

CARE AND RESPECT FOR CHILDREN IN THE FACE OF MODERN CHANGES

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Abstract

In today's world, care for children by their parents is seriously eroding, with many parents turning over the care of their children to either nannies or educational institutions. Unfortunately the abandonment of their responsibility as the primary caregiver of their children takes effect soon after the expiration of the compulsory maternity leave period. Most parents live their homes earlier before their children wakes up and comes back late when they must have gone to bed. Despite the role that parents play in caring for their children, the educational institutions as well as other institutions must not lag behind in complimenting the efforts of the parents as character moulders. The children in their hands are like the clay in the hand of the potter. He chooses and determines what shape he makes out of it. Modernity to the young folks means freedom to do whatever they wish because the traditional society was an old school. Would you put all the blames on them when they are left in the hands of nannies and to the mercies of foreign movies and peer groups? This research is about care and respect for children which by implication entails proper upbringing of the child in the fear of the Lord. Eph 6:4 says: Fathers, do not provoke your children to angers but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Col 3:21 corroborates the same view: Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged (RSV). The above admonition teaches that while providing care for children at least to forestall discouragement, they should also be nurtured in the fear of the Lord. The combination of the two responsibilities will produce obedient, respectful and patriotic children for a better society. The book of Proverbs, Prov. 22:6 instructs: Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it. (RSV). Spear the rod and spoil the child is a popular assertion that connotes proper discipline when a child

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does wrong and the book of Proverbs asserts: A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the back of fools. (Prov. 26:3).

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Introduction

In modern society, respect and care for children seems premium but the contrary is the case in developing economies. This can be explained partially due to the culture of the society and struggle for survival due to the nature of the economy and partly due to the perception of our society towards children. All these are gradually changing in the face of modern innovations pervading our contemporary society which is facilitated through globalisation. The traditional society holds some positivities in it, while the modern changes, despite the advantages it provides, come with consequences; these consequences could ruin the future of our children, if proper care is not taken to identify what to allow or restrict in the light of care and respect for children.

To the young folks modernity to them means freedom to do whatever they wish because the traditional society and its tenets are old school and belong to the dustbin of history. To them they need to feel good, have good times and decide what is good for them even if it comes with dare consequences. In light of the above perception, it will be proper to clarify the concepts in this research topic for better understanding of the views of this writer.

Care: It connotes close attention, concern or responsibility. It also connotes maintenance or upkeep. In the context of this research *care* simply put is close attention, concern, responsibility, maintenance and upkeep of children.

Respect: An attitude of consideration or high regard. *Respect* in this context simply connotes an attitude of consideration and regard for children.

Modern: It pertains to current or recent time and style; not ancient (*Wiktionary*).

In view of the definitions offered in regard to these concepts, it is obvious that there are current realities which cannot be wished away but adequate care needs to be taken by parents to provide leadership in their homes taking into consideration the current changes in the contemporary world. From the Word of God, as covenant parents, we received the task and calling to bring up our children in the (filial) fear of the Lord. This is with the intent that our children

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during all their life shall serve the Lord and His kingdom. That is what we promised when our children were baptized: “Do you promise and intend to instruct these children, as soon as they are able to understand, in the aforesaid doctrine, and cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your ability?” It is the purpose of this research, to begin reflecting, not just on the content of the upbringing of our children, but also on methods, institutions and instruments that are used in the care of our children especially in the face of contemporary modern changes.

According to the author, children have a greater capacity for spiritual and social maturity, than what is at present attributed to them, and the wrong view of how we must bring up our children, is precisely one of the problems that hinder spiritual growth and maturity. It is not strange anymore to see and read reports in the news media that point out the immoral and intellectual decline that takes place among our young people, which often leads to extreme cases like murder, rape and gangsterism. Some Nigerians no doubt are already on this road not just the modern societies. One pertinent question which needs to be addressed is: Is this the fault of the economy, politics or the church, or do we have to look closer at home to find what is wrong? (Cfr. 1 Peter 4:17).

Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one Lord: And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words, which I command you this day, shall be upon your heart; and you shalt teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut 6: 4-9).

A lot has drastically changed in the way we look at things. Man has become more and more obsessed by contemporary innovations and modern changes especially in education and family care, although it has its positive sides, in other areas it has had negative consequences. In the past it was strange to see young people especially the opposite sex hugging and kissing each other in the public but modern changes says nothing is wrong with that. They even go to the extent of seating and carrying each other on their laps. Modernity to the young folks means freedom to do whatever they wish because the traditional society was an old school. Would you put all the blames on them when they are left in the hands of nannies and to the mercies of foreign movies and peer groups? This research is

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about care and respect for children which by implication entails proper upbringing of the child in the fear of the Lord. According to Eph. 6:4, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord". Col 3:21 corroborates the same view: "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (RSV). The above admonition teaches that while providing care for children at least to forestall discouragement, they should also be nurtured in the fear of the Lord. The combination of the two responsibilities will produce obedient, respectful and patriotic children for a better society. The book of Pr 22:6 instructs: Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it (RSV). Spare the rod and spoil the child is a popular assertion that connotes proper discipline when a child does wrong; and the book of Proverbs asserts: A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the back of fools (Prov. 26:3).

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

This research shall adopt Bowlby's attachment theory as its theoretical base upon which to understand and explain the need for caregiving to children as well as the consequences for not providing adequate care.

Attachment theory is a psychological model that attempts to describe the dynamics of long-term interpersonal relationships between humans. However, attachment theory is not formulated as a general theory of relationships. It addresses only a specific facet: how human beings respond within relationships when hurt, separated from loved ones, or perceiving a threat.³¹⁹ Essentially, attachment depends on the person's ability to develop basic trust in their caregivers and self.³²⁰ In infants, attachment as a motivational and behavioural system directs the child to seek proximity with a familiar caregiver when they are alarmed, with the expectation that they will receive protection and emotional support. John Bowlby believed that the tendency for primate infants to develop attachments to familiar caregivers was the result of evolutionary pressures, since

³¹⁹ Waters, E., Corcoran, D. & Anafarta, M. (2005) 'Attachment, Other Relationships, and the Theory that All Good Things Go Together', *Human Development* 48:80–84

³²⁰ Levy, Terry M., and Michael Orlans. "Corrective Attachment Therapy." *Attachment, Trauma, and Healing: Understanding and Treating Attachment Disorder in Children and Families*. 2nd ed. London: Jessica Kingsley, 2014, p. 201.

attachment behaviour would facilitate the infant's survival in the face of dangers such as predation or exposure to the elements.³²¹ The most important tenet of attachment theory is that an infant needs to develop a relationship with at least one primary caregiver for the child's successful social and emotional development, and in particular for learning how to effectively regulate their feelings. Fathers or any other individuals are equally likely to become principal attachment figures if they provide most of the child care and related social interaction. There are times when parents feel tired or distracted. The telephone rings or there is breakfast to prepare. In other words, attuned interactions rupture quite frequently. But the hallmark of a sensitive caregiver is that the ruptures are managed and repaired.³²²

Attachments between infants and caregivers form even if this caregiver is not sensitive and responsive in social interactions with them. This has important implications. Infants cannot exit unpredictable or insensitive care-giving relationships.³²³ Instead they must manage themselves as best they can within such relationships. Research by developmental psychologist Mary Ainsworth in the 1960s and 70s found that children will have different patterns of attachment depending primarily on how they experienced their early care-giving environment. Early patterns of attachment, in turn, shape but do not determine the individual's expectations in later relationships.³²⁴

Bowlby's contemporary, René Spitz, observed separated children's grief, proposing that "psychotoxic" results were brought about by inappropriate

³²¹ Landa, S., &Duschinsky, R. (2013) "Crittenden's Dynamic-Maturational Model of Attachment and Adaptation." *Review of General Psychology*, 173

