

In the Shadows of Truth

The Polarized Family



Elly K. Kansiiime



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Globethics.net Praxis

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FOREWORD

In the shadows of truth is yet another of Rev. Can. Dr. Elly Kansime's interesting books that highlight the insights about family life. In his first book entitled "*Integrating Faith with Work*" a *Ministry Transformational Model*, he dealt with how poor work ethics affects Christian societies, families and individuals negatively. In his latest book, Kansime deals with how families have been polarized due to circumstantial factors affecting parents and children. Families are living in the shadows of the realities. While life seems to be going on normally, behind scenes, there are worse things happening among the children living under the same roof with their parents, knowingly or unknowingly. The realities experienced in families have been overshadowed by the parental absence in the name of work and children's education and these have resulted into polarizing family life.

In this book the author deals with the hidden realities posed by parents who spend most of their time at work and less at home, while the children spend a lot of time at school and later with house workers. In the course of that long period of time of separation, children find intimacy with the school teachers, peers and house workers with whom they stay for longer hours as compared with what they spend with their parents. The parents knowingly or unknowingly have created a lot of space through which their children learn things that will affect them negatively for the rest of their lives. The author therefore attributes most of the

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negative aspects of life that are experienced in families as a result of the current trends where parents and children are separated by work and school life. These have denied parents to perform their roles and even spare some time with their children as parents. As a result the parental responsibilities have been shifted to teachers and house workers. All that children know and do, come from other most frequent sources than from their parents. He calls them “worlds” in which each world is seen as having an influence on the children. The time the children spend in those worlds is more than the time they spend with their parents, and therefore the impact of influence is greater than of parents. He points out that even when parents are available, they tend to spend their time on T.V, Radio or News Papers and seem not interested in their children’s concerns. Sometimes making children to lose confidence of their parents and suspecting them of non- responsive attitudes towards their concerns. They develop polarized relationships.

The advice the author presents is that parents should not assume that their children’s concerns are dealt with at school or by the house keepers without knowing that each world of their experience responds differently against family norms, and imparts different behaviors which later contradict family norms and spill over to the wider communities. He says that despite all these, the parents tend to pretend that their children are free of bad practices and yet the truth is that many things are happening behind “curtains”, not of bricks and fabrics, but of neglect, ignorance and pretense. In that case children are found to live and do things less known and understood by their parents, even when the parents are aware that their children are highly influenced and are behaving badly, instead of helping them they protect them in order to safe guard their own parental position from those who are not happy with their behaviors. On the side the children try to hide away from their parents as if nothing is happening, yet under the same roof and in the schools they

trust, many things are happening and when parents discover, it becomes too late to put them right.

This book therefore focuses on parental ethical roles. It is a very moving family ethical exposition that will build parents and help them to rethink about what they have been doing without knowing that they were “killing” their families and their children’s future.

I would greatly advise and invite parents and those intending to raise families in future to read this moving book with numerous examples that portray real life experience in order to guard against being held responsible for their children’s failures in life. Children also are encouraged to read it in order to be helped to guard against the influences of the “many worlds” at their disposal. It is a book that will help most parents and children to see what has been happening between them and be able to adjust where things have not been going the way they should have been. I do therefore recommend this ethical exposition to families, individuals such as house workers and schools as a tool for responsible parenting.

Prof. Christopher Byaruhanga
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1

INTRODUCTION

There are always facts of life that seem to be hidden behind curtains and we do not see them, but they are really there. Equally there are things that are obviously known to us and we pretend as if they are none-existent or have no effect in our lives. In our families where we are born and grow, there are issues that affect our lives positively or negatively. We pretend that they are not there or that they are not affecting family members especially children. You look at the children and you think they are ignorant and yet they see and hear. When they get opportunities they act like their parents or neighbors do. Brick, wooden or fabric curtains can never isolate and insulate children from knowing what happens in the home. They are always inquisitive to know what is said and especially what is done. One day we were travelling in a Mercedes Benz Lorry. In the driver's cabin the driver sat with his two year old son. Whenever the lorry started moving down- hill, the driver decelerated and the engine throttle made funny sounds. His son was inquisitive to know where the sound came from and what the father did in order to cause it. He eventually saw the father putting one of his feet on one of the paddles and he also slid slowly from the driver's sit where the father has sat him and he prepared to put his small weak foot on the same paddle his father had stepped on. Although the boy looked young and ignorant, he showed that he was hearing and seeing what was happening. Such an example tells parents that they should never ignore the

presence of their children whenever they are doing certain things, or think that they are ignorant of what is happening around them.

In most cases youth constitute the biggest (largest) percentage of the world's population¹. When we talk of youth, we can limit ourselves by the definition where youth are those who fall between the ages of 10 and 24 years.

The concept of 'youth' can be defined as all the people within a specific age group, or as a state of being or even a state of mind. In this brief, we define youth as the people between age 10 and 24. This covers a wide range of experiences and transitions that includes an early phase (between ages 10 and 14), a middle phase (between 15 and 20) and a later phase (between 21 and 24).²

They are the most energetic and quick thinkers and yet they are made less productive, because most of them are less engaged in meaningful work. They are the most consumers of family and national resources. They are vulnerable and neglected members of the society socially, economically, politically and in most cases are misled religiously and socially. Because they are in the growing stage and 'do' things that require strength and facilitation, they are always consumers more than producers. They are life seekers in order to fit in the struggling world of scarcity of supply but with a lot of demands. They are part of the many factors that contribute to what they go through; what they do and not do, not because they want to be like that, but because the changing times and environments have determined so. Some of these factors are visible while others which are very influential factors are not

¹ L. Ashford, D. Clifton, and T. Kaneda, *The World's Youth*. (Washington, D.D: Population Reference Bureau, 2006), Accessed from; www.prb.org/pdf06/YouthInAGlobalWorld.prd, on February 3, 2017

² Rachel Nugent, *Population Reference Bureau*: www.prb.org/pdf06/YouthInAGlobalWorld.pdf

visible. Sooner or later these factors will be manifested in the behavior of the growing child, and sometimes we begin to wonder about the genesis of such behaviors. The truth is that as the child grows, things that seemed out of knowledge begin to surface and what were seen or heard become the springboard of their later life.

The trend the developing countries are taking is very alarming because the large population of youth is more of “idle activists” than “active front liners” and more of dependents than independents. They become idle activists in the sense that they spend most of the time doing nothing good for themselves and their families, but very active to give support to whomever else needs it, and they will by all means provide it if only at the end they have used their time for what seemed good. The global trend has influenced most countries of the world and forced the youth to be detached from their parents through social, economic, political and even sometimes religious forces. When it comes to education, children are sent to schools at an early age, when they have not even started to identify themselves with their family culture and social values. They spend most of the time before an academician; the teacher, who engages their minds more than he does with their hands and hearts. As they grow, the time they spend at school in most cases increases their detachment from the matters of the hands and the heart. They also lose their homes for social, religious and economic engagements. Their focus now is less local but global and later they become more of liabilities than assets of development to their families and communities. The world today recognizes someone who has a global exposure and wide experience outside local settings. By the time these children grow into youth and later adults, they know little of their home settings as compared to what they already know of their schools and their teachers. Teachers become their immediate models, mentors and parents. Some children grow up in school life calling some of their teachers, uncles and aunts. They never had time to know their biological uncles and aunts. They

may not know the difference between the biological relationship with the social and academic relationships. A close observation will show you that most of our youth are strangers to their homes and culture. The long periods spent before academicians transform the children into enemies of their own culture and traditions. It is not bad to have broad knowledge or a global picture, but it is equally dangerous to completely be ignorant, forgetting and rejecting your own roots, sometimes regarding them as old foolish ways as some youth call them.

Children, who rise up early morning and to go to schools, they see less or not at all of their parents. When they come back home, most of their parents are not yet back from their daily work. Eventually the children sleep without seeing their parents, especially the fathers, who can make themselves even busy where there is no business. This goes on and on, and eventually children grow in the presence and hands of the teachers who are more frequently before them and house workers who are always at home. In some cases mothers become even less available because for them matters of modeling and grooming have always been less felt as determined by the position of an African woman, looking at their limitation to authority in the family. We can read carefully through the quoted poem that follows so that we can see how parents especially fathers are responsible for the failures or successes of their children.

Best Answer: Knock Knocks (By Daniel Beaty)

“As a boy I shared a game with my father
Played it every morning 'til I was 3
He would knock knock on my door
And I'd pretend to be asleep
'til he got right next to the bed
Then I would get up and jump into his arms
"Good morning, Papa."
And my papa he would tell me that he loved me
We shared a game
Knock Knock

Until that day when the knock never came
And my momma takes me on a ride past corn fields
On this never ending highway 'til we reach a place of high
Rusty gates
A confused little boy
I entered the building carried in my mama's arms
Knock Knock

We reach a room of windows and brown faces
Behind one of the windows sits my father
I jump out of my mama's arms
And run joyously towards my papa
Only to be confronted by this window
I knock knock trying to break through the glass
Trying to get to my father
I knock knock as my mama pulls me away
Before my papa even says a word

And for years he has never said a word
And so twenty-five years later, I write these words
For the little boy in me who still awaits his papa's knock

Papa, come home cause I miss you
I miss you waking me up in the morning and telling me
you love me
Papa, come home, cause there's things I don't know
And I thought maybe you could teach me:
How to shave;
How to dribble a ball;
How to talk to a lady;
How to walk like a man
Papa, come home because I decided a while back
I wanted to be just like you
But I'm forgetting who you are

And twenty-five years later a little boy cries
And so I write these words and try to heal
And try to father myself
And **I dream up a father who says the words my father
did not**

Dear Son

I'm sorry I never came home

For every lesson I failed to teach, hear these words:

Shave in one direction in strong deliberate strokes to avoid irritation

Dribble the page with the brilliance of your ballpoint pen

Walk like a god and your goddess will come to you

No longer will I be there to knock on your door

So you must learn to knock for yourself

Knock knock down doors of racism and poverty that I could not

Knock knock down doors of opportunity

For the lost brilliance of the black men who crowd these cells

Knock knock with diligence for the sake of your children

Knock knock for me for as long as you are free

These prison gates cannot contain my spirit

The best of me still lives in you

Knock knock with the knowledge that you are my son, but you are not my choices

Yes, we are our fathers' sons and daughters

But we are not their choices

For despite their absences we are still here

Still alive, still breathing

With the power to change this world

One little boy and girl at a time

Knock knock

Who's there?

We are.”³

(Emphasis my own.)

In the poem, there are bolded words which we need to read with care and understand what the poet was communicating in the direction of parenting. What do we say or not say to our children? Even when we meet and play with them, we fail to seize that opportunity of exchanging

³ Daniel Beaty, *Knock Knock* (2013) New York, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers. <https://genius.com/Daniel-beaty-knock-knock-lyrics#note-1537028>

a word or two. Many opportunities have been lost and the future only will tell. The poet clearly indicates that what follows is loss of direction in terms of family core values and the relationship between skills, gifts, duties and responsibilities.

Most of us in our families cannot dispute the allegation that we are the promoters of degeneration among the youth, and therefore we should be the same to find the way out, otherwise we shall live behind no future families. Even today it does not make any sense for us to make noise about the degenerating youth, because we have not taken the initiative to correct the mistakes we have been brought instead we have promoted them among our children. They have therefore inherited a situation of no dialogue between father and son, mother and daughter, parent and child. The nearest mentor who can easily dialogue is either the teacher or the peers or the house worker with whom the child spends most of the time. The life of the youth is mostly lived outside their families. When we are available at home, we dialogue less but push them so much to do house help jobs. We only remember when dialogue is no long possible at all. The children grow sometimes resenting the words of wisdom offered at a time they are already lost to their own world. Therefore this ordinary exposition of “In the Shadows of Truth”, is explaining the realities of youth life in different worlds they grow and go through in the face of their parents and the changing environments within the developing countries especially in Uganda and how our families and their future are affected by what we do or not do with our children.

FAMILY LIFE AND DEVELOPMENT

You may agree or not agree that of recent many families have improved their family life. Most of them have Radio and TV sets or at least neighbors within a few meters. A good number of children between the upper primary and University level have cell phones. Some have got access to computers and internet and other media platforms. They will spend most of their time listening to music, watching different programs according to their choices and tastes; programs that have not been censored for youth consumption. This kind of behavior has multiple effects. First of all these children spend most of the productive time of their life skills and gifts into inappropriate and unnecessary leisure. Secondly, they expose themselves to dangerous programs which even sensible adults guard against. All these come as a result of majorly six problems: (1) Parenting gap, (2) Long periods of School exposure, (3) Poor guidance, (4) Globalization, (5) Urbanization and (6) Technology.

The question now is, How well should children and youth be brought up face to face with the realities of life in the face of the local and global challenges? Should parents remain aloof and leave their responsibilities to schools, TVs, Computers/Internet, free access to cell phones in the name of global and urban development or even industrialization, anticipating that all is well, when the outside world does not care about how your child responds to these challenges? Development demands more of people's time at work than at home with their families and yet to neglect

a family is to neglect the entire human race. Much of the parents' time is consumed by the public participation or involvement on the expense of their families, especially the children. Should parents take their work more important than their families' responsibilities? You will realize that youth have become victims of the search for education and the economic wellbeing of their families. In the process, parents have become completely ignorant of the global forces pressing against their children. In spite of the long hours of stay at school, it is surprising that some parents are not even interested to have their children at home for holidays. They see them as more of nuisance than productive members in the family. They even do not see them as people who deserve a rest from books, a change of environment, a change of diet, and a change of new faces, all of which are important in the child's social and intellectual growth. Parent wants to know is when the next term or semester will begin and how much the fees bill is. Immediately bills will be paid through the banks as soon as possible to guard against excuses for children delaying at home when they should have left when schools open, leaving the parents to feel relieved. That feeling is very disastrous for both children and parents. They will end up resenting each other. Therefore we need to know; 'Why are the youth' on the forefront of social, religious, economic, and political polarity? How can we really deal with the youth from negative tendencies and forces that are polarizing our families and make them useful and productive? Read the following local story and see the parental role.

Every day John was chased from home to go to school following his elder brother and sister. They joined another group of children from the neighbouring villages. He was very young and could not move at the same speed, and yet at school they were all expected to arrive at the same time. Late coming was punished by serious caning or other severe alternative punishments. He feared the cane and all

the teachers looked unsympathetic. So whenever he was late, he hid himself in the nearby bush hoping that at break time he would jump into the school compound and join others. That did not save him because in the class he was already discovered and registered absent. The class teacher would give him some caning for his late coming and absence from the morning classes. This continued on and on making him to hate school. He started to dodge school completely, sometimes for a complete week. When his father later discovered that he was less in class than the days of the week. He also punished him. He did not realize John's problem much as the teachers did not. There was no safe place for John. He schemed for something he thought would save him. He developed an illness that would see him out of school for most of the days. His father was a very clever man. He quickly knew what was happening. Instead of punishing him he found some time, sat him down and began to talk to him at his level of understanding. The father went in his bedroom and came out with a number of sticks he had kept there for caning John, and he threw them out to assure John that he was no longer going to beat him. Every evening when the father was home, he made sure that he went with him to do some work together. At the beginning it bothered John because it denied him the company of his brothers and sisters. He came to learn later when he grew up that the time his father spent with him contributed a lot to his wellbeing and he would never forget what his father used to tell him. He started to love school because his father imparted in him specific values that removed his fears, and ever since, John's father's involvement made his life different from

all his siblings. When he got closer to him, in his wisdom he discovered why John hated school and why he was sick almost every other day of the week. He made sure that in the morning John left earlier than his brother and sister. He even asked him always to bring his books home so that he could see where he wrote his notes every day. John realized that he could not deceive his father that he had attended school. The father started telling them stories for John's sake and benefit. Some were scaring and others were encouraging. Without knowing, John found his pretense of sickness going away without his knowledge, and he started to pick interest of going to school regularly and in time. John's father gave himself time for all of the children order to see them get their education, but also understand family values which he said he never had a chance to get during his time.⁴ He said that much as he never went to school, he knew that education was treasure.

This reminds us of Wiersbe who said: "it is the treasure within the vessel that gives the vessel its value."⁵ Meaning that it is not the school that matters, but the knowledge it offers that makes the school or going to school important.

The short narrative above has been taken for its comparative parenting role against the first one. It depicts a father who involved himself in the education life of his son at the point when things were getting out of hand. How do you rate such a parent of that time in relation to most parents of today who are educated but have no time for their children, or are hostile to them?

