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ARISE & SHINE!

BE AN
INSTRUMENT
OF
CHANGE
TO THE
YOUTH

Rev JAMES YAMOGAH (PHD)

PRINTER'S INFORMATION & ISBN

BOOK TITLE & PUBLISHERS INFORMATION

FOREWORD

We of the older generation get worried about the attitude of the youth towards life. Many of them seem to have lost focus and direction in whatever they do; both in the secular and religious areas of life. This is a very worrying situation, especially if you think of the youth as the future leaders of the country and the church.

The author of this book, *Arise & Shine! Be an Instrument of Change to the Youth*, Rev. Dr. James Yamoah, a very experienced Youth Pastor and educator, has identified almost all the problems of the youth and has vividly outlined the way forward in bringing the youth back on course. We acknowledge our indebtedness to the author for providing solutions to our fears about the future leaders of the church and the nation.

Every parent and church leader is encouraged to get a copy of this book and use it effectively in his or her training of the youth at home and in ministry respectively.

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FOREWORD

The youth of today may be seen as individuals that are filled with joy because we see them to be full of enthusiasm, fun and happiness. However, some are faced with many challenges that could totally affect their success in life. They may seem to be chasing their dreams but many times, some waste their time without knowing. Some are faced with family problems as a results of single parenting. While sex education at teenage level is sometimes a taboo in some homes and cultures, unfortunately, sexual immorality at that level is observed to be on ascendancy. Thus, some teenagers, curious about sex or driven by hormonal changes, poverty, and other pressures, indulge in it prematurely, either by consent or rape, sometimes resulting in unplanned pregnancies.

Disparities in educational levels are causing lots of insecurity among the youth as some are under pressure from their parents who want them to pursue higher academic careers, sometimes without reliable financial support. There are problems relating to unemployment. But the need for survival and desire for materialism has led to increase in social vices like internet fraud, ritual money (commonly referred to as “sakawa”), armed robbery, etc., with some involving mainly the youth. Indications are that drug addiction is very common amongst the youth today. Poverty is fast catching up with some people such that they live in extreme slums with many health challenges arising from

sanitation problems. Due to the hustle of society today, some parents work overtime, trying to earn a decent living, instead of spending quality time with their children at home. The overall effect is the unhealthy lifestyles observed in some of the youth today.

Some individuals and organizations have made numerous surveys and researches to find solutions for the challenges. Rev. Dr. James Yamoah, as a Pastor and Educator, touches on some of these challenges. Indeed, good research was done by him to bring solution to most of these issues. Most of his ministerial career has been dedicated to youth ministry so he has many years of insight and experience in matters that affect the youth. In this book, he expertly unearths major social vices confronting today's youth and brings to light the vivid pros and cons that helps them to make a better choice. The book deals with the issue of generational gap which in many sense has brought much misunderstanding between the old and the youth. The book delves into it and offer good options and solutions.

If you are a parent, pastor or church leader, teacher, counsellor, or even a youth who wants to see transformation among the youth, this book will definitely be a helpful guide. I recommend this book to you.

Rev. Stephen Ofori Amanfo

General Overseer

Restoration Christian Church - Gh

Vocational Guidance and Counsellor

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE BOOK

**“Study to show
yourself approved unto God,
a workman who does not need to be
ashamed and who correctly
handles the word of truth”**

(2 Tim. 2:15; NLT)

and

**“And the things
you have heard me say in the
presence of many witnesses entrust to
reliable men who will be qualified
to teach others”**

(2 Tim. 2:2; NLT)

DEDICATION

To the
following ministry groups: the
Youth of Christ Resurrection Church, Ghana,
where I served as the National Youth Pastor for almost
twenty (20) years and built up lots of experience; and the
Youth of Restoration Christian Church, Ghana, for their joy
in my current service as their National Youth Pastor; then
also the Youth of House of Compassion Ministries, Ghana,
for all the great encouragement they keep giving me, not
forgetting Youth of Voice of the Lord Evangelical Church,
for their contagious zeal in youth programs; and finally,
Rev. & Mrs. Jerry & Alice Jerry Adjei Adjetey, Pastor
Maxwell Jerry Laryea, and all members of the
leadership team at Arise Leadership Training
Centre, Teshie, Accra, for their immense
zeal and commitment to ministerial
training. May God richly
bless all of
you!

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I cannot overlook the contribution made by the galaxy of people towards my life in general and in the production of this book in particular. Specific people whose names constantly ring bells in my spirit are: Madam Mary Nyarko (my mother), Messrs Francis Gyamera Akwaw (of blessed memory) and Peter Yamoah Akwaw (my uncles), Mrs. Rose-Vida Danquah and Ms. Georgina Achiaah (my aunts), all my siblings (Maggie, Big Joe, Emma, Maame Joe, Esther and Martha), my cousins (Ellen, Dr. Angela, Linda, Dr. Francis Yamoah, Gifty, Eunice, Yvonne, Francisca, Richmond and Richard) and the entire family, especially Nana Osei Bonsu, MD, Bethesda Printing Press, Kumasi, Nana Ampong, Nana Kofi Amoah and my entire family. I am forever indebted to these and others who in many diverse ways helped to lay a solid family foundation for me to build upon in life.

It's hard for me to not express my gratitude to the great number of fathers and the countless Christian leaders, friends and acquaintances in whose hands I passed to this humble height. Notable ones are the entire families of Mr. & Mrs. Obiri-Yeboah, Mrs. Rita Amakye-Ansah, Mad. Charity Nyarkoah (my mother-in-law). Then also Rev. (Rtd) Charles Soso, all Ministers and the entire members of Christ Resurrection Church (CRC), Ghana, most especially, members of the Youth ministry whose tall list I cannot provide here, for helping me to grow and serve as a Minister of the gospel for almost twenty (20) years.

I am highly indebted to the General Overseer, Stephen Ofori, and his deputy, Pastor Jones Abbey, and all Pastors, Elders, and the entire membership of Restoration Christian Church (RCC), Ghana, for their great encouragement in my current service as one of their Pastors. Then also are these special personalities: Rev. Martin Obeng (Trinity Theological Seminary, Accra), Dr. & Mrs. Okoh, Dr. and Rev. (Mrs.) Amenuveve, Mr. Nii-Noi Adumuah (MCE, Adentan), and Rev. Dr. Gifty Lamptey, Rev. John K. Appiah, and Pastor Emmanuel Dunyo (USA). To these I would like to express my gratitude for their support as that has propelled me to this stage in life.

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Narrowing the scope further down to my core family of Mrs. Florence Yamoah, whose comforting presence gave me the most needed encouragement to produce this work, and my children; Jemima, Emmanuel (who did a lot of the typing), and Joseph, I wish to acknowledge that it is their interactive presence which kept me awake to finish this project, and they constituted the immediate 'power-house' behind this book. Thus, I pray God's abiding presence with them.

Above all, I am forever grateful to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for always being there for me in accordance with the promise, "...Great is His faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22-23). To Him alone is the glory, Amen.

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible gives us a rich description of the experiences of many great leaders who began by remembering to walk with God and served Him when they were but Youth. They oftentimes succeeded and sometimes failed. We learn much by studying about their practices, where they got their motivation, courage, insight, faith and where they reached. They obtained good report by realizing that God was with them despite their inadequacies. Knowing this should encourage us to press on in our service while we continue to rely on Him to see us through.

The contents of this material: ***Arise & Shine! Be a Youth with Vision and Mission***, are easy to imbibe, digest and assimilate. The discussions are so interesting that there is little or no room for volatility. As Scripture says: “Where there is no vision, the people perish...” (Prov. 29:18; KJV), hence, the message of this material is tailored to satisfy the usual three conventional aims of knowing, feeling and doing. It provides a basic but solid information on the youth and why and how to organize them for effective ministry. It activates in you the desire and inspiration to know more on the subject and ignites in you the needed zeal and zest to act immediately upon what you learn.

It is worthy of note that few paragraphs of this material have been raised in some discussions of some of my books. The objective for their elucidation here is to emphasize the issues that border on the youth. Therefore, the material is

calculated to lay a concrete foundation for acceptable youth growth and transformation, and consequently, generate interest towards a fruitful service. In some areas of the discussions, I use my over thirty (30) years of experience as Youth minister in addition to some elucidations on pertinent issues discussed in some of my books for the benefit of our discussion on how the youth can fulfil their visions to the glory of God.

One of the most important attractions for any subject is the impact it can make on people. To this end, the aims of the issues treated in this material and the learning outcomes have been captured together as the main issues of consideration in this introductory section. Study methods of this material may include lectureship, large and small discussion groups, group and individual presentations, problem solving exercises, panel discussions, analogies, etc.

At the end of the discussions in this book, it is expected that the discussants will be able to do the following:

- a.** Describe how God has designed the youth and also be able to relate to the theological and historical basis for Youth ministry in the church. The objective here is to explain a working biblical basis for youth ministry and to understand the goals of youth ministry in the scheme of God.
- b.** Understand the impact of physiological and behavioral changes on the Christian youth and their families. The objective is to adapt appropriate Youth ministry programs as these changes occur. It is also to emphasize the importance

of such a ministry in developing acceptable character and behavior.

c. Consider the impact of current socio-cultural issues on the Christian youth. The effort is to highlight some of the basic principles for developing a comprehensive program for the youth. The objective is to illustrate some effective models of Youth ministry in the midst of the challenging issues.

d. Examine current social issues as compared with teachings of Scripture and adjust Youth ministry programs as social conditions change. The underlying objective is to critically analyze current issues and their impact on the youth of today. Consequently, the discussions hope to make the youth aware of postmodernist and secular-humanist worldviews and develop proactive methods and ways for addressing arguments of such anti-Christian social views and thereby help the youth withstand them.

e. Help the youth to demonstrate an organized and holy lifestyle. The aim is to exemplify an organized and holy lifestyle as it relates to God, the ministry, and the family. Additionally, it is meant to address the issues of youth through teaching, preaching, and appropriate methods of discipline.

f. Define specific role of models, particularly, the youth pastor and the parent(s), in youth ministry. The effort is to understand how such role models can cooperate in dealing with youth problems. It is also to explain how youth ministers must adapt their ministries to meet current needs.

g. Describe how an effective youth ministry can provide positive guidance in the areas of moral development and

behavior. Moreover, it is to describe the importance of youth ministry in developing morals in youth character and behavior. Then also, it is to describe how an effective youth ministry can lead to the resolution of conflict.

h. Help the church create and organize an effective youth program. The objective is to determine how to get church leadership to understand and cooperate with the youth with regard to their programs.

i. Synthesize effective programs to address social issues in youth ministry and in effect establish youth programs that assist youth in resolving social issues and develop Christian character in the midst of peer pressure.

j. Be prepared to train the youth to exercise respect for leadership because it brings blessings and enhances total growth of the church

k. Encourage the youth to appreciate their overall role in the plan of God. The aim is to challenge the youth to emulate some of the biblical characters that serve as transformational models for the present youth with a vision to learn from. It is also to activate the transformational qualities in every youth in order for them to strive for qualitative change in the youth around them.

l. Evaluate not only the effectiveness but the applicability of all the operational youth programs. Efforts will be directed towards exploring other methods for creating a more sustainable and productive youth ministry.

As a youth leader/minister of your church, it is expected that you will be able to apply the issues learned to

your context as a youth who desires to fulfil God's vision for your life. Consequently, a special feature of the discussions in this material is that all the users are encouraged to relate the studies to their own church and ministerial and community context. After each discussion, there is an opportunity for self-examination in the form of application. And to demonstrate similar commitment, each discussant should be ready to sign a pledge form.

At the end of all the discussions in this material, all discussants should be able to agree with Roadcup's (1980, p. 131) commitment to youth ministry: "My ultimate goal as a youth minister is to bring youth to maturity in Christ; to prepare, disciple, and train them to serve God." Thanks and God bless you as you study it.

DISCUSSION ONE

CHARGE THE YOUTH TO ARISE AND SHINE AS TRANSFORMATIONAL AGENTS

The objective of this first discussion is to activate the transformational qualities in you in order to experience qualitative change that will affect your generation. I noted in one of my books on transformation (Yamoah 2012, p. 12) Barack Hussein Obama's "Yes we can" slogan which became one of the loudest on American soil during the 2008 elections campaign for the 44th President of the United States. His campaign was pivoted on one strong word, "change," which contained promises of transformation of the people. This no doubt inspired many Americans, particularly, the youth, and thus catapulted him to victory.

For many critical observers, President Barack Obama's victory was due to one reason: that the majority of Americans saw in him a transformational leader.

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Similarly, there are a number of both biblical and extra biblical characters all over the centuries of humanity's existence whose lives serve as transformational models for the present youth.

A. Why transformation?

The word, *transformation* comes from; "trans," meaning "to change," and "form," meaning "appearance." It is a process; it

usually begins as a slow process but gathers momentum to continue till success is achieved. Transformation brings about a total change that reflects new mindset, beginning, function, and value. It is a change that is triggered by a desire and willingness not to conform to certain old standard(s) or status; but a hundred and eighty degrees turn to achieve something new. "...True transformation is never an easy process" (Folmsbee 2007, p. 17).

From all indications, such a change has often been difficult to handle, especially when it also entails certain undesirable experiences such as; breaking, melting; molding,

"Transformations come only as we go the long way round, only as we're willing to walk a different, longer, more arduous, more inward, more prayerful route."

and filling as involved in the transformation of a character like biblical Moses (Yamoah 2012, p. 45-47). And as Devries (2008, p. 122) rightly observes:

"Transformations come only as we go the long way round, only

as we're willing to walk a different, longer, more arduous, more inward, more prayerful route."

However, it is a necessary step to confront, especially, if one has to move to the next stage in life. It makes sense if one sees the old (or first) form or stage as good but the new (or second) as better. It is no doubt a closing of one chapter of life to begin another; both are very challenging but the latter comes with better prospects. Thus when the preferred status of life has not been attained the desire for change should not be shelved; it should rather be watered to germinate.

Though transformation may happen automatically, it is better initiated when the need arises. This means that, when life's expectations have not been met, we must not just sit down and wait; we should pursue them. Therefore, transformation is not achieved by just drumming the idea into people's mind.

Rather, a transformational person is one that is ready to reason and team up with God to bring His perfect will to pass in this world. That person has to rise up and accept the challenge for change. Such a person should be prepared to renew his/her mind in order to know more of God and His "good, and acceptable, and perfect will" for his/her life and for humanity (Rom. 12:2). Above all, such a person should possess a "can do spirit" and be prepared to be transformed so that he/she can also transform others, knowing that "with God, all things are possible" (Luke 1:37).

B. God desires transformational agents

God demonstrated His transformational prowess when He brought the initial chaos of creation into perfection. There is no doubt that He is still in the transformation business to bring everything He created to its excellent state. Let's consider this:

- Clay soil was created with fine particles that can hold water. But it has less humus, air, and soil organisms, therefore, not healthy for plant life. This, notwithstanding, a potter is able to use clay soil for a worthy purpose.
- The message of the Lord that came to Prophet Jeremiah in the potter's house reveals transformation from ordinary clay soil into various types of ceramic pots or earthenware (Jer. 18:1-6).

- Now, if ordinary clay soil can be transformed into worthy products, then God can do same with His people: “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand ...” (Jer. 18:6).

Consequently, God raises people as agents of change in every generation to engage a transformational process. In such challenging times, a “can do spirit” as demonstrated by Joshua and Caleb becomes the master key. No wonder, the Most High God himself endorsed this duo (cf. Num. 14:24). He allowed them to go to the Promised Land and made them the leaders of His approved generation. Such an unyielding, persistent, and God-focused spirit always motivates people to bring change to difficult situations. God still desires transformational agents.

C. The Youth as God’s transformational agents

In the scheme of God, the role of the youth in ministry is paramount. It is quite significant to emphasize the role that young ministers have been instrumental in the move of God’s Spirit and Word. In the OT, young people such as Joseph, Joshua, Ruth, Samuel, David, Solomon, Josiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Esther, and the like, are usually regarded as the forerunners in God’s ministry. Their entry into ministry obviously fulfils the admonishing of the wisest earthly king, Solomon: “Remember thy Creator in your youth...” (Eccl. 12:1).

The NT is also replete with many examples of youthful ministers. Beginning the ministry at the age of about 30 years, the Lord Jesus Christ himself is seen as the very perfect example of a young person in the ministry of the Lord God, our Heavenly Father.

Building on the example of Jesus, the Christ, both young men and women have found themselves at the center of the ministry of our Lord from the foundation of the church till present.

Building on the example of Jesus, the Christ, both young men and women have found themselves at the center of the ministry of our Lord from the foundation of the church till present.

The Lord used the Apostles to engage young people in the ministry. This is typified by the selection of someone like Stephen as a deacon in the church. Indeed, God continued to demonstrate his interest in the ministry of young people by selecting a zealous young Jew, Saul, whose Roman identity was Paul.

The interest in the use of young people for the fulfilment of the Great Commission was also demonstrated by Saul/Paul in his choice of Timothy. This is a youth whose recommendation for ministry was signed by the twin Asia Minor cities of Iconium and Lystra during Paul's Second missionary journey (Acts 16:2). Arguably, Timothy proved that though quite young, he nevertheless was equal to his call and task involved in it.

The examples of Saul/Paul, Timothy, and other relatively young ministers in the scriptures are strong indications that the role of the young minister in fulfilling the Great Commission cannot be overemphasized. Paul in his second letter to Timothy says: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needed not to be afraid, but rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). This great exhortation by the Apostle to the gentile world still rings loud bells in the spirit and soul of every believer of the gospel of our Lord.

Conclusion

Currently, churches everywhere are engaged in one form of a transformational agenda or the other. This calls for you to rise up, especially during this period of your youth and accept the challenge. This is the message of Isaiah 60:1: “Arise and Shine...” It is hoped that the expositions of the world around you will motivate you to develop the character of a youth who has transformational qualities and who can always say, “Yes we can!”, while others keep saying, “No we can’t!” Remember that the clarion call is still loud and clear: **“Arise and Shine as a youth with vision and mission and lead a transformation.”**

DISCUSSION TWO

BE ZEALOUS IN LAYING APPROPRIATE FOUNDATIONS FOR A FRUITFUL YOUTH LIFE

The focus of the discussions here is to drum home the undeniable observation that ***the youth have a role as transformational agents in God's eternal agenda.***

Therefore, it begins by placing emphasis on the historical and theological foundation for Youth Ministry in the church. The effort is to give a general description of a Youth Ministry and illustrate some effective models. It hopes to explain a working theological basis for youth ministry and to understand the goals of youth ministry. As noted already, in some paragraphs of this discussion, the issues raised are a re-echoing of a similar discussion in one of my books just for emphasis.

Failure to train youth: theological & historical backgrounds

Many reasons account for the cycle of sin which began in Israel after the death of Joshua and the generation of elders who knew the Lord and taught his ways to the people. During that period the scriptures say that the new generation who came after Joshua and his generation had died knew neither the Lord nor the great works he did with their fathers. Consequently, this new generation turned from the Lord to other gods leading to very negative consequences.

One of the reasons for this great disappointment is that the next generation of leaders failed in their duty to train the younger generation that followed them. This led to a generation

that grew up without much information of the workings of God among the people of Israel. Consequently, this new generation turned their backs on God and followed the gods of the Amorites on the land of Canaan.

What happened in the biblical Judges period is likely to occur even in today's church hence the need to devote attention to building up the youth in the ways of the Lord. Since youth is a transition from

What happened in the biblical Judges period is likely to occur even in today's church hence the need to devote attention to building up the youth in the ways of the Lord.

childhood right up to adulthood, anything that will affect such a smooth transition is likely to have repercussions on adult life. That is, adult life is inevitably destroyed when the youthful stage is not given the needed attention and foundation.

Apparently, there are various problems and/or challenges associated with the failure to nurture youth in the church. These include inactive youth, moral breakdown or high immorality, static or unfulfilled vision, a youth who might not know what is right and thus mess up, and the like.

The result of such a failure is a loss of an important link between the informed adult and leaders who might know what is right and might pursue it and ignorant children. Such a loss leads to the creation of a generational gap in the church as it happened to Israel in the book of Judges. To summarize, the results of failure to train the youth, among other issues, include:

- i. Inactive and uninformed youth with unfulfilled vision
- ii. Youth that demonstrate a high level of immorality

iii. Lack of continuity in church/ministerial vision and mission

It is imperative to bridge the generation gap by training the youth. This is God's design for youth life.

There is need to bridge the Generational gap

Everyone's youthful days are the critical bridge between childhood and old age. It is the right period of life that the person has both the physical and mental strength and is daring, having hearts that are filled with visions of the future. In their old age, many harbor regrets. On one hand, they do so because of certain wrong decisions they took and/or the choices they made when they were young, energetic, vibrant and strong. On the other, it is as a result of some important decisions they failed to take and/or choices they failed to make during that stage of life.

One of the wisest leaders that ever lived, King Solomon of Israel, almost 3,000 years ago, left humanity a legacy of written wisdom. In such documents, the king spoke of his experiences in life; but the insights and applications of his message are relevant in our time. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he gives practical insights and guidelines for life.

Particularly, the book of Proverbs was written to give prudence to the simple; knowledge and discretion to the youth in particular and mankind in general, to make them wise. For example, the king passes on his practical advice in the form of short, concise sentences that convey moral truths. The book gives hundreds of practical examples of how to live according to godly wisdom, including youth and discipline, family life, self-control and resisting temptation, and so on.

It is a book that has helped to transform many lives because of the lessons it offers. The King's frequent reference to "my son" emphasizes instructing the youth and guiding them into a happy and prosperous life. The youthful age, with all the vigor and blessings of very active mind and purposefulness is the period when better services for God can be nurtured with strong roots. Old age is a period where the desires of life are mostly lost and most of the human physical strength has slacked so much to the limit that active service to society is much reduced, let alone to God.

Thus, one has to identify with the Creator while he/she is young so that at old age he/she might have achieved God's purpose for him in life, and man will be well placed to give accounts to his Creator. The book of Ecclesiastes, which is argued to be Solomon's written sermon, is an analysis of life experiences and a critical essay about its meaning. In this profound book, Solomon takes his readers on a mental journey through life in general, using himself as a test case.

King Solomon explains how everything he tried, tested, or tasted was "meaningless": useless, irrational, pointless, foolish and empty, an exercise in futility, after all that he had: tremendous intellect, power, and wealth. Worst of all, old age hasten life's uselessness. After this biographical tour, the king made his triumphant conclusion, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth...Therefore fear God and keep His commandments...For God will bring every deed into judgment" (Eccl. 12:1-14). The emphasis for youth is that laying a good foundation will help us escape the traps that will lead to failures.

Of course, serving God in our youth will help us avoid many of the pitfall of life that bring sorrow and regret in old age and thus open us up to the “**days of darkness**” (Eccl.11:8) that will come. These are days in which all the joy of life had passed and little or no pleasure is found in the remaining years of life (Eccl.12:1). Since these days will certainly come there is need for preparation by any youthful person in order to avoid regrets.

Importance of the Youth in the Church and Society

Among other reasons why the youth are important in every church or ministry (cf. Num. 14: 29, 1 Tim. 4:12; 5:1, Eccl. 11: 9-10, 12:1; Acts 16:1-5) are the following:

- The youth constitute the future or hope of any family and church because they serve as the bridge between the aged and children, and therefore fill up the generational gap in the church.
- The presence of the youth is a positive step to ensuring a better future for any progressive church because they constitute the vibrant group of every society. So they are a big asset.
- The youth can be trained for various services which can make a church lively. For example, they can be actively involved in core activities such as prayers, praises, worship, ushering and the like.
- Developing a vibrant youth is a prerequisite for transforming a weak or sick or stunted church into a growing and healthy one (Acts 16:1-5). When properly utilized, the youth can be good wheels for church growth through evangelism.
- A well-developed youth group within and outside the church may serve as motivation to the children that are close to them.

- A well-organized and trained youth are useful manpower tools. They can support in the organization of both involuntary and voluntary manual services.

Conclusion

It can now be deduced from the discussion so far that ***the youth have a role as transformational agents in God's plan.*** As argued in this chapter, the Bible is replete with examples of how God has used young people in some of the most vital roles in the unfolding of his marvelous plan of redemption. They include characters in both the Old and the New Testament. Therefore, any leader who plays down the importance of a youth ministry in the church is toying with the growth and healthy development of the church; he/she is creating a generational gap.

DISCUSSION THREE

UNDERSTAND THE MINDSET OF OTHER YOUTH YOU ARE LIKELY TO INTERACT WITH

Our discussion here is to underscore the importance of the efforts in unravelling the thought patterns of youth. This will help in formulating modalities to help them pursue Christ-like character and acceptable behavior. Arguably, no one can organize the youth to form an effective ministry without first understanding the mindset of youth.

Ironically, the youthful period is so unique a stage of life, that ***the mind of the youth is quite complex to read, let alone understand.*** What goes on in the mind of the youth is a cumulated response to different stimuli, mainly: physiological, psychological, religious, socio-cultural, just to mention the basic ones. And so, their actions are as a response to these stimuli.

Thus, it is imperative to devote attention to deciphering what goes on in the mind of the youth, in order to interpret and appreciate their actions. In so doing, the youth can be handled through various programs drawn from informed sources. God designed that period in the light of certain obvious changes.

All of these changes should not only cause humanity to appreciate the characteristics of that period of life but make it incumbent on us to better handle those within that age bracket. Thus, all persons who want to be successful with the youth must be able to decipher the fundamental issues that pose as challenges to them. It is only when such issues are identified and dealt with that we are guaranteed a responsible youth.

Who are youth?

The period of life where a person is considered as youth is very technical, hence hard to define. It is usually understood to be the life age spanning the adolescent to young adult, with both periods not being very specific. According to Kum (2013), the term “youth” “adolescence” and “young adult” are defined variously. He notes:

The US Centre of Disease Control defines adolescence as ages between 13 and 19 years and 20 to 24 for young adults. Pediatrics and the Society for Adolescent Medicine define it as 13 to 31 years. The World Health Organization refers to people between the ages of 10 to 19 as adolescents and the larger age group 10 to 24 as young people (WHO 1986).

Of course, there are definitions from other angles some of which are provided here:

- From the limit that God gave concerning the Israelites in transition from Egypt to the Promised Land, the youth may be people of the age 13-19 (Num. 14:29). But this youthful period is also seen as the transitional age from childhood to adulthood in terms of sexual development and maturity.
- Other biblical sources do not support this age period above because there were some people who at certain stage were referred to as being in the youth age bracket though they were grown-ups holding responsible positions. In fact, Apostle Paul and his “son,” Bishop Timothy, are concrete examples of youth who engaged in the ministry of Christ.

Most people mistakenly say that Saul's name was changed to Paul, rather, he was also known as Saul (Acts 13:9). It's most likely Saul was the Hebrew name since this is the name common among the Jews prior to his conversion into Christianity (Acts 7:58; 8:1-3; 9:1-11; 11:25-30; 13:1-22; 22:7-13) while Paul was the name he adopted as a Roman citizen and used during his ministry throughout the Roman Empire (Acts 13:9, 13, 16, 42-50; 14:1-23; 15:2; 22-40). As a zealous Pharisee bent on persecuting the First Century Church, Paul was described as a young man (Acts 7:58) though to qualify as a Pharisee one needed not to be less than thirty (30) years.

On the part of Timothy, not only did he know the Scriptures from early periods of life (2 Tim. 3:15), he was also addressed as a young man by Paul though he was ordained as the first Bishop/Pastor/Shepherd (all from the Greek, *Poimen*) of the metropolitan seaport church at Ephesus at the time, and was exhorted to be an example to other youth (1 Tim. 4:12).

- In terms of strength and vigor, the period of youth is that stage of life where a person is most active. This might be the idea that Caleb espoused when he argued that even at eighty-five (85) years he was strong enough to fight and overcome any giants on the land (Jos. 14:10-12).
- Philosophically, the youth is a stage in life where one begins to learn from dependence to complete independence and so it may stretch beyond the period stated in "a" above.
- If the traditional saying that, "life begins at forty" is anything to go by, then the youth period is that stage of life below 40 years where real life is yet to begin.

From the above analysis, it is clear that the age of the youth is hard to define. In this write-up, however, I will adopt the age group between the adolescent age of 13 and young adult age of 45 to reflect the traditional, socio-economic, and political positions of many cultures.

Understanding the mind of the Youth

Generally, the physiological, psychological, socio-cultural, etc., changes from the adolescent/teenager period and the period immediately beyond may trigger in the youth certain behavioral characteristics.

The mindset of the youth is quite difficult to understand let alone predict. However,

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their mindset is characterized by, though not limited to, some characteristic features such as the following:

- i. Exuberant and active because they are full of strength
- ii. Adventurous and usually want to be very experimental
- iii. Joyful and hopeful because of their high interest in life
- iv. Accommodative and quite changeable or moldable
- v. Susceptible or prone to dangers since they like exposure
- vi. Paying special attention to their appearances and outlook.
- vii. Interest in the company of the opposite sex
- viii. Oftentimes curious and desirous of sexual issues.
- ix. For a number of the females they become quite secretive, shy looking, and seek extra privacy or freedom.
- x. For a number of the males, they prefer spending more in outdoor programs than staying indoors.