³²² Landa, S., &Duschinsky, R. (2013) "Crittenden's Dynamic-Maturational Model of Attachment and Adaptation." *Review of General Psychology*, 173

³²³ Umemura, T., Jacobvitz, D., Messina, S. &Hazan, N. (2013) 'Do toddlers prefer the primary caregiver or the parent with whom they feel more secure?', in: *Infant Behavior and Development* 36 (1): 102–114

³²⁴ Bretherton I, Munholland K.A. (1999) "Internal Working Models in Attachment Relationships: A Construct Revisited". In Cassidy J, Shaver PR. *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research and Clinical Applications*. New York: Guilford Press. pp. 89–114.

experiences of early care. In his 1951 monograph for the World Health Organisation, *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, Bowlby put forward the hypothesis that the infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate, and continuous relationship with his mother in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment, the lack of which may have significant and irreversible mental health consequences. This was also published as *Child Care and the Growth of Love* for public consumption. The central proposition was influential but highly controversial.³²⁵ Infant exploration is greater when the caregiver is present; with the caregiver present, the infant's attachment system is relaxed and they are free to explore.

From early in the development of attachment theory there was criticism of the theory's lack of congruence with various branches of psychoanalysis. Bowlby's decisions left him open to criticism from well-established thinkers working on similar problems. Critics in the 1990s such as J. R. Harris, Steven Pinker and Jerome Kagan were generally concerned with the concept of infant determinism (nature versus nurture), stressing the effects of later experience on personality.³²⁶ Building on the work on temperament of Stella Chess, Kagan rejected almost every assumption on which attachment theory etiology was based. He argued that heredity was far more important than the transient effects of early environment. For example a child with an inherently difficult temperament would not elicit sensitive behavioural responses from a caregiver. The debate spawned considerable research and analysis of data from the growing number of longitudinal studies. Subsequent research has not borne out Kagan's argument, broadly demonstrating that it is the caregiver's behaviours that form the child's attachment style, although how this style is expressed may differ with temperament. Harris and Pinker put forward the notion that the influence of parents had been much exaggerated, arguing that socialisation took place primarily in peer groups. Parents and peers have different functions, fulfilling distinctive roles in children's development.

³²⁵ Prior & Glaser (2006) *Understanding Attachment and Attachment Disorders*, London: JKP, p.17

³²⁶ Bowlby, J. (1960) 'Separation Anxiety', in: *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 41: 89-113

One focus of attachment research has been the difficulties of children whose attachment history was poor, including those with extensive non-parental child care experiences. Authors considering attachment in non-Western cultures have noted the connection of attachment theory with Western family and child care patterns characteristic of Bowlby's time. As children's experience of care changes, so may attachment-related experiences. For example, changes in attitudes toward female sexuality have greatly increased the numbers of children living with their never-married mothers or being cared for outside the home while the mothers work.

As a theory of socio-emotional development, attachment theory has implications and practical applications in social policy, decisions about the care and welfare of children and mental health. Attachment theory and research have generated important findings concerning early child development and spurred the creation of programs to support early child-parent relationships.

Care and Respect For Children: Parents Responsibility

This question has become imperative for parents: What is our purpose with our children? We must hope that our children will know more about Scripture than we do, that their world and life view will be formed more and better than ours, and their fear of God will greatly increase. That purpose is nothing less than that they will be a godly seed (Mal. 2: 15), sharp arrows in the hand of the mighty in our fight against the enemy (Psalm 127: 4,5). It is also important that parents must realize anew that they are wholly responsible for their children. When irresponsibility is rampant, the chief offender is not the church or the state, but the parents. Scripture is very clear, bringing up children for all areas of life, is the responsibility and task of the parents (Deut. 6: 7; Eph. 6: 4). Responsible children cannot emerge outside their homes. It demands that parents are called to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord. Using the example of Eli and his sons to clarify the relationship between children and parental responsibility: Now Eli was very old, and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting. And he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. No my sons; it is no good report that I hear the people of the Lord spreading abroad. If a man sins against a man, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?" But they would not listen to the voice of their father (1Sam. 2: 23-25).

