:13,14,16 (NAS)

Emotional needs are not peculiar to adults alone, children have them also. They have a need to be loved and to express love, they have a need to be accepted and a need to be secure in that love. Children with inferiority complex are often those reared in emotionally "cold" homes, homes where their fathers are dictators and "military commanders" and their mothers are disciplinarians.

Children need to be talked to, their questions answered and their need for a confidante and friend met. Parents need to study their children, to know their temperaments and moods, their likes and dislikes. One child may be reserved, given to reading and thinking, while another is boisterous and playful.

You need to discover also your child's talents and God given abilities. Believing in him and his gifts help develop confidence in the child, and is an essential ingredient for success. Constantly reaffirm love for your child. Praise is a wonderful instrument for instilling confidence in children. Praise him for the things he does well. Lavish praises on your child. It is wise to reward good habits

with praise.

Never assume that your Family members know they are loved, tell them and demonstrate your affection by hugs and kisses. You can really help to develop an optimistic outlook to life in your child.

Also, right attitudes are as important as actions. For instance, when you ask your child to do something, also look out for how he does it, whether cheerfully and excitedly, or grudgingly, with murmuring and complaining. Bad attitudes in children (and adults too) affect the atmosphere in the whole house. It's a wrong spirit. God Himself watches out for right and wrong attitudes.

Because thou servedest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies...

Deuteronomy 28:47-48

The Family is a team, a work-group and a mini-nation. Teach your children to learn to work together, each one must learn also how to work on behalf of the other. Sibling rivalry or jealousy and animosity between children of the same parents arises when children are not brought up to be each other's keeper. They must learn to work together, help each other and share their things with each other when necessary.

As parents, we need to learn how to draw our children out of themselves and help them discuss what's on their minds. I suggest that you make out time to have long talks with each child. Let your child know repeatedly that he has access to you, and can come to discuss what's on his mind anytime.

And because we are faith people, we must understand the need for faith and fun to go together. Let your home be full of laughter, not a place where children are always tip-toeing about, afraid to play and laugh, always "sober". No! Laughter and joy have a way of filling the home with God's presence, it makes for a very balanced Christian Family.

To help your child develop emotional stability, watch what you call him. Never label him a failure or some other negative name, it may stick to him all his adult life. Rather, tell him he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him.

The great man of God, Robert Schuller narrates how as a primary school pupil, his English teacher told him he would never be a writer. Today he has proved her wrong by writing several books, yet he says it took him a long time to believe he could write and take the first step.

Still talking about helping a child gain emotional stability, I can hear parents of teenage children asking how to help them through teenage romances. As they approach their teens, it signals the coming alive of their emotions, so teach them about sex. That is, explain to them the various changes that are taking place in their bodies, letting them know that it is normal.

With these physical changes also comes emotional changes, a need to be admired by the opposite sex. Teach them that in order to avoid undesirable problems they (both boys and girls) need to keep Christian friends, leaving out intimate friendship with any member of the opposite sex.

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

2 Timothy 2:22

Girls sometimes don't understand how boys are easily sexually aroused. You must teach them that their actions are forms of communication, so they must be careful not to unknowingly seduce young men, the consequence of which may be a loss of their purity.

As their emotions come alive, keep your teenage child active in Christian service, thus having a healthy outlet for his youthful energy. You must listen to your teenager, as he talks he sometimes betrays problems, conflicts, tensions and goings-on in his mind and life. And as you are listening, pray silently for the right words to say.

Always present your youngsters before God's throne, asking for the blood covering and angelic protection. As your child matures, treat him more like an adult than a child.

Parents need to be more spirit-controlled at this stage more than ever before. Only godly parents can raise godly children. Remember, like begets like. There is the need to remain permanently tuned to the Holy Ghost for strength, wisdom, authority and power to have supernatural effects in the home. I read a book that exhibits how you can deal with some of your children's emotional problems. It's a lesson drawn from Dr. Bill Bright, of the Campus Crusade For Christ fame.

"Dr. Bright said, 'Brad, eat your breakfast.' 'I don't want it,' he answered. 'Of course you do. You'll enjoy it. Look at me. I am enjoying mine,' returned Bill. 'Well', he said, 'I don't like it and I am not going to eat it.'

And being a bit dramatic, he began to release a few tears. Dr. Bright had to make up his mind what he was going to do. He finally decided he could either say, 'Now, young man, you eat that breakfast or I'll spank you,' or 'Forget it, I'll eat it myself.'

Dr. Bright, however, thought of a better idea, 'Brad, who is on the throne of your heart this morning?' At that, the tears really began to pour. The boy understood the point his father was trying to make. He had been taught the concept that Christ must be on the throne; but Christ was not on the throne of his life at that moment. When Brad regained his composure, he replied, 'The devil and me.'

Dr. Bright asked, 'Whom do you want on the throne?' 'Jesus', he answered. So, Dr. Bright requested that they pray together. Brad prayed, 'Dear Jesus, forgive me for being disobedient and help me to like this egg.' God heard that prayer; and Brad enjoyed his breakfast."

Parents need a fresh dose of wisdom daily, to be able to accommodate and direct their young ones in the way of the Lord. When emotional situations occur and you are not sure what to do, ask God for wisdom. **James 1:5** in the Living Bible

version says:

If you want to know what God wants you to do, ask him, and he will gladly tell you, for he is always ready to give a bountiful supply of wisdom to all who ask him; he will not resent it.

Even in their teens, when children experience fluctuating emotions, you still need to verbalize love and care. Teenagers want independence, they want to prove themselves as adults, learn to give them a chance. The real goal is to bring up children from dependence on parents to dependence on God.

Let the court of final appeal be the Word of God. Anything the Word does not condone is sin. Let your youngster see where it is written in the Bible. Whatever decision you make, have a Word back-up and let them see where it is written. Parents need to have a good understanding of their teenagers; even if your child makes a few mistakes, don't write him or her off. Learn to forgive and forget, it's a golden rule in meeting emotional needs.

As your child prepares to enter the university, or any institution of higher learning, prepare him or her for what campus life is likely to be. Tell them what to expect and encourage them to always seek God's perspective on issues.