Conclusion

This chapter has addressed a number of pertinent issues. Indeed, the youthful period is a unique stage hence ***the mind of the youth is quite complex and cannot easily be boxed or tamed***. Solomon gives a picture of the youth (Eccl. 11:9ff). A critical study is needed to lead them well. But the most important point for consideration here is how all these peculiar characteristics can be explored for the benefit of the youth themselves and to the advantage of the Kingdom of God and the larger human society.

DISCUSSION FOUR

FIND OUT THE EFFECTS OF THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENTS ON THE YOUTH

Our objective of the discussions here is to examine the effects of some of factors on the developmental changes and behaviors of the youth. This will help to adapt healthy and pragmatic youth programs to help the youth as such developmental changes occur. The discussion hopes to make the youth aware of some of the anti-Christian practices in the hope of developing some proactive methods and ways for addressing such arguments and practices against Christianity and thereby help the youth withstand them.

A vintage stage of the journey of the human being is the youthful period. A youth is any growing person between infancy and adulthood. This is where real character is formed through the influence of the environment(s) of the person. No doubt, one of the joyous expectations of the youthful stage is for the person to mature into a responsible adult; one that God, the divine Creator, can be proud of. To achieve this, many factors come into play as the person travels the stage of life from infancy right up to adulthood.

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The effects of both the internal and external environments on the youth behavior cannot be over-emphasized. Arguably, a

godly youth is the one that has survived the various influences of his/her environment. In other words, a godly youth is trained to live as such in all the necessary environments, be they internal or external. Such a youth believes in the existing of God and in all the environments of life makes efforts to live as one led by God.

1. The effects of internal environment on youth behavior

The internal environment of every person consists of the anatomical and physiological processes under the control of body fluids, especially, growth and reproductive hormones. Growing from teenage into adulthood does not only involve such factors in the internal environment that lead to maturation of the sexual features of the body but bring with it challenges in connection with sensual desires. The impact, particularly, of physiological developments, upon every individual is great especially during the adolescent period.

The body changes that also bring with them behavioral changes necessitate the enactment of certain principles by which the responsible youth can govern their lives. As part of the unique features of higher creatures, including human beings, there are special organs and systems whose overall activity sensitizes the body to function as sexual beings. When one considers their nature and development, it is obvious that God made their bodies to fully enjoy life on earth. Implying that, the Creator provided them with wonderful body parts that can meet all the needs of the body; the brain, the heart, the stomach, the appendages, etc.

Significant to our discussions here are the reproductive organs which are used to engage common functions like passing out urine and special functions particularly satisfying sexual drive and continuing the process of pro-creation. The reproductive organs also relate with other important organs of the body to bring about growth and other functions like the transformation of an immature person into a fully mature one.

For humans, the developmental changes of this period are associated with certain changes in physiology, anatomy and behavior which require some attention. Yes, the human being is wonderfully made (Psa. 139:14). Naturally, the passage from teenage into adulthood involves development and/or maturation of the sexual features associate with some physiological and behavioral changes in the body. This usually happens during the adolescent period.

Such physiological, anatomical and behavioral changes during the adolescent period may create some desires, especially, sensual feelings, which most of the times he or she may want to satisfy in various forms, particularly in the form of **sexual intercourse**, and sometimes as **pornography**, which can equally serve as a bait for sex itself. Besides, there are other forms of sexual desires which if not controlled may drive a person into such unproductive practices or destructive lifestyles including homosexuality and masturbation.

Over the next sections of this chapter, only sex and pornography have been selected for discussion. These two appear to be common among the youth of many societies today and will thus make better impact when engaged.

A. Sex - the main sensual desire

Of all the means by which the teenager can satisfy his or her sensual desires, sex (by consent), rape (sex without consent), is the commonest. The Bible discusses issues of sex for good reasons. While sex is a beautiful thing meant to be experienced by a married couple, a lot of unmarried youth have already engaged it, oblivious of some of the physical, emotional, and spiritual consequences. Others are not having sexual intercourse *per se*, but rather engaging in all the negative associations of it.

In this light, it is better for the youth to know what the Bible says about sex. This will help them to not only understand the lies their peers and all potential influencers tell them and others about this natural but divine provision, however it will also help them to be determined to remain abstinent and pure while still involved even in dating relationships.

The act of sex is not only powerful and enticing, but also romantic, exciting, sensual, and magnetic, to use these few

The act of sex is not only powerful and enticing, but also romantic, exciting, sensual, and magnetic, to use these few adjectives.

adjectives. As far as God is concerned, sex was created for divine reasons but not for fun or casual entertainment.

This is because it is part of the whole package of His creative work which He finally acknowledged as good. For humans, in particular, the Almighty planned sex for a marriage life (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:24; Heb. 13:4). No doubt, the delight of sex is better experienced when one enters into marriage.

Consequently, the act of sex should never be practiced outside marriage. Whenever this is done it loses its value and becomes sin. Sex outside marriage includes, teenage sex or premarital sex; this is known as fornication in the Bible (1 Cor. 6:18), extramarital sex, also known as adultery (Heb. 13:4). These issues usually arise due to the power of sex drive. It is along this same line that Kum (2013) observes:

We as human beings are confronted with sexual situations on a daily basis and much more so in these day and age of technological advancement, the internet and cyberspace, sex has become so blatant and easy to access through all kinds of means. It has become a commodity, which is traded in every sphere of our human engagements. Sex has become so daring that, it has lost its meaning, and “pleasure” has become the unspoken word that defines its cravings.

A common observation is that many youthful Christians have messed up their lives with others on a similar path either because of their ignorance of the issues of sex or lack of self-control with regards to their sexual drives or both. For the youth, a good number of them are drawn into sex because of lack of self-control over their feelings.

However, many more are drawn into it because beside their own desires they fall for some bait. If we understand what “bait” does

For the youth, a good number of them are drawn into sex because of lack of self-control over their feelings.

in a “trap,” it will help us to understand what “baits” of sex traps means. Sex “baits” among others includes:

- i) Promise of money or material gifts.
- ii) Promise of a lasting relationship (i.e., marriage).
- iii) Promise of help to meet certain needs.

In one of his online articles, Kelli Mahoney (n.d.) outlines “10 Lies Christian teens tell themselves about sex, dating, and how far is too far.” These include the following:

- **Everybody does it:** No! Not everybody is having sex. While the media and people in school may make it seem like everyone is having sex, there are just as many Christian youth (and non-Christians too) waiting until marriage to have it. Doing something just because everyone else is doing it is just giving into peer pressure. Sometimes, it takes a stronger person, or a person backed by the strength of God, to resist temptation. When you stand up to peer pressure you are actually saving yourself from committing sin while being a strong Christian witness to other teens.
- **Sex is no big deal:** Sex is a big deal. Ask any Christian teen who struggles with having had sex before. There are a lot of emotions and spiritual struggles that come from having had sex outside of marriage. It is one of the reasons God placed such an emphasis on sex and relationships in the Bible. Sex is a beautiful act that comes out of the marriage covenant, and it means more than just an action.
- **Virginity is a state of mind:** Some people use the term “technical virgin” when describing their sexual status. Usually this means that the person has not had a sexual act that

involved penetration. Virginity is more than that. Virginity is not a state of mind, but it is the conscious choice to not involve oneself in sexual acts until after marriage. Usually this excuse is used if someone wants to justify participating in sexual activity.

- **Sex and love are the same:** Sex and love are [not the same but] very different, [though] they are meant to complement one another. If you are in love it does not mean you should have sex. Sex is an act. Love is an emotion. They are very different, and it can be dangerous to mix them up. You should never feel like you have to have sex with someone just because you want to show them you love them. There are plenty of non-sexual ways to show your love to someone.

- **Sex is a minor sin:** Pre-marital sex is sin. In fact, it is dangerous to think that sex is a minor or equal sin to all others, because it can put you in a frame of mind to make bad choices. Sexual sin is still a defiance of God, and no sin is acceptable to God. Yes, you can be forgiven, but you will have to live with the sin you have committed, which can be difficult if you are not prepared to deal with sex emotionally.

- **Surely, I can overcome sexual temptation:** If anyone feels that he/she has the strength to conquer any of life's temptation, especially that of sex, the person is only setting himself/herself up for great trouble. From time of creation, humanity is known for falling into sin, especially when there is an over-confidence or one is alone.

Thus, Christian teens need to keep their eyes on God, and allow God to help set boundaries so they can resist the temptation. It is only with God's help; everyone can overcome

any temptations in life. The Bible is full of helpful advice for coping with temptation, and it can be a useful tool.

- **I've already had sex, so it's too late for me now:** It is never too late. While the idea of “born-again virgin” may seem a little like “technical virgin,” it is not the same thing. Many Christian teens that have already had sex choose to act as if they have never had sex and vow to wait until marriage. Having sex is not the end of the world. God is very forgiving, and He smiles at those who return to Him with a desire to do His will. While the temptation for someone who has had sex can be even stronger than the virgin, it can be overcome with God's help. God is waiting to welcome you with open arms.

The body of the youth or teenager should never be used for sexual immorality because the body is the temple of the Most High, our God. If anyone destroys the temple of God with sex God will destroy that person (1 Cor. 6:19-20). That is, since no sexually immoral person will enter into heaven, any culprit is hell-bound (Rev. 2:27;

If anyone destroys the temple of God with sex God will destroy that person (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

22:14-15). Paul admonishes thus: “...*Run away from sexual sin, every other sin people do is outside their bodies, but those who sin sexually sin against their own bodies*” (1 Cor. 6:18).

It is important that each youth knows which of these “baits” is likely to attract him or her into sex and how he or she hopes to overcome it. The greatest of all the “baits” of sex for which the teenager is likely to fall is the deception that sex *is an expression of one's love for another*. This is not wholly true.

B. Pornography as a sex bait

One of the negative practices which have gained lots of strength in the present time is pornography. It is a form of graphical or picture communication which is intended to arouse sexual desire or draw a person into sex. The most common forms are ones which appear in the form of pictures showing:

- i. A naked person.
- ii. Part of a naked body, mostly, the sexual parts.
- iii. Naked sexual acts or interactions.
- iv. The backside (the boobs), mostly partly or completely naked and usually displayed in purely seductive modes.

For what reasons will a youth be interested in pornography and for what reason will he or she hate same? People may take to pornography for a lot of reasons but the common ones include the following:

- i. To stimulate (or whet the appetite of) somebody for sex.
- ii. To satisfy their sexual desires in the absence of real sex.
- iii. To store in their minds sexual fantasies.

The common sources of pornography are the books or magazines, where they appear as pictures, the internet (at certain websites) especially on Facebook, television movies or video cassette movies, etc. In most cases, these sources are intended to be kept from the eyes of uninterested persons but they end up in the hands of innocent teenagers.

The age group that is most susceptible to pornography is obviously the teenage group. This is just because the teenage period is the stage where secondary sexual characteristics are developed with their associated drives and adventures. It is also

the stage where the means to exercise control over sexual behavior and desires are yet to be fully experienced.

Kelli Mahoney observes that a lot of people particularly the youth consider that pornography and masturbation are helpful in preventing a person from having sex. According to him, they argue that watching porn or masturbating is less of a sin than having sex. However, he argues that having sex is not just about the act, but it is about the frame of mind. For him, if you have lust in your heart while you are watching pornographic movies or masturbating, then there is sin there.

2. The effects of external environments on youth behavior

While the factors that control the internal environments on the youth like the growth and reproductive hormones are not under the control of the youth the factors that operate within the external environments can exercise greater control over the behavior of the youth. Thus, the positive effects of the external environments on youth behavior, if given greater attention, can become remedy to some of the negative effects of the internal environment.

At least, five of such environments are:

A. The Family environments: The role of the family is essential in bringing up a godly youth. This is seen when:

- a. Parents pray for the youth
- b. Parents accepts that the youth is a gift from God and they are responsible for his/her upbringing
- c. Parents accept the responsibility of raising the youth in a godly and acceptable ways

- d. Parents engage in their responsibility to help the youth to get closer not only to God through studying the Bible and daily attendance in church programs but to also grow in Him by getting involved in certain spiritual practices such as:
 - i. becoming familiar with vital spiritual growth ingredients like prayer, praises, worship, offering, etc.
 - ii. getting involved in voluntary practices like evangelism, follow-up and manual services such as clean-up exercises and the like.

When these are ensured, every godly youth is guaranteed a godly family foundation and any parent who wants the youth to be godly should be prepared to engage them.

B. The Personal or Private environment: The personal or private environment of the youth is the second most essential thing in his/her upbringing in a godly manner. It is where a youth reaches a stage and realizes the existence or presence of God.

- a. This is where a youth accepts to live for God.
- b. This is where a youth surrenders his/her life to God.
- c. This is where a youth begins to differentiate between godly and ungodly behaviors.
- d. This is where a youth abstains from or despises ungodly life and pursues after godly life.

C. The Educational environment: This plays an important role in helping to shape the mindset of a person. Usually, where a person is trained is not as important as:

- a. what he/she receives by way of the training
- b. the kind of message communicated to the person
- c. the kind of information stored in a person's mind/heart.

d. the kind of mentors at the place of training

A godly youth makes a conscious effort to choose what is good during the training at any place.

D. The Religious environment: In some cultures/societies, this is sometimes similar to the educational environment or serve they serve similar purposes and are thus merged. But where they are different, the role that the religious environment, especially, the church plays cannot be underestimated.

- a. The religious environment like the church creates an awareness of the existence of God.
- b. Besides the family environment, the religious environment most often makes the youth better aware of the things which are involved in getting to know God and their meaning. Examples include the following:
 - i. the use of the Bible and daily attendance at church
 - ii. others are issues like prayer, praises, worship, etc.
- c. Such an environment helps the youth to develop interest in these spiritual activities and make choices of which ones to be involved in.
- d. Finally, such environments help the youth to grow in the area that God has purposed for him/her.

E. The Community or Socio-Cultural environment: This covers people outside the immediate family of the youth who in one way or the other have influence on the growing youth. Somehow, these outsiders are part of the social system of every community which exert influence on one another. Those who usually neglect the influence of our community or socio-cultural environment on their children live to regret later.

- a. It is when a person realizes the importance of societal or the community environment and makes a conscious effort to make choices that is very important.
- b. A godly youth is likely to stick to the divine principles he/she is taught and decide to live by them in as he/she grows spite of peer pressure or societal influences.

Conclusion

This discussion here may be better concluded with series of questions skewed towards application. For example:

- Was Joseph or Samuel or Daniel or Esther or Timothy or any of the biblical youth who became champions for their beliefs in God a godly youth?
- How did all the above apply to any of them to make the person a godly youth? What lessons can we learn from the experiences of such youth?
- Which youth wouldn't want to be like Joseph or Samuel or Daniel or Esther or Timothy?

Definitely, for parents and society at large to have godly youth who are transformed to serve their generation there should be godly environments: family, personal or private, educational, religious, and socio-cultural environment. When any of these is missing, the youth may face some challenges in his/her pursuit of godliness.

DISCUSSION FIVE

STUDY AND ESPOUSE THE EFFECTS OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ISSUES ON THE YOUTH

Different social-cultural issues of the world have impact on different age groups. The focus of the discussion here is to consider some of these issues and their effect on the youth. It expects to make the youth aware of some anti-Christian and, even in some cases, anti-socio-cultural practices. Finally, it plans to develop proactive methods for addressing such issues like some of the arguments of Postmodernists and/or Secular humanists against Christianity, thereby arm the youth to be able to withstand them.

Major Socio-Cultural vices and their effects

There are lots of postmodernist and secular-humanist arguments and lifestyles which are contrary to expectations of biblical Christianity. It is imperative then to make the youth aware of some of these anti-Christian social practices and develop proactive methods and ways for addressing such arguments thereby help the youth to withstand them. Some of such negative practices are discussed here.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse:

One of such dangerous anti-socio-cultural practices which have gained lot of strength in the present time is drug abuse. This is the situation where certain un-prescribed/harmful drugs are explored by people leading to very devastating health consequences.

Alcohol and drugs affect every person directly or indirectly every time and everywhere: our homes, our school, in our community, town or city. The youth are the most vulnerable. In fact, there is no single age group of people more affected by alcohol and drugs than young people.

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In a report that the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCAAD) posted on their website on 25th July 2015, there are indications that more than 23 million people over the age of 12 are addicted to alcohol and other drugs. Thus, drugs have affected many millions of people -- parents, family members, friends, etc. The NCAAD report also notes the following:

For some, one time or infrequent use of alcohol or drugs can result in tragedy: alcohol overdose (alcohol poisoning), an accident or fall when under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or an arrest associated with alcohol or drugs that may cost you your reputation and/or your freedom. For others, even though they may not use alcohol or drugs, they could become a victim of an alcohol or drug-related crime. And, for yet others, what may have started as occasional use can turn into an addiction that presents extraordinary health concerns with potentially grave and tragic consequences.

There also appears to be some fundamental issues worth considering. Few that are of significance to our discussion that have been captured in the NCAAD report are highlighted in the subsequent section.

- **Age of first use of alcohol and drugs:** Using alcohol and drugs before the brain is fully developed increases one's risk for future addiction to alcohol and drugs dramatically. The reason why age of first use of alcohol is so critically important is that kids who start drinking alcohol before age 15 are 5 times more likely to develop alcohol abuse or dependence than people who first used alcohol at age 21 or older.

A study that was published in the Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine showed that 47% of those who began drinking before age 15 experienced alcohol dependence at some point in their life, compared to 9% of those who began drinking at age 21 or older. Youth who start drinking alcohol before age 15 are 5 times more likely to develop alcohol abuse or dependence than people who first used it at age 21 or older.

- **Do I have a problem?** Are you concerned about the role alcohol plays in your life? If you have a family history of alcoholism or addiction, you are many times more likely to develop a problem.
- **Family history of alcoholism or drug addiction:** Whether a person decides to use alcohol or drugs is a choice influenced by their environment - peers, family, and availability. In other words, it is easy for a young person to hear a lot about alcohol and other drugs from brothers or sisters or other young people especially friends. However, alcoholism and drug dependence

are not moral issues, they are not a matter of choice or a lack of willpower.

Once a person uses alcohol or drugs, the risk of developing alcoholism or drug dependence is largely influenced by genetics. However, in plain and simple terms, people's bodies respond to the effects of alcohol and drugs differently. Therefore, it is important to know "the REAL story about alcohol and other drugs." Once again, the NCAAD report provides the following facts about alcohol and drugs:

- Alcohol and drugs are the leading causes of youth crime.
- Alcohol and drugs are the leading factors in teenage suicide.
- More than 23 million people over the age of 12 are addicted to alcohol and other drugs that affect millions people; spouses, children, family members, neighbors and colleagues at work.
- 19.3% of students between ages 12-17 who receive average grades of "D" or lower used marijuana.
- Research and experience show that the younger someone starts using alcohol and drugs, the greater the chance that they will become addicted. One reason some teens decide to start smoking marijuana, drinking alcohol or using other drugs is because they think "everyone is doing it." And, since they think that the majority of their peers are using drugs, they draw the conclusion that it must be OK. If most of the people that you are hanging out with are drinking alcohol or using drugs, it's easy to think that "everyone is doing it." But statistics don't back up that claim. That is to say, "Not everyone is using drugs." In fact, most students go all the way through high school without ever doing drugs or getting drunk.

- Research shows that most teens aren't using drugs so make your own choices. Given the above statistics, if you are hanging out with a group in which the majority of kids are using drugs to get high, you may want to think about making some new friends. You may be heading toward an alcohol and drug problem if you continue to hang around those who routinely drink alcohol, smoke marijuana, abuse prescription drugs or use illegal drugs. Accept that you don't have to go along in order to get along.

Another significant area worthy of consideration covers some many unaddressed questions on Alcohol and Drugs. It is important that attention is focused on them in order to help with some tangible answers. A number of the very commonly asked questions which have been addressed by the NCAAD include the following:

- **Can you get addicted even though you only do it once in a while?** The answer is simple: Yes! For most people, addiction to alcohol and drugs is a process -- not an event. Most people who use alcohol and drugs do so with an intention of only using once or "once in a while." No one decides that they want to become addicted to alcohol and drugs. But, we are dealing with addictive drugs that directly affect the brain. It is easy for occasional use to change to frequent use or constant use -- that is addiction. The only thing we know for sure: if you don't drink alcohol and don't do drugs, you definitely won't become addicted.
- **Does marijuana use lead to the use of other drugs?** Studies show that while most marijuana smokers do not go on

to use other illegal drugs, long-term studies of high school students show that few young people use other illegal drugs without first using marijuana. Using marijuana puts people in contact with people who are users and sellers of other drugs and are likely to be exposed to and urged to try other drugs.

- **Why do some people become addicted, while others don't?** Risk factors for becoming addicted to alcohol and drugs, like other conditions and diseases, vary from person to person. But, the common risk factors include:

- i. Genetics--your family history
- ii. Age when you start using alcohol or drugs
- iii. Family treatments and experiences (including abuse, neglect and traumatic childhood experiences)
- iv. The major social environments (including access to alcohol and drugs and types of drugs used)

- **What drugs are the most commonly abused?** The following is a list of the most commonly abused drugs (starting with the most frequently used): marijuana, tranquilizers, cough medicine, sedatives, hallucinogens and cocaine.

- **Marijuana is just a plant; is it really that dangerous?** Yes, marijuana is a plant but it has very real health consequences, including drug addiction. While some people may think marijuana is a "harmless drug," actual experience and the real science show a different reality. More teens are in treatment with a primary diagnosis of marijuana dependence than for all other illegal drugs combined.

- **How do I know if I or someone close to me is addicted to alcohol or drugs?** The short answer -- if you or someone

close to you is having a problem with alcohol or drugs and they continue to use, it's time to get help. Continued use, despite negative consequences, is a powerful indicator of addiction.

- **How does alcohol leave the body?** Once absorbed into the bloodstream, the Kidneys eliminate 5% of alcohol in the urine, the Lungs exhale 5% of alcohol and the Liver breaks down the remaining 90% of alcohol. Alcohol is metabolized by the liver at the average rate of one standard drink per hour and nothing can speed this up, including drinking coffee.

- **Can alcoholism and drug addiction be treated?** Yes, both alcoholism and addiction can be treated adequately. In fact, alcoholism and addiction treatment programs can help a person stop drinking and using drugs and rebuild their lives and live a life in long-term recovery.

- **I think prescription drugs might help me feel better. Is it OK to use them once in a while?** You or your friends might think that prescription drugs are safer than alcohol or illegal drugs because doctors prescribe them. But, these drugs can be just as dangerous. When prescription drugs are used without a prescription they can be as dangerous as alcohol or illegal drugs. You can die from abusing prescription drugs, even if it's the first time.

Conclusion

The discussions here have examined some current social issues that are prevalent among the youth. It has helped us to compare Scriptural teachings with postmodernist and secular humanist arguments and practices in order to help us adapt

pragmatic youth programs as socio-cultural conditions change. Though indications are that drug addiction is becoming very common amongst the youth today, it is expected that the youth, having become aware of some of the anti-Christian and anti-socio-cultural practices, will now arm themselves with methods for addressing such issues in order to withstand them.

DISCUSSION SIX

BE AWARE OF THE SATANIC UNDERTONES OF SOCIO-CULTURAL VICES

The two preceding chapters have discussed the effects of some of factors on the developmental changes and behaviors of the youth and current social-cultural issues of the world that have impact on different age groups. The focus of the discussion here is to consider some of the satanic issues and their effect on the youth. It hopes to not only critically analyze such issues but to also determine their impact upon the youth. This will help us to compare with the teachings of Scripture in order to adapt pragmatic youth programs that will help us to overcome the ever-changing socio-cultural issues as developmental changes occur.

A. Some Socio-Cultural Issues have Satanic undertones

Daniel 1:3-20 mirrors some of the subtle ways in which the spirit of the world strategizes so as to neutralize, tame, and domesticate believers so they become worldly. Moreover, this passage challenges believers to reflect on Nebuchadnezzar's strategy for the Babylonization of youthful Israelite captives. The good news, however, is that the same passage reveals the strong but wise and subversive resistance of a number of these youthful captives.

Nebuchadnezzar targeted young Israelites with the aim of entrapping them to make them children of his kingdom, and by some accounts was successful with majority of them apart from a few. It was a calculated satanic/demonic agenda to destroy the youth of his realm and win them for his gods. However, Daniel, and three other Hebrew youth, namely, Hananiah,

Mishael, and Azariah, proved to be examples of the few that determined and succeeded by offering some tactical resistance to Nebuchadnezzar's agenda. Thus, God reward and resourced such faithful youth.

Similarly, there exist a satanic/demonic agenda to destroy the youth of our society today. Based on the outcome of the *Losing Heart* report, Asumang (2017) observes that it will appear that Babylon is winning in the battle for the Youth of UK. Commenting further, he notes: "At least there appears to be a sense of despondency and 'giving-up-ness' in large sections of our Churches regarding the prospects for the kingdom's youth".

Asumang's comments stem from a survey into the state of Youth and Children's Ministries in 2054 churches across England, Scotland and Wales, conducted by *Youthscape* Centre for Research, titled *Losing Heart* with the ominous subtitle *How Churches have lost confidence in their work with children and young people and was released in December 2016*. This report unearthed major alarming issues that need attention by the whole church. For example, on the basis of this *Losing Heart* report, Asumang (2017) comments thus: "It is a grim but realistic account of feeling of despair, of discouragement and loss of nerve and of ideas by our Churches on Youth work."

The *Losing Heart* (p. 8) report notes:

The churches lacked confidence in addressing the topics young people really care about, and feel a general sense of desperation about what, if anything, will improve their youth and children's

work in the years to come...Many simply can't seem to provide any youth work or don't have any young people left to work with, and it's hard to know what comes first: young people leaving the church, or a lack of youth provision. For many of these churches, the workers are few and they are losing heart and confidence.

This feeling of despair, discouragement and loss of nerve, notwithstanding, pragmatic efforts can be made to address the challenges. As leaders, we can focus attention on the current state of Youth ministry in our respective churches and communities in the light of such evil agenda and its implications and come out with measures to reverse some of the negative trends that are mentioned subsequently.

B. Negative effects of sexual desires on the youth

If the natural sexual drives of the youth are allowed to get out of control over them, it can easily lead them into terrible consequences. Some of the results of uncontrolled sexual desires include the following:

- (i) Teenage pregnancy resulting in unplanned family life.
- (ii) Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD), Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), gonorrhea, and so on.
- (iii) Abortion – this may affect the womb or lead to death in extreme cases.
- (iv) Psychological effects on life – shame, trauma, and so on.
- (v) Interruption and/or destruction of life's ambitions such as education or vocational training.

It should be understood that all the above consequences generally impact negatively not only the Christian youth but their families as well as the church and society. According to Michele Ybarra (2013), President and Research Director of a non-profit research organization, Center for Innovative Public Health Research (CiPHR), sexual violence usually emerges around the age of 16 years. It's normal as a parent that you don't witness your child having sex or being sexually violent as to force others to do engage in sexual activities.

Unfortunately, in their recent study published in JAMA Pediatrics suggests that not only do all of us need to be thinking about sexual violence; "we need to be talking with our children about it as well". Ybarra outlines five facts people need to know about youth and sex:

- Almost one in ten youth are perpetrators: Research indicates that about 10% of youth between the ages of 14 and 21 have admitted to influencing someone to engage in something related to sex when they knew that the other person did not want to. This is not just those who are actually having sex but all those pushing others into it.
- We asked youth who said they have tried to or made someone have sex with them, how old they were the first time. The most common age of initiation is 16 years old.
- Media matters: Youth who watch violent x-rated material are more likely to admit to being sexually violent. Trends also suggest intense exposures to violent media (people shooting, fighting, killing) and sexual media (people kissing, having sex) may be related to sexual violence.

- Girls are perpetrators: One in three youth who admitted to trying or making someone have sex with them was female.
- Few perpetrators face consequences: We asked youth who had tried to have sex with somebody or those who made someone to have sex with them, what happened as a result. Two in three youth said nothing happened; no one found out. Only 1% of the youth were contacted by the police. This is an indication that great majority people who sexually abuse others face no penalties for their misdeeds.

C. How to address negative sex-related practices

On one hand, any parent/minister who wants the youth to be godly should be prepared to explore the issues of the aforementioned external environments. On the other hand, youth who wants to be transformed in order to serve their generation should be prepared to be raised well in all such environments. These will enable them to overcome such negative influences dictated or driven by the factors of the internal environment as **sex, pornography**, and all other negative sexual practices and their accompanying negative effects on the youth.

Once again, Ybarra (2013) provides helpful measures to address negative influences dictated by factors of the internal environment especially the sex-related practices. A few of these that are applicable to our discussions are as follows:

- Talk to youth about healthy sex and unhealthy sex. Healthy sex is when both people are ready and want to have sex. Unhealthy sex is when one or both aren't ready, or are unsure about whether they want to have sex.