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Although it seems that Eli brought up his sons in a church environment, verse 22 makes it clear that Eli when he was an old man became aware of his sons' transgressions and that from someone else. Eli failed in disciplining his sons; he was not around for them. Eli had to bear the consequences, God's judgment (1 Sam. 2: 27, 30). This was also a poor example for Samuel whose sons were also rebellious after they grew up (1 Sam. 8: 1-3).

Today, many parents follow in the steps of Eli, by delegating their covenant responsibilities away to others. In view of this, many parents persevere in the ways of Eli who could not instruct their children properly, of which the many children in kindergarten, after school centres and public schools, too often witness. To Abraham, it was recorded in Gen. 18:19 "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him..." which in theory are nicely promised and established when the child is baptized, are then very much the reason that we justify in the end that our children are brought up by everyone, but not the parents. The minister, teacher, youth leader, psychiatrist, parole officer, etc., all stand ready to bring up children, while Mum is just there to cook the meals at the "home-hotel", and when the child basically comes, only to sleep, eat, and relax in front of the head/man of the house, the Egyptian, better known as the TV.

Dad is then nothing but the screaming and yelling machine. Dad and Mum will occasionally teach the child some good manners, and cute mannerisms, but for the rest it is the task for the "experts" to truly bring up children. But what limits Dad and Mum's ability to bring them up themselves? Well, most often Mum's priority is the necessary full time work, coupled with women association meetings, etc. All this makes it impossible for her to spend much time with her children. And Dad's sports club, drinking club, tennis/golf clubs, etc. shows clearly there is no time to look after and teach their children. We are too busy with all the so-called important things in life. On top of this, the average couple has the massive burden and responsibility of the present day large family. Think of all the money these children are going to cost. All the necessities like a third car, a vacation, television sets, videos, rugby tours, etc., have to be paid, before they can think of a proper care for the children. Further, this is clear evidence that home schooling or a private school cannot be part of the budget of our family, even if we really want to do it. It has become clear that there is no time

and no money to bring up our children ourselves. Someone else has to do that for us, and when something goes wrong, well, then probably it is the fault of the teacher, the church, or the state or even the third party who we indirectly relinquish our children as slave labourers under the guise of house helps.

“God designed each family to be a culture - with a language, customs, traditions, and countless unspoken assumptions. The culture of the family intimately shapes the children who grow up in it. It is the duty of the father to ensure that the shaping takes place according to biblical wisdom. Some fathers establish a rebellious culture for their children and bring the wrath of God, sometimes for generations. Other fathers fail to establish a distinct culture, and outside cultures rush to fill the void. Through the Messiah, God promised blessing to His people, their children, and their children's children forever.” The norm for faithful members of the covenant is that their children will follow them in faithfulness. The oddity should be children who fall away. Unless we re-establish faithful Christian culture in countless homes, we will never re-establish it anywhere else.³²⁷

The nature of the scenario in our country Nigeria is worrisome. The neglect of values in our country is not in the first place the result of political or ecclesiastical failures, but is a result of the irresponsible behaviour of parents, especially of the fathers in maintaining and applying Christian values in their own life and in that of our families. Scripture teaches clearly that the father (together with the mother) have the primal responsibilities for the upbringing of their children (Eph. 6: 1-4). Many parents think it is enough to take the children to Sunday school, or to church, or drop them off at school or the young people meeting when Dad is on his way to play cricket, and Mum takes time to look at the TV soap operas. It is the place of the parents to bring up God-fearing children in their homes, (1 Tim. 3: 4,5; Tit. 1:6). Parents are to rule over their home that is, by providing and leading exemplary lives. They cannot do this when they turn their home as wrestling grounds.