Sometimes what leads youngsters into undesirable relationships is their exposure to soap-operas on T.V. and novels. Being easily impressionable, you need to censor what your children watch on T.V. Everything they see is recorded in their subconscious. And because one becomes what one watches, listens to and reads, whatever will destroy the mind of your child needs to be censored.

Buy Christian videos films, books and music. Prevent your child from participating in unedifying activities in school; instead, create something far more interesting at home, so there is no vacuum created, or else he will feel he is missing out on the pleasures of life, that Dad or Mum don't want him to have "fun".

Good, open and effective communication is a vital tool in helping your child develop emotional stability. A child who is self-assured and who has high self-esteem will be immune to foreign influences. The home is the best place to meet the emotional needs of the child.





Chapter 5

Meeting Physical Needs

But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

1 Timothy 5:8

God expects us as parents to cater for the physical needs of our children. There are several ways to do this. However, you must bear in mind that according to Maslow, physiological needs include the need for food, clothe and shelter.

Food

You must ensure that your children are well fed. Growing children need particular types of food to ensure a healthy growth. Please make sure that they eat carbohydrates like rice, yam and cassava based products, bread, potatoes, etc., for energy building. Also, feed them with proteinous food such as beans, meat, fish, eggs; they need these for body building. Then fats and vitamins, which can be found in palm oil, vegetable oil, fruits and vegetables.

As a parent, supervise the feeding habits of your children. Sweets, ice-cream, meat pies, buggers, biscuits, etc. are not real food, and are not nutritious. Rather, sweets and biscuits and sugary pastries spoil their teeth. Even when you permit them to take a little, ensure that they brush their teeth.

Growing children need to eat often at least three times a day. If you have a child who just would not eat, ensure that he eats a balanced diet regularly, no matter how small.

Sometimes, your children may not want to eat a particular food. For instance, many children don't like beans, even though it is nutritious. Help them to like it by praying with them over the food (remember the story of Dr. Bill Bright and his son.) Another alternative is to prepare it in different forms. In Africa, for instance, beans can be made into bean cakes, either cooked or fried.

Clothing

Children need to be adequately clothed. Warm clothes for cold seasons and light clothes for warm seasons; festive clothes for occasions and clean stay-at-home clothes for every day use.

Some parents are quite selfish. They buy the most expensive shoes and clothes for themselves, yet their children are shabby. So they cannot boldly introduce them to guests or go out with them. This is very wrong.

Some other parents over indulge their children, may be because when they were children they could not afford those things. So, they are prepared to spend anything, just to satisfy their children. This in itself is not wrong, as long as the children are not encouraged to become covetous and materialistic, and as long as the parents can afford it. Also, parents who over indulge their children may end up borrowing, just to satisfy them. Please be warned!

Children should be decently dressed. It is wrong to allow your children wear clothes that are worldly, seductive and simply the "in thing". Please be careful; once those children get used to having their way in their dressing, they become difficult to correct in later life.

And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtle of heart.

Proverbs 7:10

Mothers should note that their appearance greatly affect their children's good feeling about themselves. This doesn't mean you must wear very expensive clothes, but you must be neat and attractive. Every child wants to be proud of his mom, to be able to say, "That's my mom!" That's why some children do not want their parents to come for Parents' Day in their schools; they are simply ashamed to have to introduce their mothers to their friends. Christianity is not a licence for shabbiness! Let your celestial knowledge affect your domestic duties and appearance.

Home Enviroment

Children need to be taught how to be diligent, not lazy and irresponsible. Parents need to train them in good habits, with fun, goodwill and consistency. As children mature into teenagers, it becomes more difficult to develop these habits. Teach them to make their beds, tidy their rooms, bathroom and clean out the dishes after a meal. As they grow, teach them how to cook. Remember to reward them with praise.

Here again, there is a need to lead by example. If you want your children to develop good habits, make sure you have good habits yourself. If you are untidy and lazy, it is nearly impossible for your children to be neat and hardworking. Remember that children are natural mimics. You take the lead!

Develop a pattern of good habits for your children.

Personal cleanliness such as regular baths, brushing of their teeth, washing their underwears and others should be carefully supervised until a good habit is formed. Children must be taught to be orderly and careful with their toys, clothes and books. Most of these things do not just come on their own, but must be taught and developed.

It is also important to help children properly manage their time. They should

have regular times for going to bed, studying and doing their home work, as well as time for devotion. Cultivating these habits takes a process of time, so be patient with your children.

Psychologists say it is important for each child to have his place in the house. His own chair (side where he sits at the dining table), his own place in the car, in the room (if shared with other children), his own space. It makes him feel special and like an individual.

Academics

Another important physiological or mental need is helping your child in setting goals, especially in choice of subjects at school. In higher school, some children opt for some subjects, and may be end up with good grades in all of them, but with no good combination, due to parental negligence. This may in turn drastically affect their career in future.

I remember when our first son was to choose subjects in his high school. I had to prayerfully assist him with some suggestions. This eventually helped him to have a good subject combination.

Help them to prayerfully choose their courses. They may change their goals later, but at least they should have one. Encourage them to have a dream. As parents, discover their talents and stir them in that direction. Don't try to pour your children into your own mould. Sometimes, parents want their children to be what they themselves always wanted to be and never was. Do not force them into moulds, because God may have an altogether different plan for them.

Handling Money

Every normal person in the Family, whether male or female, adult or children, will have to use money at one time or the other, irrespective of his country and the kind of currency he uses.

It is important to know that to waste money is to waste life, because one is in essence misusing the labour used to earn it.

Children can earn money from little jobs. This is important because until you learn how to earn money, you won't become a wise spender.

It is important that you don't allow you children squander whatever monetary gifts they are given. My children would always show me whatever money they are given, no matter how small it is. I have created a kind of purse for them, where they put the money after showing it to me. They pay their tithes from it and wisely decide what to do with whatever is left.

If children are allowed to spend the money as soon as they are given, you will discover that they will not spend it wisely, and there will be no proper account of it.

It is important for Christians to understand this secret, because your children cannot live on the wealth you have acquired. God will prosper them more than you think. Teach them how to be financially accountable.

Statistics show that over 90% of the children of wealthy people don't end up wealthy, because they never worked for the money, and so do not know how to spend it judiciously. They were neither taught nor disciplined on how to spend money, so they end up wasting it.