⁴ Told from a progressive Munyankole adult man who is now a Managing Director of a big Company in Uganda (2016)

⁵ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Encouraged*, Colorado Springs, USA: Cook International, 2007, p. 49

At Independence, Uganda addressed three aggressive enemies to human development which included; (1) ignorance, (2) Disease, and (3) Poverty. These have not only been Uganda's enemies but also common to Africa, induced by global forces. At every Uganda's independence anniversary these enemies also make part of the Nation's address as if they were part and parcel of the independence Presidential packages. These enemies have become common attendant guardians of most of African families, and seem to claim a permanent residence in most homes, and have become responsible for most of the failures the youth are experiencing. When you analyze carefully, the highest percentage of victims of these aggressive enemies, is none other than the youth. In the Poem 'Knock Knock' (2013), the young man writes these words and tries to heal; he dreams of someone who could say these words... 'That my Father did not'. Ignorance, poverty and disease are matters that can be avoided right from home and not from schools. Today a good number of youth who are poor and sick are educated. Their education sometimes makes them ignorant of the fact that there is a life to live outside white collar jobs. How could they know if the parents did not offer them lessons appropriately? How could they know if their mentors are white collar job workers? Employing different tools, we can start to understand 'why the youth' are the most vulnerable members of the society whose protection is not guaranteed. It then comes out that the usual words we hear people say, "survival for the fittest" or "when the going becomes tough, the tough keep going", are usually insults to the youth because though some of them are trained they are not seasoned. They cannot survive without undermining their spirituality for those who have any way. They are not fit. They cannot keep going when the going becomes tough because their parents never prepared them for hard times. In your view, how far have the parents and the schools prepared you as a youth to survive and keep going when things become tough? The answer might tell us that the youth are not fit, nor are they tough enough if at

all, and as a result they are swayed and tossed by winds of life, uncertain where they are likely to land.

In such circumstances our youth, the future hopes of nations must be given priority more than any other assets nations have. It does not make sense that most of the African countries which are above their youthful years of their independence are crying of poverty, disease and ignorance. Let us understand this clearly, that through the stages of human growth a number of other developments also take place. From childhood to adolescence through to youth stage and to adulthood, each of these stages is a development stage in a human life. If one grows in age but does not grow socially, religiously, economically and politically, then there is doubt if the person has abilities to engage public life if private life has failed. St. Paul had advised that, "If a man does not know how to rule his own house how will he take care of the church of God?" (1Tim.3:5). Countries that are twenty five years and above since they attained independence, should have by now overcome those enemies, which unfortunately are targeting the youth. The western political, economic, religious and social forces have all been behind the increasing poverty, disease and ignorance affecting African nations. Why? Because most African countries are not mindful of where they are coming from and going to. They have accepted whole sale packages of social and economic policies, which do not operate alone without their religious, political and educational cousins. When these unite they make a maze of confusion that the youth try to go through but get lost not knowing their roots of origin where they are coming from and where they are going or what they will be. Do we blame the youth for the confusion experienced or do we turn to ourselves as parents accountable for the mess? Should the youth be turned to none issues in our programs at home and in community, waiting to beg for economic support when their families and communities have the capacity to tap their potentials?

Writing from a Ugandan perspective, it is said to have the youngest population in the whole world with 77% of its population being under thirty years of age, and 7.3 million are youth between the age of fifteen and twenty four.⁶ A similar analysis was made and results published in *New Vision*, the national News Paper. These records give evidence that Uganda's biggest population is in a working age bracket. If the parents and government looked at this with interest then they would have gotten a remedy to save the nation from the ever increasing levels of poverty and unemployment. If Africa especially Uganda is to save the future, youth must be her priority. Why do we find that the youth have been left out of economic empowerment, social - public engagement, and have instead become victims of political lianas and religious claimants? Why should the political and religious developments target the youth when the economic and social developments have neglected them? Unless a kraal has calves, for sure the herd is faced with extinction.

The developing nations' view point must have the youth at the forefront of the development agenda. The parenting and mentoring process should be a 'must do' so that the youth are quite prepared of the world they are going to. They need political orientation, economic empowerment and spiritual awareness. A large percentage of the youth in Uganda between and 21 and 24 years who have degrees live in the urban, but most of them are disconnected between the degrees achieved and the vocational skills needed that are demanded for workers. It is further said that those without degrees are also not able to obtain jobs because they lack skills, needed for the positions, or they don't have the resources such as land and capital, while others have not been prepared to take up certain jobs when offered. Who is to blame? There are two sides of the matter. First, most of the parents have left their children to be mentored and parented by others and know nothing about what can shape their children's future. A number of parents do not understand many aspects

⁶ Uganda National Housing and Population Census 2014

on subjects that could add up to a skilled job, be it private or public. Secondly, the government is without excuse because it is quite well aware that many graduates are on the streets doing nothing because the degrees they studied do not meet the job market requirements. It would have been very ideal as early as at Primary level to begin career guidance which should be carried out in the presence of the parents so that they become part of the child's future choices, because it is also a parenting role to direct the child where to go and how to get there. It is not the teacher who determines why a parent should send a child to school. Parents should not let the teachers determine for their children's future or the children to follow what their peers have chosen to be. The government on her part should select skill based courses and make them mandatory to be additional courses to the study of one's choice. We should not forget that we are training our children to become employed by others. That is why most of the curriculum for schools is more of an employee than employer oriented. The Western Colonial masters wanted it like that and our African home masters have maintained it. We are the worm that eats itself.

However we cannot deny the fact that there has been a lot of selfishness where the youth have been denied the opportunity to look at what lays behind *the curtains*. They cannot be allowed in politics because they are inexperienced, they cannot engage business because they have no capital, and they cannot engage ordinary life because they have no possessions of their own. They are veiled. Where ever they would want to be involved, they are denied and repulsed from engagement in public life. When they are able to go through the curtain, they only see things as shades, not making sense, because they had never been tried or exposed. The few who may see it all, represent a small percentage of the massive youth, and may never pass on what they have been exposed to, because sometimes there are *status barriers*. This leads to the search for

a living in a very elusive way, sometimes violating social and religious norms.

Neglect

Human beings do not treat their offspring like some animals that produce their young ones and leave them to the mercy of nature. Our children grow with us in a family and enjoy the warmth of family members through interactions, relating and sharing with one another, even when they become grownups. As they grow, they learn through seeing, hearing, doing and feeling. These are essential for positive human growth. When children go to school at the age of three years, they are separated from the real world called “home” and they enter another home. This process causes tensions because at that age children’s dispositions are beginning to form and orient to family norms and social values. But as long as the children trek to schools where they stay for the rest of the day, and return home where they stay less of the day and night; family formation will never take place. We do not overlook the contribution made by schools, but one factor that is distorting the school contribution is that whether parents or teachers, they have neglected the place of parenting. Children, who stay the whole day at school, sometimes are not taken there for the sake of studying but for the sake of convenience of those who go to work. They are collected in the evenings to go back home when tired and only good for taking their evening meal and sleep. This goes on almost throughout the year. The teacher to whom the child is exposed every day may not be the type who can nurture the child, and after all the teacher has many children of different social or family backgrounds, that it becomes hard in most cases to concentrate on a single character. Many things happen in the class and school environment without the teacher’s notice. The parents also who leave every day to go and work for a living, come home late, and when they are home early, they are too tired to do anything. When then does

the parent sit with the child for parental roles and when does the child discover and learn from the parent? For that matter the children will more often than not adopt to the norms of their 'second home: the school. Parents are contented at this point with what schools are doing. We must not mix obligations with responsibilities. Schools' responsibilities are different from Parental obligations. You know it very well that a teacher might spend a whole week without exchanging a word with a specific child, a head teacher might spend a whole term without ever talking to that child as an individual? But to a responsible parent, you cannot spend a day if you stay with your children without talking to any one of them unless you are the type of worker who leaves early before children are awake and comes late when they are already asleep, but even then as a responsible parent you try to pop in the bedroom early morning or on Saturday and say hullo and possibly any other befitting words a parent can say to his or her child. It is then possible to describe such children or families to be leaving in the "diaspora from within". The teacher will remain a teacher where sometimes he or she will treat the child with harshness and impatience. Many children are known to experience severe beatings with insults in the name of modelling and learning. That is quite different from home where the parent teaches the child with love and patience, and will always have opportunities to repeat and emphasize important things, which the teacher will only do if it deals with academics. The social and religious part of the Child's growth may have challenges because of the school environment that does not relate well with home environment. Much as we know that some parents are tough and harsh, some teachers are trouble makers in the way they deal with and treat children. There are teachers who are parents and when they are at school they see other children with the same glasses they see their children. This is dangerous because the teacher may under look or underestimate an issue, or may overlook and overestimate it thus leading to miscalculations of steps to take. The over

presumptuous parents will always assume that their children are catered for at school not knowing that they have been half way attended to. What makes matters worse is that parents do not even have time to find out or to interact with the teachers who spend time with their children so as to know what they need to be done that the school does not cover. For those who are committed to boarding schools there is complete parental deficit although schools have provided visiting days. Parents turn visiting days into days of feasting and sharing ordinary news and not so much to do with the formation of values. It will only happen when a child is caught up in bad habits and the parent is summoned to come to the school. That is when questioning will begin to unearth the child's character. We need to be aware that most of our children are suffering from a disease called "ignorance". Parents are good at ignoring children's world and they see the children in the adult world and as a result they end up missing that formative stage which is denied both at home and school. We must be reminded as parents also that our days are quite different from our children's days. Life is so dynamic that each day has a new story to tell. Things that did not exist or were not allowed during our school days are now available and allowed. But the parent is not aware because there is no time to know.

There was a reported case of a girl who was expelled from one school on suspicion of engaging in lesbianism. The mother could not believe the allegation. So she sought the help of an important officer in the District who recommended the girl to be admitted in another school. Without bothering to make inquiries as to why the girl was joining the school in the middle of the year and more over a third year student, the headmistress admitted her. Two terms later the girl was again caught with other girls doing the same act. When the mother was sent for to be explained why her daughter was no longer going to remain in the school, she ignorantly started to plead. It was shortly when her minds awakened and she recalled that her daughter always dodged staying at home during

holidays for she had another girl in the neighborhood where she loved to stay for some nights.

Parents may fail to know what happens with their children because they do not have time for them, or when they do, they discuss non-issues. It is the responsibility of a parent to be involved in the life of a child whenever the opportunity is available; in fact it is a parental obligation to create opportunity for children. For working parents, it does not make big deal to save your work and destroy your children. Such parents have plenty of time to fulfill their office duties and less or no time for their children. The Bible tells us that children are an inheritance from God (Ps.127:3). As long as there is a gap between the parents and their children, then there is also a big sociological gap and by the time some parents want to come in, the gap has already widened, and they cannot now plant any family norm because to the children such norms will be too alien. It should be grasped that what is said here does not imply that the schools teach wrong norms, but the point to be taken note of is that parents have their stake different from what the school has. There will always be a difference between a parent and a teacher. King Solomon saw parents as the best teachers because he advised saying: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov.22:6). What does this Scripture tell you as a parent? The understanding should be that the neglect of teaching children is a serious matter especially when the future turns out to be futile. Neglecting children is neglecting God's gift as in Psalms 128. Neglect a child, pay dearly. Unfortunately the payment is not suffered by the family alone but also by the community. We must learn how to invest in children early enough, not parents alone but also the spiritual and other social institutions. Most children grow in an environment similar to that of orphaned children who by misfortune grow without real nurture and modeling and do what they think is best even when it is the worst the society can accept or approve of.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL SUFFERING

Children and youth are victims of circumstances. They suffer the failures of their parents and later they become social, religious and economic trouble causers or call it disgrace. There are a number of factors we need to understand that lead to this circumstantial victimization or suffering. There are many mentors at different levels of the children's growth who tend to confuse values/virtues with vices, and this is always determined by the environment in which the children are exposed. As a result the children begin to experience different worlds to which they are exposed. Even the effects of certain things in the children's environment may not be easily seen or sensed until they separate children from the ideals of life. For example the global forces have affected almost everybody be it young or old. *The phone syndrome* has had a very big but also negative impact to most people and when it comes to the youth it becomes even worse. Today children use the phone more than the adults, and to the worst, for wrong motives. I do teach, and most of my students have more than one phone. What disappoints me is that they do not have time for the phones. As I teach, others are on WhatsApp, others are *plugged in* that is to say that the earphones are always in their ears, meaning that they are even not attending to you. These are people we are training to become tomorrow's managers or administrators. I can assure you that even in office they will not perform their expected as-

signments, because their life has been tuned to phones. This is a circumstantial sickness; a global effect in the event of keeping abreast with the world around us. It sometimes gives the child freedom of watching pornography because it is accessible on the child's private phone. In this case we need to be aware that there are different worlds that the child faces during the formative years which we cannot overlook and even pretend not know. The following worlds must not be ignored and their impact on the child's current and future life.

- The parents' world.
- The house workers' world (maids, house boys and drivers).
- The school world.
- The peers' world.
- The religious world
- The global world.

The Parents' World

In the developing countries of which most of us are well versed because that is where we are born and live, almost every parent struggles from morning to late evening of every day looking for means of family survival, either in public or private workplace trying to generate a worthwhile livelihood. This has become normal. With the coming of the global awareness, every home tries to send her children to school. This in a long run separates parents and children by two important factors. The first one is the economic factor for parents, and the second one is the educational factor for the children. While these play vital roles in the family development, they pose very serious challenges to family social structuring. It is not wrong to go searching for economic wellbeing and neither is it for children getting academic empowerment. The problem is that the role of family, in modelling the children socially and spiritually, has been deeply prevailed over by these circumstantial factors we may

call *necessities of life*. For twelve hours or more parents are away for work as much as the children are off to schools; less often than not they meet at meals, and meal time in Africa is not for discussing issues especially with children. If any issues are discussed with children, they are never concluded because the children are tired and at that time their brains can take in little or nothing at all. They are good for nothing other than eating and sleeping. There are more orders than instructions at this time in most families. For the children who never return home until the end of term or semester, when they come home, things are no better than those who return home daily.

In this case, the world of the parents consists of less interaction even when they are available. It is instead more of child to housemaid or houseboy exposure than to parents most of the time. The children are expected to perform from the best of their memories of what has been said, done or seen. Sometimes it may not even matter who taught what, because there is no responsible parent to follow it up and check its credibility. Yet, “As this world becomes even wicked, children need parents who will protect them from people who seek to harm them, such as sexual predators.”⁷ The world of parents becomes devoid of the sense that children need to learn from their parents for their future social, economic, religious and even political development. When parents awaken and feel that something is missing, they begin to push hard and the children begin to learn forcefully and because of fear, Deborah and Loren Haarsma believe that children “can be taught a sense of wonder and joy when learning about the natural world. It comes naturally to them, but adults can nurture it and expand it.”⁸ I have a conviction that parents must know their responsibilities, and I think the best way is by

⁷ Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, *What Does the Bible Teach?* (South Africa, Watch Tower Bible and Tract of Pennsylvania, 2005), p.140

⁸ Deborah B. Haarsma and Loren D. Haarsma, *Origins*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Faith Alive, 2011), p.281

forming parenting associations through which they can share important values transferable to their children. However, as Andrew Masinde says: children “are different and each achieves a particular milestone at his or her own pace.”⁹ In other words, when parents come together they may be sharing notes, but should not transpose to their children what might be completely foreign to them and their families. They can formulate a curriculum to refocus on the oral traditions that were the basis for grounding children into social and religious life. For any well intended knowledge to be well grounded we need to move away from informal or oral tradition to a more formal and documentation tradition based on an acceptable curriculum. The reason why I do advocate for this method is that whereas formerly the oral tradition could live for some good decades and could even extend into a new generation, today it is not easy because of our proximity to foreign traditions and cultures clothed in globalization, urbanization and industrialization. These have caused some kind of shot sightedness in the sense that the three above are major forces of development and our children must be front liners or movers of the new trends. In the process there has been a very serious problem that to have these children be part of those new trends, parents are never included because whenever schools carry out career guidance, the focus has always been on children preparing them on what they will be in future and how to get there, and it has always addressed their academic destiny. To me, I believe that parents should be part of their children’s career guidance and formation because if this process of career choice and guidance is left between the teachers and the children, then the children’s future is jeopardized because one of the links to a successful future is missing. People do not live by academics alone. Many people who have attended schools have come back home to make a living from the ordinary family life. There is a very great need to integrate the aca-

⁹ Andrew Masinde in his article: *Each child develops at own space*, in the New Vision, Wednesday, January 18, 2017, p.26.

demics with the other disciplines, so that where academics may not favor the child, the alternative is readily available. For that matter a parenting curriculum that initiates children into other life skills is very important. We know that there are family shared values which can form the core of the curriculum in order to have it address local and pertinent issues. Career is not made up of academics only. It must combine moral, social, religious and even the political and economic formation of which parents are part. Education without morals and strong social backups is destructive both to the individual and the community. This is suggestive of the role parents must play in their children's future and choice of their careers.

When speaking of the world of parents, we must not forget that there are different compositions of such worlds where our children grow. Some families are polygamous and others are monogamous but might have children born out of wed lock and sometimes others are adopted. Under such family set up, children face problems that are never taken care of if at all they are ever known by their parents. When you read the book of Judges 11, you will find a young man by names of Jephthah born of a king from a harlot. When his father died, his brothers chased him out of their home. Parents are responsible for the mistakes committed in their world because later those mistakes will affect their children negatively. A mistake once done remains a mistake but the best way to correct it is by admitting your involvement. Children born out of the legal family must be recognized and admitted in the family so that other children can see them as part of them. Parents must create an environment conducive for them for their social, academic, religious and economic wellbeing. The moment we keep silent about it or fail to bridge the social gaps existing among our children, the result will always be negative from those who think are legal children. Jephthah suffered humiliation until the hour of need brought him back home this time not as a pauper but as a judge of Israel. In such circumstance, one would

expect a serious aggressive environment between him and his brothers. The Bible does not tell us the story between him and his brothers thereafter, but you can see that the ground was not well levelled earlier by his father. This at times makes the world of parents a jumble of challenges especially where both parents are suspicious of one another.