- Know that rape is not just physically forcing someone to have sex – it also can be psychological coercion. Remind youth that if they or their partner need to be convinced to have sex, then it's not healthy sex.
- Start talking to youth early – well before they are 16 years old about healthy and unhealthy sex. Even if you don't want your children to have sex until they're adults, it is still important to talk to them about sex. Sharing with them why you want them to wait may be really helpful for them to hear.
- Be mindful of the media that the youth are consuming. That is to say that from a public health perspective, x-rated material may not be harmful (what you believe from a moral perspective is absolutely your choice). But *violent* x-rated material appears to be a marker for concern. If you discover that a child has been looking at sexual images where one person is physically hurting another person, talk to them about it. Also, talk to them more generally about the amount of violence and sexual images they are consuming everyday through television, music, internet, etc.
- Create spaces and places that encourage bystanders (youth who hear about sexual violence others have experienced) to stand up and say something. As a community and a society, we need to ensure that those who are sexually violent meet the consequences.
- One more thing – give youth some perspective. When you're young, it's easy to feel like it's either now or never. Assure youth that they have their whole lives ahead of them to have sex. If their partner says 'no', there will be many other opportunities for better, healthier sex in the future.

D. Effect of Socio-cultural vices on the youth

As a young person, you are faced with many challenges of being influenced by the people around you. However, very few have the potential to affect your life in a more significant way than the decisions you make about alcohol and drugs. The decisions you make about alcohol and drugs will influence your health, your grades, your relationships, your job or career, maybe, even your freedom.

So, what can you do to protect yourself and reduce the risk of alcohol and drug problems? It should be understood that all the above consequences generally impact negatively not only the Christian youth but their families as well as the church and society. On their website, NCAAD want everyone to note that “Addiction is a disease – treatment is available – recovery brings joy.”

E. How to address social vices related to abuse of drugs

The challenges that Daniel and his colleagues at their youthful stages faced under Nebuchadnezzar can serve as a lesson for most youth, though it may not be related directly to only issues such as sex, pornography, alcohol and drugs, as indicated here. Asumang (2017) recommends Daniel in particular who “***purposed in his heart***” to be faithful to the agenda of God’s kingdom in Babylon (Dan 1:8) because, as he puts it, “It comes down to the heart and God blessing such commitment”.

In line with Daniel’s resolve, Asumang (2017) posits that church leaders need to start with a renewed belief within our

churches that our youth and children can indeed be captured in the heart for God. Folmsbee's submission lends support to that of Asumang. He believes that churches should embrace youth ministry in a postmodern culture with optimism and hope, instead of pessimism and despair. He notes:

Some of the statements about today's teens that I heard from church leaders and parents were absolutely shocking. It was as if these adults had given up on the current generation. When referring to the youth of today, their comments were full of disgust, disbelief, and despair, rather than faith, hope, and love... (2007, p. 20).

Here are ten tips for prevention of drug abuse posted by NCAAD report:

- **Don't be afraid to say no:** Sometimes, our fear of negative reaction from our friends, or others we don't even know, keeps us from doing what we know is right. Really simple, it may seem like "everyone is doing it," but they are not. Don't let someone else make your decisions for you. If someone is pressuring you to do something that's not right for you, you have the right to say no, and give a reason why or just walk away.
- **Connect with good friends and avoid negative peer pressure:** Pay attention to who you are hanging out with. If you are hanging out with a group in which the majority of kids are drinking alcohol or using drugs to get high, you may want to think about making some new friends. You may be headed toward an alcohol and drug problem if you continue to hang around others who routinely drink alcohol, smoke marijuana,

abuse prescription drugs or use illegal drugs. You don't have to go along to get along.

- **Make connections with your parents or other adults:** As you grow up, having people you can rely on, people you can talk to about life, life's challenges and your decisions about alcohol and drugs is important. The opportunity to benefit from someone else's life experiences can help put things in perspective and can be invaluable.

- **Enjoy life and do what you love - don't add alcohol and drugs:** Learn how to enjoy life and the people in your life, without adding alcohol or drugs. Alcohol and drugs can change who you are, limit your potential and complicate your life. Too often, "I'm bored" is just an excuse. Get out and get active in school and community activities such as music, sports, arts or a part-time job. Giving back as a volunteer is a great way to gain perspective on life.

- **Follow the family rules about alcohol and drugs:** As you grow up and want to assume more control over your life, having the trust and respect of your parents is very important. Don't let alcohol and drugs come between you and your parents. Talking with mom and dad about alcohol and drugs can be very helpful.

- **Get educated about alcohol and drugs:** You cannot rely on the myths and misconceptions that are out there among your friends and on the internet. Your ability to make the right decisions includes getting educated.

- **Be a role model and set a positive example:** Don't forget, what you do is more important than what you say! You are setting the foundation and direction for your life and others.

- **Plan ahead:** As you make plans for the party or going out with friends you need to plan ahead. You need to protect yourself and be smart. Don't become a victim of someone else's alcohol or drug use. Make sure that there is someone you can call, day or night, no matter what, if you need them. And, do the same for your friends.
- **Speak out/speak up/take control:** Take responsibility for your life, your health and your safety. Speak up about what alcohol and drugs are doing to your friends, your community and encourage others to do the same.
- **Get help:** If you or someone you know is in trouble with alcohol or drugs, get help. Don't wait. Don't try to fight it alone.

Conclusion

Creating awareness of the satanic undertones of some socio-cultural issues is a very positive step to reversing some of the negative developmental and social-cultural practices that have engulfed the youth nowadays. It is hoped that through determination the youth will be able make impact in the present fast changing society as Daniel and colleagues did. This can definitely be achieved by holding on to the teachings of Scripture and also by adapting pragmatic programs to counter most if not all of the current negative socio-cultural issues of the world.

DISCUSSION SEVEN

SET OUT GOALS FOR EFFECTIVE RUNNING OF YOUR YOUTH MINISTRY

Being able to set up a Youth ministry and considering the need for changes in its programs as some conditions change are the aim of the discussion here.

There is no doubt that any purpose-driven youth ministry will have programs and structures that reflect their understanding of who God is and how He wants humanity to relate with Him. Nevertheless, the following usually constitute the primary goals (or main purposes) of the church, especially, the Youth ministry: fellowship, worship, evangelism, discipleship, prayer, ministry or service, and other quality and spiritually-oriented programs.

Primary goals for a Youth Ministry

The primary goal of the church is typified by the First Century Church. In the whole of Acts 2 the life and experiences of the church are indicated. But particularly from verses 36-47, the key issues that the body of Christ stands for are clearly revealed. Building an effective Youth ministry, as rightly noted by Devries (2008, p. 55), “is not an event but a process”. In other words, it is the putting up of some programs and procedures in place that makes it functional. Areas of church programs which usually become the core mandate of the Youth ministry and make it effective have been highlighted as follows:

A. Worship: Worship is the time we get closer to God to express appreciation and gratitude to him. Worship is also done to show how great and wonderful God is. God made us understand in his words that when we refuse to worship Him, he would raise stones to do so which is not right. Worshipping the

Lord in songs of praise is the fundamental reason for the salvation of humanity.

Praises emanate from true love and appreciation for what the Lord has done for the individual, hence we are commanded to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart”. Apostle Peter states clearly: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet. 2:9). Churches with well-organized and trained personnel leading worship sections are able to experience dramatic transformation in their membership.

Devries (2008, p. 37) observes: “Growth and decline in youth ministry attendance is closely linked to the ups and downs of Sunday morning attendance...A decline in worship attendance generally meant youth group numbers would similarly sink.” Church worship is crucial not only in attracting the youth but, in fact, for the whole community to meet with God since “our chief purpose in life is to worship God” (Folmsbee 2007, p. 68).

B. Fellowship: “Baptizing them”. The reason for the call for evangelism is not for the youth to

Church worship is crucial not only in attracting the youth but, in fact, for the whole community to meet with God since...

just reach the world so that people will come to accept and confess Jesus Christ as God’s gift to humanity. It is also to seal up their salvation through baptism and for them to remain in constant interaction with Him. According to Roadcup (1980, p. 68), “God has always valued fellowship at the human level.

In fact, our relationship to one another is so important that Jesus said “loving our neighbor” is second only to “loving God.” As Folmsbee (2007, p. 47) also notes: “Young people need to know that Jesus invites us to join him on this continuing journey of learning to surrender to God, abide in God, and reflect God’s nature. His invitation to us is the same as the one he offered his first disciples in Mark 1:14-18.”

C. Teaching: This is the process that lays the foundation for proper discipleship. It is what Scripture states as: “Teaching them to obey” (Matt. 28:20) or continuing in the Apostles teaching (Acts 2:42). This is one of the pivots of the Great Commission. Folmsbee (2007, p. 21, 40) is impressed with Youth ministries teaching for spiritual formation rather than for the retaining of information. This is in the light of the realization that “Spiritual formation in a Christian tradition answers a specific human question, particularly: what kind of person am I going to be? It is the process of establishing the character of Christ in the person.

D. Prayer: This is the wheel for the journey towards healthy growth. Prayer ministry must be effective to bring results (Jam 5:16). To overcome the work of Satan against the progress of the church, the whole church must be marshal to wrestle against him in prayer, in order that he does not outwit us (2 Cor. 2:11). I believe that with much prayer and seeking the Lord’s face in fasting for His direction, teaching of the word of God, and crowning all with encouragement for the members to practice the spiritual disciplines, we shall be able to overcome the schemes of satanic forces against the church.

Thus, we need to follow that much prayer.

It is in line with the above that Roadcup (1980, p. 34) notes: “Don’t expect more from youth than our culture allows.” An acceptable culture is where the whole church engages in prayer for the youth to emulate. Thus, the church should arrange for a youth intercessory team to support the effort of the adult prayer ministry. By so doing, the youth are challenged to emulate the example of the adult.

E. Ministry: This involves rendering quality and sacrificial service to one another with the underlying principle of “Love your neighbor as yourself” (John 15:12-17; Gal. 5:14). A healthy youth ministry will constantly encourage the youth to discover their gifts and put them into practice through ministry and mission opportunities (Fields 1998, p. 46). Our youth ministry does not exist only to reach nonbelieving students, but to also connect them with other Christians, to help them grow in their faith, and to challenge the growing ones to discover their ministry and honor God with their lives.

F. Evangelism: “Go and make disciples.” This is one of the surest ways to achieve the Great Commission. This is the icing on the cake; it is what brings about quantitative growth and development. All youth ministries have a mandate to set in motion the wheels of evangelism wherever the opportunity offers itself, and watch it grow. Outreach ministry is the main key for church growth. Churches with effective methods of outreach are able to experience dramatic transformation in their membership. Such churches definitely see enlargement and great achievements in their vision.

Unfortunately, as Devries (2008, p. 123) observes: “The world is full of people who are waiting for someone to come along and motivate them to be the kind of people they wish they could be. The problem is that no one is coming.” Hence, the call on the youth to be visionary in their role as Ambassadors of Christ must be seen as a direct assignment from God. And, “...If we are going to make an impact in our world, moving in the direction of life-dynamic evangelism is not just an option, but a necessity” (Folmsbee 2007, p. 35).

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For any meaningful youth ministry, the primary goals or purposes lay the foundation for it to become a purpose - driven youth ministry. Doubtless, “the goal of youth ministry is the goal of the entire church: maturity - the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Roadcup 1980, p. 44).

Ingredients to fulfil Primary Goals

The afore-mentioned primary goals (or purposes) are driven or activated by some essential factors that may be called ingredients. Fields (1998, p. 30-33) discusses nine out of ten of these components, all of which he starts with “p” for easy retention. They are as follows:

- i. **Power of God:** This refers to the kind of power which works through leaders with pure hearts. There are many challenges associated with the setting up of a Youth Ministry. One of them is where the leader says: “I couldn’t create attractive programs

like those of other churches” and leading to copying someone else’s program always. Others say, “Perhaps I wasn’t the person for the youth ministry” or “I could never do enough to please everyone,” etc.

All these lead to failure. For one to become a youth worker, he/she needs to depend on the power of God. Once again, Fields (1998, p. 34-39) helps with the following pieces of advice:

- a. “Recognize God’s power through personal humility. God doesn’t need a program in order to work...He doesn’t even need me”.
- b. “Submit your abilities to God and allow His power to work through who you are...Rejoice that your presence and your words give the power of God another opportunity to be communicated...”
- c. “Focus on being a person of God before doing the work of God...No youth ministry idea or program can compete with God’s power working in and through you...”

2. *Pastor of the Youth:* The Youth Pastor is the main role model of the ministry. The involvement of such a person is hard to underestimate. They become a driving force that both pulls and/or pushes the Youth ministry to move forward.

3. *Participating leaders:* This is where the youth and adult combine their energies. The resultant effect is greater than that of each group separately. This results in what is known as synergy. Indeed, teaming up with other people, especially people that will serve as role models such as parents and other leaders for an effective youth ministry and church growth is

relevant for the fulfillment of primary goals. This also involves finding volunteers and developing them into ministry leaders to fulfill the purpose of helping in the training of the youth.

4. *Potential audience:* Identifying which youth are the targets for the purposes of outreach; and evangelism and follow-up. In fact, for every youth group, there is a potential audience that awaits their desire to reach out to others.

5. *Purpose of the Youth ministry:* It deals with “what” the youth ministry exists to achieve. It underlies the main goals of the ministry. As Fields notes, “it requires taking a closer look at the five purposes within a youth ministry: Worship, Fellowship, Evangelism, Discipleship, and Ministry” (1998, p. 47-50).

6. *Programs:* This is about deciding what programs will reach your potential audience and help fulfill God’s purpose.

7. *Process:* These are primarily about the means to outdoor and also display all your programs that will help you drive the youth toward spiritual maturity.

8. *Planned values:* This is about defining what values will strengthen your ministry and enhance your purpose.

9. *Perseverance in the midst of challenges:* This relates to learning how to survive the overwhelming responsibilities, discipline, problems, the adventure of change, etc. when difficult issues begin to raise their ugly heads. “To be forewarned is to forearm,” is a common adage. Thus, developing a persevering attitude is very crucial. In acknowledgement of this observation, Fields (1998, p. 68) comments: “Building a purpose – driven youth ministry will take a tremendous amount of commitment, perseverance, and leadership.”

10. Active and Life-Changing Small Groups: These usually function like the cells of the body, serving as the building blocks of the Youth Ministry.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the discussions have emphasized the purposes of setting a Youth Ministry and also consider the need for changes in its programs as some conditions change. As have been shown, any purpose-driven youth ministry should have programs and structures that reflect their understanding of who God is and how He wants humanity to relate with Him. Thus, the afore-mentioned and discussed components usually serve as the key ingredients that drive the primary purpose of every effective youth ministry.

DISCUSSION EIGHT

CONSIDER YOUR YOUTH PASTOR AND OTHER LEADERS AS ROLE MODELS

Do role models still matter in inculcating godly principles in our current youth as in the biblical days? The answer no doubt is, yes! Consequently, the focus of the discussion here is to emphasize the role of other models, particularly, the youth pastor and parent(s) in youth ministry. The objective is to describe how to get such role models' cooperation in dealing with youth problems.

It is also to explain how youth ministers must adapt their ministries to meet current needs. The discussion will underline the argument that a leader who is worthy of following is the one with a vision and not just the one who talks and engages in some work. This is because vision is very important in life.

It is people's visions that direct and define their lives. And the possession of vision by different people makes them perform better in life. The kind of vision that directs leaders enables them not only to perform differently but more importantly to achieve different results. The Lord Jesus himself said in relation to visionary leadership: "...*They are blind leaders of the blind; and when one blind man leads another, both fall into a ditch*" (Matt. 15:14).

The statement above clearly indicates that not every leader is worthy of following. Some leaders can lead you to a fruitful destination; others cannot. This is why it is important that after some period of following a particular leader, people have to evaluate where they have reached. And not only that, they also need to find out where next they are being directed to. This is because visions can grow, i.e., become bigger, greater and clearer as one travels successfully on the path of fulfillment.

Generally, people with good visions of what they want to achieve are likely to be good leaders, if their duties include leadership. Jesus Christ, the Lord himself came to the earth with a vision which enabled Him to fulfill His mission. Indeed, the Lord did not just to come on earth to work but to start, continue, and complete a definite mission. Thus, a good vision for life is essential to every person especially leaders because it helps them to direct the church well by making healthy choices and avoiding mistakes. The same applies to the Youth ministry.

...People with good visions of what they want to achieve are likely to be good leaders, if their duties include leadership.

A quality Youth Pastor is a fundamental model

It is imperative to drum home the fact that trustworthy Youth Pastor(s) must live as role models. Any leader (minister or pastor) who wants to develop a healthy youth ministry needs to have a fair idea of youth characteristics. In such a case the leader himself/herself can be of meaningful service to the youth.

The youth ministry is of great importance and of huge benefit to the church such that in some churches a qualified pastor is given oversight responsibility of the youth ministry. The youth pastor should be responsible for creating in the youth the awareness that the sooner they realize that their spiritual development and service to God is a path towards a successful future, the better.

As Roadcup (1980, p. 38) states: "Ministry to young people is a demanding challenge, but it's exciting - it's something you need to willingly, lovingly involve yourself in. The most important factor in youth work, however, is who you are as a person. That takes precedence over any method or program." Thus, quality Youth Pastors/Ministers should be able to adapt their lives to meet the standard that the Lord requires of His ministers. Moreover, they should be able to adapt their ministries to meet current needs. They should inspire confidence in both the church and the youth.

Like a light bulb that attracts insects, we expect the youth pastor to attract youth. When the youth pastor gets burn out, they go away. (cf. Devries 2008, p. 49) Thus, to be an effective Youth pastor, there are some personal questions that the pastor should consider like the following:

1. Do I think I am the type of leader who can help make God's purpose for the youth known? Why?
2. What are some ways I can help the youth to understand the five purposes discussed already? How would I teach the primary purposes to the youth?
3. Which of the purposes do I find difficult to model in my life?
4. Why do I find them difficult to model in my life?
5. How well can I make the purposes known among the youth, students, volunteers, and parents?
6. If I have a purpose statement that was written, is it still relevant and understandable for my youth ministry?

Now, there are various roles that the youth minister or pastor can play to develop the Youth ministry. Such a person

usually teams up with other leaders to have a general oversight of the youth in the following areas:

- To have oversight and direct the activities of the youth.
- To prepare syllabus (lessons) for the youth.
- To gain and maintain interest of youth in the church.
- To help youth identify their areas of service in the church.
- To help teach the youth acceptable Christian practices.
- To help counsel the youth on the challenges that they face.
- To prepare the youth for evangelism, teaching, prayers, etc.
- To help instill leadership qualities in the youth.
- To help the youth get involve in counseling others

Without any dispute, Youth Pastors/Ministers should be on top of issues that usually confront the youth if they are to

...Youth Pastors/Ministers should be on top of issues that usually confront the youth if they are to succeed in their roles.

succeed in their roles. What this means is that, he/she should be able to find out certain basic details about them such as their age,

gender, such as family background, and educational background; such as their class or level. It is also important to know about their life experiences are, what are the gaps which need filling, their vulnerability and painful experiences and what should be the core competencies to acquire.

The afore-mentioned issues will serve as background data on which the Pastor can base his/her dealings with each youth with. Moreover, for the pastor to deal with the menace of sex, pornography, drug abuse, etc., there is need for him/her to

have an in-depth understanding of scriptures as well as youth issues in order to combine both effectively. For example, the pastor must aim at helping the youth to know the harmful effects of sexual sin so that they will hate it and run away from it.

How to lead effectively: the role of supporting leaders

There is the need for other leaders who will help the Youth Pastor/Minister to give maximum attention to the developmental needs of the youth and enable him/her put in greater effort in the whole process of their spiritual formation. The common offices that these associate leaders occupy include, though not limited, to the following:

1. **Secretary:** To take records of events of the ministry and also engage in all the major correspondence of the ministry.
2. **Treasurer (and/or Financial Secretary):** To handle immediate financial issues as directed by the key leaders of the ministry through proper recordings of all cash flow and/or disbursement.
3. **Programs Organizer:** To see to the day-to-day organization and effective coordination of programs which are drawn by the leadership of the Youth ministry.

Generally, the creation of any office is determined by the size of the group or ministry and the need for such an office. In the selection of all these leaders, there should be laid down rules by the church that must be followed. Some of these will be mentioned in a latter discussion that center on the development of other leaders. But the overall objective of bringing in other

leaders is to support the Youth Pastor preform the responsibility as a leader effectively.

How to draw effective Youth Programs

Youth programs generally play crucial roles by making the whole ministry effective. It should however be understood that the programs themselves are only “means to an end and not an end in themselves” (Fields 1998, p. 79). As a leader, you should be able to organize programs effectively to enable members to not only partake and enjoy, but to also encourage them to take active part in other youth and church programs. All such programs must be

planned in such a way that it always make people have a sense of belonging or

As a leader, you should be able to organize programs effectively to enable members to not only partake and enjoy, but to also encourage them to take active part in both youth and church programs.

feeling that they are always recognized in the house or presence of God as active participants and not as invitees or spectators.

It is necessary to synthesize the programs to effectively address various critical issues of life: educational, cultural, social, and the like, which the youth face daily. In effect, a youth program must assist the youth in resolving life issues and develop Christian character. Some of the characteristics of healthy youth programs that need mention here (cf. Fields 1998, p. 197-203) include the fact that they should:

- Educate them on how to serve the Lord well

- Challenge the youth to deeper levels of spirituality
- Make provision for building fruitful relationships
- Be acceptable and able to stimulate interest in the youth
- Create excitement among the youth
- Act as models and be revealing to the youth
- Provide fresh source of ideas to the youth
- Have a clear sense of appeal to the potential audience.
- Provide some avenues for effective follow-up system

A list of common youth programs is provided here for perusal.

1	Bible studies	16	Indoor games day
2	Musical concert	17	Testimony evening
3	Worship night	18	Periodic conferences
4	Drama day/night	19	Educative video shows
5	Pick-n-Act show	20	Tea/Beverage party
6	Quiz competition	21	Friends-n-Visitors day
7	Prayer meetings	22	Camp meeting
8	Fashion show	23	Clean-up exercise
9	Cultural display	24	Skills training workshop
10	Health-walk day	25	Choreography night
11	Talents show	26	Spiritual sword draw
12	Debate competition	27	Talks/Seminars day
13	Open forum	28	Handicraft exhibition day
14	Voluntary/manual service day	29	Spiritual retreat (indoor/outdoor)
15	Evangelism competition	30	Food preparation competition

It is tempting to fixate on adopting particular programs which are no doubt yielding some good results. Nevertheless, provided subsequently is a list of some of the most important and yet attractive programs we will discuss and on which we can develop our action plans, although I don't think organizing these programs alone will be the panacea.

- **Periodic Conferences:** These are a formal meeting of people with a shared interest, typical; one that takes place over several days. During such conference great lessons are learned by the youth which build them spiritually and physically. It also helps the youth to interact with mature people with great ideas. Therefore, experienced people particularly those who have excelled in various fields of endeavor should be invited or be included in such youth conferences in order for them to challenge the youth to greater heights in life.

- **Pick-n-Act:** This is also one of the programs that are attractive to the youth. Such a program is used to motivate the people and also become a stepping stone for learning. Competitors will be called to pick and act on words written on piece of papers. For instance, calling a person to preach on a specific Bible text help to motivate somebody to study hard in the hope that he/she can also do it when given the chance.

- **Games and other sports:** Games and other sporting activities that people engage in are not only to promote good health but also for amusement and to release stress. This is also in line with the saying: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." Therefore, such programs are very crucial to youth development. Usually, the youth like to interact with people

during games and sports, since they use this chance to make friends. They also sometimes use such programs as platforms to invite friends who are not Christians to interact with them. In fact, such activities can turn into a soul-winning or evangelism program if well planned and organized to attract people from the community. Besides all these, it helps the youth to maintain good health.

- **Educative Video Shows:** Video shows can be used to give better understanding on issues of life. It can also serve as a platform to correct the wrongs among the youth. To make it educative and also make the youth and the whole church develop interest in better video shows, the video should be a bible-based or Christian show. The objective is for the youth to learn moral lessons and also educate the youth on what God says about our Christian lives. It is also to educate the youth on how to be obedient and not otherwise (Luke 15:11-21). Movies such as “The Prodigal Son”, “Letter from Hell”, “End Time”, “Left Behind”, etc. can be introduced to the youth. The reason is to help shape the Christian life of the youth, teach them the consequences of immoral lives such as leading one to destruction or hell.

- **Fashion Show:** It is significant to organize a program such as fashion show to address and encourage decency in dressing among the youth and even the church as a whole. This will help the youth to dress decently. Youth of this modern world put on all kinds of dresses which are not decent. Such a fashion show can be organized for awards to be given to the best male and female that will dress properly over a stipulated period of time. It

will not only promote decent dressing among the members of the youth but also encourage decent dressing competition among them. An important objective for organizing a fashion show is to develop modesty in dressing among the youth (1 Tim. 2:9-10).

- **Talent Show:** Talent is an ability given by God to a person at birth. Usually, it shows out in a person when he/she is able to do something without much difficulty. Being a leader of the youth, one should be able to discover the potential of the youth, in order to encourage their divine gifts. Gifts such as singing, teaching, dancing, acting, playing instruments, evangelism and many others can unearth during such programs. One of the benefits of such a program is to challenge people who were hitherto shy and timid to develop self-confidence. Moreover, it will enable them to always feel recognized whenever they are in the house of God. It may also enable people who are usually introverts become quite expressive in public. Overall, it will let other youth or guest to learn new things.

Note: For all such competitions, very experienced, capable, and God-fearing leaders or people in the church or even from outside the church can be appointed as judges. They will be mandated to access everyone's performance and also present an award to the very best contestant in terms of dressing, how to exhibit their talent, eating in public, etc.

Before arriving at which program and then begin with planning and organizing, a few tit-bits will be helpful here (cf. Roadcup 1980, p. 113-115):

- **Brainstorm to determine needs:** We should determine some basic area of need so as to plan the programs. Views can be solicited from the youth through a questionnaire.
- **Establish objectives:** After determining what programs need to be done, it is necessary to decide which ones to work on during that particular season. Again, views can be solicited from other youth members.
- **Plan thoroughly:** We must be careful to plan the youth activities and coordinate with other church activities, so as to avoid conflicts. If possible, set out committees to work on various areas of the program
- **Print/circulate important information:** As is a common practice nowadays, a printed brochure should be available to help remind parents, youth, other church members, and most importantly, visitors, to know what's going on in the youth program.
- **Evaluate your programs:** It is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs that are drawn, developed and are in operation. The aim of such evaluations is to improve on performance and create a sustainable youth ministry. Areas of evaluation may include but not limited to the following:
 - i. What went well with the program?
 - ii. What made the program go well?
 - iii. How do we sustain and improve upon it?
 - iv. What didn't go well?
 - v. What made the program not to go well?
 - vi. How do we correct or rectify the errors?
 - vii. When do we correct or rectify the errors?

Conclusion

The bottom-line of all the discussions in this chapter is that the church as a whole must be able to find an effective Youth Pastor and other leaders who can concentrate efforts at dealing specifically with youth issues. In the midst of the prevailing developmental and socio-cultural challenges as indicated in some of the previous chapters, Asumang (2017) observes that “encouraging the few Youth workers who are doing what appears externally to be a rather ‘dispiriting’ job, praying and providing for them must also be in the mix”. Specifically, the youth leadership must be able to create effective programs to fulfill the purposes. For every youth program, there should be maximum effort to give the encouragement and motivate the youth to participate. The leaders should be able to show the members why it is necessary to be part of the program.

DISCUSSION NINE

ACKNOWLEDGE THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN NURTURING QUALITY YOUTH

The aim of the discussion here is to understand how the church can create and organize an effective youth program. The objective is to emphasize how the church should accept to cooperate with the youth Pastor to make the youth ministry effective. This stems from the fact that the Youth ministry is part of the church, that is, it is the church's ministry and not just that of some specialists who can't even "relate" to youth.

Of course, setting-up and running a Youth ministry is the responsibility of the leadership in consonance with the adult ministries. In fact, the whole adult congregation has roles to play to make youth ministries very functional.

Of course, setting-up and running a Youth ministry is the responsibility of the leadership in consonance with the adult ministries. It is the responsibility of the church as a whole to keep the youth ministry active. In fact, the whole adult congregation has roles to play to make youth ministries very functional.

As indicated in the foregone paragraph, setting-up a whole ministry for youth is not a one-man show. As Devries (2008, p. 142) argues: "The mandate to be there for young people belongs to the Christian community, not to any individual or group of individuals." Consequently, the leadership and adult

ministries must help the youth ministry to develop well along the following areas:

A. The vision of the church must be explained to the youth:

The issue of vision is central to the proper functioning of any particular church. A visionless church can never satisfy the purpose of Christ for which it was set up. In fact, vision is necessary for any fruitful venture. In the ministry of many of the men who walked with God, vision played a prominent role.