We must rescue our generation, by teaching our children the virtues of the right use of money. No matter how small children are, they can be taught. So, begin to teach them how to wisely spend money. Show them by example also. And that will be a great investment in their lives.

To spend money wisely, discipline is a major requirement. And this can be done by ordering one's priorities aright. When your children are disciplined, even when they don't have the cash at hand, they still will not go to beg, neither be overcome by coveteousness.

Furthermore, as they grow, begin to teach them how to buy things, especially the girls. Give them money to buy things, give to someone in need or save. As you do this, you are training them on the discipline of handling money. And when they grow, they will thank you for teaching them the wise use of money.

Encourage your children to buy gifts for others; that way, you will destroy selfishness in them.

Teach your children to spend only whatever money is available and at their disposal. They should not just buy whatever is available on the street, but things that are profitable for them.

Also, teach them how to save money. It's not every money that comes into their hand that must be spent. They could save to buy clothes, books and use as offering in church, or to help somebody in need. Specially teach them to give their money as offerings and tithe in church.

Concluding this chapter, let me say that there must be a balance. My husband usually says, "Life is in phases and men in sizes." Agree with the phase by phase lifting of God in your life. Know your financial level per time; eat your size, wear your size and sleep your size per time. Teach your children the same. Don't make yourself a servant through borrowing (Proverbs. 22:7).

You must ensure that your child's spiritual, emotional and physical needs are adequately met.





Chapter 6

Understanding Teenagers

The teen years are the most demanding years for many children and parents alike. A lot of the prevalent challenges stems from a basic lack of understanding of this phase of life. The children are wondering, "What's going on here? Why is my body changing so rapidly? Do I have a disease? I saw some blood yesterday, could it be cancer? Why is my voice cracking? Why are my breasts hurting? Can I talk about it with anyone?"

Parents on the other hand are puzzled by the swings in the moods of their teenagers. One minute he is excited, next minute he wants to be alone. What used to excite him before, like certain types of clothes, is now regarded as childish. "Who can cope with it?" many parents seem to be asking. But the teen years need not be so frustrating, all that is actually required is knowledge and understanding.

*Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established:
Proverbs 24:3*

Clearly understanding the transformation that takes place in the lives of your teenagers will help you offer relevant guidance and equip you with the patience you need to go through the period.

Children are alarmed about such changes and need the comfort and reassurance

of their parents, that they are normal and that everything is alright. Go beyond being their parents to being their friend, so they can open up and confide in you.

The teen years can be one of the most interesting periods in your life. As parents, it is exciting to see a man emerge out of the little boy you used to cuddle; and as a teenager, it is fascinating to accept the responsibility of maturity. But this only happens when both parties are well informed.

Therefore in this chapter, we believe to explain certain terminologies that may have sounded like Greek to you, and describe what happens at various stages of your teenage children's development.

Puberty

The first phase children pass through is known as puberty. Puberty is a phase of sexual awakening in the life of a child. This is when the sexual organs and reproductive system of a child begin to develop, in preparation for adulthood, reproduction and childbirth. The age it begins differs from one child to another.

For boys, puberty starts from the age of twelve. Rapid growth begins to take place in their bodies. At this stage the pituitary gland (also known as the "big boss") attached to the base of the brain of man is activated. It produces hormones, which bring about changes in the body and the ability to produce a child.

As a result, one begins to notice hair growing and being concentrated in certain parts of the body, like the armpit and the pubic region. Also, beards begin to form on the face. The sexual organs also begin to enlarge, the voice deepen and becomes more steady. There might, however, be some children whose voice don't deepen.

Feelings of fatigue (lack of energy) and tiredness occur once in a while. When this begins to happen, the child needs to understand that there is nothing to be afraid of or be alarmed about. However, he will need to take plenty of rest, sleep

and also eat correctly (a balanced diet which includes vitamins, minerals and lots of protein) for proper body building.

Maturity begins earlier in girls than in boys. In girls, puberty begins between the ages of 10 and 11. At puberty, the female body begins to equip itself with the ability to produce a child. They need to understand that children (the human life) doesn't just spring up, but comes from tiny cells called zygotes, which form an embryo (baby in early developmental stage) and are housed in the uterus (below the stomach), the place where the baby feeds and lives.

And if no pregnancy occurs, menstruation (the readiness for the female body to receive an embryo every month) is the process by which unfertilized eggs and other unused hormones in the body are discharged .

Parents, your child needs to understand the entire process of menstruation, to avoid confusion and unnecessary concern. Menstruation is the monthly discharge of blood and fluid from the uterus through the vagina. It normally occurs every 28 days or thereabout and lasts for between 3 to 5 days. Menstruation starts between the ages of 9 to 15, and varies, depending on the child.

Parents, especially mothers should educate their daughters on the use of sanitary towels, to ensure hygiene during this period.

Some other notable changes occur in the girl during menstruation. Her body becomes more rounded and curvy, her breasts begins to enlarge, and may become sore or slightly painful. She might experience slight pains in the lower abdomen, hair begins to grow in armpit, legs, and pubic region.

When the menstrual cycle starts, a girl becomes very much aware of and sensitive to the regions around her private part. At such times she begins to wonder what is happening to her body and why the changes are occurring. It is very good for the parent to have a book or books with diagrams of the various parts of the reproductive organs when explaining to the child, to enhance her understanding.

Certain parts of the reproductive systems should be fully explained; e.g. the vagina (the birth canal or passage way which the baby comes through); the amniotic sac (special liquid which protects the baby in the womb). Parents should note that they are not too young to be told these things.

The period of middle adolescence (between ages 12 to 15 or 13 to 16) at times overlaps the period called the teen years (13 to 18) of a child. At this point, the changes are not only physical, but are also emotional. This period for your teenager is a very turbulent period and must be handled with God's wisdom, love and patience.

In some cases, boys begin to experience what is called "wet dreams". Wet dreams are natural emissions or occasional releases of fluid from the boy's penis. It is sometimes released at night, possibly while dreaming. It is perfectly normal and the parent/guardian or counsellor needs to reassure them that it is normal and nothing to worry about, that it is a way of getting rid of accumulated fluid in the body.

What is Adolescence?