To raise good children, parents need to love each other. If husband and wife truly love each other, as the Fathers of the Church teach, then the children will have an ideal model of how to love God and their fellow man. Saint John Chrysostom, in a more general sense, speaks about the centrality of the parents' example for moulding multiple facets of the child's development: “For generally the children acquire the character of their parents, are formed in the mould of

³²⁷ Douglas Wilson. *Standing on the Promises: A Manual For Biblical Childrearing.*

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their parents' temperament, love the same things their parents love, talk in the same fashion, and work for the same ends".³²⁸ In addition to the good example of parents, the active intervention of parents is required in directing and moulding the will of the child.

By moulding and directing the will of a child, especially at the early stages of development, the parent is teaching the child that he is not the centre of the world. Only as such will a child learn later in life to do the will of God (to obey His commandments) and to put the needs of others before his own. In order to make our job as parents a little easier, we can begin by repenting, orienting our lives towards Christ, and making ourselves a little more Christ-like. Parents in the contemporary society should prioritize their children's spiritual well-being over their worldly success, offering them a Christ-like example of love and harmony within the home, moulding the child's self-will, and striving continuously to become like Christ is a brief glimpse into raising our children accordingly. It is a difficult path, but it is the surest way we have of raising children who will grow to love God and their fellow man, and who will be a joy and asset to the society.³²⁹

Care For Children: The Roles of the Educational Institutions

Hall's philosophy concerning young people has since been the norm for the western world. Characters like James Dean and Elvis Presley are seen as victims of the older generation that did not understand how young people think. Music and films of those years and since is a testimony of "invented adolescence" by Stanley Hall, and implemented by Dewey in the schools.

*"All children in America that go to school at five years old, are spiritually sick, because they have certain ties to our forebears, parents and a Supernatural Being. ... It is up to the teachers to make these children healthy - by making them international children of the future."*³³⁰

³²⁸ John Chrysostom, *On Marriage and Family Life*, SVS Press, 1986, p. 64

³²⁹ Brian Platt,(2005) "Japanese Childhood, Modern Childhood: The Nation-State, the School, and 19th-Century Globalization," *Journal of Social History*, Summer 2005, Vol. 38 Issue 4, pp 965-985

³³⁰ Chester Pierce, *A psychiatrist, A lecture before the Childhood International Education Seminar*).

Despite the role that parents play in caring for their children, the educational institutions as well as other institutions must not lag behind in complimenting the efforts of the parents as character moulders. The children in their hands are like the clay in the hand of the potter. He chooses and determines what shape he makes out of it.

Today, this youth subculture is the dominating culture in our society. Culture in all its forms - art, music, etiquette, and recreation - is altogether in terms of the demands and needs of young people. Advertisements are directed to young people, and when directed to adults, it is to make them feel or look younger. Life is centred around young people, and the high school is seen as the cream of life. Hence there is need for proper scrutinising and censoring of these programmes if the society would become what we all envision it should be. When it rains out there in the society, the children receive most of its drops. In most of the higher institutions, a dress has been adopted yet it has not solved the problem

The Church in the Care and Respect For Children

The care for children, which is primarily the responsibility of parent, should also concern the church. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). This biblical injunction is for parents as well as the church but it is rather tragic that the modern church is failing in this. It happens in many churches that doctrines are not taught to children, precisely because they have not reached a certain phase. Separating young people, also in the church, began in the thirties, with the explosion of para-church agencies, for example Youth for Christ, Young Life, Campus Fellowships, etc. Later, many churches started their own youth programs in campuses, and today we have children services which separates the children from the adult.

