

AN APPRAISAL OF BIBLICAL ETHICS AND CHILD TRAINING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the perspective of Biblical Ethics on Child training in Nigeria. The issue of negligence of child training according to the teachings of the Bible has caused a lot of ills in our society today, making children grow up to become corrupt and immoral in all ways of life. These children often get involved in activities that are neither acceptable to the Christian way of life nor approved by the society. Thus, this work employed both the primary and secondary sources of data collection. The study which is expository, descriptive and analytic in nature attempts to proffer a lasting solution to this problem by re-enacting and instructing parents and relations on how to discipline their children as taught in the Bible. These solutions are given from biblical teachings and from personal contributions of parents. The paper shows that the Bible instructs parents not to abandon their children, but to discipline them in the fear of the Lord even if it involves spanking them from time to time. Therefore, it is important that parents and guidance should adopt this form of child training so as to teach their children and free them from the bondage of immorality and irreligiosity. This study is a mirror to parents, relations and to the entire society as it exposed parents to right and proper way of child training as they will also benefit from the blessings that will come their way as a reward for proper child training, discipline and good out bringing.

Introduction

Many individuals including Biblical figures like Eli and Solomon have been unable to give their children a proper training and they received many consequences. Most of these children grow up to become loose and immoral; they don't pay attention to elderly and wise advice and are never found among good companies or group. This results to the formation and association with gangs and the participations in indiscipline and immoral acts. It is true that most parents abandon their responsibilities to their children; they do not properly train them as they are supposed to and these children grow up to become problems not just for the parents but for the society at large. When this responsibility to train children is ignored or abandoned, the society is filled with criminals causing a lot of problems for everyone. This study under take to helps and draws the attentions of parents, who abandon child training, to pick up their rods and discipline the child properly. This study will also help teach parents the importance of using the Bible as a guide for proper child training.

Biblical Ethics

Ethics is derived from the Greek word *ethos* which means wisdom, conduct, culture or way of life. The words Ethics and Ethical are often used as synonymous for words like morals and morality especially in contexts referring to the standards of right conduct regarding an individual or group. This synonym has a clear etymological basis and justification because it is the Greek word *ethos* that is rendered in Latin as *mores* from which the English word 'morals' is also derived; both *ethos* and *mores* have the essential meaning of customs, habits, rules and so on (Anyam 3). The ethics of morality of a person or group, however, consists not merely in what they habitually or customarily do but also to what they think is fitting, right, good, or obligatory (Kerker and Anyam 2).

Ethics has no univocal definition. It can be and has been defined in various ways. William Lillie in his book *An Introduction to Ethics* has defined Ethics as a systematic study of fundamental principles of the moral law or as the normative science of human conduct (qtd in Omoregbe 4). The term "ethics" and "morality" are used interchangeably. Thomas Hobbes defines Ethics (morality) as the science of virtue or vice. According to Sartori, ethics is the study of human conducts which are voluntary and performed under the normal conditions of man's capacities which include inward capacities such as intentions, motives and desires, outward activities which include speech, movement, sitting, writings,

selling and buying (9). Ethic can be defined as the branch of philosophy which deals with the morality of human actions; or as the branch of philosophy which studies the norms of human behaviour.

Biblical ethics is that form of ethics that is derived from the teachings found in the Bible regarding morality and human behaviour. It is mostly called Christian ethics by scholars and individuals because the Bible is the holy book of the Christian religion. It can be defined as a branch of Christian theology that defines concepts of right (virtuous) and wrong (sinful) behaviour from a Christian perspective (Eckman 17). From this definition, we understand Biblical Ethics to be a branch of the Christian religious studies that is concerned with defining and outlining the right and wrong behaviors with strict reference and guide from Biblical teachings and instructions.

Christians acknowledge is not only a duty to announce the gospel, profess the faith, and worship God but also to live their entire lives according to God's will as it is revealed in the Bible. Being God's people means following God's laws which means walking in the way of good and rejecting evil. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Biblical ethics can be defined as Christian theological discipline that is concerned with identifying and elucidating the principles that determine the quality of human behavior in the light of Christian revelation (1125). This revelation can only be found in the bible; the book that is considered by Christians to contain these determining principles.