Adolescence is a term used to describe the period of life between childhood and adulthood. It is usually between age 14 and 19. It is the final stages of childhood before adulthood sets in, and is similar to the pupal stage of growth in a butterfly before the cocoon finally breaks forth into a beautiful butterfly.

Early Teens (12 -15)

As they gradually move into teen years, children begin to get more interested in people of the opposite sex. Girls start looking great to boys and boys start appealing to girls. The sexual appetite within them begins to awaken. The changes in body chemistry creates a new appetite for sex within them. They begin to want to spend more time with those of the opposite sex, eventually leading to the desire for marriage. This is healthy, if they are told how to handle it.

However, one of the biggest mistakes an individual can make in life is to get married too soon. It can be tragic! Statistics have shown that half of most teenage marriages break up within five years, because the individuals are immature. Please know that marriage is one of the most important decisions to be made in life. Therefore, it is advisable that youngsters are mentally mature before contemplating marriage.

Certain emotional changes occur in this period. There is an increased desire for relationships with colleagues, classmates and age group mates, known as "peer groups". Also the body changes, which are new and strange to them as children can cause fear to rise up in them; the fear of, "what is happening to my body?" This can lead to their being moody and withdrawn. They also become shy to undress when others are around, because they do not want them to see the changes going on in their bodies. All these are universal fears of adolescents.

And in some cases, instead of fear, inferiority complex sets in fear of being disliked, failure, fear of being laughed at. This may stir up the desire to be accepted and make friends at all cost. Though this is better than being withdrawn, seclusion and shutting everyone out, they should, however, be taught at this time how to effectively handle peer pressure. If a child falls into the wrong peer group, he may begin to conform to bad ways and habits, all in the bid to be accepted at all cost.

In such cases children must be taught that body changes doesn't mean being inferior, abnormal or bad.

They need to understand that everyone is unique, and learn to accept their uniqueness.

Late Teens (16-18)

During this phase, the changes that occur in teenagers are more emotional than physical. For both sexes, the sexual appetite grows stronger, with each being

interested in the other. While having a sexual appetite is not wrong, its fulfillment is restricted to the marriage relationship alone. (Hebrew. 13:4.)

This is the period girls have crushes on one boy after another. A "crush" means she begins to think that one particular person is absolutely fantastic and begins to fantasize about the possibility of being married to that person. "Crushes" are constantly changing at this stage.

As a parent, you will have to in wisdom and love explain to her that such feelings do arise, but are not the basis for strong and fulfilling marriages. The principles, foundation and purpose for marriage ought to be explained at this point so that a wrong choice or hasty marriage is not contracted.

Among other things to explain to your teenager, especially when they are in their late teens is the issue of sex. As a few sexual thoughts occur to them, they may ask themselves, "Will God punish me for these sexual thoughts?" This is because a sense of guilt arises in them as a result of these sexual thoughts. The thoughts come, but they must be taught how to tame their thoughts (Proverbs. 4:23; 23:7). They should also use the many spiritual weapons like the name and blood of Jesus, the Word, anoint and speak to themselves.

At such points they may even become withdrawn and reserved, quiet and moody because they are not sure about what is going on in their lives. And it is the duty of good parents to explain to them and help them understand, so they can stop being withdrawn and brighten up.

Teenagers need to know that God created the sexual desire within man. It is neither dirty nor evil. Nothing that God created is evil (Genesis. 1:31), it is the perversion of it that is evil. God's intention is that sexual desire find expression in marriage, not outside marriage. Therefore, parents should teach their teenager how to control their sexual desires.

They ought to be told to relax because what they are experiencing is normal and part of sexual development. However, determination and will-power should be

built up in them so they can control their sexual desires. Just like their desires to eat, sleep, etc. can be controlled, their sexual desires with self-control, obedience to instruction and God's grace can be controlled.

Let them know that control of such desires has its rewards. It produces a wonderful and successful marriage later in life. This happens if they save their bodies for the person they will end up marrying. Let it be clear to them that sex or activities leading to sex before marriage are wrong! Even if some of their friends do it, as believers in Christ Jesus, we are not to join them.

It is very good for teenagers to be adequately counselled. Most often before the age of 20 there will be temptations to have sex, i.e. they may be with someone of the opposite sex who will be ready to release his/ her body to them for sex. Before the temptation comes, let them make a decision to preserve their bodies for their marriage partner, because they might not have the time to decide when the temptation suddenly comes! Tell them they would need to decide before the time or it maybe too late.

One other way of helping your teenager steer clear of pre-marital sex is by being spiritually-minded (Romans. 8:1-8). If his mind is always pre-occupied with sexual thoughts, those urges will intensify. But if his mind is filled with godly thoughts, he will be able to easily control his sexual urges. Emphasize purity in thoughts, words and actions.

Furthermore, your teenager needs to be careful what he watches on television, what he reads, the kind of friends he keeps, and so on. He must rather keep busy in church.

What is Sexual Intercourse?

In the olden days it appeared a taboo to fathers and mothers to sit one's child down and talk about sex or sexual intercourse. Some people saw it as vulgar or unholy. The sad thing about that approach was that in some cases, children who were left to be educated on sex by worldly methods or other people eventually

ended up being corrupted by them.

I'd like to say that if you don't give your children sex education from a godly perspective, someone else will, and that could be disastrous! See what happened to someone:

"A girl on entering secondary school was told by her mother that if a boy as much as touched her body she would get pregnant. One day after class she and a boy were discussing some matter and he touched her arm, and she broke into profuse sobbing, to the amazement of all. It was later discovered that she thought his touching her had made her pregnant and she feared the reaction of her mother, the school authorities and everyone in general.

"When others heard it they laughed and thought it a big joke. After being told the truth on how babies are made, the girl was deeply disappointed that her own mother could not educate her properly. So, her trust in the mother failed. And she ended up being taught by the wrong people and eventually indulged in the wrong acts."

Plainly and simply tell them exactly what it is. Sex is the joining of the female and male sexual organs in an intercourse. It is exclusively preserved for the married, to express their love and to satisfy one another. It is the fun aspect of marriage and causes the husband and wife to be special to one another. Also, babies are made through sex.

What is Pre-marital sex?

Pre-marital sex is the act of engaging in sexual intercourse before marriage.