In the present circumstances where parents spend most of their time at work places, it becomes unpredictable of what might come up because some work places are stressful because of bad managers, while others are affected of overload and overwork. Others are not able to meet the family needs, and yet they have no alternatives. When they come back home after work, they find family commitments awaiting them, and to avoid more stress, so to say, they decide not to come home early because if they do, the obvious is that they will not avoid the realities at home. You must know that parents who earn little always find it difficult to satisfy their family needs, and later their spouses' conjugal rights, because their minds are roaming about and cannot pay attention or concentrate on their conjugal requirements. Psychologically partners, who miss out on this right, become angry and easily tempered. In most cases quarrels develop and children become the victims of anger and stress in their innocence. They grow seeing the struggles to control and contain situations but with no success. They begin to look for ways to compensate for the absence of the parental presence or to close up the gaps. Whatever appears to be appealing or making sense is what they go by. You can easily see that the world of parents can be greatly an influencing factor to children's loss of confidence or self-esteem and lack of encouragement when the world around them becomes hostile. Yet according to David K. Clark and Robert Rakestraw; "Christian parenthood is above all a moral commitment to nurture a child."¹⁰, but because of the complexity of today's society, child nurturing is a task which falls

¹⁰ David K. Clark and Robert V. Rakestraw, *Reading in Christian Ethics. vol.2:Issues and Applications* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), p.64.

upon a far wider range of adults than was the case with the so called 'nuclear family',¹¹ and as a result the world of parents is like an oblivion.

Survival Skills

The world of parents is a world that should provide survival skills and these naturally flow through the interactive process between children and parents. Survival skills are those that improve talents and aid the person to live by self in the absence of other skills like educational or technical skills. The parent teaches a child how to get food out of the soil, prepare it and eat it. The girl child is helped how to live an adolescent life, life before, during and after marriage. For example, parents should not fear to prepare their children how to pick on life in the event of their absence or losing their partners in marriage. What skills should help such a person to survive? Many youth have suffered through ignorance of what they must do when they become victims of circumstances simply because they have not been prepared a head of such eventualities. Parents should not fear to talk about or to tell their children about tough times like death of a partner or a parent or any other fatal accident. These are situations that are normal. There is no curricular for teaching survival skills, but it naturally comes as a result of need and parents must be aware of such facts of life to be passed on to their children appropriately. When an African says "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am"¹², it simply means that life is lived through others and the best "others", are the parents.

¹¹ David J. Atkinson, *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter -Varsity Press, 1995), p.650.

¹² John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*. (Kampala: East African Educational Publishers Ltd, 1969), p.2.

The House Workers' World (Maids, Houseboys and Drivers)

Except for a few homes, most of the house maids and boys that look after our homes including children; are not educated. The highest level is primary seven or below. You can see the seriousness of the matter that such are the people who take care of the entire life of our children including determining what they eat and drink, and even what we eat including other family needs. They have full command of the family affairs. For those who have taken training in home management, may not attach any values required in the child's growth, and yet these house maids, boys and drivers spend most of their time with children who are still trying to internalize the world around them. It is during this period that the frequency of any occurrence will be the most easily imprinted on the child's brain and most likely will no wonder become the child's character. So families which have maids and house boys and drivers, must be aware that this is a reality in the life of their children. Be warned that at no cost should you let your children spend too many hours or even sleep with these workers in the same room or bed. If you want to save your child from abuse, please distance your children from these workers at night. Unfortunately children will not understand what is taking place unless you have time to talk to them whenever you are at home. This is the most complicated and dangerous world in the life of the child because in the course of the child's growth, the family might employ different workers at different times, and whenever a new worker comes in the home, new things will be introduced to the children.

Unlike parents, the maids and houseboys spend more time with children at home than the parents do. In most cases, these are young adults employed in families to bridge the gap caused by the absence of parents at the moments of need. They have no proficient knowledge in child care and development, and not even house management. They are picked without any professional procedure, only what is in the mind of

the employer is getting someone to bridge the gap of absence without looking at the values to be imparted to the growing children. It has become a habit that even parents, especially women who are not working, also employ house keepers and leave the responsibilities of looking after the children in their hands. All that the parents want is convenience and filling in the gap. No professionalism and no experiences that are based upon to determine who should be employed to look after a home or not, entrusted with the most important and precious pearl of the family: the child. The school failures and drop outs are the ones entrusted with the life of an expected upcoming family intellectual. This is type of process far from being ideal.

These maids and houseboys come with all their rudimentary knowledge and uncouth behavior to run household errands in the absence of their masters and mistresses. The fact that the owners of the home are always away, there is no supervision of what is done or not done in most families. Whenever children are home, they are in the hands of the new 'managers'. To make matters worse, for those families that employ more than one worker, the children will be introduced to different behaviors based on their opportunities of exposure. There are many reported cases and many more which have not been reported resulting from the unchecked behaviors of the maids and house boys and later family drivers, where sexual harassments have been experienced or where such workers have defiled the children of both sexes. Drivers have been the most incomprehensible of sex harassment and defilement of their masters and mistresses' children by pretending to teach the children especially girls, how to drive. The mere feeling of being at the wheel becomes an obsession to these young girls that they easily give themselves in. Parents will never discover as long as the girl can be able to drive the family car. They only become surprised to discover that their children can drive without knowing the price they paid. This might go on and on among the children in the family secretly without allowing

any of the children discovering what is going on with the others and without parents ever finding out.

There was a case where a young boy was working for a well to do family and always went cleaning the house as far as to the master bedroom. One day he convinced an innocent young girl into the room to show her what the father and mother do on their bed. After defiling the girl, he gave her sweets and a cake which he knew the girl loved, and told her that always her parents share sweets and cakes after their sexual intimacy. So he convinced her that as long as she would have sex with him, he would reward her in the same way. It became a frequent exercise until bad luck befell them, and the young girl became pregnant¹³. These are not rare cases but not many parents know because they are never there and when they are there, they never have time for the children. In some families, the names of the domestic workers have changed and are called aunt or uncle. The parents are not bothered because they eventually begin to refer to them by their new names or titles. This is a very serious matter not to be taken lightly. The more the child begins to identify such workers as uncles or aunts, the closer they begin to relate. Parents will never get to know what has been taking place until it is too late. These children become deceived by the names given to maids and house boys seeing them as socially friendly and safe. When maids and houseboys begin to act negatively towards the children, the children are threatened to say nothing. Sometimes these house workers are conduits to sexually greedy young and old men living in the neighborhood on payment, for them to access young girls from the homes where they work. That is the world of the maids and house boys including drivers. Children live with them freely but behind the curtains they are suffering from defilement and trauma because of the hostile and fragile world they live in with no parental awareness and protection. Many of them hate themselves as well as their parents for life. Parents need to be mindful of

¹³ Anon.

the life of their children, not only for the present but also of their future. They should be compassionate in the sense that they feel pain of their children in their hearts. The world of the children's homes composed of parents and house workers must be made conducive for their social and spiritual growth or development. Whereas homes need financial stability and academic excellence, there must be a far better scheme for the social wellbeing of their children which later will determine where they are going and what they are going to be. So, comparatively quite different from the world of parents, more often than not, there will always be 'sociological turbulence' because children unlike adults, are good and quick learners and they will want to learn and do what they are told and see or even hear. Their battles have just begun because these are home based issues which incidentally can be dealt with if parents care and are quick to act. Otherwise there are bigger sociological, religious, psychological and political disorders developing and unnoticed. Some of the children after leaving their homes become criminals. They become social threats to people around them and beyond. Before following these children into the open world of adulthood, we want to look at the third world that these children go through.

The School World

If there is anything that is good in any developing world it is education. It has made men and women of excellence, it has made nations great, and it has made families recognized above others, but also it has broken and dismantled them. Besides developing communities, it has divided, marginalized, and destroyed some. We may not need to venture into all these but you the reader know what education means either from the positive or negative viewpoint. It is not that education is itself bad but the providers and recipients may destroy its purposes. Let us first examine the bad situation that exists in Uganda both in public and private schools. Children before the age of three years begin going to

school. They leave their homes as early as 5 a.m. in the morning to get to their schools. Those few who are lucky come back at mid-day, the unfortunate ones come back home at 10 p.m., in the evening with their parents coming back from work. Those in boarding schools and in upper classes from primary five and six are expected to attend prep from 5.30 a.m. to 7 a.m.; then from 8.00 a.m. or 8.30 a.m. classes begin and end at 5 p.m. with short intervals of break. Others remain in classes for remedial. After supper they go back to class for prep, and come back to sleep at 10 p.m. Those who go home, for some of the schools, they take homework with them to be done and presented to the teacher the following day. To many schools, Saturdays are normal studying days. Although Sunday is a day of worship and rest, there are schools that require that after the service of the church / chapel, students should go for classes. Most of the children's life is academic on the expense of social and religious formation, and sometimes they are denied opportunities to engage other life skills, which are mostly for future home and family making benefits. Schools and teachers see themselves as the only modelers of life.

At school, nothing else matters except classroom work. The child spends all the time at school for the academic life. The child's time spent before the teacher is more than what is spent before the parents and the spiritual leaders put together. Should we then say that the world of today demands academics skill more than other skills of life? Do schools' administrators and class teachers see the future of the children in one direction? Besides, is it healthy to occupy three quarters of the child's day with academics? Is the child's life safe without the parent's and spiritual leader's involvement for the future formation? What school curriculum that involves the parent apart from visiting days for those who are boarders? And when they do come to visit, what areas of engagement do they involve themselves in?

It is very interesting to read and understand what we might be good for us to see the trouble we are in.

“The church and the family, each already encumbered with its own strains and ordeals are fighting a losing battle, so far as the bearing of the university upon the spiritual health and wholeness of the youth is concerned. All the preaching in the world, and all the loving care of even the best parents between whom there are no problems whatever, will amount to little, if not to nothing, so long as what the children are exposed to day in and day out for fifteen to twenty years in the school and university virtually cancels out, morally and spiritually, what they hear and see and learn at home and in the church. Therefore the problem of the school and university is the most critical problem... And here we meet laughing and relaxing and enjoying ourselves and celebrating as though nothing of this order were happening.¹⁴”

Most schools have been criticized that what they are doing is ‘pumping’ children with too much stuff with an anticipation of making good grades at the final examination and make good names for the schools. It is good to make good grades and win good names for teachers and schools, but what about the complete wellbeing of the children? The reality catches them sooner than later when the ideals of life are not met in the world of facts and practice. The teachers’ presence before the child is the authority of norms that the child must take or leave at his/her own peril. The conflict comes when the child is back at home or in community and fails to integrate the academics with the sociological and religious expectations, and even the economic expectations. The world

¹⁴ Charles Malik, *The Two Tasks*, (United States: EMIS division of Billy Graham Center, 2000), p.37.

of the schools children attend then becomes alien to the world of parents. It becomes a world of theories and ideas in a world of realities and physical engagement. Too much exposure in one area does not cover up for the others which have been neglected. Parents must be assured that schools have their time to engage children, while they also have theirs. It is like running a timetable. When a teacher's period is over, the subject changes and another teacher takes over. Parents must know when it is their time to come in and use it profitably. Teachers also need not pump into children knowledge that they lose as soon as they live the classes. When children are at school, they must utilize the time table within the specified period and leave the rest to the parents, who should also take it upon themselves that they are partners or co-educators of their children. Most of the educational anomalies are parental based, because parents want to save a lot of time for their work or even leisure, they feel too relieved to have their children in the hands of care takers. Schools and teachers are care takers purposely for academics. Parental guidance is the parents' responsibility. The more time the children stay away at school every day or the parents away from home, the more the children lose fundamental social and religious value formation. Most schools have become so secular that less and less religious values are emphasized. With the loss of religious values, social values also disappear. Many teachers and school administrators have been accused of sleeping with young girls and even making them pregnant. Some school administrators and teachers use the advantage of preps or boarding facilities to prey on these young girls slowly but surely. By the time the parents come to know, their young girls are expecting women. The children lose their youthfulness, education and future. The homes they come from reject them and are no longer ready to accept them back because they are regarding them as evil doers, and yet they fail to see themselves as the cause of the problems. The schools become the breeding ground for young mothers, and as for boys, some of them become young fathers.

The whole educational system becomes a night mare. Parents should take the first blame and then the teachers or schools. The school world has become a snare to many innocent youth more than a blessing. When young girls become mothers, the best option is to expel them from school and block them from even enjoying family facilities. The teacher or the student responsible for the pregnancy continues to teach and study respectively, and the parents see their girls as family misfits and not so much of a boy that might have impregnated a school girl. There is a lot of injustice. Because of the parental roles these young girls begin to undertake, the world of parents come too early in their life that sometimes they cannot handle because they have already been labelled family misfits and therefore not even their mothers are ready to offer help. In reality all goes back to the parents only that they do not have the eyes to see themselves as the primary trouble causers. If we wanted to be true to ourselves as parents, how often have we talked to our children about relationships in an adolescence age for example, and how should children relate with those of different sexes? Someone said that our children are born and left to grow on their own like some wild animals that are born and immediately they begin to fend for themselves without their parents. Some of the animals do not have a parental responsibility. But human beings without excuse must at all costs pay attention in details what happens and goes around their children to avoid a bad future in the life of their children and even families. Our focus here is not on pregnancies of young girls in schools, but of other unbecoming behaviors our children experience while at school which might be regrettable later. A good car owner checks the car every morning before the ignition key is turned on because the life of that car owner really depends on the good conditions of the car. Children in most families are the driving force; they need to be checked on every time to ensure that family life does not get into a crash because of children. Some of the problems are mostly caused by their age mates; the peers. The peers sometimes be-

have like parents in the lives of their friends, telling them what to do or not do, what is good or bad or when to do it or not do it and even how to do it. This is another dangerous world in the life of a growing child, and this can be called “the peers’ world” because of its culture and potentials to create a social change or impact in the life of the child for the rest of that child’s life.

The Peers’ World

Peers are persons of the same age group with the same perceptions and willingness to influence one another and can form social and or sometimes pressure groups.¹⁵

Peers at every level of one’s growth and development cannot be ignored. They form a big part of community social development. They are part of our environment. Youth unlike their parents or seniors are vulnerable to the influence of pressure and are unfortunate because they are exposed to different categories of peers who pressurize them to particular responses. In the villages where they are born, they have a different world of peers. When they go to schools they face another world of peers. On coming back home, besides facing the world of their parents, and house workers, they also begin interacting with peers who attend different schools with different cultures and traditions. Unlike the adults, the youth are still in their stages of physical, social and religious formation. We can examine the way they feel about themselves in the words of Peter Block;

“When we reach the age of consent, responsibility for our well-being shifts into our own hands. The assumption of

¹⁵ The author defines peers as above and will apply this definition in this book as a personal convenience, [“peer” denotes an individual who is the same age as other people in a group, less as members of a group who have the same abilities, motivations or similar intentional statements– Ed.].

responsibility is ritualized by society in giving us the right to vote, the right to defend our country, the right to enter into legal contracts. On our eighteenth birthday, we become adults, and placing our safety, our self-esteem, and our freedom into the hands of others is no longer required or functional.^{16,}

Some of the youth eagerly wait to see that time of independence when their rights will require no official announcement. Their brains can easily erase the past and easily paste the present. They are in the ‘world of discovery’ and therefore would want to taste and prove more of the sweetness of life than its bitterness. They do not easily take in what parents and seniors would want them do. Sometimes parents and seniors choose wrong words when teaching or guiding the youth by saying: “during our time”. They forget that time is a dynamic factor of life and many events change as often as possible. As the saying goes “If you do not change, change will change you”¹⁷, youth are not dormant and therefore they see change as an opportunity. I remember when I was growing there was a dynamic change in the field of dancing. Many different types of dancing styles were being introduced in our life. If one did not know the dancing style of the day, it would be taken a serious matter that might lead one to having no friends especially girls with whom we loved to dance. One was regarded uncivilized, ignorant and insensitive to life. We therefore struggled as much as we could to make sure that we learn from our peers the new dancing styles. The best dancing style that was acknowledged for the educated/civilized people during our time was the ‘waltz’; every youth in secondary school at that time had to learn how to dance it. Whenever a new style was introduced, we moved in quickly and learned it in order to keep our peer fellowship.

¹⁶ Peter Block, *Stewardship: Choosing Service over Self-Interest* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1996), p.77.

¹⁷ Mbiti, p.108

Any other habits that came with it, we had to comply so as not to betray a kind of 'brotherhood' or fellowship. Read this short story of a young man who was betrayed of the peer world.