Childhood and Training

Childhood is considered by many people to be the most important period in a child's life because it is the period the individual begins the learning and development in life. That is why it is necessary for the good of the child's moral responsiveness and growth to be taught and instructed by the parents as soon as the child begins to understand what is being said to him or her. This is the stage where training of the child begins and as the Bible instructs, it is time for the parent to decide whether or not if the child should be morally upright or to be morally irresponsible and rotten. It is the period when parents shall not spare the rod if necessary so they don't spoil the child.

The term childhood is non-specific and can imply a varying range of years in human development. Developmentally and biologically, it refers to the period between infancy and adulthood (Boas 23). In common terms, childhood is considered to start from birth. In the legal systems of many countries, there is an age of majority when childhood officially ends and a person legally becomes an

adult. The age ranges anywhere from 15 to 21. Biologically there are three stages in the development of a child. We shall discuss them briefly. The three stages include;

1. Early childhood
2. Middle Childhood
3. Adolescence

Early Childhood: This is considered as the stage when the child begins to speak or taking steps independently. It begins with infancy and follows with childhood. Early childhood spans the human life from birth to age eight. At this stage, children are learning through observing, experimenting and communicating with others. Adults supervise and support the development process of the child, which then will lead to the child's autonomy. Also during this stage, a strong emotional bond is created between the child and the care providers (Boas 25). The children also start to begin kindergarten at this age to start their social lives. This is the stage where disciplinary actions on the behaviors of the child begin. The child is instructed on simple dos and don'ts and is corrected when he or she goes wrong either by spanking them with a little stick or by scolding them and expressing dissatisfaction and disappointment over their behaviors. These responses to child behavior help communicate a message to the child regarding the feeling of the parent on each and every matter.

Middle Childhood: Middle childhood begins at around age seven or eight, approximating primary school age and ends around puberty, which typically marks the beginning of adolescence. In this period, children are attending school, thus developing socially and mentally. They are at a stage where they make new friends and gain new skills, which will enable them to become more independent and enhance their individuality. Once parents are sure they were giving the child the morally upright child training at the early childhood state and the child was taking it they don't need to worry about the child's moral judgment and decisions at this stage all they need to do is continue instructing the child concerning, mostly, the influences of bad and good friends and the good of keeping only good friends.

Adolescence: Adolescence is usually determined by the onset of puberty. However, puberty may also begin in preadolescents. The onset of adolescence brings various physical, psychological and behavioral changes in the child. The

end of adolescence and the beginning of adulthood varies by country and by function, and even within a single nation-state or culture there may be different ages at which an individual is considered to be (chronologically and the legally) mature enough to be entrusted by society with certain tasks (Boas 27). During this stage the child also needs to be oriented on human sexuality and its consequences. This is one of the issue parents have difficulty teaching the children but it is regarded as one of the most important things parents should often discuss with their children. Sex is not a bad thing in itself and the Bible says God created it for the consummation of marriage and for procreation therefore parents need to teach their children the right Biblical teachings regarding human sexuality.

An Appraisal of Biblical Ethics and Child Training

We take illustrations from the stories of Eli and his children and David and his own children. They were not the best of parents and the consequences of their failure to train their children in the fear of the Lord were felt by almost the whole of Israel. However, it must be understood that, the training of the child that we are talking about is not just spiritual training but moral training as well.

The Bible is critical about training the child morally and spiritually to ensure the growth of the child in both ways. It is the duty of the parents to instruct their children on what the Bible say regarding common immoral acts among children. Acts like lying, theft and disobedience to parents. These are the few things that are first observed in children when they begin to grow up and are lacking a proper training (Matthew 107). The starting point for the discipline or training of children is the fear of the Lord or the faith and obedience of the parents.

In the book Deuteronomy 6:1-9 says, "Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." The biblical approach to child training starts with the parents. The parents are commanded by God to observe the law (Deuteronomy. 6:1), fear the

Lord, keep all of God's statutes and be careful to observe them. Parents are to love God with all their hearts, soul and strength and must learn God's law and place it in their hearts.