After explaining sexual relationship to your teenager, he must be told that sex before marriage is contrary to God's command (1 Corinthians .6:18-20). At such point they may begin to feel God doesn't want them to enjoy themselves. But it should be made clear that this command is not to keep them away from having pleasure, but rather from experiencing sorrow and pain later on in life

(1Corinthians. 3:16-17).

Your children should be told that disobedience to this command leads to many harmful consequences namely: venereal diseases, unwanted pregnancy and sin against God. Your peaceful relationship with God is sacrificed as a result, because nothing is hidden from Him (1 John. 1:6; Proverbs. 15:3).

Also, pre-marital sex emotionally damages those who engage in it, as such people lose the innocence of youth. Such people might later in life become hard and cold, as a result of a bruised conscience. Furthermore, their marriages may be affected, as the experience which was meant to be special and reserved for one's spouse is no longer special.

In conclusion, we cannot afford to sacrifice the joy and peace of our children on the altar of tradition, culture or modernised ways of educating children about sex. Let's make it a point of duty to find out and understand properly all the changes that our children undergo, and from a godly perspective teach them how to go about it. Let's pass on to our children a godly heritage, for they are the future generation who would reign for Christ.

Following the many things that have been said, let me say that you can succeed in having a wonderful relationship with your teenagers. Your greatest task is one of understanding and communication. Keep in touch with happenings in their lives, be current with what is happening to and around them. Also, be available to offer assistance or direction; and most of all, believe the best about them. God is on your side!





Chapter 7

Discipline

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

To train means "to mould the character, to instruct by exercise, drill; make obedient; to put or point in an exact direction, to prepare for a contest". A necessary part of child training is discipline; it is what completes and makes it effective. There is a way to train up a child and discipline is a part of that way.

Discipline means training, especially of the mind and character, aimed at producing self-control, obedience, etc.

Susanna Wesley, who lived two centuries ago and turned out two of that generation's most dedicated ministers Charles and John Wesley, (as well as nine other children), had an interesting philosophy on rearing children.

The child who refuses to go to bed at night is the same child that refuses to learn scriptures and follow the Lord. And just as surely as I'd see that child went to bed, I'd see that child come to God.

To refuse to discipline your child is to prepare him for destruction. That was how Phinehas and Hophni, the two sons of Eli were destroyed. Their father refused to

discipline them. He knew about their immorality, yet he was complacent.

For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

1 Samuel 3:13

Eventually, Eli was also destroyed. So child training is a responsibility of parents (both the father and the mother); and discipline is an integral part of training. I saw a word in the book of Job that reinforced this principle of training.

He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity.

Job 36:10

It is God who opens our ears to discipline and commands us to return from iniquity. The two main points mentioned here are discipline and iniquity. Discipline here means to train up a child (especially our children) to be obedient and self-controlled; while iniquity is anything contrary to righteousness in words, thoughts and in our actions. Until the ear of a child is opened to discipline, iniquity will continue in his life.

How does God expect us to discipline our children? He expects us to do it with the "rod". The rod is the tool of discipline; it must be used to mould the character and give shape to the life of our children. Scripturally, there are two types of "rod" the spiritual and the physical.

The Spiritual Rod

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

Isaiah 11:1

The rod being referred to here is clearly Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is also the Word of God.

And he [Jesus] was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

Revelation 19:13

The spiritual rod is the Word of God. It is the strongest rod you can use in disciplining your child. It has the in-built capability to change and transform the life of your child more than any physical cane can. Only the Word of God can reach into the soul and spirit of a man, penetrating deep into places where a physical rod cannot go.

Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word of God is quick (alive) and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword; with the ability to discern the thoughts of the heart and expose the soul. What a tool for discipline!

How can the Word of God be effectively used for discipline?

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

For instance, if your child misbehaves, rather than hitting him with a stick, locate an appropriate scripture and sit him down. Show him from the Word of God why his deed or attitude is wrong and why he must change. Trust the Holy Spirit to give you the right words and appropriate illustrations. Make it clear to the child that his action was displeasing to God and that he must repent of it, and ask God for forgiveness.

Give the child room to accept his fault, all the while trusting the Holy Spirit to convict him. If you do that, even when you are absent physically, the Spirit of God will keep working on his conscience.

There are some occasions when you may not have time to sit him down with a Bible in hand. At such a times, simply tell him exactly what the word of God

says about his action or attitude. I want to challenge you to use more of the spiritual rod than the physical, it has a more lasting effect.

The Physical Rod

The physical rod is the cane. Never form a habit of always beating your child with a cane. It may, however, become necessary to reprove a child with a cane once in a while. There's an adage that says, "spare the rod and spoil the child." This has some truth to it, particularly when you understand the rod to mean both the Word of God and the physical rod. But spanking a child should be very occasional, or else the child becomes hardened.

You must never beat your child out of anger, otherwise it would be just to placate your anger. If you have to beat your child at all, make sure you explain to him the reason for your actions. Make sure he knows love is behind it. At all times, the spiritual rod (the Word of God) should be applied first before you ever think of applying the physical rod (the cane).

Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.

Proverbs 23:13-14

If you tolerate a flaw in a child it will remain. A child, unlike an adult, does not see far enough to produce his own self-control.

Let me make it clear that undisciplined parents cannot discipline their children effectively. You must be careful to practise what you preach. Remember, an ounce of example is worth a ton of preaching, and children have more need of models than critics.

Don't beat them recklessly and don't buy a special horse-whip for your children. You're not a tyrant and must be careful not to be mistaken for one. If you want to have lasting effects in the lives of your children, discipline them with the

spiritual rod more than the physical, and do it in love.

As a parent, I emphasize the spiritual rod over the cane. As children grow into teenagers you cannot beat them as when they were smaller, so discipline yourself to use the Word as an instrument of discipline. As a parent, I cannot ever remember beating any of my children with a cane. The rod of the Word of God has always been more than enough; yet all my children to God's glory are very disciplined.

At school where I am not present, I can have peace about my children knowing that the spiritual rod and the staff of the Holy Spirit (Ps. 23:4) are their companion. The same can be your experience, in Jesus name.

Prayer

We can never underestimate the life changing effect of prayer. Prayer releases the power of God to be at work in the lives of your children. The physical world is controlled by the spiritual. In prayer, you wield control over the physical realm.