One time Alex (not real name) went with a student friend of his who was a few years older than him, to visit his brother who was an army officer in one of the army barracks. They were well entertained to food and drinks to which both of them he was not a good consumer. After lunch they were taken to the "mess" a name given to the equivalent of an ordinary bar. At that time beer in barracks was like 'flowing streams of water'. Beers were served in no small quantities. As already said, Alex was not familiar with alcohol consumption. In order to prove to his friend and their hosts that he was not an illiterate or villager and not even a boy, he decide to drink as the others were doing. Little did he know that two things he wanted to prove were going to prove him wrong. In the meantime, he was drinking like all gentlemen would do although something was beginning to happen in his behavior. He started to talk more frequently than before, and he was not sipping but gulping the beer. *The way he started to swallow it turned around slowly but surely and started to swallow him.* He was however conscious of what was going to happen to him. So he started to have intervals without drinking, but the pleasure of their hosts was to see them emptying bottle after bottle. The friend's brother and those other soldiers with whom they sat drinking were encouraging them to drink because they said, that was just a beginning. "Drink, we are not short of anything", they would tell them. Alex told them after two bottles that he was feeling dizzy. They laughed at him. His ignorance

played tricks on him. His inner self started to tell him, “You are going to be ashamed. Prove that you are not a villager and also not a boy.” He called his colleague outside and told him what he was experiencing. He suggested that he was going to walk back to school (7 km away from the barracks without short cuts) because he was feeling unstable. Alex’s friend laughed at him and suggested that he kept around with them but must stop drinking which was somehow a good idea but hard to keep. No sooner had they returned to the mess than his colleague’s brother (their host) brought a crate of beer, saying it was for the visitors (Alex and his colleague). Alex’s eyes at this time were beginning to become tired and started to close for uncalled for prayers. Whenever they opened, he could see so many stars blinking and yet evening was still two hours away. He surprised those around by the question he asked. “Why have you brought all these crates?” How many were they? It was only one but because he had started to see many things in one, that was why he could see many crates before them. He was pushed and encouraged to take more beers at regulated intervals, which drunkards do not respect. The end of the story can be concluded at a note that what started well did not end well especially with Alex. He was under the influence of peer pressure to make sure that he pleased his friends but also to prove his status as a grown up youth, this time not from the village but from the town. To please others under peer pressure, one ends up disappointed and displeased.

Why is this story important? We must see how the world of peers can destroy good intentions instead of constructing one’s life. This is one of the few experiences of a youth in the world of discovery and

practices among peers. When different worlds begin to unfold, youth life begins to change circumstantially for either better or worse. In most cases, on the surface, new experiences seem not to have challenges, but as one goes deeper, some complications begin to develop, where fellow peers cannot help or provide solutions. All that peers would do is to encourage others to continue and not to stop the habits already started. In this case the world of peers is a delicate world where parents and other responsible adults must step in to direct its course. Parents should not pretend as if they do not know that the world of peers exists and is real. The world of peers is sometimes deficient of wise decisions or choices. It is led by sentiments rather than purpose. Youth may choose to be destructive under the influence of peer pressure and sometimes under political polarity when they are used because the majority of them own no property and no families, and therefore they have nothing to lose. They do not take responsibility of what happens or do not happen. In the book of 2nd Samuel.13:3-5, Amnon was ill-advised by Jon'a-dab how to deal with his half- sister Tamar; In 1st Kings.12:8-11 we read the story of Rehoboam who rejected the counsel of elders and instead took the counsel of his peers, that resulted into the division of Israel's Kingdom. Sometimes some youth are driven by anger, jealousy, resentment and even hatred gotten from their former worlds. Their future is dim. They need someone to flash a ray of positive change in their lives and the result would be dramatic "transformation."

Peer pressure is not always bad or negative. There are peers who become models for others, and can have great impact in their lives and all these might depend on where those peers are coming from. If their parents were good models or parents, their children without doubt would enviously be examples for others to emulate.

The Unprotected World of Choices

The world we live in becomes a reality when we grow and begin to fend for ourselves, where some people have called it: “making ends meet”. When our children are still young, they are on the receiving end. Parents make sure that their children receive the basics of life, and the children rarely get to know what it will be the time ahead. The moment they are out of their homes, certain things begin to unfold negatively without giving quick options to overcome them. Many things begin to present themselves with no chances of choosing what is of absolute necessity against what is absolutely unnecessary. Choices are many, but what is absolutely needed is the challenge. Children or youth are confronted with such challenges, but to choose what is best for them is not possible. In their formative stage, everything is appealing. The sieving mechanism is not competent and tight enough to allow habits and practices that are necessary and required.

‘In the shadows of truth’, it creates a more critical concern as to why the youth are frequently the victims of the ‘worlds’ they live in. Youth need to be entrenched in more and better strategic purpose driven life, and should not be left alone on their own to command their life the way they want it or to make choices without guidance. They need to be guided and developed in order to sustain their human identity and stabilize human society. The world of peers is a good ground for planting lasting culture and values, because they are quick learners and if followed, no doubt they can make a better world. The writer of proverbs says “train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” (Prov.22:6). When our children are still young, they are in the world of choices. It will all depend on what is presented before them and at what opportune time. Since most children interact with the world of choices when they are growing, the frequency of what is exposed to them determines the brain mapping. Things that are less exposed to the children are less mapped and easily ignored and forgotten. What may

seem to appeal to the child's mental world, will not easily go away, and sometimes the child will be forced to look for it in case it is not within easy reach. Paul says, "When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child..." (1Cor.13:11a). This implies that the child's life is mostly its choice. But as they grow, the world changes and they begin to see the world differently for the sake of others as Paul continues to say; "But when I grew up, I put away childish things" (v.11b).

Churches and other civil society organizations are called upon with urgency to deal more with the youth because they are the reason we work to develop them for tomorrow's continuity. We must be aware that many youth are not educated. Those who are educated have got no employment, and those who are employed are doing petty jobs which are not well paying but are influenced by peer clustering in search of a living no matter how. Some of them turn to crime in order to look for means of survival. We need to note that most of the criminals come from our 'homes' because they lost the best initiation into the realities of life at the parenting level, they cannot see themselves coming back home after failing outside there, instead they decide to remain where life has placed them. Today the youngest population in Uganda falls between the age of 18 and 30 years, which constitute 21.3 % of the total population. The employment of these is at 64%.¹⁸ So what happens to the rest of the youth?

In Uganda, a new era has dawned, the era of 'Kyeyo'. The reality of Kyeyo is a new indirect way of modern enslavement. Youth will always be persuaded by their peers to join with them as they go in search for employment abroad. We have had stories of both young men and women going abroad in the name of Kyeyo and end up as sex workers. They do all other domestic and slave work. All sorts of misfortunes they face

¹⁸ Gemma Ahaibwe and Swaibu Mbowa, *Youth Employment Challenges in Uganda and the role of Employment*. Kampala, Uganda: EPRC Accessed on July 8, 2016

are not by their own will but by the manipulators in the name of employment. Some of them have their passports confiscated and are denied work permits whether for short or long term employment. Though government authorities are aware, they are not protected. They do not see anything wrong with people getting employment outside their home countries. The exported man power is non skilled and therefore it is not protected by any of the labor laws. We should not believe that countries like Uganda cannot put in place measures to stop exporting unskilled labor, which labor can be provide here. Skilled labor has a bargaining power while the unskilled labor has no capacity to protect itself. Why should parents fail to guard and guide their children against employment abuses, if they cannot fight it why not the government which has the capacity to put laws in place to check this inhuman treatment of our future generation? Yes someone was blaming the government for collecting revenue from the exporting companies without caring about the future of the exported youth. Responsible governments should not allow companies transporting unskilled labor to be licensed, well knowing what that means to the youth. For how long should the African young generation continue working for other countries? Slave trade took the best of our youth, and today America is thriving on the African man power transported to them in the 18th and partly 19th centuries. Many European countries which traded and commanded slave markets are rich because of the money earned out of the business. Now as if we are not concerned, there are fellow countrymen together with new 'Eastern dealers' disguising in the name of employment abroad. We may ask a stupid question; do Arab countries not have youth who can do domestic work or is it because the African youth are poor and need jobs? Should rats forever keep producing for the cats? I think time is now for the youth to be protected in all respects for the sake of their future and continuity of our families and societies.

One of the priorities of every developing nation should be the protection of the future. We cannot keep on pretending that all is well when our future is under threat. Many parents become happy whenever their children graduate from high schools, colleges and universities. They see it as a relief because it brings them closer to ending their financial obligations. They see their children old enough to look after themselves, without considering the world they are going to. Eventually these children become victims of social, political, economic and religious void. When people are poorly equipped, they become easily manipulated. Many developed nations are thriving on human resources of the developing countries. The story has never improved since three centuries ago, when America and Europe enriched themselves because of African manpower. Today the story is repeating itself as had already been pointed out. The Arab countries are once again the new interested buyers (hirers) because they had formerly traded in slaves in the East African region. Sometimes one wonders what would have happened to Americans and Europeans if they had not taken many of Africa's natural resources after the scramble for Africa and then its colonization. Africa would not have been as poor as it is now. The matter was made worse when cunningly the colonialists made treaties and agreements with their new colonies to their advantage so that even when they are no longer here, they have indirectly continued to control and take the best from Africa. These resources should have been now benefiting our generation of youth without going to look for Kyeyo. The youth have been left with no choice but to take on anything that comes their way and in most cases; the world of unprotected choices full of unscrupulous life. We cannot all the time push blame to parents or schools, no! There are situations when children decide to go their way without even peer pressure. Reading from Luke.15:11-16, we see a young man who made up his mind to take his inheritance, traditionally which should have been given to him after his father's death. We are not told that there was any kind of peer

influence, but his heart deceived him and he took a choice that became disastrous. In other words some children live in a world outside home even when we have them living with us no matter what good is offered to for their sake.

The World of Technology

This is a world that is so sophisticated to the extent that many families and governments have failed to control. A lot of the world's information, wanted or unwanted is posted on the internet every second. It does not mean that you who do not open and read or watch video clips will stop others doing so. Unless this world of technology is controlled, there will be continued brainwashing for those who have decided to make technology part of their life. Whatever is heard and seen is taken to be complete truth and practicable. Sometimes some of the things our children see are robotic¹⁹ displays which are quite superficial. This has slowly but surely destroyed our resourceful youth. The designers of television and internet entertainment or leisure programs first study their consumers' psychology so that they can lure them and bend them towards addiction. Their purpose might have multiple scores like promoting a specific culture, influencing clients to prone areas for social benefits and economic exploits. It has been researched and found out that seven years before 2013, 'The global porn revenue was estimated at \$20 billion of which \$10 was coming from America'²⁰. Usually the financial benefit overrides other purposes. The programmers knowing very well that their clients will look for enticing programs, the youth mostly will

¹⁹ These are mechanical and stiff movements made to act and speak without feelings, emotions or expressions. In this case children's mind is manipulated by what they see and will always depend on the mental imprints in order to be stimulated to actions. But even when these actions do take place, they are full of human value deficit.

²⁰ Covenant Eye, Internet accountability and filtering, covenanteye.com, 2013.

go for more frequently especially the ‘erotic’ porn. This is why ‘pornography’ has worn the day, because the youth more than the adults will go for it whether they are well employed or not. The world is highly peopled with youth and a percentage of 68 young men and 18 of women is said to be viewing pornography at least once a week²¹. Today the rate at which pornography is viewed is most likely to have doubled or increased greatly because the mobile pornography has become the game of most mobile phone users. The numbers of people who have and use phones, have access to information very readily any time they want it. They will choose what they want to view or listen to. In this case the Mobile porn has increased in popularity, and will continue to increase because to every modern family, it is fashionable to have children in upper classes possessing mobile phones. In 2015 some parents in Uganda were seriously requesting for school authorities to allow their children to own mobile phones. The reason was that they wanted to ease communication with their children and know how they were faring and what they needed. Of course to some parents it was to relieve them of the absence of their loved children. Hearing them speaking or sharing on WhatsApp, reading from the Facebook and twitter the messages from their children would be soothing lonely hearts. Little do these parents know that the mobile phone is not only for their convenience but also children’s own amusements? They are very dangerous tools in the hands of growing children. Lydia Nyesigomwe, Director of Parenting Uganda says; “From the parenting perspective, it is during the adolescence that children define who they are. They get an identity, confidence and become inclined towards a certain career...”²² With this in mind we can now be able to see how at the adolescence stage the young men and women would want to discover the world around them without any

²¹ Covenant eye, 2013.

²² Lydia Nyesigomwe pointed this information in the New Vision Publication Vol. 31 No.39 of February 24, 2016, p.23.

guidance from responsible persons. The phone is the immediate companion. The entertainment program designers do not in any way feel concerned in whose presence the programs are being exposed. They will not carry the blame because designing a program and exposing it are two different things altogether. The world over, the controlling mechanism has not been thought of with urgency, not that the solution is not there but because pornography is a sure and stable economic venture, and most likely in the hands of powerful rich people from whom governments get taxes and therefore the will to stop pornography may not be there at all. The youth population is growing every day and the most victims are in the developing nations. Just look around and you will find out that most of the modern phones are owned by the youth, even those who are not employed. Surprisingly, many youth own more than one phone. The non-employed mass may find their consolation in spending their redundant time in viewing pornography. Well at the face value people may not see it a problem because some categorize it as entertainment but the socio-religious effects are too adverse in their later days. Many of them will not have stable families and others may never marry at all because their sexual interests are artificially aroused and satisfied through pornography. It is robotic. In an article; “*Your Brain and Porn*”, it is said that watching just five hours of porn has been proven to significantly change people’s sexual beliefs and attitudes.²³ Another problem is that people who have grown up viewing porn become addicted and cannot live without it. It so happens that some valuable time might be spent on porn. Besides the dangers of porn, today the social media is very much a modern tool of communication. It is computer-mediated tools that allow people or companies to create, share, or exchange information, career interests, ideas and pictures (as already seen). These may include You Tube, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter among many others. It is through such technology that young men have

²³ Covenanteye.com

been deceived of new friends, jobs, financial support and many other things from abroad. By the time they realize they have been deceived, they are already deeply involved and find it difficult to come out. Many youth lose a lot of money and later trust, some of them do not believe what they read on their mails from their well-known friends because those who cannot speak out in the open will use the advantage of technology to air their views accompanied with a photo or a selfie. Pornography does not need to come from abroad and posted for all those interested, it can just be a selfie of erotic areas taken and sent to a friend in order to attract attention and later be hooked for sexual benefits. So the world of technology is not as simple as most of us parents think of or know it. I had an opportunity to share with someone I trusted and who I think trusted me in the sense that none of us would mention the name of the other. The person seemed versed with pornography. I was told that one of the dangers of pornography is in married couples. Because pornography can sometimes be exaggerated, what people see, they think they are realities. So if one of the couples has been exposed to sexual pornography, he or she will expect to have the same. But because it has been exaggerated, the level of human performance is always less. To one who has been highly exposed and addicted, the expectations are high from the partner, but because this is far-fetched, there comes disappointments and resentments every time sexual intimacy is sought. What follows later is a broken marriage. This was very interesting for me to hear. All this begins when people tend to think that what they see contributes to their knowledge and pleasure. There are even those as I was told who do not feel comfortable talking to the opposite sex. Their satisfaction is in pornographic films that will excite and satisfy them. So people who think phones are good for their children must know that it is more dangerous than what they expect to achieve.

An elder shared something very important for all parents to take note of. He said that when we want children to learn talking, we begin

with simple words, and continue developing communication by adding harder words until they learn what we call language. So he said that film designers begin with simple children's cartoons from which they begin to develop their interests and make sure the children are addicted to cartoon watching. They progress the cartoon stories from ordinary children stories to youth stories still in cartoon form. They do this so that the life of the children is made to think that life and entertainment are only on Television and readily compatible. As they grow, some of them continue watching cartoons, but of mature stories, and others move or advance to sophisticated videos and films. Their lives become glued to Television watching. It becomes very difficult to separate a young man or woman who has come all this way watching Television. Their real life is on the screen, and will do anything needed to buy films and spend hours deep in the night watching them. This may not be good for the youth to hear, but the truth remains, that most of the people who watch hard core pornography or blue movies are difficult to meet their partners' sexual expectations. They find it difficult to give time to their families. Women will not reach orgasm unless their husbands can be able to reach the level of the porn. Men can never find pleasure in sex unless their wives can play it the way it is in the porn. The elder expressed his disappointment on the rate at which marriages are breaking down especially during our time, and he attributed it to the world of technology. The worst comes when most of those addicted spend their time on television or smart phones without any productive work, and yet they will want to eat and drink. The youth need to be aware that if their world is to be real, they must avoid the world of technology with urgency and only rely on it for reasonable matters and time. The parents are responsible for all that takes place. Whenever you allow your children free access to Television and phones, and you act like you want to be a modern and civilized parent, you are actually behaving like you are not. Civilization does not mean laxity and neglect of parental responsibility.

ties. Always be in the know of what is happening with your children. You are the road to their successes or failures. Different levels of life require different levels of intervention for different ages of life. Today we need not cry out that our children are uncontrollable. The fault is deep rooted in our parental neglected roles while taking things on surface value without reading deeply what their future would be.

Parents rarely know what is going on in the life of their children. They think all is well, but under the blankets and behind the curtains things are going a miss. What do we do now that we have known that modern technology is dangerous to the growing youth? Did you ever believe as a parent that some of the things you detest are the favorites of your children or that the things you do under cover from your children, they also know them from other sources? What do you plan to do then? Our children (youth) need mental strength to make them develop, and it is you the parent to map the road for them and develop their understanding of the world around them, and that one laying ahead. Problems arise from many different angles, but the person at the roots is the parent.