One of such people is the Prophet Isaiah. Indeed, it will be expedient to discuss some of his experience here in order to enrich our discussion and also use them to emphasize some issues in relation to the healthy growth of the youth ministry. Before delving into the discussions of vision, let's consider some basic questions.

- Does your church have a Vision Statement? If no, why? If yes, what is it?
- Do you have a separate Youth Ministry Vision Statement?
- Does your Youth Ministry Vision Statement meet the criteria of acceptable Vision Statements? Is it challenging? Does it give a feasible picture of the future of the ministry?
- Is the Youth Pastor a visionary leader? How do you know? If he is not a visionary, what problem does this present for the ministry?
- Are there visionaries on the church board or the ministry staff? If so, who? If not, how might this affect the ministry?
- Have you spent any time praying for a vision? If yes, what thoughts have come to mind so far? If no, why?
- Do you tend to have an ambitious or humble vision?

Vision is essential to any organization (Prov. 29:18; Acts 16:6-10; 26:12-19). Vision is subject to change, meaning that, it is dynamic not static. In other words, overtime, the vision must be renewed or adjusted to some of the developments of the environment such as the contexts in which the congregation lives. In most cases, such changes take place only at the margins of the vision, not at its core. Meaning that, the core, which is the Great Commission, does not change. The details of the vision and the words used to convey them might change.

For any church, and narrowing down to all the ministries, including the Youth, it is usually the responsibility of the primary leader, i.e., the pastor, to set the vision that drives it.

It appears for a number of churches, there is no clearly defined vision presently because there are indications of a loss of our sense of direction.

There is thus the need for a fresh casting or redefining of our vision. For any church, and narrowing down to all the ministries, including the Youth, it is usually the responsibility of the primary leader, i.e., the pastor, to set the vision that drives it.

What needs to be done is for the primary leader to take a long period off to seek the face of God concerning His vision for the church. The vision must be clear, specific, scriptural, and it must be discussed with the rest of the leaders, in order to have leadership buy-in.

The Development of the Vision: “A vision is a clear and challenging picture of the future of the ministry.” It is a picture or image in one’s head showing how the church would look like. It

also shows a clear sense of direction or focus, and answers the question of, where or which way? The following are common features of vision:

- A vision is a clear picture.
- A vision is challenging.
- A vision is the future of the ministry.

Some of the reasons vision is important are:

- Encourages unity
- Creates energy
- Provides purpose
- Fosters risk-taking
- Enhances leadership
- Promotes excellence
- Sustains ministry

The Vision Personnel

Developing a Vision Statement, like that of Mission Statement, is both a **top-down** and **bottom-up** process. Thus, it begins at the top of the church with the Senior Pastor. Such a person should be a visionary leader who is convinced of the need for a powerful, inspiring vision. Besides, it is necessary to have other personnel to help with its final review.

Generally, the process of developing or formulating vision involves many but simple steps. By way of ensuring this formulation is fulfilled, if presently there is difficulty getting started, the steps here may be of help:

Step 1: The process has several important aspects.

- Examine other Vision Statements

- Give yourself quality time of deep prayer and reflection
- Engage a brainstorming session and think big
- Try hard to picture the vision/dream
- Organize and question the vision/dream that emerges

Step 2: Articulate your Vision in a written statement.

- What statement can you put down to describe your vision?
- Will people understand your Vision Statement?
- Does the Statement convey your vision for the church?

Step 3: Can you apply your experience?

- By way of application, can you construct your church's Vision Statement? For example, the vision of the church is
.....
- Based on this, you can construct your Youth Ministry Vision Statement. For example, the distinct vision of the youth ministry is
.....
- Can you close your eyes and repeat what you have written? Yes or No? My answer is.....
.....

Communication of the Vision: I suggest that they write the original vision down. But before any formal publicity or announcement, it is significant that others get their fingerprints over it. This is the **bottom-up** or **middle-out** process that results in ownership or a shared vision. As indicated earlier, the leader/minister/Pastor's example is very crucial. If such a person does not share or cast the vision, no one else will.

Leaders, like pastors, cannot cast the vision from on high and expect compliance. Therefore, it requires the use of all possible means to communicate your vision statement.

That is, all avenues should be explored in order to achieve this aim. Thus, like the Mission Statement, it could be done through the following means:

- a. The vision can be articulated in a written statement
- b. Use your sermon/teaching sessions as platform for casting the vision.
- c. Exploring avenues such as formal/informal conversations, special bulleting, framed posters, church brochures, church training materials, slide-tape presentations, audio/video-tapes, drama shows, newcomers' classes, church newsletters, mails and envelopes, etc.

Overall, each ministry leader will need to discover which method is best for them. What works well in one context may not be in another.

B. The Youth must be involved in the Purpose of the

Church: The purpose of any church is 'what' it is supposed to accomplish, but the mission is how that church is going to make it happen. And the youth have a huge responsibility if the church's purpose will be fulfilled. This begins with explaining the Purpose Statement of the church to them and it is in line with what a Purpose Statement will do for youth ministry (cf. Fields 1998, p. 57-60).

- A Purpose Statement will clarify the reason for the ministry's existence and show the direction of your church.
- A Purpose Statement will make the ministry professionalize.
- A Purpose Statement will attract followers.
- A Purpose Statement will minimize conflict.

- A purpose statement will create personal excitement among the members especially the youth.

Obviously, it is not just enough to come out with the Purpose Statement; the church should teach the youth ministry leadership the five purposes (Fields 1998, p. 61-64). The usual characteristics of a purpose statement are:

- A purpose statement should be simple.
- A purpose statement should be meaningful.
- A purpose statement should be action oriented.
- A purpose statement should be compelling.

What to do once the Purpose Statement is written

- Seek the wisdom and input of others: If you're afraid of other people's opinions and criticisms, you'll never be a good leader. Therefore, it is advisable to get support from your pastor.
- Launch it with wisdom: The fastest way to show a church that things are happening is to carefully launch a Purpose Statement. According to Fields (1998, p. 66), "this step gives people an opportunity to process their future participation."
- Convey your Purpose Statement: As a leader, do well to communicate regularly with youth members via the following:
 - i. State it as often as possible. That is, recite them over and over again. No one will know and value them as much as the main Mission/Vision caster or bearer of the ministry (cf. Fields 1998, p. 73)
 - ii. Put it on all of your literature. Your youth members should see and discuss your Purpose Statement regularly.
 - iii. Teach on each of your purpose(s) throughout the year.

- iv. Challenge your youth to memorize the Purpose Statement.
- v. Make your Purpose Statement visible with a poster in every corner of the church including your meeting rooms
- Be sure to properly communicate or convey the purpose of the church to the parents and other stakeholders especially the church leaders as well. A good leader makes sure that, at least, some key members of the church are able to memorize the Purpose Statement (Fields 1998, p. 74). This is achieved by:
 - i. Explaining your Purpose Statement at every meeting.
 - ii. Printing your purpose statement on ministry stationery so it is seen on all letters sent home
 - iii. Asking and assigning parents and other stakeholders like church leaders to pray specifically for the purposes as they relate to the youth ministry to be achieved
 - iv. Showing them how every program is designed to fulfill a specific purpose.
 - v. Sending them copies of your Purpose Statement and a brief description of each purpose.

Overall, each leader will need to come out with a Purpose Statement which is best for the church/ministry because what will work well in one context may not work in another.

C. Youth must be involved in the Mission of the church:

For every individual, mission is how he/she accomplishes his/her purpose in life. In relation to Christian

In relation to Christian ministry:
“Mission is a broad, brief, biblical statement of what the church is supposed to do to achieve its purpose or core mandate.”

ministry: “Mission is a broad, brief, biblical statement of what the church is supposed to do to achieve its purpose or core mandate.” It spells out the strategic plan of action that a church puts down to fulfill God’s purpose. It is a clear sense of the work to be done.

For a number of churches/ministries, however, issues of missions are usually kept on the sidelines. The reason might be that “churches have viewed adolescents as objects of mission, not as agents of mission” (Devries 2008, p. 159). But this is not only unfortunate but also unhealthy for the growth of the church. In fact, it is very necessary for the youth to be involved in the mission of the church.

Mission has many key elements. Four of these are that: mission is biblical; mission is broad though it is brief; mission is what every ministry is supposed to be doing; and mission is supposed to be clearly defined by a statement. The importance of mission includes:

- It dictates the ministry’s direction
- It formulates and focuses the ministries function.
- It provides a guideline for decision making.
- It inspires ministry unity.
- It shapes the strategy for the ministry.
- It enhances ministry effectiveness.
- It ensures an enduring organization.
- It facilitates evaluation.

Importance of Mission Statement: Does your Church or youth ministry have a well-defined Mission Statement? Do you often

remember to articulate it to people anytime, anywhere? Mission of any Christian organization is important for lots of reasons. The Lord Jesus Christ clearly spelt out the mission of the Universal Church to His disciples (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). Thus, the development of a core Mission Statement for your church or ministry is pertinent because it impacts on the growth of the church in numerous essential ways.

The mission of every church is usually contracted into a simple, and most appropriately, single sentence that becomes the Mission Statement. Therefore, the Mission Statement is like the Great Commission restated. It is the 'radar' of the church, "a description of the general accomplishments of a church and the umbrella of everything a church does." A church without a Mission Statement can be likened to a soccer team that is playing without any strategy, or like working mathematics without a formula.

The Mission Statement must be clear, specific, and must conform to scripture. This means that it must satisfy the general purpose God has given to the church in the Great Commission to win the lost for Christ. It is to be proactive, inspiring, and quite challenging. The purpose must provoke the members to action. As Folmsbee (2007, p. 47) notes:

*Most ministries teach youth the Great Commission
- challenging them to share faith with their peers,
sit with the students at lunch who are sitting alone,
and invite their teammates to outreach events. But
God invites us all to something bigger. God invites
us to recognize that the story of God is unfolding*

around us each day, and that we share in God's mission by becoming agents of restoration. Recognizing our calling to fulfill the Great Commission is one thing. But recognizing that in doing so we become partners with God in his mission of restoring the world is so much more.

Development of a Mission Statement: Like vision, the mission of the church and narrowing it down to all the ministries including the Youth must come from the heart of God. Therefore, the Pastor, the primary leader, should take a long period off to seek the face of God concerning His purpose for the youth in the church.

The process of formulating a Mission Statement for your ministry involves many but simple steps. Generally, however, some of the questions for consideration are:

- What is your church doing presently?
- What is your church supposed to be doing?
- Why are you not doing what you are supposed to be doing?
- What will change what you are supposed to be doing?

If you have difficulty getting started, these should help:

Step 1: What is your church supposed to do or be doing?

- What is the motivation for the establishment of the church?
- Which group(s) of people is the church serving?
- How is the church rendering their services to these people?

Step 2: Articulate your mission in a written statement.

- What words best communicate your Mission Statement to the audience?

- Is your Mission Statement well stated, do the youth and other people understand it?
- Does your format convey well in your Mission Statement?

Step 3: Is your Mission Statement brief and simple?

- Is the Mission Statement broad enough?
- Is the Mission Statement clear?

Step 4: Is the Mission Statement brief and simple?

- Is your Mission Statement memorable?
- Would you or anyone in your church remember it easily?

Step 5: Can you apply your experience?

- By way of application, can you construct the Church's Mission Statement? For example, the Mission Statement of the Church is
- Consequently, the distinct Mission Statement of the youth ministry is
- Can you close your eyes and repeat what you have written?
Yes or No? My answer is.....

Communication of the Mission Statement: This area requires the use of all possible means of effective communication. The leader/minister/Pastor's example is very crucial. If such a person does not live the dream, no one else will. Therefore, all avenues should be explored in order to achieve this aim. It could be done through the following:

- Articulate your Mission in a written statement
- Use your sermon/teaching sessions to communicate it.
- There are other methods that can be employed including: engaging formal/informal forms of conversations, special

bulleting, framed posters, church training materials, using projector screens to provide slide-tape presentations, audio/video-tapes, drama shows, newcomers or converts classes, church brochures, newsletters, envelopes, and mails or correspondence, and by way of periodic leadership and congregational performance appraisals.

What works well in one context may not in another. So every youth leader should discover the best method for the group.

Most leaders mistakenly confuse values, purpose, goals, objectives, mission and their related issues with vision. Generally, however, a church's vision is not the same as its mission. In fact, the relationship between the two is that on one hand a vision provides the recipients with a picture of what the mission will look like or what is supposed to be realized. On the other hand, mission is the actualization of a vision. Some of the differences are shown below:

Area	Vision	Mission
Definition	Picture/Snapshot	Statement
Purpose	Inspires	Informs
Activity	Seeing	Doing
Order	First/Second	Second/First
Focus	Narrow	Broad
Communication	Visual	Verbal
Variation	Dynamic	Static

Table showing the differences between Vision and Mission

Sometimes, however, these two; vision and mission, become like the “chicken and egg” situation; it’s hard to determine which should be placed ahead of the other. But much will depend upon which one comes to mind first.

D. The Youth must be helped to have divine goals: Missions are driven by Goals. Goals are the plans that are set out to

Goals are the plans that are set out to achieve one's vision in life.

achieve one's vision in life.

Thus, an important step to involve the youth in the church's mission is to come

out with a set of objectives, each of which describes the activities the church will put in place to fulfill its primary goals. By doing so, the church is helping the youth to be involved in godly services and fulfil divine goals. It is along this same line that Folmsbee (2007, p. 64) argues: "Our lives should declare the truth about God and ourselves. We are called to make known who God is, what he has done for humanity, and how to enter into a relationship with him."

This is also in line with the fact that everyone ought to remember to serve God while there is life and strength. Jesus' said in John 9:4: "As long as it is day, we must do the works of the one who sent us" (that is, the Creator). The whole passage is a look beyond earthly vanities to God, who made mankind for Himself.

E. The Youth ministry must be supported financially: Biblically, and in fact, in a lot of cultures, men are viewed as the head and breadwinners of the home. Nevertheless, women have also been the caretakers of the homes in some cultures through many centuries. These trends are sometimes also experienced even in the church, where women have been playing supportive roles including financing programs.

This gesture of giving can be of immense benefit to the church if the focus is extended to cover the youth ministry. In the final analysis, it is realized that the leadership and adults of the church must be proactive when it comes to raising monetary support and provision of needed resources like study materials and electronic gadgets to support youth ministry programs.

Conclusion

It is reasonable to conclude that every youth must not only be connected to the Creator but be supported to relate well with Him by way of information and provision of resources. The adult can also pray for them and also counsel the youth and play leading roles such as Group mentors, Youth Bible study class teachers, etc. In this way, the youth can serve the Lord in the days of his/her youth before the evil days come.

DISCUSSION TEN

IDENTIFY AND REACH OUT TO ALL POSSIBLE POTENTIAL AUDIENCES OF YOUTH MINISTRY

In this discussion, the attention is not only on how to identify all possible potential audiences of youth ministry but more importantly on how to also reach out to them. Fields (1998, p. 86) notes, “Your programs will become more successful, while fulfilling God’s purpose, if you spend some preliminary time identifying the different audiences in your ministry.” Even so, it does apply to the youth ministry. What this means is that when we, as the youth, know the potential audience we are trying to reach, we can design our programs to focus on them.

In fact, the program can follow one specific purpose of our target audience at a time or it can be designed to satisfy many purposes at the same time if it is well strategized. Indeed, Jesus ministered to many people at different levels of faith at different times by adopting different strategies (cf. Fields 1998, p. 90). Some of the undergirding issues of how to identify all possible potential audiences and how to also reach out to them are discussed subsequently.

A. The potential audience for the Youth ministry

It is important to identify all the potential audiences of the church and the community that the youth can reach out to, so as to plan with them in mind. If we classify the youth within the age bracket of 13-19 years as “Adolescent” youth and those

above that age as “Matured” youth, then the usual audiences we are likely to deal with are the following:

- “Matured” and committed youth in the church
- “Adolescent” and committed youth in the church
- “Matured” youth in the community both students and other professionals
- “Adolescent” youth in the community both students and other professionals

B. Fulfilling God’s purpose of reaching the audiences

What should the leader do after identifying all the potential audiences? The next essential thing will be the tools for winning them into the ministry by witnessing. For the church and, especially the youth, evangelism is non-negotiable, for it is the core mandate given

by the Lord as the Great Commission.

A sensitive, vibrant and dynamic youth leadership ministry should be able to

A sensitive, vibrant and dynamic youth leadership ministry should be able to help the ministry to express an evangelistic attitude; it should be able to challenge the youth with strong evangelistic themes to seek the lost.

help the ministry to express an evangelistic attitude; it should be able to challenge the youth with strong evangelistic themes to seek the lost.

In a broader sense, just as “iron sharpens iron,” so should every youth ministry that is evangelistic-oriented. Such a ministry is likely to challenge the whole church to reaching out to the outside audiences. It should also be understood that

evangelism is not just a program but a process. According to Folmsbee (2007, p. 30):

A lot of youth ministries killed event evangelism a long time ago and now focus entirely on a friendship evangelism method. And there's a lot to be said for this, it calls for Christian students to build bridges between themselves and their friends who are outside the church. This bridge is usually built on a common interest such as sports, academics, goals and dreams...

Therefore, the youth must be able to challenge their colleagues, especially students, with basic evangelistic steps. Some of the basic steps include the following:

- Telling friends about their Christian commitment
- Telling their friends why they are Christians
- Telling their friends how they became Christians
- Inviting friends to an appropriate youth programs
- Asking friends if they would like to become Christians

C. Emphasis on the community should not be overlooked

The community in which the Youth Ministry operates is very important. On this, Folmsbee (2007, p. 31) states: "A new kind of youth ministry is committed to time and proximity. It means getting into the canoe and crossing the "waterways of life" together, in community, with your sphere of relations." And in continuing, Folmsbee makes another important observation:

In an age of certain change manifesting itself in uncertain ways, life-dynamic evangelism has great

potential to reach the distrustfully curious and the faithfully skeptical. I believe it is essential for youth pastors to begin developing and implementing a ministry culture that allows students [and the youth in general] better understand how they might be Jesus to their family, friends, and the wider community (2007, p. 34).

The community is usually the immediate constituency of our churches, thus our first focus of any effective outreach.

D. Tools for reaching out to potential audiences

With much understanding of our communities, the next essential thing will be the tools for winning them into the ministry by witnessing. The essential tool for any effective outreach is the message, which is basically, the Good news or gospel of salvation.

The essential tool for any effective outreach is the message, which is basically, the Good news or gospel of salvation.

This should also be backed by the leading of the Holy Spirit in order to direct and embolden us, and a good prayer session to water the ground. Of course, sometimes our own testimonies can also be powerful tools.

In agreement with Fields, we may not have the resources to create programs attractive enough to compete with the world (1998, p. 105). Yet, there are some occasions that the youth can seize the opportunity to organize their own programs to achieve their aim. In most cultures and societies, some of the important occasions are marriage ceremonies like weddings,

birthdays, burial ceremonies, send-off or retirement and other important events that call for parties and celebrations, etc. As a transformational youth, the underlying objective for such ceremonial practices is the opportunity to transform lives of the audience. The common practice, however, is for whole church to be able to launch out in teams, spearheaded by the senior pastor and other leaders of the church (cf. Fields 1998, p. 91).

E. Upholding our Cultural values

To minister effectively in any culture, particularly Africa, we need to identify with our cultures. Folmsbee (2007, p. 35) is right in his observation that “our evangelism design will require constant re-culturing to remain relevant and accessible. We must be speaking the language of an emerging culture, and those immersed in that culture must perceive our ministry as near to their heart.”

This means that churches would have to draw a teaching outline that will sensitize members to the kind of people in the communities. During such programs, the churches have to teach the youth to understand the culture of the people. If we fail to understand the culture in which our churches are located and serve, then we are surely ministering in a vacuum. This means that our youth should know about the language, rules, norms, traditions and customs, family structures, our rituals, etc.

Thus, the present need and mission of every church should be to devise strategies that involve active evangelism in our socio-cultural environment. Folmsbee (2007, p. 14) agrees that for any postmodern youth ministry, evangelism (i.e. proclaiming

the faith) and apologetics (i.e. defending the faith) must always be done in culturally appropriate ways.

F. Fulfilling God's purpose of Worship

Different worship preferences exist depending on the taste of the community or society. It is hard not to agree with Fields (1998, p. 117-118) that a crowd program such as a worship session is usually an open door to the community audience and therefore needs a positive environment. Continuing on the same subject, it is important to note certain characteristics that for the sake of the youth would constitute a positive worship environment or a negative one. They are as follows:

a. Positive environment (that is, generate interest in youth)

- Contemporary choirs play spiritual yet “choooboi” songs
- If possible, the youth are encouraged to compose their own songs and sing them. In one of the churches that I served as the National Youth Pastor (Christ Resurrection Church – CRC, Ghana), the youth song goes like this:

We are the youth of C.R.C.

We are the heirs of this great church

Spreading the gospel is our aim

Stand up to be counted for the works of God

Make God's Church grow!

Make God's Church grow!

- Youth leaders and others are involved in welcoming guest
- Seating is arranged to make the room feel welcoming and relaxing, and not the usual strict or by-force seating orders
- There is freedom for photographs and maximum interaction

b. Negative environment (that easily turns some youth off)

- The choir is singing to the accompaniment of organ music
- Adult and youth leaders have formed a “heckle tunnel” and are ridiculing invitees for their appearance as they appear for the programs
- Seating is rigid and arranged by families and seated in order of special protocol or popularity

What these mean is that the church leadership in general have to ensure that an environment conducive for the youth to “enjoy” their programs is created. On this, Asumang (2017) exhorts church leaders thus: “...Breathing hope into Youth ministry itself must be a priority”.

At the same time, it is quite necessary to put in place the needed checks and balances to avoid or control excesses. This means that certain factors need to be considered by the church in general and the youth in particular to ensure not only a healthy worship but all other youth programs. It is also in the same light that Fields (1998, p. 119-137) comments concerning many crowd programs. He indicates that:

- A crowd program needs youth involvement and an understandable message
- A crowd program must fulfil God’s purpose of fellowship and also nurture the congregation
- Many visitors will evaluate your entire ministry based on how they were greeted when they arrived
- A crowd program sometimes needs some elements of fun. Without any controversy, God wired us with the capacity to laugh. Thus, we should not view all forms of fun as ungodly;

some of them eventually help us to release tension while others also educate us.

G. The big deal about small groups

Breaking a bigger group into smaller units is one of the issues of ministry that many leaders have not exploited. Donahue (2002, p. 22) notes: “Significant relationship (including one-to-one) occur best in the context of a small group. Connecting people in a small group is not an optional sub-ministry of a church – it is essential for growth. Without these connections, people can, at best, attend meetings, but they aren’t truly participating in church.”

Beyond this fact, there are lots of advantages, one of them being that, at least, it offers the leader(s) the opportunity to have better oversight responsibility of a body just as Jethro did to Moses (Exod. 18:1-27). Fields also argues:

A leader who can nurture a group of students will experience a depth of ministry never reached in just being up front and running the show...Small groups allow students to be known...We want to grow larger and smaller at the same time. Small groups make students verbal. Small groups allow students [youth] to personalize their faith...Small groups encourage accountable relationship.

There are many other pertinent characteristic advantages of organizing Small groups within a larger group like the youth ministry. Fields (1998, p. 140-142) notes some of these as:

- Serve one another (Gal. 5:13)
- Accept one another (Rom. 15:7)

- Forgive one another (Col. 3:13)
- Greet one another (Rom. 16:16)
- Bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2)
- Be devoted to one another (Rom. 12:10)
- Honor one another (Rom. 12: 10)
- Teach one another (Rom. 15: 14)
- Submit to one another (Eph. 5: 21)
- Encourage one another (1 Thess. 5:11)

In line with the same argument, Roadcup (1980, p. 70) notes two important characteristics as follows:

1. In a small group, the adult can focus his attention on the needs of a few, and thus be a more effective leader.
2. Small groups provide the best environment for the most intimate kind of fellowship at all times.

Indeed, as Fields (1998, p. 138) also agrees, Small groups usually become long-term solution to some of the challenges of

Thus, in order to ensure maximized effectiveness in operation, decentralization and accountability, some leaders should be appointed to supervise small groups of youth and to report to the Youth pastor.

most larger societies and cultures. Thus, in order to ensure maximized effectiveness in operation, decentralization and accountability, some leaders should be appointed to supervise small groups of youth and to report to the Youth pastor. What this means is that all the small groups in the church, especially among the youth, should be supported and encouraged to function effectively in the hope of making the bigger body of

Christ become a wholesome and well-functioning unit, to the glory of God.

Hence, each of the small groups should be given the necessary support to organize effective programs to help their spiritual growth and development. At the same time, the members should be performing their required commitment as individuals to the church. Here are some of the criteria for breaking into small groups:

- Age
- Sex
- Level of education
- Neighborhood or residence
- Available meeting times
- Interests (for example, sports, drama, music)
- Area of commitment in the church or Youth ministry

H. Discipleship: How to prepare new youth members

Preparing for new committed youth members is one of the surest ways to the fulfillment of God's purpose of discipleship. Fields (1998, p. 159-164) observes that "the small-group leader is the one who does most of the encouraging and plays the role of a disciple with hands on oversight and mentoring", hence he proposes some procedures to achieve such primary purpose:

- Define the useful habits of a committed Christian, especially the youth. For example, the prayer life of one of the leaders may be used as case study.
- Find or create the tools to help build such useful habits among the other youth such as focusing on encouragement

and involvement and challenge all other youth members to make them emulate such habits.

I. How to fulfil God's purpose of ministry in the church

Fulfilling God's purpose of rendering any service or ministry is one of the important steps in challenging youth at all levels to do ministry. The subsequent procedures, proposed by Fields (1998, p. 174-175) may help:

- Stop treating youth as the standby or future church but not useful now. This is because the youth aren't the future of the church; they're the present church
- Continually communicate ministry message and teach them to appreciate that they were created for service
- Involve them in areas of the church's programs that have the tendency to challenge each of them and inspire them individually and collectively to do same
- Help the youth discover their spiritual gifts

Conclusion

It is quite obvious from all the different areas that have been discussed that identifying and reaching out to the different potential audiences of youth ministry involves a lot of issues and procedures. Nevertheless, when these areas are carefully followed and implemented, the growth of the Youth ministry will be both qualitative and quantitative.

DISCUSSION ELEVEN

DEVISE MEASURES TO HELP OTHER YOUTH OVERCOME FLESHLY DESIRES

The discussions here hope to come out with pragmatic steps to help the youth overcome fleshly desires. In other words, the effort here is towards how to help the youth to demonstrate an organized and holy life-style. The discussion hopes to exemplify an organized and holy lifestyle as it relates to God, the ministry, and the family.

In the arguments of Folmsbee (2007, p. 50): “The last thing postmodern young people need is something more to do. They have plenty to keep them busy, but precious little to make

them holy.” Thus, no important advice can be given to the youth than the one that draws their attention to important life decisions during the prime age of life, in order to make them live responsibly now and in future.

...No important advice can be given to the youth than the one that draws their attention to important life decisions during the prime age of life, in order to make them live responsibly now and in future.

One of the major areas that the church in particular has trouble with is how to help the youth to control or flee youthful evil desires. Apostle Paul exhorts Timothy concerning lust in the following words: “Flee the evil desires of youth (teenage), and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22). In relation to such a call, the Daily

Graphic (2011, p. 29), one of the Ghanaian newspapers reported:

Okatakyie Dr. Amenfi VII, Omanhene of Asebu Traditional Area, has appealed to Christians to help fight anti-social activities such as homosexuality and lesbianism in the society. The Omanhene said Christians were regarded as the light of the world for which it was incumbent on them to check things which Christ abhorred.

Many other calls such as the above on the need to practice sexual morality keep on coming from many concerned people and opinion leaders: spiritual, traditional, political, etc. What needs to be understood is that though God made us sexual creatures, teenage sex and other negative sexual practices such as pornography, homosexuality, etc., are evil. When we understand God's purpose for sex, we will not sin against our own bodies and God.

Some people may vaguely argue that pornography is not mentioned in the scriptures. Of course, the word "pornography" does not appear same in the scriptures, but is implied in some of the sins mentioned therein (2 Sam. 11:2-4; Matt. 5:27-30; James 1:14). More often, pornography is included in the sin of sexual impurity or sexual immorality because of some reasons such as the following:

- i. It can make a person's mind become filled with impure sexual thoughts (or visions) which arouse sexual feelings and fantasies. This is sin before God.
- ii. It creates lust and sexual desires that can lead to sin.

- iii. It can lead to spiritual depravity and moral weakness.
- iv. It can arouse inordinate sexual feelings leading to masturbation, homosexuality, rape, promiscuity, etc.

To forestall these negative practices among the youth, there should be well-calculated and pragmatic efforts such as teaching, preaching, and effective disciplinary measures to bring the youth in line with biblical lifestyle. These include:

A. The youth must acknowledge God as the Creator: Apart from taking steps to prevent the youth from youthful sex and contacts with pornographic material the youth must remember the Creator. Without any argument, in order to groom any youth with a vision in life they must be oriented to be conscious of God's presence. The title "Creator" in Ecclesiastes 12:1 is well chosen to remind every youth of divine responsibility to life.