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Hebrews 11:3

As Christian parents who desire to see their children brought up in the way of the Lord, make out time to pray with and for them. Praying with them is important, because in the process they learn the art of prayer. There are many adults today who don't know how to pray because they had no example to learn from when they were young.

On the other hand, praying for your children will help them walk in God's plan for their lives. For example, Lester Sumrall's mother prayed for him until he fell in line with God's plan for his life. No wonder he emerged a giant in God's Kingdom. Pray daily.

Prayer makes discipline easy, because in the realm of the spirit, you have already broken the yokes of stubbornness or whatever else might have been plaguing your child.

You need to be committed to the task of praying consistently for your children, pulling down whatever satanic strongholds might be in their lives. This done, when you sit your child down to instruct him in righteousness, he quickly responds. Prayer softens his heart and you receive grace and wisdom to know what type of disciplinary measure to employ.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:16

It may initially be an unpleasant experience for your children when you discipline them, but afterwards they will thank God for you (Hebrew. 12:11). As children we used to wonder some times whether we were loved, because the training seemed so tough then. But now I am leaving that same legacy for my children. Lay a solid foundation in the Word and in discipline for your children.

I would like to note that praying in the spirit (with other tongues) is very important. There are times as parents, when we may not always be able to locate the needs of our children or what is going on in their lives. However, the Bible says, "The spirit helps our infirmities ..." (Romans. 8:26). The Holy Spirit who knows all things helps us to pray aright for our children.

Gloria Copeland said, "you can get to a level in God using your prayer language (speaking in tongues) while praying for your Family, that anything that is happening to them will no more be a secret to you. God will just begin to reveal to you what your children are doing both at home and when out doors." That is, the Holy Spirit gives you first hand information about them even when they try to hide things from you.

Love and Control

Love and control are both very important for effective discipline, discipline that is lasting and that produces a good character. The two are equally very essential, because where there is control and no love, it results into rebellion, bitterness and hatred, and eventually, destruction .

In essence, you cannot control a child that you do not love; and a child that you do not control you cannot claim to love. You need 100% of both for each child.

To instil discipline via the rod (spiritual and physical) and prayer, love and control must be applied. We have mentioned the instruments for discipline and good child training the rod and prayer. Now let's look at how to apply them in instilling discipline in the lives of our children.

Love

Love is very patient and kind... It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out.

1 Corinthians 13:4,6 (TLB)

Your use of the rod and prayer should be in order that what is right should be done by your children. However, when administering these instruments of discipline, remember that love is patient and kind. And as I mentioned earlier, don't beat them till injury occurs. Don't let discipline degenerate to child abuse.

Always let your children know you love them and that your reason for disciplining them is because of your love for them.

It is important to note that children are very sensitive, so if your actions and words do not portray that you love them, they will doubt it even if you say it. Therefore it becomes mandatory that you:

Develop a relationship of mutual trust with your children

Let them know you trust them by admitting your mistakes when necessary and

ask their forgiveness, if need be. Never be too proud to say "I'm sorry" to your child when you've made a mistake (Ephesians. 6:4 Amp.). Encourage them to confide in you, just as you confide in them. Treat them respectfully as little people and not as inferiors; it will help their self-image.

Always demonstrate your love

The Lord Jesus who is our example demonstrated his love for children when he rebuked his disciples for turning them back:

...Let the little children come to me! Never send them away! For the kingdom of God belongs to men who have hearts as trusting as these little children's.

Luke 18:16 (TLB)

Then he took the children into his arms and placed his hands on their heads and He blessed them.

Mark 10:16 (TLB)

This is an example of how to show love to your children. Take note of the following in the above scripture:

He carried them, He laid his hands on them. You too should learn to carry, hug and kiss them. You should be able to touch your children and they touch you in return. Remember, Jesus is not an High Priest that cannot be touched, so strive to be like Him.

He blessed them. Compliment your children. Remember, your words are powerful and your children will become what you say about them. A wise man once said, "A torn jacket is soon mended; but hard words bruise the heart of a child." Meaning that if your child tore his jacket, it can be mended; but if you abuse or speak hard words to him, you bruise his heart and the "tear" in his heart is much more difficult to amend than a torn jacket! So, be careful what you say to those children!

As you point out what they did wrong, also find time to point out any good character or thing they do so they can continue in it. Always sandwich your corrections between showers of praises.

Be sure that you are an example to your children always. Don't tell your child to do something you won't do yourself; rather show him what to do by example. Remember, children need love, especially when they don't deserve it.

Control

To control is to have authority and power in order to direct, manage or rule.

Love without control leads to destruction. This can be seen in the story of the sons of Eli.

Your children are not supposed to control you. And just like Eli found out in 1 Samuel 2:22,29, you cannot train a child if you cannot control him.

No matter how much you love your children, control is necessary; it is the stabilizer of love.

Until you are able to control them, you cannot mould their character. Where control is lacking, the love you show them is no more the right kind of love. Make them understand that there is a need for control in order to avoid excesses and destruction.

A man without self-control is as defenseless as a city with broken down walls.
Proverbs 25:28 (TLB)

As soon as possible, children must be taught the fact that they will have authorities over them in life, which they have to submit to. And the best way to display this is by example. As they see you submit to others, they will recognize that they too must submit to higher authorities. Let them know it is for their good (Romans. 13:1-5).

Using love and control will keep a child on the path of a disciplined life. That is because a child who knows his parents love him and has been trained to obey their authority will find it easy to allow a loving God to control his life.

Both love and control go hand in hand; one cannot be effective without the other. Armed with these two spiritual weapons, disciplined and godly children will be raised to the glory of God, and they will in turn pass the baton to generations after them. May your children remember you and call you blessed!





Chapter 8

Ministering To Problem Children

Children, like most adults, are often products of their environment; so also are problem children therefore often products of a problem-filled environment, which the enemy is very quick to take advantage of.

What are the root causes of the problems of children?

Parents' Reaction to the way they were brought up

Some parents, in reacting to the way they were brought up under strict discipline tend to be lenient and inconsistent in disciplining their own children. On the other hand, those reacting to their parents' leniency tend to be strict and inconsistent in disciplining their own children. It is an unending cycle, from one generation to another, and ultimately causing deep resentment on the part of the children.