PARENTING GAP

Africans are well versed with different modes of parenting. These include; words, actions and seeing or watching. It was and still is to a great extent the responsibility of parents to mentor their children through those modes and find out which of them works better for parenting their different children. One scholar asserted; “If you want to make progress in any field of endeavor, there is an essential first step...you must understand its principles.”²⁴ There is no need to keep emphasizing one specific method thinking that all is going on well without evaluating what the child has taken in or not. The principle must be there as to why you must do parenting. Failure to do so, children grow while the parents keep assuming that their parenting lessons have been taken seriously and yet outside the home, they take on lessons they think are better for their growth and development. They end running out of control, bringing shame and blame to their parents and eventually to the community they belong. What is being said here is that while parents are sometimes good at doing their work, they need to have time to evaluate their roles as well as the extent their children have complied with their teaching. That evaluation process is good to keep the lesson at the right pace and also

²⁴ Joseph Murphy, *The power of your subconscious mind (rev)*. (London: Pocket Books, 2006), pp.3-4

keep the content dynamic. However, it is true to say that many of the parents do the parenting as if it were a punishment. They have no prior arrangement to meet with their children, but whenever they get an opportunity to see them around, they will call them for counsel. Even if you and the children are available to each other, the parent will not make an impact if there has not been preparation of what to address. Parenting is a unique program that must not be taken casually. It must focus on behaviors, attitudes, concepts, perceptions, actions, words, the frequently changing environment around the child and many other things. To the parent, keen listening, seeing and deep thinking must be employed in order to address parental concerns for the children in their homes. Another thing we need to take note of is that we do not only address challenges, but also things every youth must know, believe and practice or live to or by. Keen parents are those who are always ready to avail themselves when children seem to need them. Their presence is part of parenting. Let children also do the talking while parents do the listening. It might appear childish talk, but they are communicating their inner most feelings for the parent to know and learn of what they think or feel, and from there they may begin to understand their children's like and dislikes. Parents must guard against branding them with derogatory names, discouraging them and even demeaning them as failures even when parents feel to be losing hope among some of their children. A parent might truly be present but that presence might be the most resented that the children might feel much better if the parent was never there. That is parental gap in the guise of their physical presence.

From an African perspective, it was upon fathers to offer parental guidance (mentorship) to their sons while mothers did it to their daughters. Reason of separation was due to gender roles which differed in values and status. But equally important, both parents had collective responsibility to guide their children into family values and becoming good models for others. A young boy would in the process admire the

mother's character that might shape his future search for a wife. If the mother's character was resented then the young boy looked elsewhere for modelling and mentoring for his future wife and family foundations. The way young men behave by a big percentage is a replica of their mothers, while it is true for girls and their fathers. Did you know that there are some children for reasons that may be even known to their parents who may have the guts to say: "I hate you", and may decide to walk away from the presence of their parents even when parents demand their attention? When such things happen then know that as a parent you have lost track of your child's future. None of you both (the child and the parent) can trust each other anymore. I have a friend who shared with me a very nasty experience from a real story:

A mother always went on visiting days to see her daughter in one of the great traditional school in Uganda. This lady dressed to look "cute and impressive". Besides heavy cosmetics, she put on short and half see through dresses. The story says that on one of those visiting occasions, she made the talk of the day because she had out-done everything for the purpose of "impression". When the day was done and she had returned home, some students turned to the young girl at school inquiring if the lady who always paid her a visit was her mother. To her, she thought that her friends were going to appreciate the impressive beauty she thought her mother had expressed on some of those visiting days. Unfortunately it was not so. Having told them that she was her mother, to her embarrassment they bust in laughter and sarcastic talk. She learnt that the whole issue was centered on the way her mother dressed before them showing almost every detail of her body. The young girl felt badly hurt and tortured. It became almost an every day's school talk. When the day

for the next visit was approaching, the story says that the young girl rang her mother and told her never to pay her a visit at the school anymore, and that she explained the reason why she should never. This was too much for the child among her peers. Her mother caused her stigma. From then on wards there started to grow a rift between the two because the child no long trusted her mother in many things (as you may know the role played by mini-skirts).

It is therefore very important to be carefully cautious when we are before our children. We must guard against betraying them because they are looking to us parents as their models. We are their first hand models. We model them to be models for others tomorrow. What we destroy today among our children denies them of becoming good parents and responsible citizens in future.

A good father shaped the wishes and hopes of his daughter, giving her the optimism of the type of husband she would marry. In other words the father became the model type of husband the daughter would marry. If the father mistreated the mother and the children, the daughter would resent him and wished never to marry a man the type of her father. Whenever she is looking out for a husband to be, she would look out for similar or different traits in her future husband. Women who resent their husbands and even mistreat them, they are replicating their mothers' if not both parents' behaviors. The boy with the mother was not different either. This tells us that the presence and participation of a parent in the life of the child was and is still very much wanted, and the parent must know and understand what to display before and in the life of the child. If today you are a parent that is never available for your children, they will grow knowing that parents are never present for their children. There will be inherited traits that almost all future generations

will adopt without ever knowing the importance of the presence of parents before their children.

At every opportunity parents would get, they would speak to their children; like at work in the fields, on journeys travelling together, before or during and after meals and so on as often as such opportunities would allow and it was a well-known routine. This kind of parenting by word meant that there was a very close relationship between the parent and the child, such a relationship that created enough trust, that even the child would open up for learning and speak out his or her minds. Because of building trust between the parent and the child, a lot of learning would take place in form of questions and answers. Know that in the process of sharing, a smiling or gloomy face will communicate non-verbal feelings that will send signals to the child of what has been said. This implies that parents must choose moods for conversations in order to deliver well what they intend. Anything good but communicated under a bad situation will not be received positively neither will something bad communicated with a smiling face be received negatively. In communication, moods are good interpreters of what is said or not said. However parents must be aware that teaching or mentoring is not done forcibly. A moderate mode is always preferable for the child to find an environment not too harsh and not too lenient.

Today such parenting process has met with a lot of challenges because opportunities to relate with children or with parents have become rare, dictated upon by social demands, economic pressures and the political environment in and outside the family. Many children, most of the times are away from home and work for school. When they come back home they are alienated from their parents because of fear and the different worlds of their experiences. There is a parenting gap because the child cannot open up easily at home like they do at school where they spend most of their time and become more familiar with the school environment than with their homes and parents, which is always less felt

due to such activities that take them away more frequently. When the parents are around, because their relationships with their children have not been well grounded, children tend to withdraw themselves from them and relate to the well familiar world they confidently trust themselves to; the world of house workers. It becomes rather surprising to find that the child trusts and confides more in the teachers and the house workers than the parent simply because the teachers and the house workers at this point know more of the child than the parents and above average spend more time with the children than the parents do.

Sometimes when there are opportunities and children want to close the gaps and they are not at school but at home, the parents are not at home. When they are at home they are busy watching Television or listening to radio news or reading a newspaper they had no time to read while at their work places. When they are very much relaxed, they are watching video. When these are not taking place, some parents become aggressive for reasons best known to themselves to the extent that whatever is seen or said sparks off negative responses and children recoil as if they have been received an electric shock. Even if one of the less aggressive parents would want to speak something important to the children, they will half- heartedly be attentive. They will be suspicious that anything might happen to them. The ever angry parent will always be avoided as much as possible, because children never tell what might befall them in the process. The behavior of one parent might cause lack of trust for all. In such circumstances parenting gap begins to develop and even widen because the parents first of all are not or are less available. Secondly they are poor at communication, and thirdly they are full of orders and instructions and give little time to conversations and advices. It is also equally true that children may be withdrawn from their parents because of their public image. Parents must know that every day that passes in the life of their children, is a time of growth that improves on their perceptions and articulation. If a child hears ill-talk about the

parents, there is a possibility of the child rejecting and even refusing to identify with them. Parents must be quick to find out and then bridge up. Parents and children must become friends if gaps must be closed or bridged. By permission of the author of *Bridges to Relationships*, I have included a story between a son and a father to help us understand how parents can help their children to grow by choosing between right and wrong.

The focus is on relationship networks that exist between parents and their children. It is common knowledge that parents do not fully understand the minds of the young ones, due to a generational gap most of the times. Some children even become miscreants in the society due to the different kinds of pressures they are faced with, but with the loving assistance of understanding parents, the young ones can become better guided in different areas of human endeavors.

Due to the friendship that exists between Jiire and his father for example, the problem of peer-pressure which could have led to his destruction was well handled, and the boy received timely intervention that promoted healthy relationship

One sunny day Jiire and his friend Casal were discussing about issues of life generally. Little did the former realize the fact that the group of boys he was moving with on campus had actually constituted themselves into a 'campus cult' it was Casal's assigned responsibility to lure Jiire into their ways of life, and that formed the dialogue that ensued between the two friends:

“Casal: ‘Have a stick Jiire.’

Jiire: ‘A what? Cigarette? If daddy sees it with me, I am a dead dog.’

Casal: ‘What do you mean by that? You don’t have to show it to him.’

Jiire: 'No, No, No, Dad and I are good friends. We discuss issues together.'

Casal: 'Stupid boy. Do you think you are still a kid? So you cannot take decision without your dad? If that is the case, please check out of this club.'

Jiire wanted to keep his friends but definitely not at the expense of his relationship with his dad. On getting home, dad noticed that Jiire was not himself.

Jiire's Dad: 'My boy, what's up today? You are looking too cool! Come over to the recreation garden and let's gist.'

Reluctantly, he followed his father but was very afraid to open up to him.

Jiire's Dad: 'Yes, Ji-Ji, my boy, which of those girls gave you a cold shoulder today?'

Daddy asked the question as a way to start off a serious discussion, because he had perceived that his boy was troubled at heart.

Jiire: 'Dad, don't be funny. It's a serious matter.'

Jiire's Dad: 'So what is it my darling boy? He asked, putting his arms around Jiire by this time'. Jiire felt safe in dad's arms and so he shared with him about his encounter with his friend Casal.

'Are you sure that's all that happened at college? And you told him No, already. Isn't it?'

'Yes daddy'.

'Then why are you so disturbed?' Jiire explained to his father that he had been excommunicated from the club. Dad smiled and said to his boy assuredly: 'This is an old game boy. Ignore it. Beware of intimidation and please do not succumb to any form of peer

pressure. You are passing through a phase in your life that all young boys go through, but you have to make up your mind not to give in or else it will definitely ruin your future. ‘My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.’ (Prov.1:10)’

‘You know what’, he continued: ‘smoking is dangerous to your health, and smokers are liable to die young. Miscreants in our society started this way. Most of them began by trying their hands on cigarettes and eventually graduated into taking drugs. And before you know what’s happening they stay away from their parents’ homes, joined gangs and constituted themselves as nuisance to the communities where they live’.

Jiire listened attentively to dad’s lecture.

‘You can see at my age, I am still healthy and fit because I distanced myself from irresponsible way of life. Boy, I want you to be the best that you can be in life, so watch the type of friend that you relate with at college. Do you understand my point?’

‘Yes, dad, I think I am more confident now to face peer-pressure. After all, we met at college, and we shall soon part ways. I will not allow any indiscipline boy to destroy my bright future and tarnish my reputation on campus’; Jiire responded.

‘Thank you very much dad for your invaluable advice. But dad, could it be that those boys do not have parents to warn them against careless was of life?’

‘Well, my son, I am not in a position to judge anybody. But what I can deduce from it is that not all parents are friends to their growing kids. Sometimes they bully them on matters they should have resolved amicably, so the children to have confidants outside, and that’s become afraid and aversive. They prefer to have confidants outside, and that’s how a lot of them get involved into wrong hands.’

‘What will be your advice dad?’ Jiire asked.

‘Well, my advice to all parents will be to get close to their kids and get to know their friends and acquaintances. This will guard against untold heartaches. The Bible instructs: ‘Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.’²⁵ (Prov.22:6).’

This is quite a good reflection of the experience between children and parents who are mindful of what their children go through and need to experience in the presence of their parents. It is obvious that the gaps between are caused by lack of love and trust between parents and their children. It would have been good if we examined what Peter Block asserts about the radical intent of stewardship as service accountability without having to be in charge.²⁶ We parents have roles as stewards over our children. We cannot deny that responsibility and we must be ready to act radically against what our children deem right, because we must be ready to give social and religious accountability to society and to God.

Actions are also good for building the future of a child. Good parents will always want to show their children what they do, how they do it and when. Every time you are at home, it does not matter for how long but make sure the child is exposed to some practical experience that you know is good for the future. Today as the economic and political world demands, there cannot be any survival without practical exposure. There must be that real engagement or contact between the head and the hands. I remember that whenever we went for interviews, we were asked to give our work experiences or even recommendations of our past work experiences. There are parents who do not think that their children

²⁵ Esther Adenike Luogon, *Bridges to Relationships*. (Lagos: HMB “Hephzibah” Publishers, 2008), pp.81-87.

²⁶ Peter Block, *Stewardship; Choosing Service over Self-Interest*. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1996), p.76.

should be made to work at all. The only best thing the children can do is to relax, watch Television, play music or go for internet. These days leisure occupies more of the youth time than work. Many leisure centers have been put in place for holiday makers and money makers at the same time because that is the world we are living in now. Parents find it easier to send or take their children to these centers than sitting them down and talk to them about meaningful life skills, work matters and job creation. Work at home is only left to house helpers. I had of a friend sharing with another about a young girl who was at University. She came home every day and whenever she reached home she would request the maid to come and remove shoes from her feet, there after get juice for her from the fridge which was at an arm's reach from where she would be seated. After the juice has been brought, she calls again to be given a remote control for the Television. When all has been done, the maid retires to the kitchen only to be called back to switch on the air conditioner and draw open the curtains. That is just a shadow of the truth behind what was happening about this young University girl. The question is: What about other things that demanded moving and doing outside the living room? The question then is; what will happen to such a girl when she gets married and becomes a mother? We can think beyond the story. Suppose this young girl is doing so because her parents never taught her what to do in life? Suppose the same gets married to a man who was brought out in the same way, what a home? It will be very disastrous if such a girl gets married to a hard- working man. There would be trouble. One of the things people and even parents have never known to be true of breaking marriages is; laziness or failure to be practical. Everything in most homes is done by maids or house boys, and all it requires is for the man to prepare money to pay for maids and house-boys who offer services. I am not saying that homes or families should not have maids or houseboys, but if they are there, they should be giving support to areas where work is too much. Not everything is for money.

When we work we teach our children to work too. It is healthy to work as part of physical exercises, but also as a cultural mandate to work (Gen.1:26-28 & 2:8). It does not matter how big or small the work you are doing, but let the child be involved too. For some parents when children come home for holidays, the houseboys and the maids get their off in turns leaving the work they have been doing to be done by the children, especially that which is manageable. Sometimes when they do not go, the children are given instructions to accompany these workers so that they are made to engage in real work life.

The nature of the environment most of us live in is completely separated from practical work. In the cities where most of our families live, there is practically nothing for our children to do. But remember that the future of family members may not for ever be in the city. It would be good for children to have one of the holidays in their ancestral villages to be able to engage some practical work and even see what people do, because seeing is part of learning and parenting. There was a scenario during the 1979 Uganda Liberation War. Most families had to run away from towns to their villages. For the first time the children were exposed to village life, and they saw things they had never seen before, namely: a cow from which milk came. To them the source of milk was either from the shop or fridge. They did not know how it came there. I heard that even one child described the cow as a big dog being milked, because they had never seen a cow but a dog. That means children who are born or who live in the cities have a problem of interacting with the real world and issues related to work. Responsible parents should be mindful of the future of their children by leading and guiding them into a future world of realities. Learning from a parent is treasure and must not be taken casually and lightly either by the parent or the child. The future demands for people who can make and not seek for jobs, people who can make things happen rather than waiting to see things happen or those who never know why and how such things happen.

Long Periods of School Exposure

The global trend has influenced many families to live a life separated from each other. Some parents go to work to make a living for their families and may stay away for long periods. At the same time their children are sent to school at an early age for convenience to overcome the challenges of parents' absence. Sometimes some parents want to be like other families whose children go to school. Today by good luck schools are within short distances, enabling children to attend without excuses. *(On average in my own assessment in the rural areas seven of every ten children go to school, while in the urban the percentage is about 9.5 of those who go to school. Six out of ten in the rural persist to complete primary seven, while 8.5 of the urban of those enroll in primary one do complete primary seven. Four out of ten in the rural and seven out of ten in the urban continue to complete senior four. Five out of ten of the urban youth, and two out of ten in the rural complete advanced level education. On average two out of ten that complete advanced level of education from the urban, go to University while 0.2 from the rural are admitted. In general the range of six to twenty year olds, are at school)²⁷*. For the time they spend at school, they have less contact with their parents. The most available people are the teachers during the day and house workers during the evenings and weekends. It worsens when the mothers are public servants. The worst can always happen unknowingly when it is discovered too late to rectify. Such an experience of the children who are growing to their teens and later to their adulthood will be void of parental presence and real family life. They will lose their

²⁷ This assessment is not based on research but a mere observation in the villages and towns I have lived. It can be used to help the reader to understand what is being discussed knowing very well that the percentages of those who go to school from the rural and the urban are not the same, even the drop out levels. The argument is that rural areas also have had opportunities to send children to schools although at the end few are successful.

esteem and even never trust themselves when assigned specific roles in their communities. That is why Helen and Donald Wastlake write saying; “There has always been a need for parents to know more about their children and about themselves in order to meet their parental responsibilities more effectively”.²⁸ Because when they grow and make families, they will also have nothing to offer to their children. Parenting is a process that is generational and demands continuity. We do not leave children to find out on their own. Interacting with some parents on parenting issues you would be shocked to learn that to some of them it does not matter because the social influence pushes them that far. Others because of the way they have been nurtured, they do not understand that the parent has an important role to play in present and future life of the child especially for those who go to school because the teacher is available. To most of the parents, as long as the children are at school, they can relax and attend to other matters. Children are not part of their immediate “agenda”. Anywhere in the world, be it human beings or most animals and plants, when left on their own at an early stage, they die, and when they survive, they have unique characters and miss out on many things. To human beings, growth and development of essential human capacities more often than not will meet with challenges because the person was not nurtured to adapt to human social, political, economic and religious environment. They grow without values and sometimes they become wild.