The parents are to love God with their whole being and they are to express that love by learning and obeying God's precepts. They in turn, are to pass their total devotion to God to their covenant children. What this means is that, biblical child training starts with covenant faithfulness on the part of the parents. The covenant promises that apply to the children of believers are not unconditional. If parents want blessings from God for their children, grandchildren and beyond, they must love God and keep His commandments. The Psalmist concurs that, "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him and His righteousness to children's children, to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them" (Psalm. 103:17- 18).

These passages do not mean that God saves people based on their keeping the law or human merit. They simply point out that true faith in Jesus Christ results in good works. In other words, justification leads to sanctification. The reason that covenant continuity is associated with faithfulness on the part of the parents in Scripture is the simple fact that parents who habitually disregard God's law do not exhibit the outward signs or fruit of regeneration in their own lives. Such parents pass their unfaithfulness down to their children by their example and defective doctrine. God blesses the children of faithful parents because He promises to do so; and faithful parents are the normal means by which children are taught sound moral reasoning and decision making and the true Bible doctrines.

The parents introduce their children to the doctrines of God, Christ, the law, gospel and so on. Faithful parents exhibit the truth of the gospel every day before the eyes of their children. There are a number of important truths that should be noted in relation to the fact that biblical child training starts with the parents and their relationship with God. First, Christian parents need to recognize that they are under the direct authority of God and His infallible, all-sufficient word. Parental authority is not arbitrary, dictatorial or autonomous. It is rooted in divine revelation. Therefore, it is ministerial, loving and limited. Paul says; "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Eph. 6:1). Parents do not have authority to command your children to do anything contrary to God's word. Consequently, they also must not use child training blueprints and guidelines derived from an unbelieving, apostate or pagan worldview (Rushdoony 93).

Parents should never turn to modern psychology, psychiatry or heretical gimmicks for ethical advice or tips on child training. To do so reveals a lack of faith in the sufficiency of Scripture. Dependence on these so-called scientific, secular vocations is akin to Israelites seeking counsel from the priests of Baal. It is a dangerous and destructive form of syncretism. Parents are to derive their standards solely from the Bible. Furthermore, Children need stem discipline in order to drive the innate ethical foolishness out of their hearts. Proverbs 22:15 says, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him."

"Foolishness is the mighty tendency to evil-imbibing wrong principles, forming bad habits, entering into an ungodly course. It means the very root and essence of sin in a fallen nature-the folly of turning away from a God of love. It includes all the sins of which a child is capable-lying, deceit, willfulness, perverseness, want of submission to authority-a fearful tendency toward evil and revulsion against good. It is not a sheet of pure white paper; not the innocent, or even the easily controlled creature, easily guided by proper means, that we are looking at; but a little heart full of sin, containing all the seeds of future evil, multiplying to a fruitful harvest" (Adams 158). Parents in the context of love must use the divinely-appointed means to rid their children of this ethical poison.

Some of the passages we have considered regarding the Biblical Ethics on child training have been primarily negative. That is, they warn parents of the consequences of a neglect of their duties. There are also passages that speak to the necessity of biblical discipline from a positive perspective. One of such such passage is Proverbs 29:15, "The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother." Wisdom in the book of Proverbs is loaded with meaning and should not be confused with a mere moralistic theism. It involves not only learning God's precepts but a loving reverential relationship to God Himself. Wisdom is founded in the fear of the Lord.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; for they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck" (Prov. 1:7-9). The controlling principle of life, which crowns a man and enriches his days with wisdom, is the fear of the Lord, and this fear is inseparable from the law, instruction, or direction of God. The goal of biblical training of children is not just to impart ethical guidelines or family values. Also, discipline is not applied merely so that parents will have a well-ordered, peaceful household. Children need wisdom (ethical and doctrinal

knowledge, Christian character, biblical discernment, sanctified shrewdness and discretion) that is inseparably connected with and flows from a saving relationship to Jesus Christ. Matthew Henry writes, "In order to the attainment of all useful knowledge this is most necessary, that we fear God; we are not qualified to profit by the instructions that are given us unless our minds be possessed with a holy reverence of God, and every thought within us be brought into obedience to him." (12)

Nurturing the Child For Proper Eating Habits

The act of child training begins from the moment the child can respond or react to the people around him or her. It is important that the mother starts training and teaching the child proper eating habits at infancy. When the child is suckling and decides to bite on the nipple of the mother whether out of anger or frustration it is the time for the mother to teach the child that what the child has done is not correct but if proper disciplinary or correcting act is not implored or applied the child may not understand that he is at fault, therefore the mother can spank the child gently but enough to pass the information to the child that it is wrong and painful to bite the mother's nipple while feeding.