These parental reactions tend to build walls between them and their children; and could cause a lack of respect, inability to confide in parents, bitterness whenever there's an attempt to discipline the child (even when the child is clearly in the wrong) and an unwillingness to receive counsel from them.

In most cases, the child's reaction to this inconsistency in discipline is what leads them to cultivate unwise friendship outside the home, secretiveness and in

extreme cases, rebellion.

Homes Where There Is No Peace And Harmony

Children are products of what they see much more than they are of what they are told. Being exposed to violence, irrational behaviour, and inconsistency in their parents' relationship exposes them to harsh realities without the maturity to handle them.

Some parents are so consumed with their own problems that they do not pay adequate attention to their children, leaving them to their own devices. This lack of attention and affection from parents cause the children to become violent, take laws into their hands, and become hardened.

Some children take advantage of the disunity between their parents to manipulate situations to their advantage. And when they find out that it works at home, they will try it outside; thus inevitably becoming schemers, cun men and generally the source of most fights between people.

Rejection

Instability in a child's personality is also often caused by wounds of rejection. Some children are rejected even before they are born, on such grounds as when a child comes too soon after the last one, or when there are already many children in the Family, or the wrong sex preference, or when they have some physical defects.

Children also feel rejected by parents who verbally abuse them, batter and physically or sexually abuse them. They also react to peer rejection. Such rejections could be on the grounds of being affluent or snobbish, poor and badly dressed, insecure, domineering, or when one has some exaggerated physical features such as big ears, nose, mouth or the like.

Some rejections are also as a result of negative comments from school teachers,

such as being told that they will never make it or succeed in life. And yet others are church-related hurts from Sunday school teachers. Lack of love, especially from parents is probably the hardest blow.

These rejections lead to various reactions from the child. He or she might easily be lured into the arms of someone who promises love, but who ends up taking advantage of him or her lustfully. This is more rampant among the girls. A child, in seeking a sense of self-worth would try all manner of attention getting devices.

Many spend their lifetime trying to be somebody else as a result of this rejection. In most cases, this leads to their being double minded, unstable and having dual personalities - saints at home and a beast outside the home.

Rejection also causes paranoia in some children, a mental illness in which someone believes that other people are trying to harm them or that they are much more important than they really are. This might cause them to want to attack before they are attacked, make them suspicious of the intentions of others and often become either full of pride or hatred.

Rejection as a result of physical defects, dullness at school, might lead to a hatred of self, inferiority complex and insecurity, which might result in: rebellion; resentment; self-pity, causing deep-rooted depression; and escapism.

Other reactions to rejection include, reading (where the child projects himself into one of the principle characters in the story); watching television soap operas (in an attempt to forget hurtful pasts); going to sleep and not wanting to get up in the morning; resorting to drinking alcohol and drugs.

Others are self blame or accusation; fear; death wishes; becoming judgemental or always finding fault (a child who is criticized will become judgmental); distrust and disrespect; hardness (he feels that this way nobody will hurt him again); promiscuity; possessiveness (not wanting to lose a good friend and eventually end up being rejected for being over possessive.)

The Remedy

Every problem has a solution, and every question has an answer. As overwhelming as the foregoing problems of children may be, they are not without solutions in the Word of God.

One man in scriptures who knew the meaning of the word rejection was David. Out of all his brothers he was the least loved, he was even forgotten when Samuel came to anoint a king for Israel. But David had a secret the more he was rejected by men, the closer he got to God. A strong relationship with God therefore is the best way to deal with rejection.

When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.

As parents, our aim must be to help our children out of whatever problems of rejection they may be having, into a strong relationship with God; because only God can give them true comfort. The man of God, Larry Lea, who has a flourishing church in America today, at 17 faced severe rejection and depression. His father, who was very wealthy, had given him all the comfort that money could buy. He had a posh car, and the entire second floor of their home was his.

His mother was a Christian, and done her best to bring him up in the fear of the Lord, but there was a certain emptiness inside him that money could not fill nor satisfy. That feeling of emptiness became so severe that he lost his mind, and was committed to a psychiatric home. At a point, he knew he was at the verge of insanity; and then, something happened.

In his psychiatric ward he caught sight of a crucifix, with the inscription, INRI. He grabbed it, wondering what was INRI. But soon his eyes fell on other crucifixes in the Catholic chapel next to his ward. He picked them and began running, and the Catholic nuns pursued him, solving the mystery of INRI for him; saying, "It's not Henry, it's Jesus."

When he got back to his ward, he knelt down and cried out for Jesus to help him.

Instantly, he heard a voice that not only told him he had been saved, but called him to preach the Gospel. And that was the end of rejection depression and insanity.

I can hear you asking, "How do I get my child into a personal relationship with God?"

Firstly, by prayer. You can pray for him, breaking the power of satan over his life, bind the spirits of rejection, depression or rebellion, and cast them out of your child's life. Pray that the scales on his eyes would drop off, so that he can see what the devil wants to do to him. Then ask God to intervene in whichever way He wants to.

The man of God, Novel Hayes, recounts how his daughter was possessed by the spirit of drug addiction and rebellion. She had done all manner of terrible things, which brought pain to his heart and shame to his ministry. But he would not give up praying intensely for her. God delivered her in a very dramatic way.

One day, as she slept, a huge man appeared in her room, he was twice the size of an average man. He said nothing, did nothing, just sat on her bed. Then he stood up and left her room, walking down the hallway; and the curious youngster followed him. But, she was startled when he turned and walked through the wall. It was then that it occurred to her that this was no ordinary man, but an angel. That encounter ended her years of rebellion.

Somebody said that the devil has the "gift" of patience; he never wants to give up. So Christians must also persevere in prayers of deliverance for any rebellious child.

The most effective kind of prayer is prayer that is anchored on the Word of God. God has made several provisions for the deliverance of our children. One such scripture is *Isaiah 49:25*:

But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and

the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.

Having located the scripture, go to God in prayer, presenting your case to Him.

Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob.

Isaiah 41:21

Secondly, plead the blood of Jesus and use the name of Jesus to pull down satanic strongholds in the child's life. Remember, ***Philippians 2:10*** says:

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Revelation 12:11

Do these in faith, refusing to doubt; and you will see that mountain out of the life of your child forever. Prayer changes things!