Working couples find it very important to please their employers at the expense of their families, especially children in order to keep their jobs. Women secretaries working for busy offices will be required to extend their working hours in order to meet company deadlines. Men in similar companies may be required to be in office for supervisory roles or may be required to be in the field for many hours and even days and

²⁸ Helen Gum Wastlake and Donald G. Wastlake, *Child Development and Parenting*.

months. Towards the end of the financial year, work is so demanding for many to prepare financial reports and making budgets. It is a time when children are insincerely orphaned. They will rarely feel the existence of the parents at home. Although we all know that life today demands a lot that may take parents away from their families for long hours, it is possible and advisable that whenever they are back home, they should try as much as possible to fix time and be with their children, not only to talk but also to play and pray with them. They should enhance the parent-child relationship so that it will become more rewarding for all.²⁹ The closer the parent to the child, the more familiar and friendly they become. Do not make children feel that you are their parents only, but also make them feel that you are their friends! Create an environment of trust and deeper feelings that they are loved and cared for by their parents but not the other way round where they see the teachers and house workers more active in their lives than their parents. Sometimes parents think that the best way to bring children closer is by giving them eats and drinks, which are not bad, but also not good because there will be a time when you want to be close to them in the absence of the eats and drinks and it becomes difficult. Use every situation conducive for your parenting role.

Young men and women, who intend to get married, need to take deep and considerate thoughts about family making. Whereas it is one thing to work and earn a good living it is another to lose your family on the expense of your work. It is also possible not to work and save your family. We need to think between lines whether we should pay attention to our work or to our families. There are things most of us workers must take seriously as we think about our families especially children. When we are at work, we are referred to as “Bosses”, “Madams” or “Officers”. At home we are “Fathers” or “Mothers”. We need to know that there will be a time when we will cease to be called bosses, madams or offic-

²⁹ Helen and Donald, p.52

ers especially when the jobs are no longer. But our children will still call us fathers or mothers. We are not called parents because of our work but because we have children. Our work does not determine our parental roles neither do our parental roles determine our work. The Public work we do complements our family social and economic status, otherwise many families have moved on without such work and they have become successful. All we need to do is to be wise and balance the two without losing either. Each is independent of the other, but the way we invest in them matters a lot because if we are not careful, family life can affect work life adversely and work life can do the same to our family life. It will depend on how best we shall play our “cards”.

Parenting comes in many different packages. A parent needs also to know the type of package to avail to the child and at what time. Do not just come to the child because you want to show that you are present, and you just open your package to which the child is not prepared for and at the end you are convinced that you have done your job. For example you cannot begin teaching a child who has just come from school and tired and you think the child is attentive or you begin teaching a five year old about adolescence. Good timing plays the best program and each level of the growing child has got its own concerns or package, which should unfold as a process as long as the parent knows what to do and when to do it and is available for the child. Many times children become victims of the parenting gap, and it becomes; “to whom it may concern”. When it comes to that point, no one will ever know what package was opened and how it was delivered. That is why you find many young boys and girls are sexually active and will end up resenting marriage because the one who opened the package, opened it at the wrong time and the child ended up in displeasure and knew it the wrong way and when they get old enough they will never regard sex in marriage with respect while others will think that it is right thing to do with anyone any time. Parents must also know that children who feed well

become sexually sensitive and active by the age of nine years. Their ears and eyes are very inquisitive about what is said and seen in relation to sex matters. Any package about sex will attract their attention, but because of fear they will pretend to have heard or seen nothing. When you are absent, the older house workers will interest them and later engage them. They will talk among themselves and even begin to do fanny things between themselves. Life in our families is always a transition. It is like coming from one academic level to another. Someone cannot miss primary and go to secondary or University. The process must be complete in order to be better performers. However much brilliant the child might be, the primary stage is the academic spring board that becomes the child's future in the academic world. Therefore as much as parenting is a process, the children's growth must also undergo a process of nurturing to avoid overstepping their boundaries or skipping important learning levels on how to respond to their behavioral changes as they grow into man and womanhood. The home is the class, the children are the students and parents are the teachers. Although at another level, the parents must become learners because; "Parent education should help potential parents to become more aware of their own values and how these can affect their relations with children."³⁰ So as earlier said of a curriculum, there is nothing wrong to sit and think through what you and your children must learn to help both of you emphasize your family values.

There are parents and teachers who have always thought that every child who goes to school must excel if not in all, at least in Science subjects. When some children fail to make it, they are insulted as good for nothing whose future will not be bright and so on and so forth. We forget that each person has different levels of excellence where his or her intellect is driven. When the child fails to perform well at the end of the year, both the parents and teachers without knowing why; they begin

³⁰ Helen and Donald, p.52

calling the child names and the child becomes discouraged. In the end the teacher fails to see that it was his or her role to make the child pass because it was his area of academics, while the parent also fails to understand that poor parenting might have rendered the child's failure. We must know that they are not the hours a child spends at school that make that child successful, no! It is a combination of both the teacher and the parent that makes the child a success. For example, one cannot expect a child to become a better performer academically when the home environment is hostile surrounded with poor feeding and accommodation, lack of proper reading environment and too much manual work that cannot allow the child to perform academically well. Unless these are evaluated properly and rectified, it will not matter how long the child will be at school, the results will remain poor. Apart from parents visiting their children at school on visiting days and with little or no interactions with the teachers, parents must be part of their children's school life.

Another example is of parents who from their work drive by the schools and collect their children. As they drive back home, some of them want to use this opportunity to speak to the children because it is the only possible time with them which cannot be missed. These parents do not realize that the children, while at school behave like working machines, and now it is their time to be switched off and possibly need servicing to begin working again. As they travel, the children are in a dormant mode. They can half way hear and may not respond especially when there are issues of the parent's interest and not their interest. Nurturing or parenting takes place in a very relaxed mood and not driven by circumstances. The reverse is true when the parents come back home from work tired and find the children waiting to talk to them about their concerns. We need to know that children at their level may not be able to comprehend life so as to be in position to ask questions about it. Their main concerns may be money for their upkeep at school or reporting

teacher so and so who does this or that. They are just reporting and not discussing. What should have now been the opportunity for the parent to open his or her package slowly becomes a disaster because the parent is also tired after long hours of work or travel. Such parents find themselves too tired to attend or sustain to any conversation or engagement with their children's concerns. Sometimes the attention is channeled to news broadcast on a radio or television which the parents think they cannot miss. However, there must be a difference between the parent and the child. A parent must and **must** give attention to their children. Whether they are tired or listening to the news, they must pay attention to listen to their children's concerns. They are looking for some attention and sometimes a consolation if in the day they found something depressing or stressing, the parent is the right shock absorber, the right answer. It becomes discouraging and hurting or even scaring when parents respond to their children's request by pointing out to them; "Do not disturb, I am listening or watching T.V." Yes, it might be right because information is good and is required to be updated, but it is totally wrong. Because the attention is put on mostly external things and historical events of some days past, and the issues children would want to raise are pushed aside yet they are the most internal matters that need not be overlooked.

In such circumstances, parenting is surrounded by challenges of time and space amidst work pressures, but still remains part of the parents' program for their children's growth and development. Parenting is not structured like a classroom lesson. It is a process with different dynamics that unfold circumstantially. It begins right at child birth and goes on until one dies. It defies all odds of time and space, but must take in account social, cultural and religious values which do not contradict each other. Parents therefore need to be quite aware that children should not suffer because of their social and economic demands or the need for education while suffocating their parental mandate. Tomorrow's parents

are today's youth. All successes and failures are manifested in the parents' levels of involvement.

POLARIZATION

The problem of polarity is not determined by one factor. There are many possible factors and concerns that must not be overlooked as provisions are put in place to help the youth from losing focus and a future, which will later affect our families and communities directly. There is much we see in most of the Western world where parenting is taken lightly. A lot of disharmony in families and communities is explained by the public life demonstrated when these youth grow and become public servants and parents. It does not matter whether the youth is from well to do families or not. Youth life must be experienced within the parental control. Our children have been very much exposed to the foreign way of life through what they see and read on the Internet or TVs and Magazines. Many parents do not know anything about such things and sometimes have no access to them. Because of the many worlds the children have been exposed to, they will be charged like an electric current, and begin to move in the direction where forces are stronger from the direction the family or society is moving to.

The social, religious, political and economic polarization has greatly affected the youth. There are too many forces pushing towards, and pulling away from the center of core values. Today the political, religious, social and economic poles seem to be the strongest forces and as a result most youth tend to move where the pushing or pulling is strong-

er. They tend to seek for where they can favorably gain acceptance and even compete favorably. From the inward, youth have social challenges they meet and would want to deal with them positively, but because conditions are never favorable, they remain unsolved. Today there are two main driving forces that youth think can influence and even answer their pressing needs. These are religion and Politics. These are social institutions at play that determine “belonging”. Youth are very conscious of belonging in order to achieve. The social force is not so much at play because most of their associates are poor and cannot command influence or status.

Today religion has become a very strong pull. Many churches have come up and captured the attention of innocent youth promising them of what they have seen as the mostly needed things. These churches study their clients psychologically and manipulate them by dealing with what their hearts need. The central theme has been ‘prosperity’, because for a youth who is at or have left college or university would feel good to swim in money, get a good job, drive a good car and generally have their life’s expectations answered. Most of them are interested in getting some people to love. So they go to some churches where relationships are the central theme. To the youth who are lonely and have no money to influence relationships may have no reasons why they cannot attend such churches. Back to the point of prosperity, there is the idea of sowing the seed for multiplication. The belief is that whatever you sow determines what you will harvest or reap. If you give little money in the offertory basket you will reap fewer opportunities and if you give a lot of money, your opportunities will be too many. To the youth who is looking for opportunities see this church as a promising church and therefore will use every little resource available to “sow”. The project sounds very good, and giving to God is a very wonderful thing, but it is too much of manipulation because *God does not bless according to the amount we give but the heart that gives*. So the expectations of much

reaping, rips the minds of these poor young people. They try their best to get what to sow in order to reap enough and determine their future's success. Others have been promised of Visas to go to where pastures are greener so to say and think. Many of these youth have ended up disappointed after doing all the needful with their little money without any positive outcome. Such churches have become manipulative and exploitative on the expense of poverty and mostly poor parenting leading to the children's ignorance of the environment around them. Their families in most cases do not have economic independence and therefore cannot maintain young men and women who are not employed. Sometimes going to such churches which can say what people want to hear is the only best thing they can do, because after such a promising church service, those anticipating results soon, begin thriving on hopes that sooner or later will begin to fade.

Politics

When I was young between the age of twelve and thirteen, Uganda was working towards attaining her independence. The two prominent parties at that time were Uganda People's Congress (UPC) and Democratic Party (DP). These parties composed their campaign songs and we children were taught and used to go at campaign rallies to sing. One of the bad things I can remember is that the songs were full of insults which adults found shameful to say but were found to be easily sang by us children. We were used to achieve the purpose of the politicians. We were political without being politicians and later not even becoming beneficiaries of the political cake. We did not mind and did not know how bad it was to insult people, after all we were young and the politics of the country were in their infancy. Today's politics have become so much polarized because of social and economic benefits. Young men will be promised a number of benefits that they will be willing to do anything to make a great following and if need be, a fight for the candi-

date of their support. Capable candidates will give out money to youth for campaigns and if need be, disorganize their opponents' campaigns. Because of many African countries being poor with big numbers of youth with no employment, it is not difficult to lure them into an optimistic future. Politicians will find such youth easy to win and be used of course in most cases not for good reasons but for destructive purposes as long as some little money can be dropped in their hands. This can be called survival politics. At another extreme, some youth want socialization or association (be identified) even where there are no direct economic benefits. They always have anticipation of success, which sometimes comes but with costs.

So we can see that the youth in most cases are circumstantial victims. The economic trend polarizes every part of the youth life. Today youth in the range of 15-35 years are victims of human trafficking, drug dealing, murder, and to a certain extent suicide. Why the youth, because there is a lot of frustration, disappointment, poverty and even betrayal. Educated as many of them may be, they are flaccid within their communities with little contribution to offer. Their education cannot place them anywhere among the working ranks and to the worst it cannot place them among the non- educated. They belong to a rootless world.

There was a similar situation related to the above situation, when a young man after senior six came to the city to look for employment. When he failed to get any, he thought it would be shameful to return home, and too shameful to steal. He decided to push a handcart ferrying goods from shopping centers to various bus parks, a job he did very well, after convincing other operators that he did not go to school. A day of misfortune came when he got English clients with whom he was able to negotiate comfortably in English and carted their luggage to where they were going. No sooner had he started to push his cart than a gang of other cart pushers surrounded him. "Why did you lie to us that you are not educated? Don't you see that you have interfered with our work?"

Every time you take the better side of the jobs we do because you can speak English well. You go to offices because that is where you seem to belong. You must stop right now. We do not want you here!” The young man felt threatened and insecure, because he had found the job rewarding especially with his unemployment educated background. He had to negotiate for a certain percentage of his daily earnings for the chairman of cart operators, if he was to remain in the business. This tells us that the educated youth are the most “endangered species” of our time. Such realities are part of what constitute the extremities of violence, crime, human trafficking, drug abuse and many other dangerous vices polarizing the youth to act against human values.

The dynamics of change are consistently widening the borders between the ideal and the realities because what should have been the ideal of a schooled youth seem not to be there. Formerly the ideal was that every educated person gets employed to a white collar job but not any employment. Today even the non-white collar jobs are not available.

Economic: A Street Study Survey

I made a two days' street study survey of Kampala city. The purpose was to find out why there were large numbers of young people on the streets every morning of the week up to late hours of the evenings, and also to find out the nature of the work they were doing. The study survey was done on the following streets which are always heavily populated and are the busiest: Kampala Road, Luwum Street, Nakivubo Road, Main Kikuubo business outlet, Kisenyi Bus Park Terminal and Kiseka Market.

On Kampala Road, I discovered that half of the youth did not have any business or job to do. They only spent their time moving up and down, some holding big envelopes and small hand bags, which I was told contained application letters, CVs, and some News Paper adverts pulled out from old papers. You see them talking with concern as if there

were very serious business going on, and indeed the business in discussion is “employment”. When they are not talking to each other, knowing how sensitive Kampala road is, they decide to sit in the bus stage shades pretending to be waiting for taxis or buses to travel, and travel long journeys in the eternity of job seeking. The number increased or decreased according to the conditions of the day. The youth on this road were relatively well dressed and sometimes hard to tell that they were job seekers. I just had to be careful enough in order to find out, but the truth was hard to discover.

On Luwum Street, more than half of the youth there had no jobs. There were many young people both males and females. The street was over crowded more than Kampala Road. Many of them disguised as customers buying or bargaining, moving from one place to another, offering unacceptable prices well knowing that they were far too below the bargaining line. They did it intentionally as a means of killing time and boredom. In fact a young girl, who did not know how things work, became a victim of miscalculated bargain when the vendor asked her to pay the money she had mentioned to pay. It was too unfortunate for her that she fidgeted and lied that the money was with her friend who had just been with her but did not know her whereabouts. In due course I identified myself with one of them, who reluctantly though, accepted to talk to me later. The revelation made was that many of them had been on city streets for a long time and that they did not have fixed places because they targeted opportunities of good Samaritans who would make a day for them or even bump into an old friend who could make a sad face to smile.

The youth I talked to on Luwum Street told me that one would spend some time on Luwum Street like a day or two, and move to William Street or Nakivubo bus Park. He went on and told me that there were those who stayed with relatives promising that when they get employment, they would begin to live on their own. This was conditional and

sometime it took long to be fulfilled since the job hunt turned out to be a payless job in itself and never came to an end. He told me that those who were unfortunate to get something small to do, would immediately be sent out of their relatives homes to go and look after themselves. They would then team up and look for cheap places where to rent and stay. He did tell me that they were in some cases engaged in some kind of crime for their survival, but in the course of our conversation, there were indicators that there were situations when some of them would be pushed hard and forced to engage in some unlawful activities.

Kikuubo business outlet is one of the busiest places down town where a lot of unscrupulous business is done. Here one can hardly know who is in business and who is not. There is a lot of movement up and down. The Kikubo has many shops with so many in and outlets. This creates a very good environment for casual jobs but also a conduit for jobless youth where they can move freely without being suspected as jobless. Sometimes they meet people they know who sympathize and make a day for them. Standing at any of the in or outlets, one would see that the largest number are youth between the age of fifteen and thirty years and are well dressed to the point that one cannot see anything missing in them. I estimated that seventy percent were youth and about sixty percent of these as having no work there.

At Nakivubo bus park terminal, the story was a little bit different. Many of the youth I found engaged in some work. They spoke good English but were dressed poorly and this was for reason. Here, youth of about eighteen to thirties appeared to be the majority of the people in the park. They engaged in three types of work. (i) Passenger brokers (ii) Luggage carriers/ cart pushers and (iii) Hawkers (Duka mukono)- These sold a number of mixed assortments and moved all over the park and sometimes went up the Streets looking for customers. I inquired from one of the officials in the bus park concerning youth who stayed around the park without employment. I was told that these were very

much discouraged because some time back they used to grab passengers' property and caused chaos in the park. This caused security concerns to protect the people and their property. In fact the bus park as of today is one of the secure places one can be assured of. The youth who operate there have been given uniform with numbers and are registered. They are known by names and numbers and stations of their operations. A youth who was not registered was not allowed to loiter about the park.