It implies that no one created him/herself but was created by a Creator. The fact that mankind has a Creator means everyone is accountable to Him. It is important for everyone to remember this Creator in his/her youthful days due to the uncertainties of the future. This will make the one well prepared for the judgment to come (Eccl. 12:1-7, 13-14).

It is important for everyone to remember this Creator in his/her youthful days due to the uncertainties of the future.

Folmsbee (2007, p. 76) observes that a new kind of youth ministry helps students determine who God has created them to be before determining what they need to become. The author of Ecclesiastes concludes that a person ought to enjoy the best of what he/she

can, but this enjoyment should be accomplished only by acknowledging God's sovereignty over creation. For, God is in control of life and He can be expected to reward obedience by the creature to Him. Whereas the Preacher can only say that obedience to God's commandments is mankind's hope, Apostle Paul proclaims that God has acted in Christ to bring new hope to mankind; a hope to stand in God's judgment.

A common observation is that it's especially in the period of youth that one is most inclined to forget God, our Creator. King Solomon thought it wise to advise the youth to build a strong foundation in the Lord during that period so that when the evil days come, the person can still stand. By old age, his interactions with all these had moved his heart from following God to idols as stated in Scripture:

King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women...As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God...So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely... (1 Kings 11:1, 4 and 6, NIV)

No wonder, it's in these years that we are exhorted to remember Him (Eccl.12:1). David Murray (2012; cf. Usman, 2016) notes: Our enemy says, "Youth for pleasure, middle age for business, old age for religion." The Bible says, "Youth, middle age, and old age for your Creator." The following is an outline by Murray of some reasons why the youth should work hard to remember the Creator during such age period:

- **Energetic years:** Why wait until we are pegging out, until we are running down, until our gas is almost empty, before serving our Creator? The God who made us deserves our most active and healthy years: our bodies are strong and muscular (well kind of), our minds are sharp and clear, our senses are receptive and keen and sensitive, our enthusiasm is bright and bushy, our wills are steely and determined. Remember Him in your energetic years.
- **Sensitive years:** Why do far more of us become Christians in our youth than in our middle or old age? It's because youthful years are sensitive years. Without giving up our belief in "Total Depravity" we can say that it's "easier" to believe and repent when we are younger. It's never easy, but it's easier. And it's easier because as we get older our heart is hardened, our conscience is seared, our sins root deeper, and our deadness worsen. Let's use our youthful sensitivity and receptivity to remember our Creator before the evil days of callous indifference set in.
- **Teachable years:** We learn more in our youth than in any other period of life. That's true in all subjects, but especially true in religious instruction. All the Christians I've met who were converted to Christ late in life have expressed huge regrets about how little they know and how little they can now learn.
- **Dangerous years:** Youthful years are minefield years since they are controlled by: hormones, peer pressure, alcohol, drugs,

pornography, immorality, testosterone, etc. Consequently, few youth navigate these years without blowing up here and there. Dangers abound on every side – and on the inside. How many “first” temptations become “last” temptations! How much we need God, our Creator, to keep us and carry us through this battlefield.

Everyone is thus advised by the Preacher to remember his Creator in the days of his youth because of the reason such as found in Ecclesiastes 12:1-5. In agreement with Murray, youth time is usually underscored by the following:

- i. When self-surrender is not very difficult because life has just begun.
- ii. The time when ones' heart is less callous to holiness; one has little to worry about, and has much zeal to work.
- iii. The period when desires of man are high; desire to do anything is not lost.
- iv. When a person is less troubled by sorrows, affliction, bodily weaknesses, constant anticipation or fear of death, calamity, etc., which characterizes old age.

Therefore, before old age comes, one has to remember his creator. To summarize, the author of mankind's life has to be remembered because of the following reasons:

- i. He as the creator has absolute claim over the creature.
- ii. The creature owns the Creator duty and honor, or a sense of appreciation.
- iii. The human heart is prone to forget the Creator and instead, align and praise the creatures around him, or

some evil days will compel him to forget major issues of life (vs. 2-7).

- iv. It is remembering the Creator that one may come to terms with the reason he/she was even created.
- v. The creature will definitely give accounts of the life he/she enjoyed to the Creator (vs. 14).

How does the Youth remember the Creator? It is to enable mankind reconcile and relate well with the Creator that Christ came, so that He may lift humanity up from the clutches of sin and give everyone who believes in Him the grace (by the Holy

If anyone is able to live for the Lord through the strength of His Word and the Spirit, the one will not fear the judgment to come.

Spirit) that enables the one to live a righteous and holy life for God. If anyone is able to live for the Lord through the strength of His Word and

the Spirit, the one will not fear the judgment to come. The book of Ecclesiastes chapter 12:13 gives us some reasons:

- i. By fearing God, one has to abstain from evil deeds.
- ii. By keeping God's commandments, which means one has to know the precepts of God and walk in them.
- iii. By doing good and abstaining from evil, a person's ways are rightly set up before the Lord.

Similarly, Murray (2012) gives some helpful tips to the youth to remember the Creator during these best of years and perhaps "worst" of years. They are as follows:

- Be persuaded that you have a Creator: Get well grounded in a literal understanding of Genesis 1-2.

- Get to know your Creator: Study His Word using sermons, commentaries, and good books. But also study His World using microscopes and telescopes and any other instruments He gives.
- Join with your Creator's friends: Build friendships with other creatures that love to remember and respect their Creator.
- Follow your Creator's order: He set and gave the pattern of six days work followed by one day of rest for contemplation of His Works.
- Ask for your Creator's salvation: Even if your rejection of your Creator has broken you in pieces, He's willing to re-create you in His image.

Conclusion

King Solomon came to the conclusion that a person ought to remember his/her creator in the youthful days because of all the above issues that have been considered and the experiences that he had in life as a king. He wasted his youthful years experimenting with the things that he at the end called "Vanity upon vanity" (Eccl. 1:1-2:1ff). As Solomon grew older, he no doubt had a sad end because of the choices of his youthful days (1 Kings 11:1-13). As youth, King Solomon's life is just enough lessons for us.

DISCUSSION TWELVE

USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO MAKE YOUTH COUNSELLING BOTH PRACTICAL AND RESULTS-ORIENTED

Many things have been discovered as benefit that the youth can derive from their relationship with their pastor and/or leaders or mentors. In our current world, many outlets exist for exploration to achieve desired positive results. Social media is one of these. This can be explored in counselling on practical life issues, especially with regards to current socio-cultural and spiritual matters. The common social issues of youth that every leader should be much concerned about include the following: masturbation, pornography, sex, alcohol and drug, and the like.

Generally, it is significant to let the youth know that they can trust you enough as their leader, pastor or mentor not only to confide in you their secrets but to also depend on you for some significant issues of life such as the following:

- Helping them to enjoy healthy family relationships
- Winning them into a father-daughter/son relationship
- Allaying their fears and encouraging them on life issues
- Helping them break away from social vices as indicated above; sexual immorality and/or sexual oppression through dreams, masturbation, pornography, and the like.
- Appreciating their natural qualities and helping them develop their talents
- Helping them to imitate you in order to become responsible people in future

- Helping to re-shape their future plans/dreams or ambitions and to realize them.
- Charting a path to win them for Christ and grow in Him
- Apply the techniques of social media to win the youth

WhatsApp chats as effective counselling tool for

While some people engage in relationships by way of phone conversation, others have now moved beyond and taken advantage of social media like Facebook, WhatsApp, Tweeter,

While some people engage in relationships by way of phone conversations others have now moved beyond and taken advantage of social media like Facebook, WhatsApp, etc., to achieve similar objectives.

etc., to achieve similar objectives. I believe that the Church of Christ and particularly youth leaders must wise-up and seize some of these emerging opportunities to advance

the cause of our Master. Issues like counselling, evangelism, follow-up, announcement and the like, can be pursued through such current channels of communication.

In some of the chats with one of my beloved daughters, named Bekka (pseudonym), lots of issues came up that can really help any youth leader or mentor to relate better with them in the hope of not only helping them but winning them for Christ. Some of the healthy developments in the online interactions that ensued have been posted here for our perusal. (I hope that readers will appreciate and understand some of the shortened sentences, phrases and words such as common in a number of WhatsApp chats.)

Chat 1

Winning Bekka into a father-daughter relationship

Bekka: Heeellooo dad, are u busy? I called earlier but you didn't respond, y?

Counsellor: Yes, my daughter, I was online but was recording a preaching message for a certain group. That's why I couldn't respond. I hope you understand. I hope all is well with you and the whole family.

Bekka: Ok dad. I do understand. But I have a question for you

Counsellor: Ok, I'm not feeling very well. So it's likely I'll be sleeping a bit early. I hope you understand. But you can go ahead and ask your question.

Bekka: Ok, dis is de question: Why do u like me?

Counsellor: It's that all? You want to know why I like you?

Bekka: Yes

Counsellor: Then I'm sorry to disappoint you because I don't think I like you.

Bekka: Y do u love me

Counsellor: What I have for you is not a like; it is more than that. Rather it is pure 100% LOVE. Ok?

Bekka: Ok daddy, so why do u love me?

Counsellor: Simple! I love you because it is the Lord who brought the two of us together so that I will be a father to you and you will be a daughter to me.

Bekka: Ok dad thanks 4 ur answer

Counsellor: So whatever the Lord gives me is a good and genuine gift which I have to love and cherish and handle with great care. Are you ok with my reason?

Bekka: Yes I am dad. Among all ur daughters in other churches I hope I'm ur favorite, right?

Counsellor: Ok. Can I also ask you a question?

Bekka: Yes dad u can ask me de question

Counsellor: Why did you ask me this question?

Bekka: I just want 2 knw dad cos I hve 2 be ur favorite

Counsellor: Ok. Yes, I'm praying that you continue to become obedient to the Lord's guidance through your parents and

mentors like me. Ok? It's the only route to becoming my favorite daughter. Right?

Bekka: Ok daddy

Counsellor: But let me apologize for not being able to visit as I wanted to do. I have been feeling very bad today. I have decided to rest a little to regain my health. I hope to make it up to you. Ok?

Bekka: No worries dad, hope u get well soon

Counsellor: Thanks my daughter. I'll definitely get back to you to see how we'll celebrate the season. Meanwhile, you've promised to be a "good girl". So I expect you to keep your promise in order not to break the heart of your parents and beloved ones like me. Ok?

Bekka: Ok daddy am being a gud girl dad

Counsellor: Right. I love that. And I hope to keep on praying for you in order to fulfill God's plan for your life.

Bekka: Yes dad hope u getting better

Counsellor: So help me to help you. Understand?

Bekka: Daddy, dnt get u pls

Counsellor: Ok. What I mean is that I've decided to help you grow up into the person that God wants you to be but you have to accept that you will comply with the pieces of advice that you'll receive. This is what I mean by you helping me to help you. Until you agree to stop certain sinful practices and engage in very godly practices there's nothing that I can do that will help you. I hope that's clear

Bekka: Yes dad. I understand you I would think of it, that is, I'll think of accepting Christ

Counsellor: Excellent. This is the most prescribed advice to greatness and glory and success. And I promise you that this decision will deepen our father - daughter relationship. Don't you think so?

Bekka: I do think so but it is difficult dad, or you think it is nt?

Counsellor: It's not easy when the mind is not determined but is only being forced. However, if the mind is determined nothing can stop it and it becomes easier. I hope you agree?

Bekka: I tot it was de heart

Counsellor: Wonderful. You are 100% right. The decision always comes from the heart. But the transformation and determination occur in the mind. This is where the heart and mind work together to make a difference in the person. Understood?

Bekka: Yes dad I do understand

Counsellor: Very good. So now, prepare your heart well to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Then be determined to live as led by the Lord through the Holy Spirit and the Scripture. Then, counselors like me and other pastor together with your parents will continue to guide you through life. And I can assure you that you'll make it big in life. Ok?

Bekka: Dad pls would think of it would hve some time, dad

Counsellor: Ok. Agreed. Now, is time for me to go to bed and rest a little. I hope to get back to you early tomorrow. Agreed?

Bekka: Ok dad. Would u wake up n hve u midnight prayers?

Counsellor: I hope to. But I'm a bit weak so if I have enough rest and wake up then I can pray for quite long. Right?

Bekka: Ok dad, hope u get well soon dad

Counsellor: Thanks. I love you for your great concern. Keep praying for me and I'll be doing the same for you. Ok? Byeeeeeeeeeeee!

Bekka: Ok daddy I love u too. Byeeeeeeeeeeee

Chat 2

Helping Bekka break from Masturbation

Bekka: Hello daddy, hope u gud?

Counsellor: Yeah, Bekka, my beloved daughter. How are you too?

Bekka: Not bad, Dad. We hve a lot 2 tlk abt 2 day

Counsellor: Ok, daughter. I hope you enjoyed your sleep yester-night because you prayed before going to bed.

Bekka: No. Actually, I dnt pray now bcos of some reason

Counsellor: What are some of the reasons?

Bekka: Daddy would master courage n tell u

Counsellor: Yeah. Tell me.

Bekka: Becos I feel unclean so I can't pray 2 God

Counsellor: What has made you unclean?

Bekka: So many thing dad would? Tell u later

Counsellor: For once, my daughter, feel free to tell me the truth. Tell me now; right now. Don't keep me in suspense. Just confide in me.

Bekka: I tell u Dr truth but it is nt wit any guy or boy

Counsellor: But who?

Bekka: Would tell u but difficult

Counsellor: Bekka, if you really consider our father - daughter relationship and you trust me enough then don't delay any more time. I'm waiting now.

Bekka: Am nt but would feel very ashamed dat is y

Counsellor: Between the two of us you don't have to be ashamed if I get to know your secret. Unless you want to hide something from me which will not help our relationship. So tell me the whole truth so that I know how to handle you. You yourself know that I'm the only person you can trust now. So if you don't tell me, well, I'm ready to stop probing further. Right?

Bekka: Ok I hve. Let's make a deal if I tell u I would still be ur daughter ryt

Counsellor: Nothing will change our father - daughter relationship. You have my promise. ok?

Bekka: Really sure, daddy. I would even feel shy 2 luk at your face

Counsellor: My daughter, don't keep me in suspense any further. Please, just let me know the details

Bekka: I hve been masturbating

Counsellor: Since when? How did it begin?

Bekka: Since 10 years old

Counsellor: Ok, my daughter. This is not the end of your beautiful life. So don't think that the Good Lord will slay you because of this weakness in you. So we need to find a way to deal with it. Right?

Bekka: Yes n pls dnt tell anyone

Counsellor: Don't worry, nobody will hear of it. I promise you. But first, you need to be bold and tell me how it began. For example, who introduced you to it?

Bekka: I dnt knw I was kinda into dis sexually things

Counsellor: Through reading porn books or doing it with someone? Didn't anyone first touch you to make you have the first experience?

Bekka: Dad, it was in my former school, dat was when I was in kg 2

Counsellor: Yeah, and what happened?

Bekka: I was introduced 2 lesbianism

Counsellor: By who? And since then who has been doing it with you?

Bekka: Since I left there n came here there was a classmate of mine

Counsellor: So you can't remember the first person who did it with you?

Bekka: I can

Counsellor: Who? And after the classmates, who else has been doing it with you now?

Bekka: I don't do it with anyone, I just dnt

Counsellor: I wish you could make me know what you were taught to do. So now how do you do it? Use only your hands to touch/caress "yourself" or you use an instrument to insert into your "body"?

Bekka: I dnt hve an instrument. Dad, can I spear u de details

Counsellor: My dear, the reason I'm asking for all these details is for me to get to the root. As a Pastor, I usually tackle problems like this from the foundation. I'm not just being curious. It's for me to know where to attack the problem from in order to completely uproot it. So just let me know. I'm going to refresh myself. By the time I return you should have narrated all the details. So continue. I'll be back.

Bekka: Daddy, can we pls continue later. It is kinda late n am feeling sleepy

Counsellor: Ok. Enjoy a sound sleep. I'll keep on praying for you. The Good Lord still loves you and I love you too. Stay Blessed as always and bye for now

Bekka: Ok daddy, I love u too. Byeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

Chat 3

Follow-up: Looking for results the next day

Bekka: Hello daddy, was waiting 4 u

Counsellor: Sorry I slept. Just woke up.

Bekka: Oh, no worries

Counsellor: I hope you are very good. How was your day?

Bekka: Kinda boring

Counsellor: I hope you are already getting over yesterday's discussion

Bekka: No dad. Still feeling messed up. Daddy, are u feeling sleepy?

Counsellor: No. Rather, I'll be getting ready for midnight prayers after our chat.

Bekka: Ok daddy, dnt 4 get 2 pray 4 me

Counsellor: By all means, I'll remember to pray for you. There is one thing I want to tell you; don't continue to feel bad because of what you told me.

Bekka: Ok daddy, pls pray 4 me I need it badly. I still feel very bad though

Counsellor: Do you know the number of people who have committed similar sins but are now serving the Lord faithfully because the Lord has forgiven them?

Bekka: Dad, can I? I seriously feel so messed up a lot

Counsellor: Of course, you're a human being so you'll definitely feel guilty for any sin you commit. But the Lord can forgive you if you genuinely repent and ask for forgiveness of sin. Ok?

Bekka: At first, I used 2 feel guilty but later when I do it I dnt feel guilty any more I feel ok

Counsellor: Did you do it yesterday?

Bekka: Yes in de morning

Counsellor: That's before you confessed to me. Right?

Bekka: Yes dad

Counsellor: What about today?

Bekka: Yes, I wanted 2 but didn't cos I was thinking of something n I slept

Counsellor: You mean you wanted to do it even today. That's after confessing to me yesterday?

Bekka: Yes, dad am sori, but didn't do it

Counsellor: If you get any opportunity will you still do it?

Bekka: Yes, if de feeling is dat strong I would or if I feel lke I would do

Counsellor: What kind of feelings do you have before you do it?

Bekka: Like de feeling of having sexual intercourse

Counsellor: Do you miss a boyfriend during such period?

Bekka: Sometimes. Yes

Counsellor: Do you do while lying on bed only or you can do it anywhere?

Bekka: Anywhere at all?

Counsellor: Yesterday, I asked you about how you do it. But you couldn't tell me. Tell me now.

Bekka: Yes dad, I just do it

Counsellor: Do you just touch "your sensitive parts"?

Bekka: Yes I do touch

Counsellor: Who do you think about during such period? Do you have a particular guy in mind during such period?

Bekka: No de devil is in mind such periods

Counsellor: What do you mean? Will you be thinking about the devil?

Bekka: I think of someone who I don't knw n sometimes De devil

Counsellor: Is it any man who comes to mind?

Bekka: Yes sometimes men I don't knw of

Counsellor: That is, you just assume that any man at all is having sex with you. Right?

Bekka: Yes dad

Counsellor: What about the devil? Do you assume that he is also with you when you are doing it?

Bekka: Yes, bcos it is a demonic act I do think of de devil

Counsellor: Ok. I get what you mean. Do you have any desire to stop?

Bekka: Yes, bcos of someone

Counsellor: Because of who?

Bekka: Dad, bcos of my loved ones

Counsellor: I don't understand. Loved ones like who?

Bekka: Bcos of De pp who seriously L me

Counsellor: Thanks be to God. Yes, that's part of the answer. I love that. Yes, there are people who will be greatly disappointed if you continue to mess up your life through this sinful act. The second answer is about yourself.

Bekka: All bcos I dnt wnt 2 mess up my life bcos of dis it would seriously hurt my loved ones

Counsellor: The fact is, the more you continue to do it the more you open yourself to the devil to get hold of you.

Bekka: Y is it abt myself

Counsellor: Yes. And I cannot imagine the next step the devil is planning to take you. But before you realize you have reached a stage where you cannot return to normal life. How sad and disgusting and disgraceful it will be for people to know that you have become a lesbian. Don't you think so?

Bekka: Daddy I actually knw I need a turn around

Counsellor: Thanks for this admission. Yes, and this is the time.

Bekka: I knw daddy I am attracted 2 de opposite sex but when my sexual feelings come I would, need any one 2 satisfy my sexual pleasures

Counsellor: My daughter, you are too young to allow your sexual feelings to get over you. You have to control yourself. Else you will one day ask any guy who meets you to satisfy you. And if you fail to be determined to stop your relationship with the Lord will be completely broken.

Bekka: Dad, I know perfectly well but my sexual feelings are controlling me

Counsellor: My daughter, you have to be determined to not allow it to scare you. And you yourself have to pray as we also support you prayerfully. Then the next thing is for you to stay away from situations where someone can take advantage of you. Moreover, I'm not surprised at your extreme confession of weakness because the one who initiated you into lesbianism and masturbation was demonic. So the whole thing has now become a demonic hold over your life. So it's hard for you to control yourself. I hope am right?

Bekka: Yes Dad, I seriously knw. Can I tell you a dream?

Counsellor: About what?

Bekka: It was abt a frnd who was telling me she was a lesbian

Counsellor: Is she in your school?

Bekka: N she does it wit her little niece she is in my school

Counsellor: So do you believe the dream?

Bekka: Am not shocked

Counsellor: Why?

Bekka: Cos am sure she can date Dr same sex but she is attracted 2 de opposite sex strongly

Counsellor: Yea, there are people who can engage in both.

Bekka: I knw. Dat one

Counsellor: Now, the dream should also let you know that some other young ladies or students are also involved in this nasty and sinful practice.

Bekka: I actually knw I used 2 hve so many friends lke dat

Counsellor: The unfortunate thing is that if they don't get somebody to help them to stop, it will destroy their future marriage life.

Bekka: Yes daddy I knw dat was de main reason y I needed help 2 stop masturbating 2 save my marriage in de fufure

Counsellor: Ok. Are you prepared to be delivered from this demonic oppression through prayer? That is, if I should come there and ask that we meet and pray at your church would you

agree? I hope you accept that you have to be taken through a deliverance prayer session. Right?

Bekka: Yrs dad, o I seriously need dis a lot. I need dis deliverance a lot

Counsellor: Ok. Very good. I'll see how we'll arrange it. So let's discuss the details tomorrow. For now, I want you to promise me that you will not do it before you sleep. Do you promise?

Bekka: Oh no dad, I promise I wouldnt do it

Counsellor: Thanks, my daughter. May the Good Lord continue to be with you throughout the night and even the day till we chat again. Stay Blessed as always and bye for now. Amen.

Bekka: Amen too. Thank u daddy gudnyt n gudbyeEEEEEEEE 4 now ☺

Counsellor: ByeEEEEEEE!

Chat 4

Helping Bekka overcome Pornography

Bekka: Hello dad

Counsellor: Hello Bekka, I hope all is well with you and the whole family.

Bekka: Yes, daddy all is well. Hope you doing gud?

Counsellor: Yes.100%. Thanks be to God that all of you are ok over there too.

Bekka: Yes dad thanks be 2 God

Counsellor: Ok. I hope that you wanted us to discuss something.

Bekka: Yes, there is sth

Counsellor: Ok. Let's talk about it

Bekka: Dad, wat I wanted 2 tell u was that I had a dream dat I was nearly raped

Counsellor: Ok. First of all, I'll be praying with you. Then I've to find time to see you and discuss the details with you. Don't worry about it because bad dreams don't come to pass when we pray seriously about them. Ok?

Bekka: Thank u daddy. I had a second dream dat I couldn't move my body and a witch was pressing my neck mentioned de name of JESUS n later I said I do surrender n I woke up

Counsellor: Ok. Don't be afraid. Though it's an attack of the devil, it's good that you were able to mention the name of Jesus and you said that you surrender. What it means is that if you don't surrender to Jesus the devil will keep on attacking you. I hope you understand?

Bekka: Daddy ok thank u. But I had another dream

Counsellor: Ok. what's it about?

Bekka: In the dream, I was telling my Mum in de dream that I was nearly raped at de cemetery

Counsellor: By who?

Bekka: Dnt knw dad

Counsellor: A friend, an adult or a young man, etc?

Bekka: I seriously don't remember

Counsellor: Ok. Don't be afraid. Though dreams have effects prayers can destroy any negativities. In fact, if you keep yourself spiritually strong some of such experiences are overcome

Bekka: Am very sure am spiritually weak

Counsellor: Thanks for that confession. May be, another important issue is what you usually think about before you go to bed.

Bekka: I sometimes think of stupid stuff

Counsellor: Ok. I'm sure that if your mind is set on the Lord and say some scriptures you can overcome any bad dreams.

Bekka: Ok daddy

Counsellor: So, if I may ask what are some of the stupid thing you think about?

Bekka: Ok, there was a day I got glued 2 porn

Counsellor: Where did you get it from?

Bekka: On TV

Counsellor: At home or where? Is it on a video clip?

Bekka: At home, around 1 o clock, was in de hall learning n I switched de. TV on.

Counsellor: Was it part of a film?

Bekka: No, it was porn itself

Counsellor: Was it shown on a special porn station? Or just one of the common stations?

Bekka: No, actually it is an historical station but at mid-night dey show it. It is in multi TV

Counsellor: Regularly?

Bekka: Yes, always

Counsellor: How did you know that they show porn on that station and at that time?

Bekka: No dad I didn't knw I was changing Dr station but there was nth on dat station. [they] usually show action movies so I placed it there 2 see if der was any action movies but it was porn n I got glued 2 it

Counsellor: How many times?

Bekka: Just once. I keep my busy in my room so I dnt go 2 De hall at night

Counsellor: Ok. Is it a step you have taken in order to stay away from such films?

Bekka: Yes dat is y normally am on line or even reading a story book

Counsellor: Good. But is there a desire or temptation to go back and watch such films again?

Bekka: Oh Yes, several tymes

Counsellor: Did you enjoy watching it?

Bekka: Kinda

Counsellor: Did you share what you watched with any friends?

Bekka: Yes I tld my close frnd n he was disappointed actually he a teacher n a very good close frnd. N I also tld my frnd a classmate

Counsellor: It's a she or he?

Bekka: A she

Counsellor: What was her reaction?

Bekka: She reacted normally

Counsellor: I don't understand what you mean?

Bekka: She was just telling me luk at wat am watching whiles we had a test

Counsellor: So it means she didn't like the idea of you watching the porn right?

Bekka: Yes. Most of my class mate watch or re attracted 2 dis things

Counsellor: Thanks be to God. At least, two people who heard about what you did were not happy about it. It tells you that even though the desire is still there to continue, it's not a good thing to do. Ok?

Bekka: Yes daddy, would abstain 4 dat

Counsellor: One last question: do you sometimes have the desire to do what you saw?

Bekka: Being honest! Sometimes, yes. I sometimes feel uncomfortable in class when my classmate TLk abt dis thing

Counsellor: Do you feel bad for not doing it? I mean, do you also want to have that experience?

Bekka: I would, but I knw if I engage in dat - pregnancy

Counsellor: So is it because of fear of teenage pregnancy that you are not doing it?

Bekka: Yes, n also 2 keep my virginity 4 my future husband

Counsellor: Wonderful. I love these answers. This makes me very proud of you.

Bekka: Yes daddy, I dnt wnt 2 mess my life up 4 some 5 minutes pleasure n nt 2 mke God sad

Counsellor: Great. But there is a third reason that is even stronger. For me, you have to strive to stay away from porn and sex because both will make you become defiled before God. When you get defiled, you will lose your position as a child of God. And when you lose your position as a child of God the favor and the hand of God will no longer be upon you.

Bekka: Ok daddy

Counsellor: When these happen the devil will have the opportunity to enter into your life. Then failures and disappointments and so many other challenges will set in.

Bekka: So in case u hve sex but later u repent would u still maintain ur position

Counsellor: Yeah, some negative things will be experienced as punishment before you regain your position again.

Bekka: Oh, ok daddy would mke sure I abstain

Counsellor: So it's best not to do it than to do and suffer some punishment before you try to regain your former position.

Bekka: Ok dad. Daddy, wat if it was a mistake

Counsellor: Now, if by mistake you do, can you get your virginity back?

Bekka: No pls

Counsellor: Can you get your pride back?

Bekka: No dad

Counsellor: Can you be able to prevent the guy who messed up with you from telling his friends what he did with you?

Bekka: No, I can't

Counsellor: What usually happens is that you always feel cheated when the person drops you for another person.

Bekka: I knw dat a lot dad

Counsellor: So what you will also try to do is to prove that you can have a better guy. So you open to another guy. Then the process continues.

Bekka: Ok, daddy, thank u a lot. Daddy, a big favour, dnt tell my mother pls, let it be btw us. Dis is bcos I feel lke de worst daughter she has given birth 2. so I knw how she would react, dis would hurt me a lot

Counsellor: Ok. But, my greatest advice to you as my beloved daughter is for you to be determined that no matter the extent of pressure from friends you will still stay pure for the Lord and for your future husband. Right?

Bekka: Yes, I promise dad would do dat

Counsellor: I hope you will not have bad dreams any more.

Bekka: No dad

Counsellor: So, you have to have confidence before God and pray. Ok?