Schlect points to an advertisement he read in Campus Life, a magazine for young people: Have the time of your life! Sure you'll study ... College should be fun. And while you're at it, you'll get an education. Schlect then shows, what is the sin of young people namely: fun before duty! Young people are taught to live a life of fun and pleasure, and after that to attend matters of primary importance,

such as work and study.³³¹ And thus, young people are taught and brought up to be more immature and irresponsible.³³²

This philosophy of "enforced" segregation by age is also introduced into the church. For every age group there is a bible study, geared to the specific needs of every group. But it is especially the young people who enjoy the most attention. Schlect sees this as follows: "Evangelical churches have honoured divisions that have existed in our culture for less than a century - divisions which have no basis in either Scripture or common sense. These divisions breed immaturity because they hinder younger people from associating with and learning from their elders. Rather than admonishing our young people with Paul's mandate, 'flee youthful lusts' (2 Tim. 2: 22), we provide a forum for youthful lusts to be pursued.

Immaturity is the result of a congregation that no longer, in accordance with Scripture, admits young people to have as much contact with older people as possible. Children do not learn from the wisdom of older people anymore (Lev. 19: 32; Tit.2: 3-6).

The so-called generation gap, which is a twentieth century invention, is used today as an excuse to segregate the young from the old. When young people are permitted to set their own standards, there would develop a "group mentality" and they are inclined to follow each other's examples and not those of their parents. Jones then comes to what he sees as the basic problem: it is not that there is interaction between the young, but the problem is irresponsible adult leadership and supervision, especially by older people. It is because of negligent and uninterested parents that young people develop a group mentality, a herd mentality in their own way of life, their own mannerisms. Think of the ever returning complaint: "but dad does not understand me ...!" But the youth must be taught to be mature, to be people that one day must serve in a world of adults. Who can better give this teaching than those who are presently adults now?

³³¹ Schlect, Christopher (2007) 2nded. *A Critique of Modern Youth Ministry* Moscow: Canon Press. Retrieved: www.southsidebible.org/files/youth...youth_ministry_6_08.pdf 12/05/2015

³³² Kathleen S. Uno, (1999) *Passages to Modernity: Motherhood, Childhood, and Social Reform in Early Twentieth Century Japan*: Retrieved www.wikipedia.com 12/05/2015

Youth has to learn that to be young is not man's chief end. Many young people are taken from adult, or the company of older people, in the name of "youth activities in the church," or because they have different needs. It happens that because of this, some children are not at home several days during the week. This is a setback for family devotions, and mutual fellowship in the family.³³³

Schlect touches further on a basic problem, when it is said by the modern churches that basic teaching of the doctrines of the church and its confessions are 'too difficult' for children, these "serious" matters are only 'for adults'. (But these last two words are not heard from young people when it concerns the choice of films, and also not from many parents that should be examples for the younger people?) Thus we depart from the godly example set by the mother of Timothy in Tim. 3:14 and 15. The church must be aware of the danger of compromise, with the purpose to remain so-called "relevant." We must be 'relevant' for the Lord and His Kingdom, not for man and his worldly lusts (Matt.6:33). It is therefore necessary for the church to repent from all forms of unbiblical thinking about young people and their upbringing.

Challenges for children care in the face of modern changes

The modern attitude to children emerged by the late 19th century; there has been an emphasis on the role of the family and the sanctity of the child, - an attitude that has remained dominant in Western societies ever since and gradually permeating our society today. This can be seen in the emergence of the cellular phone, computers and the proliferation of social media (Facebook, whatsapp, 2go, etc.). In the 21st century a new genre of *children's literature* has emerged. Instead of the *didactic* nature of children's books of the previous age, authors began to write humorous, child-oriented books, more attuned to the child's imagination. The movie industry both local and foreign are not helping the matter either, but on daily bases pushes to the market uncensored and corrupting movies with its devastating consequences on the children's psychological, sociological and mental developments. As a matter of fact, the challenges posed by these to parents in their role as caregivers cannot be quantified. Today, thanks to the growing importance of the Internet, the children have a wealth of new resources at their fingertips, but no thanks as it comes with

³³³ Mark Jones, (2010) *Children as Treasures: Childhood and the Middle Class in Early Twentieth Century Japan*: Retrieved www.wikipedia.com12/05/2015

a host of new concerns and challenges which needs to be dealt with. Computers, smartphones and the Internet are here to stay in our schools and homes and it cannot be wished away by sceptics. But care must be taken in order to be able to raise a better generation of children.