I had good moments of engagement because the youth here were friendly and interactive. I was told that many of them had been at their jobs for years and have found it rewarding because they were able to buy for themselves food and rent houses. Some of them had small families. There were those lucky ones who after working for a year or two were able to buy for themselves motor cycles (Boda Boda) to engage transport business which they said was much better than carrying luggage or pushing carts or hawking, but they feared that the Boda Boda business was risky. It involved accidents, police and thieves. So those who operated them were living in fear and danger. Most of the female youth dealt in soft drinks, fruit salads, and confectionaries. Because of the hard life some of these young females become conditionally married as a means of making ends meet. I was told that they sold commodities belonging to some rich business women and men on the condition that they would get a commission in relation to what they had sold. In some cases, some days turned out to be unproductive and one ended up with even no transport back home. In order to make ends meet as nature would have it, they partnered themselves to willing men, whether fellow youth or adults who could make their lives easier. Conditional and un planned marriages and children were reported to be affecting many young females, and such circumstances separated them and they began to live on their own by depending on exploitative work. **This is very important to note in the life of both male and female youth living on petty jobs in Kampala city. All that happen around the youth is either;**

generational or conditional or intentional. We shall look at these as conditions influencing polarization of the youth.

I lastly visited Kiseka Market. The uniqueness of this place is that most of the business deals in motor vehicle spare parts. Most of the youth found in this place are either middle men or they are thieves. Some elderly man who was running a spare parts shop there told me that they have nothing to do even when they know those who are thieves very well. They fear to identify them least they turn around and betray their business. So they just kept quiet about it in order to protect their business. He said that besides many of them being thieves, they were also business dealers. They acted as middle men. They persuaded customers and ended up getting some commission. Those who were trustworthy connected customers to a number of shops and at the end of the day they went home like those working in government offices. He told me of some young middlemen who were having their personal cars and motor cycles. Generally Kiseka Market was another challenging place but the youth there made money more than on Kampala Road and Luwumu Street.

At the end of my two days' city study survey my assessment concluded that:

- 1 There were many youth in the city more than the adults at about seventy percent.
- 2 There were many jobless youth along Kampala road, Luwum Street, and Kikuubo. However, Kikuubo and Luwum Street had the biggest numbers respectively as compared to other places I visited.
- 3 There were many female youth at Luwum Street and Kikuubo than other places.
- 4 Youth at the Bus Park were enterprising compared to those living in other places where the survey was carried out.

5 There was less or no concern that these youth existed as jobless or job seekers.

I made a reflection on the three important things I had already talked about: Parenting gap, long periods at school, and poor guidance. Although it may not totally be true or applicable to the youth I found in the city with no jobs, in some cases it is very true.

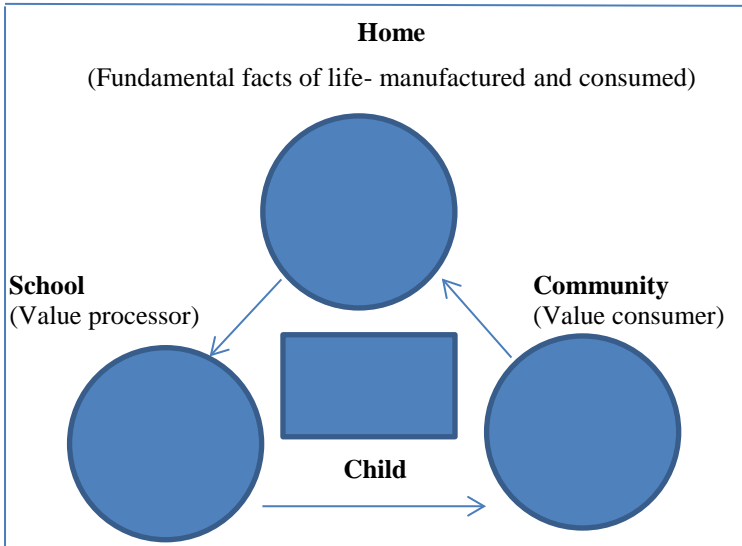
The parenting gap is a very serious matter. Children grow on their own without facing the real world at the hands of their parents. Today parents have left all responsibilities in the hands of the school and the teacher. It is the teacher who offers all services: parenting and teaching. Traditional and cultural matters are not part of most of the school curriculum. Even if they were, in some schools the teachers are nor conversant with the pupils' culture. Children grow in the world of academics only. The teacher who teaches your child in some cases is not religious. How then does a parent entrust the complete life of a child into the hands of such a teacher and be contented that the morals of the child will be checked? The teacher will provide knowledge but not wisdom, for wisdom is provided by parental involvement in the child's growth (Prov.22:6; Eph.6:4b). The teacher will provide theories while the parent provides practical skills. We do not wait to see our children engage work when they have left colleges and Universities. Homes are the laboratories where the school theories are tested. When the parent is absent or not available, the child's knowledge remains dormant and later forgotten.

The longer periods the child spends at school, the more the child is exposed to class and school environment. To the child, home becomes foreign especially when the child leaves home at 5 a.m. and comes back at 10 p.m. tired and only able to eat supper and sleep. Weekends in many schools have become normal teaching days. Children today stay at school almost 11 out of 12 months of the year. When do the parents conduct their parental lessons to their children? When they are at home,

are the parents there too? Do parents have a timetable and curriculum for their children? Who is responsible for their future? Is the school the sole responsible institution for nurturing and modelling the child? All these questions are very important to think about. Parents must guard against their children's future which will affect their families and not the schools they have been to. When a child leaves school, even if that child was a hero or heroine to be remembered, there will be a time when he or she will be forgotten like Joseph (Ex.1:8). The family however cannot forget her own, no matter how dormant one was.

The third aspect is lack of guidance. Today most schools carry out 'Career Guidance' in a bid to help children find their future tailored to their choices. Homes should also prepare a 'work career guidance' curriculum to guide their children to what they should do at home and in future. This is important because schools prepare our children for white color jobs which are also not available. Few schools prepare field practical engagements. This answers why many youth are unemployed because what they target does not come their way. Their hands and heads are not tuned to manual labor/work. Parents are responsible for most of their children's failures, because they fail to show them where real work lays. Home curriculum for career guidance is required and necessary so that children can grow knowing that they belong to many worlds, but that the most important of them all, is the world of their parents where the fundamental realities of life are manufactured, then processed at school and marketed and consumed in communities or public institutions. It forms a cycle of life values: from home to school to community and back to home. At some point, the life of the child is shared and the benefits are resourceful.

The Cycle of Life Values



We must note that the community includes both the Home and School. However in the figure above, we would want to see each of them as a different entity with specific positioning in the life of the child. The community which is the consumer may include any other actors which may exclude the child’s home and the school.

For that matter, what youth go through, is a story long started at home. In my book; *Integrating Faith with Work, A Ministry Transformational Model*, I talked about people thinking that work is only that which is remunerated. This is the concept of our educational system which has affected our youth adversely, yet most families in Uganda possess property and assets like land. There is no better and enterprising project than engaging land in both crop and animal farming. Unfortunately our children/youth missed the use of land resource at home because there was no home or family curriculum or career guidance, and the parent was never at home to implement one even if it were available. As a result, they see land like refuse, and will always leave it behind and

go to towns for the so called 'remunerated jobs', beg for food or stay hungry most of the time.

Polarity

In human life there are many forces of nature that are responsible for our successes and failures. Some are inborn and others are acquired. Most of the polarizing elements among the youth are acquired from the worlds of their exposure. Before other forces of success or failure set in, the home must have been at play. However, the gap our homes create develops into serious negative forces. Youth are at their promising and growing stage where they see their future bright. When shadows of doubt begin to draw in, life becomes an antipathy rather than an enjoyment. In order to bridge up, the youth look for other means to remove the shadows of doubt and maintain superficial expectations of their future. Like adults, youth want independence, recognition and power. The financial position of an individual in most cases determines his or her expectations. Because of lack of employment, youth cannot achieve their expectations. They therefore look for ways to meet those expectations. In our Physics class, I learnt that air occupies space. Where there is a vacuum, air will rush in to fill the space. Youth cannot live in a world of emptiness or vacuum; devoid of independence, recognition and power. Their world must be filled, no matter how and of what kind; they must look out for the means to have them. If they were well parented and guided, they might not have difficulty, but if this did not happen, then they might at this point employ all means possible to achieve their expectations as the saying goes: "by hook or crook." Life to them begins to appear uncertain and unappealing. They have no friends because they have nothing to offer or share with them only may be they can be joined to them by their common fate.

The Dimension of Generational Polarity

The generational problem is propagated by the parents who either deal with issue negatively or neglect them altogether. If parents took children's issues lightly or were not concerned about their behaviors, it would appear that what children do in the presence of their parents, are acceptable. There are parents who emphatically reject those who point fingers against their children for wrong doing and even denying that their children have done any wrong. When this happens in the face of the children, they feel empowered as if nothing has gone wrong and that they have received approval from their parents. The children see strong defense in their parents no matter how grave they know the outcome will be. Children grow knowing that, that is the way things are done. Parents are never bothered with the counsel and modelling of their children for a promising hazard free future. Let us examine a case where a child is born to a promiscuous mother. Men come in and go as they wish. The family livelihood and survival depends on the mother's business. The child grows knowing that it is the way life is lived. The mother does not have any moral say, to tell the child that it is bad to sell oneself for or buy sex. At an early age, young girls born to such mothers become victims of the immorality to the worst, with their mothers' lovers. Young boys begin to engage sex the same way they see men engaging their mothers. They take opportunities against unsuspecting young girls in the vicinity including their own sisters to experiment what they see and hear. Such mothers have no guts or even time to explain the dos and don'ts of sex. They are preoccupied with their business and how to win their customers and not how to protect their children. In Mumbai, India, there are many prostitutes who even have families (husband and children). On one of the "Red light" Street, you will find both young and middle aged women standing by the entrance of their small houses (a room of about 8'x8'which accommodates more than five people) waiting for customers. During my stay in Mumbai, I was told that entire

families; including the husbands depend on what the woman earns from her prostitution. When a customer comes even if they have taken to their beds to sleep, the woman will request them to go to the small veranda of their room and allow the customer to go in. The family seem to understand this situation because now the woman is the bread winner, they have got to comply and the husband cannot complain or feel jealousy. It is a norm acceptable among prostitutes who have families. The question now comes; do you think that a child who grows under such circumstances knows the difference between vice and virtue?

Fathers who are engaged in crime rackets, sometimes involve their sons and to the worst, their daughters. That is why in most of the city gangs, a number of young and middle aged females are involved. It all begins right from home. Sons and daughters are initiated in systems that can keep the family going. Some parents have been found to be drug and alcohol dealers besides being sex workers too. It is well known and written about that some young people are pressured by peers into experimenting with drugs, while others learn by examples from their parents.³¹ It rarely occurs to parents that what they introduce to their children or allow their children to be involved in, will have later effects on their families and public life. For example Mawhinney and Petersen say:

Narcotics such as heroin and morphine are bad for the fetus. Heroin is associated with abnormal prenatal growth and complications during labor and birth. Seventy percent of babies born to heroin addicts have drug withdrawal symptoms. If the resulting symptoms of diarrhea, anxiousness, and fits of screaming are not effectively treated

³¹ Helen and Donald, p. 396.

by the physician, a baby may have convulsions, enter a coma, and die.³²

We find many parents crying over what their children especially girls go through in their married life without recalling their youthful life when things were taken lightly in the name of freedom and children rights or things that took place in their absence. Certainly there are youth in spite of being drug and alcohol addicts, survive to old age. However, close observations have shown that these people are abnormal in their growth and behavior. Some of them have quick tempers, absent minded, sexually inactive, and frequently asleep under the influence of drugs or alcohol and to the worst, have no selection capacity. All these are likely to build up in a home that experiences the parental presence rarely or where children grow in an environment that lacks parenting responsibilities.

Most of these issues are mostly urban centered. In most cases they happen among the children of political leaders and millionaire business people as well as children from middle and low income families³³. Very poor families that live and occupy single roomed houses with all their children like the Mumbai case mentioned above, face very serious addiction to drugs, alcohol and sex of almost every family member because it develops as a family norm and spreads among them like forest fires. The children unavoidably see and hear or experience the mature sexual behaviors which they would not have experienced if their parents had cared to protect and offer them alternative living. When men come home and do not find their lovers present, they easily turn the seemingly mature girls and sleep with them. As time goes on the men will turn to the young girls against their mothers resulting into chaos and crime between mothers and their daughters. Sometimes relatives who stay with such families cannot be trusted with young girls and even boys in some

³² V. Thomas Mawhinney, and Corlice J. Petersen, *Child Development: Parenting and Teaching*. (Cincinnati: South – Western Publishing Co.,1986), p.46.

³³ Helen and Donald, p.396.

cases. I remember reading a story where such a situations occurred. In the house lived a mother and her young daughter, and her nephew; the cousin to the young girl. They were almost of the same age. The story says that one time when the mother was absent, the young girl asked her cousin to go to bed with her and do what she has been seeing her mother doing with men. The important issue I am advancing is that some of what our children go through or face, are home generated, and they may go from one generation to another. A habit once planted and never checked, grows quickly like lianas that later become too difficult to get rid of destroy. It would not be wise to judge the youth why they behave the way they do without looking back from where they are coming from. Jesus once taught that a good tree will be identified by its good fruits (Matt.7:20). If we do care, we would then need to tell anew story about them. I know of a specific woman in her 70s now. She has had five children with five different men. Her daughters had children in almost a similar manner. As of now, the granddaughter has followed the same course. This has become generational and may continue like that for many years to come. There are many cases of similar nature that you may know existing in your area emerging from parental negligence. However, it is not completely true that only generational problems are responsible for polarizing the youth. There may be other forces or dimensions at play that we will not talk about now, but we know them.

The Dimension of Conditional or Circumstantial Polarity

Families might be doing well in nurturing their children in a Christian way. However, as we talked about the different worlds children experience, they may condition their behaviors in noncompliant family and Christian life. Many times most of these youth are pushed to the 'wall' because of the harsh conditions around them. In most cases what charges the youth is the feeling of hopelessness, a feeling of being out of

place, of joblessness and poverty. The best solution to them is to get rid of such bad feelings and replace them with some kind of occupation which works as sedatives. To them, as long as they can find happiness, it is well and good. It does not matter how and what will affect them thereafter.

When I was growing up as a young boy, I found myself surrounded by circumstantial poverty, but in a humble Christian family. With the world of peers around me, I was conditioned to indiscipline contrary to what my family accepted and approved. I started to smoke and drink alcohol hiding away from my parents. These are fifty plus years ago and life has completely changed because that time we had our parents close to us when we were not at school, but we managed to hide from them and do things without raising any suspicion. Today the situation is worse because parents are nowhere nearer to their children than our parents were. To me smoking and drinking became the biggest burden in my life that started slowly but surely, and getting rid of them later was too difficult until I received God's grace through Jesus Christ. Some youth may be what they are because of the conditions around them. If for example we recall the 4th to the 2nd century B.C, Greek Hellenism, we find that many people especially the youth were influenced to live like the Greeks. Because many people wanted to be identified with Greek civilization, they ended up compromising their own traditions and religious beliefs. Jews were a good example of that influence. It is said; "Many of the Jews in Jerusalem, as well as the Jews in the Diaspora, were influenced by the culture of the Greeks. This experience had important consequences for the future of Judaism".³⁴ Around most of our youth, there are situations that appear appealing and when they sense that there is nothing stopping them, they willingly or by pressure expose themselves to such conditions seemingly attractive to them. There is what I may call conditional dynamics, meaning that there are situations that seem im-

³⁴ John Holder, *The Intertestamental Period*. (London: SPCK, 1994), PP.19-20

pressive and enticing, there they go and when they find them less impressive and enticing, they may withdraw and find other replacements. The most impressive and enticing conditions are normally those demanding hard hearted people. They demand brevity and cunningness. One must be ready to confront danger face to face otherwise coward youth may never attempt to live that way. The hardened youth move towards situation and do not wait for situations to come to them. They entice the environment rather than being enticed. They become confident of themselves rather than being confident of others. They believe in their own success rather than in the success of others. If you have never seen a confident youth, find out from a conditionally polarized youth. You will then know how to formulate a new definition of youth.