Bekka: Ok, I would pray always at all tyme

Counsellor: I love that. Continue to be a good girl. Enjoy the rest of the night.

Bekka: Ok. Daddy, promising u would be a good girl

Counsellor: Wonderful. I think it's getting late and you need to rest enough for tomorrow. Would you pray before you sleep now?

Bekka: I would, dad, gudnyt n gud

Counsellor: Stay blessed as always and bye for now.

Bekka: Byeeeeereeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeé

Chat 5

Helping Bekka break from pressure of sex

Bekka: Hello daddy, pls I seriously hve sth 2 discuss something so urgent wit u

Counsellor: Don't worry about it. Can't it wait till tomorrow. I'm returning from a program and it's likely I'll return the house late like yester-night. And so it might be late and you'll be sleepy. So let's agree to make it tomorrow. Ok?

Bekka: No dad, if it waits a second am sure I would die but try n wait 4 u ok

Counsellor: Ok

Bekka: It is disturbing me dat's y

Counsellor: Ok. I'm still driving back home. But at least, you can go ahead and send the details. When I reach home I'll reply.

Bekka: Ok daddy. It is abt dr guy I tld u abt. Every year in December! I get dis weird feeling dat mkes me do what I Dnt want 2 do. It seriously affects me a lot. It is dat feeling I had when I was wit my ex boyfrnd Dr feeling makes me do bad stuff

Counsellor: Oh, Ok. Now that you've promised not to do that again, I hope you can forget about any guy and concentrate on how you can build your life. Or you don't agree with me?

Bekka: I can, oh dad, but dis feeling makes me feel uncomfortable when am in de mist of guys

Counsellor: I understand perfectly well. But you should know that such feelings are usually experienced by anyone who finds

him/her self among the opposite sex. So, it's not only you. What everyone tries to do is to learn what we call "self-control."

Bekka: Oh no, Dad, it's not it

Counsellor: Then what is it?

Bekka: It is nt dat tn. It's Dis feeling. De feeling is weird. It's nt de attraction 2 Dr. opposite sex but De feeling. Dad, I'm sure u would understand I mean

Counsellor: Yeah, I know what you are trying to get across. But it all begins with a kind of deep feeling. So explain

Bekka: It makes me remember my past with guys n would wnt me 2 do wat I did in de past with other guys in de present

Counsellor: Ok. I'll have to have another time to sit down with you and talk this over. Right?

Bekka: Ok Dad. Byeeeeeee

Counsellor: Stay bless as always and bye too.

Chat 6

Breaking from immoral dreams

Bekka: Daddy, I kinda had a dream wit sexual intercourse inside

Counsellor: I don't understand. Can you explain?

Bekka: Sex was included

Counsellor: Who was having sex with who?

Bekka: It wasnt a vag****-pen** sex it was me n my frnds brother

Counsellor: You and your friend's brother doing what?

Bekka: An**-pen** sex but a wit condom

Counsellor: So he was doing it with you?

Bekka: Yes n his sister came there so we stopped. I dnt lke de dream n I seriously dnt love D guy

Counsellor: It's a bad dream because that type of intimacy is very detestable to God. It's very demonic. So we need to pray seriously about it. Right?

Bekka: Yes dad

Counsellor: So I'll encourage you to let us fast and pray about it. Are you prepared to fast tomorrow?

Bekka: I've messed up ryt now. So, Yes dad, I would do dat. N dad sth has been happening 2 be now

Counsellor: What is it?

Bekka: Some whitish liquid comes out 4 rm my lke when u done having sex

Counsellor: Since when did this begin?

Bekka: Past 3 or 2 days dad

Counsellor: For the first time, since only 3 days ago?

Bekka: Yes dad it used 2 happen 2 me when I was masturbating but when I stop 4 de past. Few days it follow

Counsellor: Ok. Am sure we need to tackle and deal with the spiritual roots first. Then we can talk about the physical experiences later. Ok?

Bekka: Ok daddy am a seriously weak

Counsellor: So are you sure you can fast and pray tomorrow?

Bekka: I can fast, actually but my problem I can't pray effectively. Dad, pls can u do me a favour, pls dnt let my, Mum knw ok, pls 4 my sake

Counsellor: No problem. I fully understand. So you have to begin with the prayers gradually. At least, it will allow the Lord to draw closer to you. Ok?

Bekka: Ok dad

Counsellor: So tomorrow, at least, up to 1:00pm we are fasting. Just try a little for me. I'll be doing the greater part of the work. Right?

Counsellor: Then, I'll find time to explain other things to you later. Ok?

Bekka: Ok, daddy would try n do dat 4 u

Counsellor: So it's a deal. Ok?

Bekka: Yes dad it is

Counsellor: Good. At least, we can conclude our chat on this arrangement. I need to record a preaching message right now for a certain group. I hope you understand.

Bekka: Ok daddy I understand u

Counsellor: Good. I pray that the Good Lord will continue to protect you under the power of His Spirit throughout the night. Amen. Hopefully, we'll get in touch tomorrow afternoon. Ok?

Bekka: Amen n he would do de same 4 u. dad pls dnt inform my Mum or dad. I love u

Counsellor: Trust me. God bless you and keep you. Amen

Bekka: Amen dad. Thanks 4 being there for me. Gud byeeeeeeeeeee!

Counsellor: Byeeeeeeeeeee!

Chat 7

Helping to allay the fears of Bekka

Bekka: Daddy, hello daddy hope u gud 😊😊😊

Counsellor: Yeah, Bekka, my beloved daughter. How are you?

Bekka: So great; writing exams, actually hoping 4 de bst

Counsellor: Exams? I hope you are going to school tomorrow.

Bekka: Yes dad

Counsellor: I've told you not to be afraid of exams. Gather confidence and say to yourself that you shall make it. Ok?

Bekka: Ok daddy thanks

Counsellor: And surely, the Lord will help you because I have no doubt that both Dad and Mom plus other people including me are with you in prayers.

Bekka: Yes daddy

Counsellor: So all will be well. I'm glad that you're going through all this to prepare you well for the final exam. I hope to pass @ to see you after the exams.

Bekka: Yes dad, aiming 4 9 ones

Counsellor: Wonderful. I'm glad to hear that. Expect me soon with your b'day gift. Right?

Bekka: Ok daddy would be expecting u

Counsellor: Good girl, that's my daughter. Stay Blessed as always and bye for now.

Bekka: Thanks dad. Gud byeeeeeeeeeee!

Chat 8

Helping Bekka repair a broken mother-daughter relationship

Bekka: Hello daddy. Daddy pls when can u come on line?

Counsellor: Ok. Thanks for your message, my daughter. I hope all is well with you and your parents and the whole family.

Bekka: No, all is nt well at all wit my Mum n I

Counsellor: Sorry, what has happened? Is it anything I need to know?

Bekka: Yes, now she doesn't trust me at all cos she knows abt it. It's all my fault

Counsellor: But don't you think it's good that you yourself told her so that she could support you with prayers?

Bekka: I knw but I knew her reaction were going 2 affect me now am feeling bad n feeling lke de worst child ever daddy I seriously want 2 Die now

Counsellor: No! Don't ever let me hear that from you again. Death is not something to mention in our chat. Ok?

Bekka: Daddy, am very serious I dnt wnt. 2 live I seriously dnt hve a reason 2 live

Counsellor: Don't say that. Now, the question is: are you not the one who told Mom about it?

Bekka: Daddy I didn't tell her she read our chat 4 got 2 delete it

Counsellor: And afterwards, what happened? At least, you told me she prayed with you. So what is bad about it now?

Bekka: No! dad, is nt bad dat she prayed 4 me but der way she reacted towards me had been hell

Counsellor: Well, I rather wish you'll see that from a positive side. It shows how much she loves you. It should let you know that any mistake on your part is a big disappointment. This is how a parent who cares should behave. Don't you agree with me?

Bekka: I do knw masturbation is a demonic act n it is Dr devil n spirits dat influence dat act. But she is reacting lke I entered it bcos I lke or loved it

Counsellor: Ok. Is she angry that you didn't tell her?

Bekka: Yes, she says that 4 4good years I knw it was a shameful act dat is I didn't want anyone 2 knw

Counsellor: Did she like the idea that I wanted to pray for you at your church?

Bekka: She didn't knw abt it.

Counsellor: That's my daughter. I'm proud of you. You know what; there is so much glory and honor awaiting you, provided you'll be determined to overcome all the negative and demonic things. Ok?

Bekka: Yes I am ready 2 overcome all of dem

Counsellor: Thanks be to God, my daughter. So, I'm sure you'll not think that your mom hates you again. Right? See her reaction as a way to help you prove to her that you are no longer a bad girl because of what you did. Right?

Bekka: Ok daddy, I dnt think she hates me I just got disturbed n messed up when she felt worried

Counsellor: In fact, you are a gem. And I really like the way you agree with your mom's reaction. Now, I pray that you'll be able to communicate better with her once you've accepted that she means no harm. I'm sure you'll begin to appreciate her more than it used to be. In fact, my greatest joy is in the fact that you have a very great future and you're prepared to take care of yourself in order for God's plan to be fulfilled in your life. Ok?

Bekka: Thanks dad.

Counsellor: That's my girl. I'm glad to hear this. Do you know that even in the Bible some people did worst things but afterwards they became great people? In the same way, try to forget about the past sins because the Good Lord still loves you. I hope you agree with me?

Bekka: Yes dad I do agree wit u dad

Counsellor: Ok. My daughter, the joy I have is that you have understood your mom's reaction.

Bekka: Ok daddy

Counsellor: Good girl. Stay blessed as always. Enjoy your sleep under the mighty hands of God. Goodnight.

Bekka: Gudnyt too dad n good byeeeeeee 4 now

Counsellor: Bye! My daughter.

Chat 9

Appreciating the natural qualities of Bekka to win her for Christ

Bekka: Hello, Sup daddy. I hope u're gud?

Counsellor: Yeah, my daughter. How are you too? And, it's everybody at home ok?

Bekka: Yes, daddy, everything is good.

Counsellor: Thanks. I'm sure you're already preparing to sleep. Right? Or you're studying?

Bekka: I was studying but stop cause am kinda feeling sleepy,

Counsellor: Ok. That's alright. Then I hope that you go to bed peacefully. Have you prayed?

Bekka: No.

Counsellor: Why? Don't you pray before you sleep? I hope you will do so. Ok?

Bekka: I do, dad, yes I would do b4 I sleep. Daddy, did u vote?

Counsellor: Yea I did. But I don't think you are eligible to vote because you're not yet 18 years.

Bekka: Yes dad, unless 18

Counsellor: So how old are you?

Bekka: 14. Pls, so nxt 4 yrs

Counsellor: Ooooooh you are very young and very beautiful. I hope that you continue to grow up in the Lord.

Bekka: Dad am I dat young

Counsellor: Yes. You are very young. But definitely you will be able to vote next 4 years. So be patient. Why do you think you are not young?

Bekka: Cos soon would be going. 2 SHS, dat is y

Counsellor: That's true. But going to SHS does not make you a grown up

Bekka: I knw

Counsellor: Good girl. I don't want you to rush into adult life because there are a lot of challenges in adulthood. So let's

continue to maintain your youthful life. You are young and very beautiful.

Bekka: Thanks sooooo much, dad.

Counsellor: That's my girl. And it is also becos I don't want you to destroy your beautiful future life that I think you also have to surrender your life completely to the Lord. I hope you agree with me that you need to completely surrender your life to the Lord?

Bekka: Kinda

Counsellor: No! Be firm and specific. I'm waiting for your answer now.

Bekka: Ok would think of it n tell u. 2 morrow

Counsellor: Good. Ok. I'll be waiting for your answer. I hope you can pray and go to bed now.

Bekka: Dad, u too, pls be praying 4 me b4 I sleep

Counsellor: By all means yes. I'm about to have my midnight prayers and I'll surely remember you. Rest assured. Ok? Stay Blessed as always

Bekka: Yes. Amen dad, I love u. Gudnyt daddyyyyyy



Counsellor: I love you too, my daughter. Bye

Bekka: Byeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeé

Chat 10

Following-up to ensure Bekka's salvation

Counsellor: So what is the decision?

Bekka: Yes dad am ready 2 change should I say I want 2 be transformed

Counsellor: Yeah. Don't you think that since you're prepared to give your life to the Lord you can be baptized immediately?

Bekka: Yeah dad I think it is a great idea

Counsellor: Wonderful. I'll be glad to see you go through the process. I really love to be part of it. Do you like it that way?

Bekka: Of cos yes dad I would love u 2 baptized me

Counsellor: Good girl. I'm 100% sure your mom will be happy you do it before you finally go to SHS

Bekka: Yes daddy I knw she would, be happy if I change my character

Counsellor: I'm fully convinced. And I'll be one of the happiest fathers because of you.

Bekka: You would surely be dad

Counsellor: But can you guess the challenge I will have?

Bekka: No dad I can't guess

Counsellor: It will always be whether you will not disappoint me

Bekka: Dad dnt think dat I wouldn't disappoint u neva

Counsellor: Thanks, my daughter, for your assurance.

Bekka: U wlc dad

Counsellor: The fact is, it's always been a great testimony to have your beloved daughter determined to live an acceptable life. It is a guarantee to a successful and glorious future. Unfortunately, sometimes, we suffer broken-heart after they disappointment. This is why I am concerned about you.

Bekka: Daddy pls stop scaring me

Counsellor: Sorry. Don't be scared my daughter. I'm only trying to let you know how much I love you and hope that you don't disappoint me. Ok?

Bekka: I won't dad. At least trust me a little

Counsellor: Thanks be to God. Yes, you're right. And I also wish to assure you that I've confident in you, and that you'll not disappoint me. Ok?

Bekka: Thanks dad

Counsellor: I'm glad that you've finally convinced me that you are very determined in life. I'll do my possible best to be a good father. Ok?

Bekka: Ok daddy

Counsellor: Now, can I ask one more question?

Bekka: Yes dad u 're free 2 ask

Counsellor: Ok. When Mom asks when you want to be baptized, what will you say?

Bekka: Ryt after 31 st December

Counsellor: Thanks. But can you be very specific so that we can all pray about it and prepare towards that day

Bekka: Dad I would think of it

Counsellor: Agreed. But I wish you think about it between now and tomorrow so that you can tell Mom. In fact, when I come, I'll also ask. I hope you agree?

Bekka: Yes I do agree dad

Counsellor: That's my girl. Bekka, do you know that gradually I'm increasingly becoming happy that the Good Lord brought you to me.

Bekka: Yes dad, cos am special

Counsellor: Yeah. No doubt a unique daughter; I'm becoming convinced that God brought you to me so that I'll be part of the great future that you'll become.

Bekka: Yes daddy.

Counsellor: Ok. Let me assure you that with the support of your parents you'll grow into one of the stars of your generation. Just say Amen.

Bekka: Aaaaaaammmmmmen!

Counsellor: Great. I'm glad to know this. Ok, we'll discuss the details when I come there on Tuesday.

Bekka: Daddy pls I want u 2 get me sth dad ask me wat it is

Counsellor: What's it?

Bekka: Ok dad kindly guess

Counsellor: Hmm! I've tried to think of something but I can't. Just tell me. Is it anything I can bring on Tuesday?

Bekka: My Christmas gift which is separate but Dr important one is a holy Bible anytime u get de chance dad

Counsellor: No problem. I'll try and get both to you when I'm coming. Ok?

Bekka: Ok dad thanks a lot

Counsellor: Good girl. Can I go and shower and take some rest? I hope you understand.

Bekka: Ok daddy u can am only allowing u because u tired

Counsellor: Thanks so very much, my daughter. I know you're very concerned about my life. That's a great demonstration of a good child. I hope to get back to you early tomorrow evening. Ok?

Bekka: Ok daddy I love u dad. Hope u enjoy ur rest

Counsellor: I love you too. Stay Blessed and enjoy the night under the mighty hand of God. Amen. Bye!

Bekka: Wait dad want 2 wish u a merry Christmas in advance n a prosperous New year

Counsellor: Ok. I'll take it. Actually, I was expecting it to be tomorrow. But once you've already sent the wish I receive it and wish you many million returns. Amen

Bekka: Amen! Dad, I hope am de first person 2 wish u dat

Counsellor: 😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊

Bekka: Tell me dad

Counsellor: The best so far has come from you.

Bekka: Ok I hear dad

Counsellor: Thanks. So, now, I hope we agree to continue tomorrow.

Bekka: Yes dad we do agree

Counsellor: Good girl. In that case this is my final bye!

Bekka: Yes dad my final bye also gud byeeeeeee 😊😊😊😊👉👉😊😊

Chat 11

Helping Bekka to imitate me in spirituality

Bekka: Dad I just wanted 2 knw y pp pray a lot without ceasing

Counsellor: Thanks, my daughter. Prayer is the most important thing apart from the Word of God. So anybody who wants to be successful in life cannot do without strong prayer life. Prayer does two main things: 1. Helps you to communicate with God so that you can do what He wants in order to fulfill His wishes, and 2. Prayer is a weapon against Satan and all the forces of evil and their schemes against any child of God. I hope I've tried to answer your question?

Bekka: Yes dad u hve answered my question

Counsellor: Ok. So you understand why I dedicate a lot of time to prayers, especially, during the night when I am free from any disturbances.

Counsellor: And I hope it's the same reason why you said your Mom spends a good time praying.

Bekka: Yes dad I now understand u a lot. N y do pp mostly pray at night n morning

Counsellor: And this is exactly what the Lord want you to understand so that you also become a prayerful person.

Bekka: Yes dad hope I become a prayerful person soon

Counsellor: Excellent. I just love this confession. In fact, for you to succeed in this life you need to draw more closely to God and be able to resist the devil through prayer. Ok?

Bekka: Ok daddy

Counsellor: So can I give you an assignment right now?

Bekka: Yes dad u can. Daddy wat is de assignment?

Counsellor: Ok. Good. Now, I wish you could reach out for the book I sent you and I will give you some pages to read.

Bekka: Ok daddy

Counsellor: Do you have it now?

Bekka: Yes dad

Counsellor: Ok. Open to page 135. What is the topic?

Bekka: Quite time

Counsellor: Excellent. My daughter, you are a very obedient girl. You keep on winning my love. God bless you.

Bekka: Daddy should I study it

Counsellor: Yeah. Can you complete this chapter before I see you tomorrow?

Bekka: Ok daddy I would

Counsellor: Good. Please read it over and over again until you have understood that whole chapter. When I come I'll ask some questions about it. You can also take note of any area that you don't fully understand. Ok?

Bekka: Ok daddy

Counsellor: Thanks for your response. Now I think I can leave you to begin before you finally go to bed. Ok?

Bekka: Ok daddy but when done reading it would call u

Counsellor: No problem. But please don't rush through. I'll be waiting till 11:45pm. Then I retire to rest a little before I wake for prayers. Ok?

Bekka: Ok daddy

Counsellor: Good girl. Now, enjoy the book.

Bekka: Ok daddy, I am reading Dr book

Counsellor: Are there any immediate questions?

Bekka: Yes dad just wanted 2 get Dr concept clear

Counsellor: Ok. It's simple. Quiet Time is usually a period that a person decides to withdraw from any disturbances in order to reflect. For the Christian, it's a good time to be devoted to God. And the Bible gives some passages where the Lord himself did it. So the writer is coming out with the reason and the process and the benefits. Is it clear now?

Bekka: Yes dad, it is clear

Counsellor: Ok. So you can take your time to go through two or three times and note down any issues for clarity. Right?

Bekka: Yes daddy would do dat

Counsellor: Ok. Now, it's midnight and so I want you to prepare for bed while I also organize myself for action. I hope you understand?

Bekka: Yes I do understand dad

Counsellor: Good. So I pray that the Good Lord will continue to keep you under the power of the Holy Spirit throughout the night and day till I see you. Amen

Bekka: Amen dad

Counsellor: Thanks. Good bye!

Bekka: Good byeeeeeeeeeeeeéééééééééééé dad

Chat 12

Following-up on Bekka's spiritual growth few days later

Counsellor: Helloo Bekka, my daughter. It's been a while. Is everything ok with you?

Bekka: Yes Dad, actually, am kinda happy to have u online. Ask me y

Counsellor: Why?

Bekka: Cos I am drawing closer 2 GOD n now I am reading D book small small

Counsellor: Halleluuuuuuuuja! I'm also very excited about this news. It makes me realize that our relationship is paying off. Don't you agree?

Bekka: Yes dad AMEN. Surely, our relationship is seriously paying off dad

Counsellor: Thanks be to God. I'm now convinced about the reason God brought you to me. I hope you understand me. Right?

Bekka: Dad do u knw D reason y I was drawn closer 2 u? I think it was 4 u 2 help me change but nt sure

Counsellor: Exactly so, my daughter.

Bekka: So am correct?

Counsellor: Yes you are correct, and I also knew it. But I was not sure you will cooperate with me.

Bekka: I would hve, n I am cooperating ryt now

Counsellor: Yes. Now, I've been very grateful to God for your responses so far. You've made me feel very proud. And I'm also grateful to your parents for accepting me.

Bekka: Yes, I am too, but am nt done making u proud at all there is more ahead

Counsellor: Waaoooooh. I love to hear that again and again. In fact, I know it's not very easy. But once you're very determined you can do it.

Bekka: I do it dad cos dey say determination is de key 2 success. I would surely mke it in life one day dad

Counsellor: Yes. And I'm confident that you'll definitely make it. Now, you're on the right track. So there's no turning back. Right?

Bekka: I would wit God on my side?

Counsellor: Excellent. Thanks for this acknowledgement.

Bekka: There is no turning bck dad Would prevent anything dat would hinder my progress n successes

Counsellor: Yes with God on your side together with the support from your parents and beloved ones like me and other people, you can't fail.

Bekka: I wouldnt fail; Neva! Success is my lifestyle!

Counsellor: We'll continue to keep you in our prayers and provide you with all the support you need to come up on top.

Bekka: Thanks daddy

Counsellor: So then I pray that you'll be careful of any person you choose as a friend, whether female or male. Right?

Bekka: Yes daddy I only hve Few frnds lke 3

Counsellor: Even that you still need to pray for the Lord to guide you in whatever you do with any of them. Ok?

Bekka: I sit and chat wit dem but I only hve de intimate ones just lke 3.

Counsellor: Ok. You've made my night a very enjoyable one because of what we've discussed. So I think I can go to bed and rest a little before I wake up for prayers. In fact, I'm tired. I hope you agree?

Bekka: Yes daddy

Counsellor: Oh, I'm sure you're already getting tired. So enjoy the night under the mighty hand' of the Lord. Stay Blessed as always and bye for now.

Bekka: Ok daddy I love u too. Byeeeeeeeeeeeeee

Chat 13

Helping to re-shape the marriage dreams of Bekka

Counsellor: Are your feelings for those body weaknesses the same or you are getting better?

Bekka: Yes. Getting better

Counsellor: Wonderful. I knew that you'll be able to overcome those sinful acts. Does is mean that you have not engaged in the act for the past three or four days?

Bekka: Yes

Counsellor: Praise God! I'm glad you are getting stronger. Don't you think so?

Bekka: Yes am also glad am trying

Counsellor: Good girl. I really love you soooooooooo much for your cooperation and determination. I always knew that you'll not disappoint your loved ones. So are you able to pray a little now without feeling guilty?

Bekka: Something like dat. In fact, I try a do it for someone special

Counsellor: No, answer my question well before I ask the next one becos I'm not clear

Bekka: Yes, I can pray now

Counsellor: And when you do, now, you are confident that God hears you.

Bekka: Yes I am

Counsellor: Ok. Now who's the special person for whom you've determined to live a good life for?

Bekka: It is kinda private, would let u knw when de tyme is ryt

Counsellor: 😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊 So you want to keep me in some kind of suspense. Right?

Bekka: Yes dad, till when De tyme is ryt

Counsellor: You have been able to tell me that there's some special someone. So it's not a secret to me now. All you need to do is to break the news that I can give you a fatherly advice. Right?

Bekka: Nth serious, actually dad, would seriously tell u I promise but nt now ok

Counsellor: Not ok at all, my daughter. Don't hide anything from me now. You have been bold and open to me and even told me your very secret life. What again do you want to keep from me?

Bekka: Ok my future husband is very dear 2 my hrt n special

Counsellor: Thanks for this admission. Yes, every young lady's price and pride should be that one day she'll be presented as a chaste woman to the husband. So I'm glad for this sense of determination. But do you have someone in mind now?

Bekka: Erm no

Counsellor: Are you saying the truth?

Bekka: Yes dad

Counsellor: 100% truth?

Bekka: Am nt lying, Dad. Y, don't u trust me?

Counsellor: Ok. Thanks be to God. May it be as you've admitted here knowing very well that you cannot lie to your pastor. I hope you agree?

Bekka: Ok daddy

Counsellor: Now, my beautiful daughter, my piece of advice is that you concentrate on building a strong future. This will depend upon how you clear some hurdles from JHS through SHS to the university. It is when you are there that some other great visions of life including a good husband become more enjoyable. Either than that life will become a bit rough and challenging. Do you understand the point I'm making?

Bekka: Yes daddy, I do understand you a lot

Counsellor: And, are you sure you agree with me?

Bekka: Yes, I do agree wit u

Counsellor: Good girl. Now I'm glad we can end here. Right?

Bekka: Yes. Thanks so much.

Counsellor: It's my delight. Stay blessed as always, my daughter

Bekka: Amen dad, gudnyt daddy.

Counsellor: Ok. Bye, my sweet daughter

Bekka: Byeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeé

Conclusion

No single individual can live as an island; everyone thrives on relationships. This begins with the immediate family and extends to other both far and near; house mates, school mates, workplace colleagues, church members, and the like. The same holds true for the youth. More often than not, negative family and other relational attitudes have the potential of worsening or complicating youth delinquencies. Thus, youth leaders in particular ought to try as much as possible to exercise maximum self-control concerning the way they respond to the unexpected behavior of truant youth.

For some of the youth, the more they build relationships through the least available opportunity (WhatsApp, Facebook, Tweeter, Instagram, etc.), the better for them since most of these guarantee their security, peace, and happiness. With this in mind, such avenues can be explored by leaders in order to counsel the youth and change their interests for better. You can use these avenues to let them know that you are interested in their concerns, help allay their fears and encourage them to face all the challenges of life.

DISCUSSION THIRTEEN

HELP OTHER YOUTH BUILD THEIR LIVES IN ACCORDANCE WITH LAUDABLE PRINCIPLES

There should be basic principles for developing a comprehensive socio-culturally sensitive Youth. The basic question is: In what ways can the church leadership in general and the Youth Minister in particular provide positive guidance in the areas of moral development and behavior? The objective of the discussion here is to underlie the importance of youth ministry in developing morals in youth character and behavior. Then, it is to describe how an effective youth ministry can lead to the resolution of conflict.

To achieve the aim of this discussion, the following are offered as some of the laudable principles for the Pastor to inculcate in the youth:

a. The Youth must be Purposeful in life: Besides getting the youth involved in the purpose of the church as discussed earlier, they must equally be driven by both their group and individual purposes for life. Purpose may be defined in simple terms as what has to be accomplished. Purpose-driven people have a real clear strong sense of understanding of what they want to achieve in life. They know where they are going, they have a plan of how to get there, and they work hard to get there.

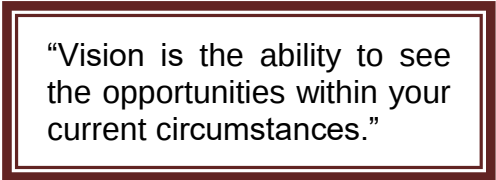
It is said that in any giving culture, if 2% of the people are committed to a common clear objective they can sway the other

98%. Every person in this life should have a clear purpose in order to succeed. The Lord Jesus made His purpose clear to the disciples when He said that He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 13:32-33).

b. The Youth need well defined Visions to follow: “Where there’s no vision, the people perish.” Thus, any youth without a well-defined vision is likely to mess up in the midst of opportunities. A vision is a mental picture, the act of seeing, or trance, a revelation or a night/sleep vision (dream), an insight, a deeper understanding (Gen 37:5-10; Joel 2:28, Prov. 29:18). Visions, it is commonly said, form in the hearts of those who are dissatisfied with the status quo.

In the words of Roadcup (Fall 2006): “Vision is the ability to see the opportunities within your current circumstances.”

Vision has to do with the eyes. It is connected to the sense of seeing, the ability to create a mental picture



“Vision is the ability to see the opportunities within your current circumstances.”

by any means. To have a vision is to receive enough stimuli that will enable the formation of an image/picture in the mind/brain.

Having a vision is the ability to see what is not yet there, or the ability to see what could be. This aspect of creation of image or mental picture can occur through many processes. Some of these processes include pictures created by the naked eyes from external physical stimuli, images created in the mind through dreams, or trance, or any form of revelation, or having an insight into or deeper understanding of an issue, etc.

In life, a person's ability to see is his or her main sense of guidance or direction for every situation. In a sense, vision is important to everybody for engagements in many issues of our everyday life. Scripture says that where there is no vision (or insight, understanding, knowledge, etc.) the people perish (Prov. 29:18; Joel 2:28; Gen. 37:5-10; Num. 14:29; 1 Tim. 4:12; 5:1; Eccl. 11:9-12:1).