Please note, however, that prevention is better than cure. You have a responsibility to create a conducive environment for your children to grow up in. Make sure that your relationship with your spouse is also in order, with no quarelling, bitterness or antagonism in your home.

Always show your child that you love and care for him. That way, rejection will be uprooted from the life of the child, causing him to grow up into a responsible young man in the society, and a blessing to the Body of Christ.





Chapter 9

Breaking The Yoke Of Barrenness

It will not be appropriate to conclude this book without touching on the issue of barrenness. This book is all about children and how to raise them in God's fear. However, there may be a few out there who will read this book in anticipation of the blessing of the fruit of the womb children. If you are such a person, here is a word God gave me for you:

*Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.
Psalm 127:3*

Thus, as long as you are a child of God, you are entitled to the blessing of children. No matter what doctors may have diagnosed, believe God's report above the medical report.

When God created you, He created you complete, with no organ missing. If anything is out of place, the devil, who is the thief has stolen it (John 10:10). And because you are a child of God, you can catch that thief and make him pay back (Proverbs. 6:31). How? By believing the Word of God, declaring it in faith and rejoicing in confidence that God has answered you.

God is a God of covenant. He will not break His covenant, nor alter whatever has gone out of His mouth (Ps. 89:34). What has He covenanted with you?

And ye shall serve the Lord your God... There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land...

Exodus 23:25-26

A covenant is a contractual agreement with terms and benefits. As long as one party fulfils the terms, he is automatically free to enjoy the benefits of that agreement. If man who is natural or carnal is faithful enough to serve the Lord, then our God who is called the Faithful one will fulfil His own part, releasing His blessings.

As long as you are serving God, you cannot remain barren. Check the scriptures. No one who served God, and who was initially called barren remained so for life. God always intervened in their situation. From Sarah to Hannah, and beyond, God always stepped into their circumstances. The only case of barrenness in scriptures which was not healed was that of Michal, David's wife, and hers was because she was cursed by God, for despising King David in her heart (2 Samuel. 6:16,23).

But for you that is born again, the bible says in ***Galatians 3:13:***

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. Barrenness is a curse and you have been redeemed from the curse of the law. You cannot be an exception. What God says to one, He says to all.

Testimonies

The power of God is a mighty force that breaks the strength of the enemy. These testimonies are incontrovertible evidences of Satan's powerlessness. Satan has lost the battle!

Barrenness is Broken!

"I have been married for seven years. Shortly after my wedding, my period

seized. Thinking I was pregnant, I kept expecting my baby. But it turned out to be a false alarm.

From the results of an ultrasound scan I did, the doctor said I had a small uterus, too small to accommodate a baby. I laughed it off, reasoning that if God has given those without wombs children, I who even has one, has hope.

At the last convention (June 1994), I got up when my case was described by the Bishop's wife. Immediately after prayers my period was restored, and in July I became pregnant! My baby was born this April and his name is David! All glory to God!"

Asubiojo, M.

Double Blessings

"I had suffered all manner of cruel opposition and harassment because I could not conceive. My in-laws had abused me verbally and physically, and put pressure on my husband to kick me out of my matrimonial home.

Finally he succumbed and sent me packing. And because I really had no where to go to, I was literally squatting from one concerned neighbour's house to the other, while seeking reconciliation.

When I learnt of the forthcoming Family Renewal Convention, I determined to serve the Lord. And God did it! He granted me favour before my husband, who called me back home and shortly after the reunion, I discovered I was pregnant! Hallelujah! my home was not only restored, but I conceived as well! The convention brought double blessings to me!"

Amaka, D.

20 Years Barrenness Shattered!

"During the women zonal Convention held in Maiduguri in April, the Bishop's

wife instructed that those who are yet to have children should come along to the meeting with baby materials, and I came to the service with two baby bibs.

I had two sisters and a brother in the South, who after being married for some time still had no issues and I decided to stand in in faith for them. My elder brother's case in particular dates back to 20 years. But to God's glory, in July 1995 (three months after the convention), I got a letter informing me that my two sisters and my brother's wife are all now pregnant!"

Sis. Okani, S.

Miracle Baby After 10 Years!

"It happened that my mother's sister had been married for 10 years and still didn't have the fruit of the womb. On 4th January, 1994, the Bishop came down from the altar and danced with us. And as he was sweating, I brought out a white handkerchief, with which I wiped his face.

Immediately, something told me I had contacted a miracle. On getting home that day, I met my aunt at home. I greeted her and said to her: 'Look woman, you're pregnant this year.' She said, 'Amen. But if God wanted me to be pregnant, I would have been pregnant all these years.'

But I assured her that she would receive her child this year. I gave her the handkerchief I had used to wipe the sweat off the Bishop's face and told her to rub it on her tummy. And to the glory of God, six months later she came to our house, pregnant!"

God gave me my own Baby too!

"I lost my first pregnancy in 1991. For one year I kept on lactating, the milk won't stop coming. No drug could help and neither was any pregnancy coming forth, for nearly three years.

During one of the services last year, the Bishop asked every woman desiring the

fruit of the womb to come out and carry the baby belonging to a woman who after five years now had her baby. He also told us to believe God for something people would see and congratulate us for. And in October 1993, I got pregnant while still lactating! The bouncing baby boy was born on my husband's birthday. He was my birthday present to him."

Aborishade, F. (Mrs.)

My husband often says there's nothing God says He has given that He has not actually given. But there is nothing God has given that the devil will not contest. It has its roots in this scripture:

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

2 Peter 1:3

There's nothing glorious in barrenness. By God's divine power, He has given unto us all things (including your desired child) that makes life glorious and makes godliness enviable.

This can, however, become manifest only through knowledge. My husband received a powerful revelation on this. He said by the Holy Spirit, "There's no mountain anywhere; everyman's ignorance is his mountain." If you want to overcome the darkness of barrenness, go for the light of God's Word and keep declaring that word until that barren situation changes.

And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

John 1:5

By the power backing the Word I bring to you right now, that situation of barrenness is consumed and you are liberated, in Jesus name. Your testimony shall be the next in Jesus name! You are free!