There is also the training regarding the washing of hands and other dirty body parts before eating food whether the child is eating alone or with the family. It is considered a morally upright character, among every culture in the, for a child to properly wash their hands before participating in any form of eating because cleanliness is one of the proper eating habits among human beings. When the child is taught all these proper eating habits and grows up he will understand and appreciate the parents and will be comfortable eating anywhere and everywhere he goes because he will possess the proper and acceptable eating habits.

Teaching the Child Hygienic Attitudes

Poor hygienic practices are causes of major diseases among children in Nigeria today and these diseases are also causes of numerous deaths. Hygiene is a set of practices that helps to maintain health and wellness and prevent the spread of diseases. Hygiene is an important part of the human being and to ensure the child's safety it is relevant for the parents to teach the child proper hygienic attitudes. There are a lot of things that the Bible teaches about hygiene and cleanliness.

In Romans chapter 12: 1 says; “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to preserve your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” The Biblical perspective regarding holiness and cleanliness of the body and the soul is very important, the bible advises Christians to preserve their bodies in a way that they will be holy and acceptable to God. The Bible instructs us to keep our bodies clean of sin and the dirt of this world because it is the temple of the Lord and the Lord does not like unholy and unclean body. Even in our societies we consider cleanliness and neatness as a virtue worth practicing and teaching our children. Environments that are not hygienic cause a lot of sicknesses and death while clean environments promote healthy living and comfort.

Children are to be taught some major hygienic and health attitudes that will serve them in their entire lives. Teaching children common hygienic attitudes like wash your hands after using the toilet is common among our primary schools and among homes. This teaching ensures the removal of germs and other disease causing bacterial when the child is taught to wash his hands properly with soap and water after using the toilet or bathroom. The child is also instructed to wash their hands before and after eating. Because children often play on the ground and may touch some unhealthy and unclean things it is important to teach them not to transfer the dirt they pick from the ground to the food they are to eat and after eating the food they should wash away the particles of the food they have eaten from their hands.

Furthermore, other common hygienic attitudes to teach the child include the brushing of their teeth at least once a day to ensure healthy gums, teeth and breathe. But if the parents can be able to observe their children very well they should instruct the children to brush their mouths at least twice a day, this promotes a more healthy mouth. There is also the teaching of washing of clothes with detergent or soap and antiseptic, this will keep the clothes healthy and comfortable. Then there is the taking of their bath at least twice a day to wash away the dirt and dead cells that are glued to their bodies by sweat. Children should be instructed to bath in the morning, afternoon and evening to keep them clean and make them comfortable (Matthew 109).

The parent should also begin teach their children, when they have come of age. The attitude of cleaning the environment by sweeping the compound and weeding grasses that may be growing around are very vital in the process of child training. According to Mrs. Tsegba, teaching the children to weed the compound and sweep it is one of the most significant ways she has been using to teach her

children personal hygiene and cleanliness. Whenever they wake up in the morning, they make sure they sweep the compound and then brush their teeth, take their baths and eat breakfast. "I have made sure that my four children learn to follow this procedure everyday and it has become a part of them such that they do this before going to school" (Oral interview).

When parents are able to teach their children the hygienic culture and those children are encouraged to practice it every day it ends up becoming part of them and they will live with it to old age. However, what the bible instructs a loving parent to do is to pick up the rod and strike their children, they should discipline them and teach them until they learn what it right and true such that when they grow they will never abandon it. Teaching children hygienic behavior including instructing them on health related issues like alcohol consumption, cigarette smoking and other habits that are harmful to health or promote a healthy living.

Teaching the Child the Lessons of Membership Associations

Human infants are equipped at birth with reflexes that orient them toward people. They are responsive to faces, turn their head toward voices, and mimic certain facial gestures on cue. It seems that human beings are inherently social animals. All over the world, people experience joy when they form new social attachments and react with loneliness and despair when these bonds are broken as when separated from a loved one by distance, divorce, or death (William 271). This study shows that people who have a network of family and friends are happier and healthier and live longer than those who are more isolated. We need one another and that is why social situations can have such a profound effect on our thoughts, feelings, and behavior.