Visions can grow, and become clearer with time. Vision is important in life because it provides direction, understanding, knowledge, etc., when the need arises. Specifically, in relation with ministry, a vision is the picture of the church's purpose; it is

Vision is important in life because it provides direction, understanding, knowledge, etc., when the need arises.

the mental description of what the leader and the church wants to achieve as a whole or within a particular ministry area.

Roadcup (Fall 2006) posits that "a purpose-driven church becomes effective when its purpose is focused into a mission that can be cast before people as a vision, and which can be actualized through well planned strategies." It is in this bigger picture of actualization that the youth should be the central focus in order to carry the church on their shoulders.

Now, the question is: Why is vision needed by the youth? Vision is very important for the youth just as it is for adults. It helps to guide/help choices in order to avoid mistakes. Devries (2008, p. 65) observes that without a clearly articulated and compelling vision of what their church would like, and what needs to be accomplished, ministries meander with no higher

than simply having a youth ministry. But a good vision is essential to the youth because it helps them to make healthy choices and avoid mistakes.

Thus the youth with a vision is a youth with a future; a youth without a vision is likely to “perish.” Having good visions during youthful days is also helpful because this is the period that such visions can be nurtured till maturity. The Bible is full of examples of people who had good visions for their life when they were youth such as; Joseph, David, Jeremiah, Daniel, Esther, Timothy.

c. The youth should seek knowledge: An important appeal to youth concerns education and quality profession. One of the greatest enemies of life is ignorance. It is said that ignorance is the worse disease to afflict humanity. If there should be anything in life that lays a solid foundation for the youth it is inevitably, education.

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Education, whether in antiquity or in modern times, has its roots from religion (Asante-Duku 2008). Obviously, God’s ultimate purpose is for His people to be educated by his word from generation to generation. And education, no doubt, has as one of its fundamental aspects the impact on culture from generation to generation.

In the light of the above, it is little wonder that formal education started among the Israelites about many centuries ago when the commandments of the Torah, Israel’s law, was

given. Laying the foundation for education, the Lord through Moses instructed the covenant community thus: “Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deut. 6:7). Education, therefore, is not strange to the field of religion in general. And in the scheme of God, the youth by reason of the stage of life they occupy should become the central focus of every genuine effort towards education.

The Bible gives us ample examples of the importance of theological education. First, the Bible tells us in Luke 2:52 that our Lord Jesus Christ grew in wisdom. At the onset of His ministry, the Lord selected twelve disciples out of the lot and trained them for a period of not less than three years.

Of course, by virtue of his divine power, he could have just imparted upon them all that they needed to know. But He saw the need to subject them to a systematic and coordinated humanly oriented tutorial processes for a reasonable period in order to equip them appropriately for their individual ministries.

Thus, at the end of their training, our Lord Jesus gave the disciples the charge to teach all those who would be converted through their preaching (Matt. 28:20). Hence, the foundation of Christianity is sound teachings. This is how the Lord Jesus himself began to do when He started His earthly ministry (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:22; Luke 13:22; John 14:23) and also commanded His disciples to continue (Matt. 28:20). It is not surprising that the Apostles attached seriousness to the ministry of teachings, even at the peril of their lives (Acts 4:2; 5:25, 28), and their converts also devoted themselves to it (Acts 2:42).

To emphasize the need for education, Asante-Duku argues with Paul in focus:

The apostle Paul was able to make significant contributions to Christianity mostly because of his educational background. As a Pharisee he knew the scriptures and could competently deal with the agitators of Judaism on Torah piety. He was competent to make baloney of the philosophical arguments of the Greeks. And he could stand to defend his faith in the face of the Roman authority. His contributions to the composition of the New Testament cannot be overemphasized.

Continuing with the need for deep-seated education, Apostle Paul admonishes believers to study to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that needed not to be ashamed, but rightly dividing/correctly handling/cutting straight the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). It is in fact incongruous for anyone to claim to have spiritual knowledge without the need for formal theological education.

Thus, there should be conscious efforts by every youth to overcome ignorance in a fast developing world in order to live a purposeful life. This means, the person should be armed by knowledge, because “knowledge” it is said “is power.” That is, each youth member of school-going age should never drop out of school, especially now that many countries are evolving schemes that support education. Thus, it is prudent that some principles are pursued. For example:

- Each student should make it a vision to get a first degree.

- Those with first degrees should strive for higher degrees.
- Those in non-formal fields/vocations should formalize their profession.

d. The youth should know about friendship and dating

The very foundation of life is relationship; indeed, life is empty without any form of relationships. Outside of our blood family relationships, friendship is usually observed as the most common form of relationship that bind people together. Youth in general like to get involve in friendship relationships, and in the process build strong ties, especially at the beginning of adolescence or teenage. It is such relationships, usually starting as an ordinary friendship, that grow into dating, with some sometimes even up ending in marriages.

Whether a person desires to engage in friendship or not, it is one of the most important ingredients of life. While such friendship relationships oftentimes become exciting experiences of life at that level, they also come with a host of issues and challenges. Usually, it is during such periods that most issues related to sex including all the negative aspects of it like pornography, pregnancy, abortion, homosexuality and the like begin to raise their ugly heads.

Little wonder, a lot of controversies arise in discussions on Christian youth and relationships. This is because, for some Christian youth issues like homosexuality, masturbation, and abortion which Mahoney (n.d.) describes as “hot button items” are clearly understood as sins. Other Christian youth think otherwise. Therefore, the Christian youth need to carefully and

consciously work at the person(s) to have and keep as friend(s). It is this period that biblical and Christian guidance becomes most essential. For, Scripture says in 1 Corinthians 15:33: “Evil communication corrupts good manners.”

Hence it is necessary for the youth to consider the traits that are important in any relationship such as fear of God, genuine love, faithfulness, honesty, and the like and how these apply to your friend(s). Again, Scripture warns that “friendship with the world is hatred toward God: and that “anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God” (Jam. 4:4). Avoiding pitfalls like lying, deceit, jealousy, envy and the like, will go a long way in building enduring friendships.

Besides, it is from such solid foundations that a more intimate relationship that is initiated through dating and the like can arise. Whether a person decides not to date or begins to set boundaries in a dating relationship, a lot needs to be considered when any relationship goes beyond friendship. Dating is a current term commonly associated with erotic love relationships. It describes a meeting arranged by two individuals usually in romantic love (or courtship) and lays the foundation for more intimacy. It is a feature that is common among people

Dating is a current term commonly associated with erotic love relationships.

exploring love opportunities, thus associated with many Christian youth, especially when they begin to think of

settling down to a meaningful family life.

It is therefore expedient for such a youth to know what he/she wants from any friendship in order to develop ways to

resist any temptation and rather build a healthy and productive dating relationship.

e. The youth need to wise-up and decipher traps of life:

There are lots of traps planned to catch the youth and destroy them. It is pathetic to note that some youth, by their behaviors and attitudes, still think that they have to be pampered in order to be seriously committed to God. Without proper application of knowledge, a simple understanding of the differences between love and sex might elude any ignorant and/or foolish youth.

Without proper application of knowledge, a simple understanding of the differences between love and sex might elude any ignorant and/or foolish youth.

The truth is that, to many shallow-minded people, the simple statement, “I love you,” is interpreted as, “I want to have sex with you.” This is rather unfortunate and many teenagers have been deceived by such expressions and have become victims of sex. To love is therefore different from to just engage in the act of sex as the world has made it appear.

In fact, love is a character of God that caused Him to relate to man, according to John 3:16. It is through the demonstration of love that God saved the sinful man, “For God so loved the world...” God is love and therefore His children, Christians, are supposed to share His nature. Hence, we are commanded to demonstrate pure love (Heb. 13:1). This pure love comes from a Greek word translated as *Agape*. This kind of love that we are commanded to show has nothing to do with the practice of sex.

So, people can love the opposite sex without falling into the lustful desire of sex. Christ-like love is not sex but is from God. However, lustful desire for sex is from the devil (Jam. 1:14-15).

f. The youth should be determined in life: If sensual desires are not controlled they may drive the youth to engage in some negative sexual behaviors; sex (by consent), rape (sex without consent), homosexuality, sexual fantasies, masturbation, etc. There should therefore be conscious and a determined effort by every youth to do the following:

- i. To lead determined lives because determination is a key to success. There is a saying that “where determination rules supreme no amount of failure can dismantle the flag of success.” Thus every youth need to be determined to keep himself/herself pure from sin.
- ii. To keep themselves from any form of contact with pornographic materials and they should not befriend people whose sexual behaviors cannot be trusted.
- iii. To not listen, look, concentrate or read much about things that can arouse your sexual desires and not go to places that may open them up to sexual acts or promiscuous lives.
- iv. To not make themselves too susceptible to the opposite sex or draw too close to them when very exposed.

To achieve the above, the youth should fill their minds with the word of God, hymns, spiritual songs, etc. (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4). They should be able to always pray against teenage sexual desires. Moreover, when idle, they should do private studies by reading books.

g. The youth should be governed by a Principle: Such principles can be organized in a statement of faith. For example, for any youth with a mind of determination to succeed, his/her statement of faith may be as follows:

As a youth with a winning, faithful, stable, unyielding and yet modest mind in Christ, there is:

- *No battle too fierce that I cannot fight*
- *No mountain too steep that I cannot climb*
- *No cross too heavy that I cannot bear*
- *No test too difficult that I cannot pass*
- *No challenge too great that I cannot overcome*
- *No enemy too strong that I cannot defeat*
- *No race too fast that I cannot run*
- *No success too big that I cannot achieve and*
- *No situation too complex that I cannot survive...*

In fact, I can do all things through the Lord Jesus Christ who gives me strength (Phil. 4:13).

Conclusion

In this chapter, attention has been devoted to helping the youth build their lives in accordance with laudable principles. There is need for some basic principles that will culminate in the development of a comprehensive socio-culturally sensitive youth policy. Yet, it is expected that any seriously minded youth, be they individuals or group, who decide to build their lives in accordance with the basic principles and procedures outlined here will receive the needed help to live their dreams and emerge on top in this challenging world.

DISCUSSION FOURTEEN

STRATEGIZE FOR OTHER YOUTH TO PLAY THEIR ROLES IN GOD'S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH

In this discussion, the concentration will be on the strategies the youth can adopt to play their roles in the overall plan of God for humanity. Of course, only those who are ready to challenge the status quo, where others prefer not to confront, that really possess transformational traits. They are the ones that are able to achieve success because they are often ready to “take the bull by the horn” or “bite the bullet”.

Such youth show character that propels them on when others have stopped, open doors of opportunity where others are locked up, see victory where others are already defeated, never look at the majority before action, and never retreat nor surrender. In line with the general mindset of their age bracket, such transformational youth are adventurers at all times.

A SWOT analysis by the youth, that is, by considering their individual ***strengths, weaknesses, opportunities,*** and ***threats***, is likely to help them become better positioned in order to achieve God's purposes. Typical examples are:

1. Joseph as a role model

Joseph typifies someone who was able to nurture his dream to maturity and fulfillment. While a youth, he experienced God by way of dreams which by interpretation meant that he would be a great figure in future and that not only his brethren but his parents would submit to him (Gen. 37:5-10). In spite of

attempts by his brothers against his life so that he would not realize his dreams, his life of innocence (in the father's house) which made him to run away from sin (in a strange land, Egypt) became a shield of protection for him.

a. Joseph's transformational prowess: SWOT Analysis

Once again, a few tips can be picked from the experience of Joseph for the benefit of our desire as youth for the needed transformation of our churches and ministries. On assumption of office Joseph rolled out definite strategies to execute his transformational agenda. He was a person who really knew his job and had a perfect description of it. He did this by:

- Assessing the agricultural needs of Egypt against the impending threat of famine.
- Building up adequate storage facilities to harbor all reserve or extra food for storage.
- Leading in the actual collection and storage of enough food against an impending famine.

Based on a SWOT analysis of the challenge of a potential famine threat in the land of Egypt (i.e. assessing his strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats), he braced himself up and tackled and solved the threat successfully. Among other things were the measures he put up to enable him execute his assignment to perfection. His analysis included the following:

His strength:

- He knew that God was watching over him to fulfil His promises concerning him.
- He decided not to corrupt himself with sexual immorality.

- His visionary foresight and ability to dream and or interpret visions opened doors for him.
- Not only was Joseph blessed with having great dream, he was also gifted with the interpretation of dreams.
- From the answer Joseph gave to Portiphar's wife, he was convinced that God Almighty was with him wherever he was.
- He was a humble person. Whenever he was promoted, he did not lord himself over the people but rather submitted to Portiphar, his master, and then to Pharaoh.

His weakness:

- Joseph was a slave; not a native of Egypt, so was not likely to enjoy some rights that other citizens could easily enjoy in their country of residence.
- He had no family in Egypt to depend on for support.

His opportunities:

- He spent time to assess Egypt's agricultural potentials.
- He knew that the people could produce enough from the land and also store enough against an impending famine.
- He had the mandate to appoint administrative officials and other leaders to help in the duties of the temple.
- He could organize all the resources in the land and provide for their needs when the famine came upon the land.

His threats:

- i. Joseph knew that any failure on his part would be a disappointment to the God who had revealed great dreams concerning what He would do with his life.
- ii. Joseph knew that any failure could spell doom for Egypt.

- iii. He knew that not only would the people suffer upon failure but his life could be in danger.

b. You are the Joseph of today

In what way does the life of Joseph serve as a role model to the youth of today? Joseph's life offers lots of challenges to any leader or person aspiring to such a position, especially the youth. His readiness to live a morally acceptable life and to confront all corruptible situations and deal with them is enough for the youth to know how much God expects them to brace themselves up and live holy lives in the midst of challenges.

It is this combination of gift and desire for purity that became the keys which opened doors of favor for him in prison

And when the opportunity offered itself, Joseph proved more than equal to the challenges that he faced as governor of the land of Egypt.

and also lifted him to greatness in the palace of Pharaoh. And when the opportunity offered itself, Joseph proved more than

equal to the challenges that he faced as governor of the land of Egypt. Though young, Joseph instituted a plan that bought the whole land for Pharaoh.

The measures put up by Joseph did not only help Egypt and the then known world to overcome a great famine period but it also helped to save his own father's house. Similarly, any youth can be like Joseph if the person desires to pursue a life of purity so that from the youthful days such a one will allow God to prepare him/her to meet and deal with some challenges of life and other issues both within and outside of the church.

2. Samuel as a role model of transformation

In a few paragraphs here, let me raise some of the issues presented in one of my books on transformation (Yamoah 2012, p. 91-101) to emphasize the ministry of Samuel as perhaps one

The life of Samuel no doubt typifies somebody who rose from grass to grace or from the pit to prominence. He thus presents a transformational experience to many of the youth of our generation.

of the youthful and yet very challenging biblical characters whose life is worthy of emulation. The life of Samuel no

doubt typifies somebody who rose from grass to grace or from the pit to prominence. He thus presents a transformational experience to many of the youth of our generation.

Young Samuel, a son to Elkanah and Hannah, ministered before the LORD under Eli as a prophet. “In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions” (1 Sam. 3:1). At age twenty-five (25), Samuel was already ripe to be launched out to public ministry. Though a youth by this period, yet he had matured and built up courage to start off and demonstrate good leadership with unwavering zeal for the Lord.

a. Samuel’s transformational prowess: SWOT Analysis

Unfortunately, Samuel’s time to mount the scene was the death of his mentor, Eli. The tragedies that befell him were not only news of great losses but became the cord that drew him into action and opened the door for him to prove his ministry. He did a SWOT analysis of the situation looking at his strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Samuel had the following as strengths:

- As a youth, he had good preparations for living a godly life; he stuck to his parents' upbringing and instructions from aging and experienced Eli.
- He had a lot to his character worthy of emulation: obedience to his mentor and spiritual father, Eli; tenderness of heart; emphasis upon righteousness; submission to the Lord; and concern for his people, Israel.
- He provided a contrast between himself and the sons of Eli (1 Sam. 2:18; 2:26; 3:1). In fact, he refused to be corrupted by the depravity surrounding the Tabernacle at the time.
- As a young leader, Samuel developed the humility to serve his people when other Levites most probably were lording themselves over God's people.

Samuel had the following as weakness:

Samuel was faced with challenges both spiritually and physically, which became threats to his call yet he overcame. These are some of the challenges:

- Samuel was faced with a major challenge of how to restore the morale of the people in the face of disaster.
- There was the challenge of how to worship because the Ark of the Covenant which represented the presence of God in the midst of the Israelites had been captured by the Philistines during the war at Aphek (1 Sam. 4:11).
- He was faced with the challenge of where to worship since Shiloh, the initial place of worship, was no longer safe because of the threats of the Philistines.

Samuel had the following as opportunities:

The above issues and many more that the Bible does not enumerate were the challenges he encountered and became threats to his success in life. Yet, he stepped forward and accepted the challenge and successfully tackled all of them. The greatest opportunity Samuel explored to his advantage in order to overcome his challenges was his solid background training in the Tabernacle which enabled him to perform many different roles at the same time. These include:

- ***As a priest:*** Samuel was able to lead the people such that the people's morale might have heightened. He brought sanity to the priesthood such that after twenty (20) years his sacrifice on behalf of Israel was accepted by God. This brought victory to Israel over the Philistines at "Ebenezar" (1 Sam. 7:12).
- ***As a true Prophet:*** Though a youth, yet Samuel was a true prophetic voice to sinful Israel. He fulfilled Moses' description and qualification of a true prophet. He was called by God (1 Sam. 3:7-10) and was given a prophecy concerning his master, Eli. When he became the High Priest and prophet after the death of Eli and his sons, he turned the heart of Israel back to God such that "all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was a prophet" (1 Sam. 3:19-21).
- ***As a Master-revivalist:*** Samuel led the people to a religious revival. For 20 years, Samuel was probably moving from town to town to make the nation sensitive to their sins against God and urged them to abandon their idolatrous practices if they desired a return to independence and peace (1 Sam. 7:15, 16).

In fact, after twenty years, the people had repented such that they confessed their sins at Mizpah.

- **As a Judge:** All Israel recognized Samuel as a judge. He went on regular circuit visits to interact with the people and to settle and judge their disputes. Scripture says that year after year, Samuel went on a circuit from Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah and back to Ramah, his home base, judging the Israelites. He demonstrated hatred for leaders who disobeyed God's word by pleading and/or pronouncing judgment on them whenever it became necessary.
- **As a Visionary leader:** His visionary exploit is his vision for extension and expansion of God's work: he set up the School of Prophets (or the prophetic guild, 1 Sam. 10:5 and 10; 19:20); he encouraged others to accept God's call into His service and trained the young prophets.

Samuel had the following as threats:

- Samuel encountered a lot of unhealthy malpractices among the people. Not even the priests were faithful to the dictates of their holy office; their moral life collapsed. They became wicked, perverting the ritual at the Tabernacle and treated the Lord's offerings with contempt (1 Sam. 2:12-17).
- The immoral life of the priests made even the faithful among the people to abhor worship of Yahweh at the Temple. Their faith in Yahweh had seriously declined because of the deficient religious conditions (1 Sam. 7:3).

These, notwithstanding, young Samuel had to brace himself up to overcome these threats, and indeed, he proved more than equal to the task.

b. You are the Samuel of today

Samuel's life offers lots of challenges to any leader or people aspiring to leadership positions, whether adult or the youth. His readiness to confront all situations and deal with challenges is enough to let ministers know how much God expects them to brace up for the tough challenges of life. One of the important things that Samuel's visionary foresight should challenge the youth of today to desire is to be people of vision.

Like Samuel, there are current challenges in the house of God that He is still preparing the youth to meet and deal with. It will take the youth who are prepared to live like Samuel to be used to fulfil such great plans of God.

3. Esther as a role model

Like Governor Joseph and Prophet Samuel, Esther, who became a queen of the then Medo-Persian Empire, can be considered as an excellent role model to the youth of today. Esther came to the scene of transformation as a youth. Queen Esther's life another typical example of somebody who rose up from grass to grace and from the pit to the palace and thus presents a transformational experience to many of the youthful females of our generation.

a. Esther's transformational prowess: SWOT Analysis

Though Esther was raised from an obscured background in captivity by her uncle, Mordecai, she did not allow her disadvantaged background to prevent her from rising into prominence. After a SWOT analysis of the situation of the Jews

(same as Judeans or Hebrews) in captivity, these are some of the opportunities Esther explored to overcome her challenges.

- ***Esther as a Beautiful Youth:*** She explored her God-given beauty by maintaining her virginity and humbling herself under the control and guidance of her uncle. She used what she had (her beautiful natural qualities) to get what she aspired for. Her life of purity and obedience opened the door for her to be selected as a Queen, the wife of an Emperor.
- ***Esther as a Queen:*** She maintained her queenship and provided leadership by example. She identified with her people such that their plight became her concern.
- ***Esther as a Prayer organizer:*** When faced with the scheme of the enemy against God's people she turned to fasting and prayer to invoke the help of God. She took some steps to win the King's favor through divine means. With the help of her uncle, she organized the people into an army to fight against the scheme of the enemy against their lives.
- ***Esther as a Visionary leader:*** After being informed of the schemes of Haman, an enemy, against Israel, her people, she came out with a plan that destroyed the plot of the enemy and led to the promotion of her uncle.
- ***Esther as Team player:*** She teamed up with her uncle who was much experienced spiritually to come up with strategies that helped reversed the Persian laws that were against the Jews in exile. She also encouraged the people of God to team up with her and seek God's intervention together.

Esther's life offers lots of challenges to any female youth who is aspiring to leadership positions. Can't we learn from her?

b. You are the Esther of today

Unlike Joseph and Samuel who were males, Esther's readiness to confront challenging situations and deal with threats is enough to let youthful females know how much God

One important thing that Esther's lifestyle should challenge the young girls of today to desire is to be a woman of purity.

expects them to brace up for the tough challenges of life. One important thing that Esther's lifestyle should challenge the young girls of

today to desire is to be a woman of purity. Just as God used Esther, there are challenges that God is still preparing the youthful women of today to overcome so He can use them to bring glory and honor to them and their people.

4. Nehemiah as an excellent organizer

In this discussion a few more tips can be picked from the experience of Nehemiah for the benefit of our drive towards church transformation. Nehemiah's book has a lot to reveal about the way he handled all these questions; his reaction to the news about the state of Jerusalem and also about some of the steps he took to ensure the rebuilding of the broken wall.

Not much is said about Nehemiah's age when he served as the cupbearer of King Artaxerxes Longimanus, the Medo-Persian emperor. But it is very likely that he was not a very aged person considering the fact that Kings of those biblical days were interested in employing youthful people for their palace services. Thus, it can be assumed that Nehemiah was a youth when he served in the 20th year of the emperor's reign.

Nehemiah received news about the poor state of the land and the broken walls of Jerusalem.

- Although Nehemiah was living in comfort in Susa, one of the capital cities of the Mede-Persians, he demonstrated concern for his people in Jerusalem.
- His attitude to information on misfortunes in Jerusalem was a demonstration of a person with transformational abilities.
- He did not only inquire about them but quickly turning to the Lord about the report he received he became concerned about his people and his land.
- He requested from the Emperor and gained his favor and was authorized to return and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
- He also received royal escort and all the needed resources.

a. Nehemiah's transformational prowess: SWOT Analysis

From the information Nehemiah received, one realizes that Nehemiah understood the exact problem at stake; the wall of the city of Jerusalem was broken down (Neh. 1:1-4; 2:17-22). On arrival, Nehemiah rolled out his strategies to satisfy his transformational program. Applying SWOT analysis, he looked at his strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats:

Nehemiah's strengths:

It is important that church leaders learn some of the factors that enabled the people to successfully rebuild the wall.

- He turned to prayer and received the help of God. His plans that worked to perfection before his master, the Emperor.
- Nehemiah was firm and resolved in all he proposed to do.

- Nehemiah was a strategist. When he returned to Jerusalem he first went on a night inspection to acquaint himself with the work to be done.
- He won the people's favor by convincing them to accept to change their disgraceful circumstances and improve their security situation.
- He was able to encourage the working team to prove equal to the task and completed it within a short time of 52 days.
- He was able to organize the people into a working army; while some were on guard others were workers with full armament in hand in readiness for battle.

Nehemiah's weaknesses:

An undeniable fact of life is that humanity is generally weak, irrespective of our natural abilities and capabilities. Scripture undergirds this fact when it says that no person can succeed by human abilities (1 Sam. 2:9).

- Nehemiah recognized that as human, it would be suicidal to embark on any venture let alone expect a fulfillment of his laudable transformational program.
- Acknowledging such weaknesses compelled Nehemiah to trust God's strength in all his endeavors. He humbled himself before the Lord and sought divine counsel in the steps he took (Neh. 1:1ff).

Nehemiah's opportunities:

There are some strategies that Nehemiah devised to execute his business. A couple of them are provided here:

- He got the leaders of the people together and challenged them concerning the work at hand. This step was necessary

to secure everybody's involvement, especially the other leaders. Team work is important.

- As a result of the people's willingness to do the work, he came in with the strategy of organizing different portions of the work under various families so that the people set to work with all their hearts. This is where division of labor is adopted in order to maximize labor force, ensure speed, and secure every skill and resources. Little wonder, within 52 days, the work was completed.

Nehemiah's threats:

- Nehemiah was not ignorant of the devil's devices. There were opposition from Samaritan governors; Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem which he had to deal with. These enemies of the Jews employed various tactics from mere ridiculing and warfare to methods of influencing some of the leadership and some false prophets to attack the people.
- He did not only have to maintain the interest of the leaders but also needed to keep them united and challenged till the work was completed.

Studying the life of Nehemiah should convince everyone that he was not only a master strategist but also an excellent organizer. As youth, there are a lot to learn from the life of this master strategist.

Conclusion

Which of the problems of your church have you identified? Which is your priority or are you concerned about? What do you think are some of the solutions you have identified to the

problem? Why do you think the solution you have identified to the problem is important? The Good Lord is still preparing the Josephs, the Samuels, the Esthers, and the Nehemiahs of our time to rise up and build the broken walls of our churches.

DISCUSSION FIFTEEN

CHALLENGE OTHER YOUTH TO RESPECT AND HONOUR THEIR PARENTS

One of the greatest occasions that the whole world celebrates is the Fathers' Day. Every year, such a special day is celebrated globally on the third Sunday of June. Although, fathers are biblically and in many cultures, regarded as the heads of the family, when it comes to parenting in most homes, the world over, mothers are rather closer to their children right from birth than to their fathers.

No doubt, such a bond begins when a person starts to grow as a fertilised egg in the mother's womb till the time of delivery, a period which usually lasts about nine (9) months. By the time a person is born, a kind of natural affection towards the mother is established. So honouring our mothers is usually not a big deal as is usually observed with a lot of pomp and in more fashionable forms, hence is not a major focus of my discussion.

It is rather sad to note that a number of people hate talking about their fathers simply because either there has not been any real relationship with their fathers or that the relationship between them has broken somewhere along the line. It is therefore not surprising that some go to the extent of saying that they have no father or they don't want to know or talk about anything called a father. Little wonder, the celebration of Fathers' Day, unlike Mother's Day, is often celebrated on a low key (cf. Eyiah, 2019). Thus, my aim in this chapter is to inculcate in the youth the need for them to honour their fathers.

Any time Fathers' Day is celebrated, it becomes expedient to also remind ourselves of not only the need to honor our fathers but its significance as well. Even the fathers that we find around in the house also have fathers and so they also celebrate their fathers. It is an occasion that has been set aside to honour fathers, especially those who have accepted it as a God-given responsibility to raise their children, and thus celebrates fatherhood, paternal bonds and influence of fathers in society. That's why it is relevance to discuss some few things relating to our fathers. In this discussion, I'm focusing attention not on the fathers as parents but rather on all of us who are supposed to honor our fathers, especially the Youth.

Who's a Father?

A father is the male parent of a child. Going by the definition of the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Cynthia Morrison (2019), "the male parent who has legal right, paternal bond and social relation with the child, is a father." A real father makes himself relevant in the upbringing of his children and also set himself as a pillar against whom the family leans on. A real father is a mentor and a motivator to his children. A godly father no doubt raises the child in the right moral manner; and makes sure he becomes a pillar of love, support and discipline to his children and the family at large.

According to Morrison (2019), "an affectionate, supportive and involved father can contribute greatly to his child's cognitive, language and social development as well as academic achievement." Responsible fathers indeed "set the

standards, enforce rules and provide for their families both financially and emotionally which means that a father's responsibilities at home extend way beyond financial security to providing a conducive environment for proper development of children" (Morrison (2019). Of course, there can never be a father if there's no child. Anytime you look to somebody and call him a father, it means you admit that you're a child. There are many types of fathers, and among others include the following:

1. Heavenly father
2. Biological father
3. Foster father
4. Spiritual father
5. Step father
6. General fathers

Indeed, "father" is a general term that we used for anybody that we look up to and especially in our part of the world in African context. Our culture is such that we respect everybody that attains a certain matured age and accord such people special elderly status. In most cases, no matter who the person is you're supposed to respect that person as a father. For example, the President of a nation is not only the first person of that nation but he is also considered presently as the father of the nation.