Earlier before now, children in Nigeria hardly had access to computers, phones or internet but the case is no longer the same in recent times when children use better and more expensive phones than their parents do. Even the homes have become so busy with chatting and movie halls. Similarly in the school, most children do not even pay attention to the lessons going on in class simply because they are engrossed with chatting on their phones. After school, the same chatting on their phones might continue that they even forgot to do their homeworks. Most parents also have become busier that they pay little attention to their children because they now have a whole range of other caregivers, including, extra lesson instructors and nannies to share in the responsibilities that would otherwise have been completely their own. Achunine notes that Parents should avoid delegating too much of their duties to other helpers such as relatives, nannies and hired hands.³³⁴ This is because, as a parent, they pass on to their children important educational values which are vital for their proper formation. Parents should understand that children need adults whose constant presence can help them reflect on their life's progress. That need is less likely to be met when parental authority is shared with many adults who play only a transient role, and the result may be problematic with identity and self-esteem. This may account for the reason why children take to the alternative of interacting with peers over the social media friends, who may influence them negatively in life.³³⁵

³³⁴ Stella Achunine (2015). "The Role of the Family toward a Better Society" in *The New Searchlight Magazine*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 47-48.

³³⁵ Steyaert, J. (1997). "Peeling the CIS onion: The Looking after Children system in an international perspective" in N. Gould & K. Moultrie (Eds.), *Effective policy, planning and implementation: Information management in social services* (pp. 27-47)

Recommendations

In the face of the myriads of challenges facing parents in the care for their children nowadays, the following recommendations are paramount:

1 Discourage unnecessary peer relationships, especially to encourage family bond. It is a good thing for families to sit together in church, instead of what happens today, that each member looks for his/her own place. Important family dates like birthdays, family devotions, eating together, etc., should have precedence over any other.

2. Young people can attend adult bible studies, especially where parents attend. Most children understand much more than some adults today. There is a message in the Bible for both parents and children! It may be somewhat strange at the outset, but the child will gradually grow in its knowledge of the Bible and how to study it.

3 Organize affairs for families, not just for young people or only parents, for certain occasions. The program must not be changed to accommodate children's needs, but must be in line with the programme and leading of adults.

4 Children must associate their upbringing with parental authority. It is high time that parents assumed their *prima* responsibility by taking over the upbringing of their children from the youth leaders, and other experts (Prov. 22: 6).

5 Children must be taught to always respect their parents and at the same time ask them questions, even about the Bible and the faith. These children should not be brought up as enemies of their parents, but must be shown some respect and honour (Eph. 6:1-3).

Conclusion

As parents, how much do you appreciate God's covenant children, which he loans out to you temporarily and promised to give you everything needed to bring them up? Remember, one day we all must appear before God's judgment seat to give an account of how we brought up our children. When we claim we did not have time and money, there is something wrong with our priorities and planning (Mat. 6: 33), especially in the area of bringing up our children.

By strength shall no man prevail. The task of good upbringing of children cannot be accomplished successfully by parents without the help of the Holy Spirit. "Unless the Lord builds the house, in vain does the builders labour and unless the Lord watch over the city, in vain does the watchman keep vigil"; "Lo,

children are a heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. ... "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them!" (Ps. 127:1,3,5). Without getting angry when the child tests his limits and without putting excessive pressure on the child, parents can do much good for the child's soul by setting clear and pronounced boundaries around the child's self-will. Of course, the parents need to consistently maintain and remind the child of those boundaries in a loving and gentle way. In doing this and in a manner, such that takes the child into consideration of course, the implication is that the child is treated with care and respect.

The position of this paper is that caution should be applied in taking care of children in the face of modern changes. Their rights should not be denied them but bounds must be properly delineated.