From the above statement we understand that to ensure the children learn proper membership association which will not be to refrain them from associating with others but to encourage and teach them to associate with the right friends and be members of the right groups or associations. Children who lack proper home discipline are the ones running around the streets today and involving themselves in criminal groups and occultic associations, they were not properly taught the consequences of associating with bad groups and some of them end up getting severely injured or even killed. There have been numerous cases of young men who have been brutally murdered by opposition gangs or cult groups because they were involved in a prior violent behaviour towards the opposing gang or group.

Training children regarding which group to associate with will serve them throughout their lives. Some children who do not receive proper training from their parents regarding membership associations end up seeking help from peers who may sometimes lead them to get involved in things that would harm them. Parents, therefore, need to take the long view of social problems and to map out a plan to solve them quite as carefully and thoughtfully as they would any other problem the child may encounter in the process of growing. Children often begin to play alone at a young age but they start making friends when they begin developing and growing up because they realize it is more fun playing with other kids, the number of kids they play with will begin to increase as the children grow older. So by the time the child becomes an adolescent he is able to join and enjoy group experiences. However, if the parents were able to discipline the child properly and teach him lessons of membership of association then, the child will know exactly where to belong.

Training the Child's Mind For Moral Reasoning

It is just not important to teach the child moral truths but it is also very important to give him the tools to reason and process moral situations. This tool to reason will help him or her to decide what moral action to take when he is faced with a problem or is in a situation where there are many options to be taken. Training the child's mind for moral reasoning will enable the child understand that it is important to consider other peoples' feelings in a situation before one should take a decision (Dzurgha, A. *Principles of Ethics* 76). Therefore, if the child sees oranges on a tree, from his morally trained mind, the child will know that plucking the oranges without permission is wrong and, even with permission, plucking all of them will not be correct because the owner planted the orange tree for himself as well. Moral reasoning will help the child go beyond his immediate wants and consider other people's opinions, beliefs and feelings, then take it further and apply this reasoning or thought universally.

There is a responsibility to present children who will live in the unknown environment of the future with the tools which allow them to consider dilemmas and which promote rational, creative and moral thinking. By the term moral reasoning we mean using cognitive skills:

1. To endeavour to examine all facets of a dilemma
2. To evaluate this understanding of the situation against known experiences
3. To imagine, and deliberate upon possible avenues of action

4. To consider personal and societal effects and affects of actions, and then
5. To select the most appropriate behavior from within this considered range of choices (Rushdoony 96).

Therefore when the child is thought to know all the above and to be able to make or take decisions with the interest of others in mind, he or she may have received the training that is to help shape his moral reasoning.

Molding the Child's Moral Character

Raising a moral child means, teaching your child to live by the golden rule "do unto others as you would have them do unto you", the child has to learn how to emphasize, to be able to think through an action before doing it and to judge how the consequences of his action will affect himself and others. Therein lies the basis of a morally upright character.

The parents are the child's first and most important moral teacher and it is important for the parents not just to instruct the child but to live as an example since children often do what they observe more than what they are taught. Parents should connect to their children and sensitively teach them the rules of morality, this will help the child develop an inner code of behavior that will become deep rooted and as a result it will make the child develop moral feelings of or healthy sense of guilt, feeling appropriately wrong when they act wrong. Thus to a child with an inner code of behavior a lie is a breach of trust. When he slips, his well being is disturbed, so he strives to persevere and restore this sense of moral balance.

Discussing and teaching the child virtues of moral behavior is like arming the child against the battles of life in the area of correct moral judgment. Therefore when the child drifts into the life of moral uncertainty he will not fall victim to the morally decayed choices that will be available rather he will seek the right decisions to be made at the right time. Because the child has a moral reference system to use as a standard he will not adopt the values of others neither will he shift his values according to what is most convenient for solving problems of the moment (Dzurgba, A. *Principles of Ethics* 79). The society is concerned with what the child will become when he grows up and the parents are going to receive either the blame or praise for whatever their child grows up to be in the society. This is why it is important for parents to teach their children to pick interest in and concern for other people, in this way they will develop a sense of human

conscience and will express remorse whenever they have behaved wrongly towards any member of the society.