This point is emphasised by Vice President of Ghana, Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, when he hailed the President of the country on the occasion of Father's Day, revealing that, "by his deeds he has lived up to a good father of the country." In a message commemorating the day on his Facebook page

sighted by mynewsgh.com (2019), he stated: “I wish the father of the nation, H.E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, a Happy Father’s Day.” Continuing, he said: “By your deeds you have lived up to the mantle of father of the nation.” Whether there’s a father who’s alive that you can point to or there isn’t a father that you know, there is still somebody who is a father to you. Thus, it is important for you to honour such a person.

Whether there’s a father who’s alive that you can point to or there isn’t a father that you know, there is still somebody who is a father to you.

Though the father is supposed to be a role model to his children and make them feel that they are also accepted and respected (cf. Eyiah, 2019), unfortunately, some of them fail in this aspect. Thus, in as much as there are some good fathers out there, there are others who fail to take responsibility of their children that they bring into this world, leaving the burden on mothers, or pushing them to live on the street or loiter around without any or adequate parental guidance, support and leadership. More often than not, such children end up not knowing their fathers let alone as their role models.

Consequently, the active role of fathers in the lives of children, according to Morrison (2019), is to “protects them against behavioural problems including alcohol and drug abuse.” Furthermore, Morrison (2019) observes that, “the issues of disability, vulnerability, and marginalization would be minimal in our country, if all fathers understand their role in the lives of their children. This explains why we always plead with

fathers who are currently not active in the lives of their families to live up to expectation and train our children into fully functional adults.”

Why should a Youth honour his/her father?

1) **The father is the male source of your life on earth.** That is, in partnership with the female source (mother), he is the person blessed by God with the power to give birth to you.

2) **It is a commandment by God** (Exod 20:12; cf. Eph 6:1-3). There are divine blessings association with this commandment. It is a commandment to honor your father and if you don't obey it's between you and God.

(a) **That it may be well with you:** If there's anything that you need to ensure that you enjoy life on this earth, then think about your parent, and in this particular instance, I'm talking about your father. A lady visited me with her baby one day and she said she has heard that her father is sick and wanted to visit him. I marveled by what she said because she was carrying a child that is so young. Others hear their father is sick and they begin to even say bitter words about his situation.

(b) **That you may live long on earth:** Once again, if there's anything that you need to ensure that you live life longer on this earth think about honouring your father. I'm talking about your father. Even if the Lord, by any means, makes you aware that your father has an evil spirit or you by some means realise anything of that sort, there's a way to deal

with such a situation. In such a circumstance, you need to pray for God to grant you wisdom to deal with your father.

3) **Our fathers carry “Special Blessings.”** We need to honor our father because there’s a special blessing that comes with honoring him. Indeed, there’s a special blessing that our fathers carry over our lives. It is demonstrated in the Bible that the blessing never come just like that. It usually comes after the father has seen or experienced something good about you. Nevertheless, some fathers also bless their children because it is a cultural or traditional responsibility to do so. This kind of blessings has the power to override your past mistakes and is usually triggered by something that brings satisfaction. So, this blessing is usually released on conditions.

a. When a father is satisfied with the service of the son (Gen 27). This is the case of Isaac and his two sons, Esau and Jacob. Isaac noticed that Esau, the elder son, was pleasing to him because he was always bringing him food prepared from the animals he brought home from hunting. Though Isaac always enjoys home food from Rebecca, yet, whenever Esau returns from hunting and brings something different, it was of greater satisfaction to him. No wonder, one day, he told Esau to present to him a “special meal” prepared from an animal from the field, so he could eat and when satisfied, he would bless him. This is the “special blessing” I’m talking about here.

Sometimes, when some fathers release their blessings to some of their children, it does not mean they are partial, it is because of what they have observed. For Isaac, Esau was the one he wanted to bless because of the delight this elder son

brought to him (though Jacob managed to take the blessings). Though Esau was the first born and so Isaac could have just called and bless him, he requested for something that would satisfy him before releasing the special blessings. The truth about the special blessing is that, it has the power to erase your past evil or negative record.

b. When a father is satisfied by the way a son has honoured him before people. There are two typical examples that will be considered here:

i. The first is Reuben. He had a lot of positives that positioned him to receive the fatherly blessings.

- He was the first born of Jacob which means that he was automatically entitled to the position of leadership.
- He was also entitled to a double portion of the father's blessings.
- He had such a good heart to the extent that he saved Joseph's life when the other brothers were plotting to kill him (Gen 37:21-22).

However, when it came to the time Jacob called all his sons to bless them (Gen 49:1-4), Reuben missed all these blessings. Why? The reason is that he dishonored the father by sleeping with one of the father's concubines – Bilhah (the former maidservant of Rachel, Gen 35:21-22). Therefore, he missed the blessings (Gen 49:1-4).

ii. The next example is Judah. He had a lot of mistakes or negative against him

- He is the one who suggested to his other brothers that Joseph should be sold into slavery (Gen 37:26-27).

- As a father, he failed to give his third son, Shelah, to marry Tamar, for fear that he would die. This was because both of his first two sons, Er and Onan, who married Tamar, died (Gen 38:1-11)
- Judah ended up impregnating his own daughter-in-law, Tamar, the wife of Er, and out of this pregnancy, Perez and Zerah, who were twins were born (Gen 38:12-30)

In spite of these, Judah ended up receiving the Jacob's praise, when he called all his sons to bless them. Not only did he end up receiving the praise of Jacob, his father, but he also ended up receiving the father's blessings of a "double portion": Leadership and Kingship (Gen 49:8-12). Why? The reason is that in spite of all the past negative life of Judah, he honoured his father. This happened in Egypt where he placed his father's life above his and was ready to sacrifice his life for Benjamin in order to save the father life (Gen 44:33).

There are a number of lessons from the ongoing discussions for every responsible youth. Some these are articulated below:

Lessons 1: There should be Change of Attitudes

One of the implications of the foregone deliberations is that we need to correct any negative attitudes we have demonstrated towards our fathers. I don't know the challenges some of us are faced with. Nevertheless, I am convinced that upon sober reflection, we are likely to find out where there's a strained fatherly relationship, and make possible amends.

Lessons 2: There should be No Revenge

Sometimes, some people hear that their father is in some kind of trouble and they do not care about it because they failed to live up to their fatherly responsibilities. I wish to advise that if you have any bitter feelings towards your father, it'll be in your own interest to deal with it in obedience to God's word. Your father's failure to perform his God-given responsibility over you is an issue he will answer to God. Our is not to repay anyone, including our perceived irresponsible fathers, evil for evil, but to do what is right before God and society (Rom 12:17). In other words, we should do well to repay any parent negative attitude towards us with respect and responsibility.

I wish to advise that if you have any bitterness with your father, it'll be in your own interest to deal with it in obedience to God's word. Your father's failure to perform his God-given responsibility over you is an issue he will answer to God.

Lessons 3: There should be Full Support

It is instructive to recognize the huge risks some of our fathers take in various fields of endeavour whether as ministers of the gospel or religious leaders, drivers, bankers, plumbers, engineers, electricians, lawyers, farmers, medical practitioners, office workers, security officers, auto mechanics, etc., in order to satisfy our needs and that of the whole of the family. It is in this light that Rev. Agordah (2019) has underscored the need for women and children to complement the efforts of men so they (men) could live healthier and longer. His advice is that

because of the pressure to get accommodation or build a house, marry and provide for the family could not be handled so easily, “they should be encouraged to be responsible.”

Yes, we need to understand, support and bear with our fathers to overcome their challenges. We should be prepared to appreciate all fathers, including those who by our limited human estimations do not fall within the ideal father bracket, because they made themselves quite irrelevant in the lives of their children, families and communities.

We should be prepared to appreciate all fathers, including those who by our limited human estimations do not fall within the ideal father bracket, because they made themselves quite irrelevant in the lives of their children, families and communities.

Conclusion

I fully agree with the call by the Gender Minister on all Ghanaians to appreciate the efforts of fathers. Agreeably, “how, can we forget those who gave us our soul and proudly named us to be identified as their own? Anyone can be a biological father, but it takes a real man to be a responsible and a good father” (Morrison 2019). This notwithstanding, our obedience to the word of God requires that irrespective of our fathers support for us in life we should still be prepared to honour them. This is the surest way to tap into the blessings of God.

All our fathers do not only need the unflinching support of us in terms of attachment or closeness, they also need our total demonstration of respect by way of obedience and submission.

Therefore, let us encourage everyone, especially, the youth, to be prepared to honour our fathers.

DISCUSSION SIXTEEN

INCULCATE RESPECT FOR LEADERSHIP AND THE ELDERLY IN OTHER YOUTH

Our aim here is to train the youth to exercise respect for leadership because it brings blessings and enhances total growth of the church. It is God's design that one day the youth not only mature into adults but more importantly assume the role of leadership. However, this divine plan can only be a reality after they have understood the healthy relationship between their current stage as youth and the people that have responsibility over them as leaders.

The expectation here is that growing as a responsible youth requires that the youth respect their present leaders. Indeed, the youth should be taught to know, understand and appreciate the fact that there are lots of blessings in respect for those in positions of leadership.

In the preceding chapter, we learned that Scripture exhorts **children** to obey their **parents in the Lord**, and to honor their parents so that it may be well with them and that they may enjoy long life on this earth (Eph 6:1-3). Many people have unfortunately understood and interpreted 'children' in the passage as the little ones below the period of youth. However, the word "children" (Greek: *Teknon*) has many meanings and applications including the following:

- Biological son or daughter.
- Adopted son or daughter
- Forster son or daughter

- Spiritual son/daughter a disciple/ or any person under somebody's spiritual care.
- Slaves/servant/maid-servants.

The discussions here concern the **child-father** or **subordinate-leader** relationship, and all the blessings or otherwise that go with the **child respecting the father** or the **subordinate respecting the leader** from the point of Scripture.

A. What we should know as children/followers/servants:

But why should there be followers/children/servants? The answer is simple: If you fail to follow, others will do same when you become a leader. Today you might be a follower; tomorrow you also may be a leader. There is little or no doubt that many people usually understand the role of a leader as one who directs/guides/inspires other people to achieve a goal/fulfill a task. While this definition may not be far from right leadership involves more than just what this definition outlines.

Though everyone has the potential of becoming a leader not everyone can go through a thorough and systematic process of training and maturation. In other words, not everyone has the required leadership skills and/or abilities. Yet, as many as

Though everyone has the potential of becoming a leader not everyone can go through a thorough and systematic process of training and maturation.

are ready to go through the mill, will definitely come out very refined to engage in fruitful transformational ministry. Indeed, to become a leader demands that a person goes through a kind of milling process. The following are some of the basic principles

that can guide any youth to successfully embark on the journey to responsible leadership:

- i. Be obedient to your leader's instructions (Exod. 17:1ff).
- ii. Support your leader throughout, as Joshua was with Moses always, so that when you will also find faithful followers.
- iii. Serve our superiors, work and be part of their success.
- iv. Seek your leaders' success; when he/she succeeds you are likely to succeed.
- v. Be careful not to challenge your leader(s) like the following;
 - Aaron and Miriam (Num. 12:1-6)
 - Korah and his followers (Num. 16:1-35)

When you do as any of the above did, you will definitely reap some form of a punishment.

Consequences of showing respect for the leaders

Typical examples of youth who demonstrated obedience and respect have been highlighted already as Joseph, Samuel, Esther, and Nehemiah. In this section, some lessons can be picked from just one of them, Joseph.

- i. Joseph honored his biological father with his God-fearing life that made him to enjoy God's favor.
- ii. Joseph received the desired blessing obviously because of the honor he brought to both his foster father and master, Potiphar, an official of the Pharaoh of Egypt by not succumbing to the seductions of his wife
- iii. Respect brought favor on Joseph that opened the door for him before Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Events that unfolded caused him to be lifted to the position of second in command to the king in the whole of Egypt.

- iv. By respecting his father, Joseph's two sons: Manasseh and Ephraim; were adopted by the father, Jacob, with special blessings of greatness (Gen. 48:1; 49:3-4).

In what ways do the discussions in the above apply to you? In other words, have you positioned yourself to follow your leader(s) as Joseph did? If your desire is to humble yourself before your leaders and serve them then you are already courting the blessings of the Lord God upon your life. Indeed, every youth should be taught to know, understand and appreciate that there are lots of blessings in showing respect for those in positions of leadership.

Indeed, every youth should be taught to know, understand and appreciate that there are lots of blessings in showing respect for those in positions of leadership.

Consequences of disrespect for the leaders

Many youth, consciously or unconsciously, including many believers, who have offended their parents by disrespecting them are reaping the results of their actions:

- Reuben did not honor his biological father and failed to receive a double portion of his blessing in accordance with the stipulations of the Law (Gen. 49:22-26).
- King Saul did not honor the spiritual father, Prophet Samuel, and his kingdom was torn from him.

Let us all, whether as leaders, elders, and especially, the youth, be prepared to serve one another with respect as the Lord Jesus Christ set us example in John 13:1-15. If disrespect goes with punishment, then the vice versa, no doubt, holds true.

Respect goes with discipline

The youth must be disciplined and submissive: As a youth, if you are not disciplined to be submissive, you might reach a point where you will say:

How I hated discipline! How my heart spurned correction. I would not obey my teachers and listen to my instructors. I have come to the brink of utter ruin in the midst of the whole assembly (Prov. 5:11-14).

A disciplined life is a necessity for Christian growth and real transformation of everyone, especially the youth (Titus 1:1-13; Jer. 30:10-11).

How does one demonstrate Discipline?

Discipline is the training of the mind and character, aimed at producing self-control and obedience in a person. It includes correction and being self-control, producing obedience and uprightness and restriction. The aim of discipline is to achieve orderly and controlled behavior in a group and in individuals. Some of the reasons for discipline include the following;

- (i) As a sign of love and a means to achieve peace
- (ii) To impart knowledge
- (iii) As a means of hope of restoration

The values and benefits of discipline

Scripturally, discipline is understood as a demonstration of the love of God for His people, or parents love for their children, or teachers love for their students, or Masters love for their subordinates or servants. It is always a form of discomfort to the

recipient; howbeit it is profitable. The book of Proverbs reveals that some people value discipline and therefore receive some benefits from it. Scripture says: “The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother” (Prov. 29:15; cf. 13:18; 15; 32b; 21:11; 5:12; 29:17, 21). This is why it is advisable for the youth to heed to the advice of those in authority to be disciplined.

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Discipline will help to keep the youth on the right path to

Discipline will help to keep the youth on the right path to maturity, leading them to enjoy the fullness of life.

maturity, leading them to enjoy the fullness of life. “A disciplined child brings peace and joy to his family” (Prov. 29:17). Lack of

discipline brings devastating consequences as revealed (Prov. 1:7; 13:1, 18; 15:10, 32; 29:1). Without discipline, any society or community becomes lawless, thus moral decadence and chaos among the members of the community become the order of the everyday life.

Discipline leads to Submission

The youth must not only be disciplined they must demonstrate respect and submission to authority. Submission is an attitude. It refers not only to the yielding and obeying

Submission is an attitude. It refers not only to the yielding and obeying attitude of the heart but also to an attitude of cooperation and support.

attitude of the heart but also to an attitude of cooperation and support. It is a voluntary attitude of sharing by laboring for the other as well. That is, mutually respecting and serving one another as the Lord Jesus taught the disciples.

The quality of discipline is typified by what Jesus Christ our Lord himself demonstrated when He respected the Father and submitted to His will as indicated by the scriptures (Heb. 5:7). It is important for youth to consider that Jesus' example of "submission to the will of the father" helps to reveal the way they should behave before God.

Conclusion

Discipline, revealed through respect and submission to leadership is an essential requirement for every member of the body of Christ especially the youth. No doubt, demonstrating a disciplined lifestyle and respect for authority will help put the youth on the path of God's plan for their lives. And of course, if we are disciplined enough to respect our leaders and faithfully submit to them, others will reciprocate our service when we also become leaders.

DISCUSSION SEVENTEEN

DON'T GIVE UP IN TURNING TODAY'S YOUTH INTO FUTURE LEADERS

Some people have wrong ideas about leadership. Though they are not prepared to serve others they harbor ambitions for leadership. They think leadership, more than a privilege, is an opportunity to exercise undue authority or lordship over people (Exod. 17:1ff; Deut. 31:7-8; 34:9; Num. 12:1-6; 16:1ff; Eph. 6:1-3). This is a misconception on leadership and must be avoided because it leads to failure.

The objective of the discussion here is to train the youth to aspire to be leaders because it establishes continuity. The underlying fact (as also learned in the preceding section) is that, if we serve our leaders faithfully others will reciprocate our service when we also become leaders. Indeed, the youth should be taught to know, understand and appreciate the fact that there are lots of blessings in servant leadership. This is one of the ways to turn today's youth into tomorrow's leading adult.

...The youth should be taught to know, understand and appreciate the fact that there are lots of blessings in servant leadership.

A. The different types of leaders

The question as to how leaders emerge is an open one. Clearly, there are different types of leaders that have arisen from time immemorial. These are:

- i. Trained leaders (e.g. Joshua, Elisha, and Timothy),

- ii. Called leaders (e.g. Moses, Samuel and David)
- iii. Born leaders (e.g. Solomon was born as a heir to King David's throne),
- iv. People's leaders (e.g. Jephthah and Jeroboam),
- v. Self-appointed and/or ambitious leaders (e.g. Absalom, Adonijah, and Korah).
- vi. Positional leaders (e.g. Joseph who was appointed as leader in Egypt)
- vii. Situational leaders (e.g. it is Israel's demand for a king that led to Saul's anointing as king)

B. The acceptable type of leaders

There are different types and levels of leadership. Arguably, a good leader is not one who usually succeeds alone. Rather, he/she is the one, who in accordance with God's will and guidance, combines the strength of others to succeed. Obviously, there are good as well as bad leaders. Examples of good leaders, as a result of their obedience to God, are people like Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, and Paul, while other people including Cain, Achan, Jezebel, Judas Ishcariot, and kings such as Saul, Ahab, Jeroboam, and the like, are examples of bad leaders, as a result of their disobedience to God.

Arguably, a good leader is not one who usually succeeds alone.

C. Choosing Potential Youth Leaders

Every Youth pastor has to fulfil the responsibility of having to raise other youth leaders. Surely, one day, "someone else

will be doing what you are doing. Devries (2008, p. 91) argues thus, “Whether you have an exit strategy or not, ultimately, you will exit.” It is therefore advisable for the Youth Pastor to dedicate more time to potential youth leaders. It also undergirds the position of the pastor as the leader of leaders and a true role model. This step prevents the creation of a generational gap as happened in the biblical days during the period of the judges. It also brings blessings and enhances total growth of any ministry or the church as a whole.

It is not helpful to keep your expectations of raising other youth leaders to yourself but rather make them known to the church leadership and parents. Before the process, be sure to tell the parents whose youth are involved some of the things that they can expect from both the youth pastor and other leaders. These would give the parents enough understanding of the purpose and grant to them some assurances while at the same time easing any tension.

D. How God chooses leaders: The Process and the Action

Any aspirant to a leadership position should note that only God can make and unmake leaders. This is why He could anoint David as king and at the same time reject Saul whom He had hitherto anointed as the first king of Israel.

...It should be understood that biblical leadership is a call to service and true accountability and not a position of privileges.

Additionally, it should be understood that biblical leadership is a call to service and true accountability and not a position of

privileges. These two facts will lay a solid foundation in helping to choosing youthful people and training them into leadership positions. Besides, it is advisable to outline other basic guidelines for such a process. The following may help:

- i. The first necessary step is to recognize Jesus' definition of the one who is a true servant (Matt. 10:24-25; John 13:16) before the person is turned into a leader. Indeed, Youth pastors have to develop youth leaders based on their ministry call and lifestyle qualifications. Fields notes: "Better to have two high-standard student leaders than fifty students who want to plan activities while they live any lifestyle they please" (1998, p. 191). Apostle Paul emphasized this in his advice in choosing leaders in (2 Tim 2:2).
- ii. The second step is to critically observe potential leaders among the youth. This is because it is from among them that you will do the selection. As Devries (2008, p. 47) notes: "In an organization, leaders must be brought from the outside. In a movement, leaders emerge from within."
- iii. The next step for you as the Youth is to use yourself as a model for them to emulate. As the immediate mentors, the whole church and particularly the parents of the youth will always have some expectations of the youth pastor. In line with what Fields (1998, p. 190-192) outlines as basic rules for youth pastors and other leaders, the following should serve as guiding principles in our responsibilities:
 - We are to model Christian leadership for the youth
 - We are supposed to mentor them in their growth and leadership development

- We are to motivate them through encouragement and the need for feedback.
- iv. Another important step in training youth to serve as future leaders is to give them real responsibility. All youth ministers should encourage the youth to multiply their effectiveness by sharing their skills with others and by giving them the opportunity to serve whenever the need arises.
 - v. After being convinced of a couple of them, conduct an interview for the best choice among the lot. Make sure you do not narrow your scope too much by limiting your choice to just one or two. It is helpful to enlarge the tent a bit and then narrow it gradually with time until the very best emerge out of the lot.
 - vi. Finally, make your choice known to the church leaders for their confirmation. When leaders are selected by God's will He himself supports them.

E. Maturing from a Potential to a Substantive Youth leader

Those called into leadership must wait for the right time just like what some biblical characters such as the following did:

- Joshua was a follower and/or servant at the time Israel left Egypt. He patiently followed and served Moses during the wilderness travel (Exod. 17:1ff). In God's own time, and through divine instructions given to Moses, Joshua was commissioned to lead Israel to Canaan (Deut. 31:7ff). And with Moses' blessings he became a successful leader.
- David waited until Saul had died as a king of Israel before he ascended the throne though he had been anointed as

king many years earlier. At the right time, the whole of the polarized Israel came together to accept him as king.

- Elisha honored his spiritual father Elijah and he received a double portion of his blessing (2 Kings 2:1ff). He waited until Elijah had been taken to heaven before he assumed his role as a prophet though he had been anointed as prophet many years earlier.
- The disciples were instructed to wait in Jerusalem until the Lord Jesus Christ had ascended into heaven and the power of the Holy Spirit had come upon them before they begin their ministry as witnesses of the risen Lord. And when they obeyed this instruction it worked perfectly well for them.

Conclusion

To the youth who are definitely future leaders, you are admonished to allow yourselves to be trained while at the same time maintaining our status as servants. For, if you serve your leaders faithfully others will reciprocate your service when you also become leaders. Indeed, God will raise you up tomorrow; but for today, you must follow and serve.

To the Youth pastor and other leaders, we should know that while issues like church attendance, wealth, place of worship, etc., are a measure of success, the far more important factor to test success in ministry is what the youth you have raised today will be doing twenty, thirty, and forty years after you. That is, whether they will still be committed to Christ or not.

DISCUSSION EIGHTEEN

GENERAL CONCLUSION:

YES! WHEN YOU ARISE, YOU WILL DEFINITELY SHINE!

At this juncture, the most reasonable question is: what should be the general conclusion to all the discussions so far? Indeed, upon careful analysis of the past and the present predicament of some churches, and considering the larger future interest of God's Kingdom, ***any youth with a vision and mission*** should be convinced that what most of our churches need presently is not just more pastors. Rather, our churches need visionary youth who represent ideas and are looking up to God to help them fulfil their call or live their dreams. Such youth do not idle around and waste their lives.

...Our churches need visionary youth who represent ideas and are looking up to God to help them fulfil their call or live their dreams.

Rather, they are ready to allow God to transform them in order to use them in the transformation of other youth for the church to experience both qualitative and quantitative growth. That is, the youth must "recognize that before circumstance could change, he [or she might have to change]" (Devries 2008, p. 112). As a youth, you should be transformed in order to also be in a position to transform others.

Some have done it before

Like Joseph who desired to pursue a life of purity so that right from his youthful days, the Lord was revealing His plans of

a great future to him, the youth of today should be challenged to such a life. Yes, in the midst of the corruption around and the great peer pressure to involve in unhealthy life practices, the youth with a vision can still excel. One of the most important things that every youth should learn from Joseph's life is his visionary foresight. His ability to dream and interpret visions should challenge the youth to desire spirituality. Like Joseph, God is preparing the youth to meet and deal with some life challenges.

Samuel's readiness to confront all situations and deal with challenges is enough to let ministers know how much God expects them to brace up for the tough challenges of life. His readiness to live a morally acceptable life and to confront all corruptible situations and deal with challenges is enough to let the youth know how much God expects them to brace up and live a holy life in the midst of challenges. Esther's foresight should challenge the young girls of today to desire to be a woman of purity.

Nehemiah's life of sincere and deep sensitivity towards the damaged wall of the

Nehemiah's life of sincere and deep sensitivity towards the damaged portions of the wall of the city of Jerusalem is still worthy of emulation.

city Jerusalem is still worthy of emulation. And in fact, there cannot be a better time than now. This is in the light of the number of issues that require repairs in our present day houses of God. Therefore, you may need to ponder over these questions and begin to address them prayerfully:

- In what way do you need a transformation?

- Which of the problems of your church have you identified?
- In what way(s) can you help to bring solution?

There are enough testimonies to show that the Lord continues to open great doors for all, especially the youth, who are prepared to demonstrate the zeal to serve Him faithfully. Indeed, the vineyard of the Kingdom continues to witness the mighty hand of God upon all such desirous youth. What about you? Are you one of such youth with a Mission and Vision?

The Clarion call: Arise and lead a transformation!

Therefore, as underscored in the preceding paragraph, the world around you is looking for change which calls you to rise and accept the challenge. The Lord is calling on you to rise and be one of the 'Josephs' or the 'Joshuas' or the 'Samuels' or the 'Deborahs' or the 'Esthers' or the 'Nehemiahs' or other youth who are biblical models in your church or community or society. He is looking for such young men and women who are prepared to do great exploits for His Kingdom so He can fill with His spirit and use. On the basis of what Daniel "***purposed in his heart***", we definitely need to conclude by agreeing with Asumang's (2017) that we need a bit of that in youth today.

The question is: Will you invest your youthful years in God's Kingdom service or will waste them and regret your future?

The question is: Will you invest your youthful years in God's Kingdom service or will waste them and regret your future? Be prepared to impact your generation by learning some lessons from how they strategically overcame the challenges of

their days. Whether an active youth or a youth leader, the clarion call is still on - *Arise as a Youth and lead a transformation!*

I have no doubt that the expositions and the discussions have motivated you and activated the character of a youth who has transformational qualities and who will always say, “Yes we can!”, while others keep saying, “No we can’t!” You are that youth, so you have to **Arise, for you will definitely Shine**, since the church and the world is looking up to you. If you are prepared to leave a legacy as a youth and put your vision into action, then just accept the challenge. Yes you can!

MY PLEDGE FORM

As a youth
with vision and mission,
my determined goal is to bring fellow youth to
maturity in Christ; to prepare, disciple, and inculcate in
them all the biblical principles necessary
to equip them to serve God well
and fulfil their life visions.

So, help me God!

.....
Name

.....
Signed

.....
Date

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Rev Dr James Yamoah, Vice President and Lecturer of Old Testament and Biblical Hebrew, Ghana Christian University College (GhanaCUC), Accra, and also the Minister-in-Charge of Restoration Christian Church on the College's campus, has not less than thirty (30) years of experience in Youth ministry. He has travelled the length and breadth of the country as a preacher and speaker at many Youth conferences and seminars. He has also ministered in some churches outside of Ghana including Nigeria, South Africa, Ohio and Maryland in United States, etc. Rev Dr JY, as he is affectionately called by his students, is married to Florence and they are blessed with Jemima, Emmanuel and Joseph.

In ***Arise & Shine! Be an Instrument of Change to the Youth*** – he challenges every youth to engage a transformational youth ministry. He deals with issues that will equip individual youth and youth ministers to function effectively. The message of this book is not only inspiring but also informative and educative. He has authored other books including:

- ***Always Ready: Over 150 Messages to Help You Study, Teach, Preach, & Live The Bible Systematically***
- ***Pacesetters of Divine Ministry: Let us learn from them!***
- ***Can You Be God's Transformational Leader? Yes You Can!***
- ***Amazing Grace: A Guide to Spiritual Formation & Disciplines***
- ***Suffer to Gain: How the Righteous should overcome Difficult Times***
- ***A Model for Hebrew - English Translation and Application: The Biblical Hebrew Student's Companion***
- ***Thus says the LORD: "No Open Defecation, else..."***
- ***Fellow Ghanaians, "Let's Stop Open Defecation, else..."***
- ***A model for Old Testament Exegetical Dissertation***

Youth in general and all ministers engaged in youth ministries be they independent or operating within churches and in fact, Christians in general, will find fulfillment in the living messages that flow from him. This book is indeed a must read. You definitely need a copy now!

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