Furthermore, molding the child's moral behavior include teaching the child manners that will help him develop variously those moral such as , civic, good, mannered, behaved, non bullying, healthy, critical, successful, traditional, compliant and socially acceptable being. Other characters that the child develops under this teaching are moral reasoning, cognitive development, life skills education, violence prevention, critical thinking, ethical thinking and conflict resolution.

Developing the Child's Sense of Responsibility and Accountability

Teaching your child to be responsible and accountable is something every parent must do to ensure a productive and effective child. Responsibility can be understood as a duty, an obligation or a liability for which someone is held accountable. Now we can see that responsibility leads to accountability and for a child to be responsible he must develop a sense of accountability as well. On the other hand accountability can be defined as the acknowledgment and assumption of responsibility for actions, products, decisions and policies. Words synonymous to accountability are answerability, blameworthiness and liability.

When the child develops a sense of responsibility and accountability he is capable of taking actions with the understanding that he will bear the consequences of those actions and he will also be answerable to authority when it is requested of him to explain and clarify himself. Children who are taught by parents and who develop a sense of responsibility and accountability often make more effective and productive decisions, decisions whose consequences, they know, will be placed on their shoulders and because of this they make choices that will portray their image in a good manner, ethically, developing a sense of accountability and responsibility aims at improving the internal standard of an individual and the community at large (Matthew 112).

The Bible also instructs us to be accountable for our actions because it is what we must go through as human beings, the bible teaches that whatever we do here on earth we are going to be held accountable for it on the day of judgment before God. This is reflected in 2 Corinthians 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil" According to Dzurgba, "everyone to whom much is given, of him will much be required, and of him whom men commit much they will demand more" (Luke 12:48). This is a principle of

accountability. Accountability increases with the rise of responsibilities. Accountability encourages hard work, initiative, efficiency and productivity (37). Therefore, a child who is taught to be accountable will also learn to be responsible since the two concepts follow each other. These are characters that qualify individuals for political positions and other seats that are considered important in the society.

Training a Child For Efficient, Effective and Productive Work

The child has the potential to grow up and become a very good productive and effective person but it is left to the parent to make sure the child becomes that person. Disciplining a child is something that a parent is supposed to do in all ramifications; the parent is to teach the child how to conduct himself morally, how to interact with other people in the society and how to be productive and effective etc. the parent should begin teaching the child the importance of efficient, effective and productive work and how much importance the society places in an honest and effective work. Therefore when the child grows up he will attach value to efficient, effective and productive work. However, the Bible is against laziness and persons who do not work, the bible instructs that everybody is supposed to work if he is to eat. Paul says this sin 2 Thessalonians 3:10-14 "For even when we were with you. This we commanded you, that if anyone would not work, neither should he eat.

When God sent out Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden he told them that they shall eat by their sweat, God was in a way encouraging hard work and saying that he who wants to eat must sweat (work) for his own food. Therefore, parents should be able to instruct their children in the way the Bible say we should teach our children so that they will be wise and enter the kingdom of God (Genesis 3:19). Morally, the society holds effective, efficient and productive work as a virtue and it applauds and encourages any member of the society that possesses these qualities but to those who refuse to learn and imbibe them the society scorns and sometime rejects.

Training the Child in the Fear of the Lord

Teaching the child the fear of the Lord is an instruction that every Christian parent must follow to ensure the proper training of the child. Children are also called by God to come and learn the fear of the Lord. "Come, you children, hearken unto me I will teach you the fear of the Lord." (Psalm 34:11.). The Bible

further encourages its teaching in Deuteronomy chapter 11:19-21, “And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou, shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth”

Before teaching a child the fear of the Lord, the parent should teach the child the scripture so that the child will appreciate what is taught therein. The scripture clearly teaches that training a child to know and fear God is the basis for pleasing Him and living victoriously in his grace. The scripture is filled with passages that show that the fear of the Lord is a positive thing. In the book of Genesis, Joseph wins his brothers trust when he declares that he is a God fearing man (48:18). On the other hand Pharaoh of Egypt brought disaster upon himself and his people because he had no fear of God in him (Exodus 9:29-31). There is also an example of Moses choosing leaders who would assist him, these leaders were chosen because they had the fear of God and would not take bribe. Therefore parents should be able to teach their children these illustrations that stress the importance and consequences of the fear of the Lord. It is not to scare them for God does not take interest in scaring his own children rather He wants them to come to Him, to know Him and live with Him forever. Fearing God is good because it saves us from caving into our own sinful nature. That is why even in our world today when we hear a man is God fearing we often trust that person more and more.

In the Catholic Church the fear of the Lord is considered as one among the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit and according to the Catholic Encyclopedia, this fear can be explained as the gift that fills us with sovereign respect for God and makes us dread above all things to offend Him (3). According to C. S. Lewis the fear of the Lord is not the fear that one feels for a wild animal like the Lion or the Tiger or Foe even a Ghost rather the fear of the Lord is one filled with awe in which you “feel wonder and a certain shrinking” or “a sense of inadequacy to cope with such a visitant of a prostration before it”. It is a fear that comes forth out of Love for the Lord (56). This fear of the Lord is felt because one understands the fearful expectations of judgment (Hebrews 10:27). Still this is not a fear that leads one to despair, rather it must be coupled with trust and most importantly love.

Conclusion and Recommendations

We have been able to comprehensively discuss the meanings of Biblical Ethics and child training and we have also touched various areas which parents can train a child to make sure the child becomes a useful individual in the society. The Bible has instructed us to take the act of training our children very importantly and not to slack or ignore anything when teaching them. This work has also stressed the moral obligation of parental training and its effect on the society and the child as well. We understand that there is no doubt that the children who have grown up to be thugs and cultists may have received a certain level of parental training and instruction however, from our discussions above the bible teaches us that training the children verbally alone is not enough we should also live an exemplary life so they can copy and we should never hesitate to use the rod anytime we feel it is necessary because it is part of parental training.

Child training is a career and parents who wants to properly train their child or children must follow the teachings of the Bible regarding how to train a child. The Bible contains the teachings of every aspect of the human life including the teachings of raising and instructing children on how to grow, what to do and what not to do. This is why when children grows up and becomes immoral and corrupt, the society blames the parents because they had the opportunity to raise up a good child but they choose not to (Dzurgba, A. *Principles of Ethics* 103). Poor parenting leads to a lot of ills and many problems that exist in the society today are associated to poor parenting, for instance if parents properly train their children in the fear of the Lord, the children will understand that to fear God means to love Him so much that we don't sin against Him. Parents therefore have the greatest role to play in the development of a child's life and world-view. The family is man's first state, church, and school. It is the institution that provides the basic structure of his existence and most governs his activities.

The heads of families are obligated to use their God-given authority to instill in their children a love of God and a thorough training in religion and morality. They are to raise up a godly seed. Most parents believe that the task of disciplining and training their children is not one that is theirs alone but this is a wrong conception. Whatever the child is going to learn the foundation to that knowledge must be thought by the parents so the child will be able to discern from positive and negative influences and choose the one that is been taught the parents to be the best.

The Church and the society also have a hand in child training but the parents should make the choice of giving their child the proper training first, thus when

the child is instructed by other members of the society, it will not be a difficult thing for the child to accept. The starting point of Christian child training is parents, who love the Lord with all their heart, soul and strength; who are faithful to God and keep His commandments. If Christian parents want to be good at Biblical child training then they need to recognize that they are under the direct authority of God and His infallible and sufficient word. The sole standard for Biblical child training, as stated earlier is Scripture. Fathers especially need to lead the whole family in godliness. The father must be spiritually mature and must have a solid knowledge of ethics, scripture and theology.

The Bible also gives many reasons why children need to be diligently disciplined by their parents; Biblical Ethics discipline is necessary because of the fall of Adam. All children are born depraved, corrupt, with a bias toward evil, with rebellious hearts and sinful natures. Children need to be disciplined in order to save them from hell. A lack of biblical discipline has negative eternal consequences. Discipline and instruction are the ordinary means used by the Holy Spirit to cause conviction, conversion and devotion to God in covenant children. The Bible says that parents who do not discipline their children hate them. Biblical discipline is a true expression of Biblical love.

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