There are circumstances that are not influenced by joblessness or lack of financial stability. Today even youth who are working and financially well off have found new polarizing trends. They are more globally than locally conditioned. The world of technology has taken over all other forces and in fact it is fully charged that youth seem to have found a world of consolation and rest. The computer and the touch phone or iPad are the best companions. Remember these are companions who are present but cannot create an environment of reality. Things come and go by just a button touch. Some of the information comes once and never to be seen again. After all, the youth most of the time, do not look for information but amusement and entertainment. One cannot ask a computer more personal and spiritual or heart matters and get the best answer at the hour of need. After all, the youth will always go for sites that excite them and contain youth matters. As long as there is an internet café or one has a computer and Modem, then all other programs are possible. The worst part comes when most of the youth are exposed to the internet pornography and want to practice what they have heard or seen. These days besides going to internet cafes, Television has become another place for youth, because a number of the channels have been intentional-

ly programed to capture youth interests. How does this begin? Television programmers must be market oriented. People who sell their products through television adverts must use cunning ways to win the market. Pornography is not a product that all of a sudden comes on television. Pornography masters begin with children by cartoon shows because they know children like seeing cartoons, until in their early teens and others middle teens when their choices and tastes change. Pornographers use psychological manipulation of what each level of human growth needs. So as children begin to grow, they graduate from simple cartoons to some mild mature stories and later graduate to sophisticated ones whose stories may include love making, crime or some kind of adventure, to which they know that when these children grow to adulthood, a good number of them will become clients or players. You need to know that the world has some fascinating episodes that tend to capture almost everybody if it were not by God's grace. These may include sex, types of alcohol and drugs, possession of power and money and all other types of crime. So you will not be surprised to find most of the television shows involving such materials and children learning from it. You might have noticed some young boys and even girls kicking and boxing the air imitating Chinese Kungfu. If they can practice that one as an interesting game, what about other interesting things they watch on television or internet?

The question comes back to us, why are the youth mostly the victims? This takes us back home. What is it that the parents passed on or have failed to pass on to their children? These days in most homes where Television and internet are available, Television remote controls are like toys in the hands of the children and in some cases, you find parents negotiating with their children which channel to turn on. In the absence of the parents, the television is owned wholesale by the children especially by one who is older or stronger and determines what others should watch. When one family becomes strict, the children will sneak

out to the neighbor's home where rules do not apply. If families within the neighborhood are rigid, children will find excuses to go out where they can get themselves served with what they want. The question again is why are parents silent about issues they know are destructive? Today almost 95% of high school children own phones, and 150% of University students own phones. Why is the percentage higher? This is because some students own more than one or two phones. Out of most of these phones, more than three quarters are installed with internet facilities. Parents know their children have these phones and sometimes they are not the ones who have bought them, but they are never bothered to ask questions why they need them or where they got them from and what they use them for? In some cases children use these gargets as means of consolation or stress absorbers. They may look back and remember when their parents were aggressive or abusive and resorted to listening to music on their phones or watch television for the whole night glued in the sitting room sofa set. When all these happen, parents must take the blame for failure to be responsible and acting wisely.

So you can see how conditional or circumstantial situations can easily polarize the youth. The big problem is that many of the older people do not understand the world of today's youth, because they have not been able to formulate a new perspective of them, different from their former childhood years. Whatever goes right or wrong among the youth, the first focal persons are the parents. Remember the poem of "*Knock Knocks*" at the beginning of this book.

The Dimension of Intentional Polarity

This is a situation when the youth do things intentionally. Families have done their best, schools have also done their part and even spiritual leaders have provided the best counsel the children require, but the youth intentionally make up their minds to do and follow what pleases them. The Bible tells us a story of the Prodigal son. We learn that there

was nothing missing in the home, but the boy decided to ask for his inheritance and leave (Luke 15:11-32). Another Biblical example is Samson, who against his parents counsel went ahead and married a foreigner who caused him trouble (Jg.14:1-3). These stories tell us that parents try to do their parental role, but the children intentionally reject their counsels. It is therefore not surprising that the affects become regrettable afterwards. Those who read the novel; “Cry the beloved Country” can remember what happened to the Kumaro’s will not make any judgement against the parents. Admittedly, youth are growing up human beings who are placed at the center of competitions and temptations. They find it difficult to make choices unless they have been helped at the earliest how to deal with challenges of life. Otherwise whatever comes their way will sometimes appear as opportunities. Even when parents or elders will try to help them out, they will see themselves as being denied the opportunities. To them the best option will always be to reject the good parental council and try their luck. The after effects are not only adverse to the individual youth, but also to the family. The stories of Cain, Samson and the Prodigal son depict intentional acts, which somehow we can call acts of ‘defiance’. Cain was forewarned by God to avoid anger and control it rather than having it control him. He defied the counsel and acted intentionally to eliminate his brother. He regretted the punishment. Samson found it challenging to please his wife at Timnah and even later, Delilah of Zoreck. The Prodigal son well aware, that he was entitled to his inheritance after his father’s death, intentionally requested for his share ahead of time. Although the story ends with the celebration of happiness, all we can see in his behavior are intentional acts. There is a Biblical problem here that we do not see Adam counseling his son and we cannot blame him for Cain’s plan was so much concealed from the father. But in the case of the Prodigal son, much as the father knew the procedure, we do not see his counsel restraining the boy from taking his share too early. As for Samson, truly

the parents cautioned him but he went ahead with his plan. We do not need to probe so much into the Semitic family traditional life or the Jewish, but this helps us to know that children must have knowledge of specific dos and don'ts. Our major responsibility is to leave a footmark of values in the life of our children well knowing that we are sowing a seed of cultural and traditional sustainability and stability. Parental and children's intentions must be grounded in acceptable community norms to avoid repulsive and antagonizing behavior later when opportunities to adjust may not be available. Depolarizing the youth is now or never.

Substituting the Parental Gap

Gaps are “vacuums”, and human life is so dynamic that it cannot allow gaps to exist. There will always be something to replace or substitute the missing link between parents and children. There are many options for substituting the parental gap.

- **Faith Based Substitutes**

These are worshipping groups or churches where most youth go in company of others. Today there are many options seemingly acceptable to many parents and children without knowing the most likely negative outcomes. Even when parents are available, they seem not to mind because hearing that the children are for example going for worship; it sounds a positive response to acceptable behavioral adjustment for the children instead of getting involved in bad peer companies. Today many of the children enjoy spending hours and even over nights in worship. Sometimes this is a very good well spent time, but if not checked it can become disastrous. Some have become devil worshippers and others involved in drug consumption. Some churches have got specific areas of concentration as ‘catch words’ to lure and maintain the membership for personal benefits either as an economic or other exploitative ventures.

There are those that concentrate on nothing other than relationships, and this is a very catch message because that is where the youth want to go and see themselves engaged. There is no relationship without cost. Sooner than later the result might become disappointing. There are some cases where parents attend the same fellowships or churches with their children, but some churches where the agenda is hidden, the children will hide from their parents and go it alone, or the church and fellowship leaders might decide to keep the whole agenda secretive without even allowing the youth to know what they are involved in. There are many youth who can spend most of their off semester holidays or long vacations in Church youth Camps or visiting from one friend to another without any caution, because their parents are never home to know what their children do or do not do.

- **Alcohol, Drugs and Substance Consumption Substitutes**

This is one of the most challenging substitutes that youth prefer because in some ways it empowers them. It gives them courage and strength to act against forces that seem to be stronger than theirs. They can face situations they had long been seeking opportunities to engage. Youth who take Marijuana will always find it very easy to penetrate hard to reach areas if they were sober. They have nothing to fear, not even where there is Police or Army. To them they see them as ordinary people and the gun as a stick, the bust of a bullet as the bust of a balloon. When it comes to a parent, they will never realize that they are talking to parents. They might even take any of those substances to find the tongue to speak the unexpected to their parents. It becomes a way of communicating to the parents that; (i) I am grown up (ii) I am independent or (iii) I want independence or freedom.

Many youth have lost their focus and intellect to move forward. I have a true example of a young man who graduated at Makerere University as a Medical Doctor. I do not know at what time he had started to

take alcohol, but it denied him from practicing. He failed his probation period not because he did not know what to do, but his alcoholic condition put in danger the lives of the patients. It might now be about twenty years since, and he has never changed. His parents were educated besides being Christian. What could have happened? We shall not blame all the children's failure upon the parents, but in some cases they are answerable. At the time children take on to drinking and engaging drugs and substance consumption, they might be looking for something to occupy them. The time the parent is supposed to be around is empty and the children will look for something they think is best. Sometimes it is accidental that they become victims of circumstances. There is a very nasty experience in which Paul became a victim. He used to smoke cigarettes. One day while he was in detention for reasons not discussed here now, he found it had to get cigarettes. The story says that there was a group of youth younger than him with whom he was detained who were smokers too. He says he rarely shared with them, but this time was exceptional. Because he had no cigarette to smoke, he found himself asking them to allow him have some few puffs of smoke so that he could have some sleep. Before they could hand him something which looked bigger than the ordinary cigarette, he says he heard some small busts coming out of the "cigarette" as one pulled the puff. He really did not know what it was, but when he asked them, they laughed at him, and one of them told him that he was about to take 'phenobarbitone'. This was translated as something that would send him to sleep as he learnt later that "A few doses at night may also help to promote sleep..."³⁵ Ignorantly Paul pulled three times inhaling the smoke, and each time he inhaled he heard small busts coming out of the cigarette. He did not mind because all he needed was to smoke and go to sleep. Indeed this was enough to send him off from the world of conversation. He went to

³⁵ David Werner, *Where there is no Doctor*. (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1993), p.407

sleep until the following morning. When he asked them, they laughed at him again and wondered about his ignorance of the cigarette he had smoked. He learnt later that he had smoked Marijuana mixed with the ordinary cigarettes. Because he badly needed to smoke, the following day he was persuaded to try once again, this time during the day. Paul says that his experience was too bad. He was thinking far back in the past. There was nothing like present or future in his thinking. He was under that kind of experience for almost twenty minutes. Nothing mattered so much to him at that time for he was in a world of fantasies. He felt he could attempt anything he wanted. The good thing was that he was in the company of these young men, so no one else could notice any queer behavior in him. That was the time he first and last smoked Marijuana.³⁶

How all this came about was not intentional but because he was already a smoker, it became the means by which he experienced that dangerous herb. The question now is what is the experience of those who have made it a habit of smoking it for a longer period every day? As it was his misfortune to be exposed to Marijuana, so is it likely to be for any other person against his or her choice. He was told by someone that the funny thing with the consumption of such drugs was that whichever way they tune your brain that is the way you will behave. Very unfortunate for the consumers.

Men who are criminals and want to command gangs will lure young men and women and expose them to such drugs to tune their brains and function according to their intended goals. So when these youth are sent on mission, they are sure not to fail. The gang leaders will not mind whether these youth die on mission or not, because the job market is rich and they will continue to recruit and remain on the receiving end. Young ladies are hooked into the habit and once they have taken to smoking the

³⁶ Reported from Paul (not real name), who was in detention from 1979 to 1982 in one of Uganda's Prisons.

same, they become worse than the boys because they are used to lure rich men who are sober, take them to planned places on promise of good pay. The rich men will be targeted for money and other important items. The girls all they need is a living. Some of them when under the influence of such drugs, they provide sex to gang leaders.

If you are a youth reading this book, do not take these as mere stories, but real in your world. So be very careful to disassociate yourself from peer influence where you are more likely to learn how to smoke and consume alcohol and have unlimited and unprotected sex. The moment you begin and become addicted you will never stop. You will find yourself a criminal of all kinds. Besides becoming a criminal, evidence has shown that some of the drug users end up having mental problems beyond cure. They will find themselves closely identified with alcoholics and drug consumers, more than family people around them. Most of them never marry or have families, for they cannot shoulder any responsibility of family magnitude. Women if they attempt to marry, their marriages will become disastrous.

- **Antisocial Substitutes**

There are many antisocial substitutes in most of our communities which attract most of the youth who do not want to work but rather eat and sleep. These include Video/film houses, Sports Betting houses, Night clubs, Criminal gangs of rape, kidnappers, human traffickers, crowbar strikers, prostitutes, money marauders, rioters etc. In countries where employment is scarce, the youth can easily resort to taking part in any of these as long as they have personal benefits or can fill any social vacuum.

Lack of employment and career formation/guidance are the most conduits for crime. The youth are people who have the capacity to do productive work. Once they are not occupied, they will occupy themselves without selection of what has value or not. There are certain

things that seem to be promising like fake gold. It is easy to deceive a person badly in need of employment as much like that one who is hungry. How does this work out? The person who is hungry looks for anything to satisfy him/herself at the moment of need, much as the person looking for employment will take on any work because he or she needs money, where the employer will use this as an advantage to achieve his own goal, and can pretend to offer good terms, good enough to lure the job seeker to bend to any terms offered. At the end of the day the employer becomes the beneficiary and the employee the loser. No matter what your experience might be, you must know that out there are men and women ready to take advantage of job seekers. When work is nowhere or is not worth the efforts, many resort to finding their own way out; where chance is the option of life. The youth will try different options based on what chance might bring their way. They will not have permanent residence for fear of identification. They will only gang up according to characteristics that can unite them, and separate when conditions of affiliation change, or they suspect of being discovered. Youth who have not been tuned to family and work life, will end up roaming towns and cities looking for employment, and will end up doing similar work to that they left home or worse than that. That is why many young girls between early teen years and early twenties are barmaids, house maids or sex workers, as long as they can have at least a meal a day and where to sleep no matter with who. Food and accommodation are the determinants of a town young girl's life. When it comes to young boys, they are not selling like young girls or at least their marketing value is less than that of the young girls, because they also want food and accommodation, they will go out to look for them and when they fail, by crook or hook, they will get them through unscrupulous means. Sometimes it is said that they might behave like a hungry lion that lays in wait for its prey. This kind of experience leads them into criminals; for they must survive. They are like vampires that sack animal blood sometimes

to the point of leaving the animal dead. The young man with no job will survive on those who are working, like it or not, they will. That is why towns and cities have many of them who failed to survive on their own, but will survive on the sweat of others. This labels most of the youth even the good ones as antisocial gangs or cliques. To avoid all these from affecting our children, we must value our time we spend with them in order to prepare them ahead of time.

THE CHARACTER IN YOU

Character is what we live and what drives our behaviors. It is inside us while behavior is outside us. Character is self-driven while behaviors can be driven by other forces around us like we looked at the many different worlds youth experience. To look at us more closely than we ever think about ourselves, we can compare ourselves with a number of Biblical characters whom we can use to read ourselves and know who we are closely related to in character. There is a lot of theological interpretation about what is happening around the characters referred to, but the players in their own way of life are ordinary players and we can therefore look at it from an ordinary way of family and individual life as well.

(a) The Adam Character

Adam was a man entrusted with the stewardship responsibilities of God, but also with producing and filling the earth. The idea of filling was not a casual responsibility because the image and likeness of God in Adam was both like a soft and hard ware that man was to keep and uphold divinely. Unfortunately his first failure was to allow his inner feelings to betray him and think that his new status of being like God would allow him to make tests or experiments, and make things extraordinarily

enjoyable and loosen himself from the control. The result was too bad and regrettable for him that instead of true liberation from God's control, he became enslaved and banished from God's presence. We should not be surprised that who we are today, manifests itself in our past. Sebyala says; "The men who are a problem today were the boys of yesterday."³⁷ The stubbornness and disobedience of Adam instead of affecting him alone, it came down to his children and the children of his children. In most cases the Bible does not proceed with a story that does not make the core of the main teaching, but it is better for us to think beyond what has been said. We do not see any moment when Adam is with his children sharing family values as any parent should have done. The spirit of independence kept him away from his children living them to do what pleased them. Because he had sought for independence from God, he had no eyes to see that his children need dependence on him as a father. Some of the present time parents liberated themselves quite a long time ago from their parents and as a result they do not see the importance of getting closer to their children. This spirit has continued by declaring children rights. How far and how much of it; are determined by the child and not the parent. Child neglect is a serious matter for the future of any family. Parents in spite of their hectic schedules are encouraged to spend time with their children, talk to them as well as teaching them about the various aspects of being men and women at an early age, so that they grow to be well-rounded individuals. To be realistic, a parent should not hide from the children the challenges of life that might have earlier interfered with his or her life in order to show all sides of life a head of the child's life. The absence of Adam in the life of his sons became a serious family shortfall that even pushed Cain far away from his parents. It may appear costly for parents to come very close to their children in

³⁷ Article by Sebyala Bethuel; *New Vision* Vol.31 No.85 of April 28th,2016, p.49

modeling and nurturing, but it becomes more costly when things run out of hand.

Some of us are the Adams of today. We see less of our children and even never bother to know what is happening in their life. “A stitch in time saves a nine” so the old adage goes. When parents take an early approach to their children’s life cycle, they are not only more likely to save them from imminent danger, but also save both the family and the community. Some of us parents do not take the initiative to intervene in our children’s life simply because when we were youth yesterday, we did not have opportunities with our parents, but we need to remember that the world of yesterday is different from that one of today. We must act and act very quickly to avert the looming danger about to erupt among the youth and destroy families and communities.

(b) The Job Character

Job is one of the greatest characters we can admire in the Bible. As man who was once a youth, he knew things that eroded youth life denying them to please God. When he grew up he remained aware that his children were not exceptional from being taken away by “youth quakes”; issues that would really shake the youth and even cause faults in their lives never to recover. Mindful of his responsibility as a parent; “Job would purify his children. He would get up early in the morning and offer a burnt offering for each of them. For Job said to himself; “perhaps my children have sinned and have cursed God in their hearts.” This was Job’s regular practice. (Job.1:4-5). This Scripture should challenge us to the extent of asking ourselves as to how many of us think like Job, and how often do we do it if at all we ever think like him? A parent’s character should be mindful of the future family and especially the children’s spirituality. Parents may be very spiritual while the children are the opposite. When they are outside there, what they portray will always shade a wrong picture of their parents. We should

not look at our heavenly journey as an individual matter. We have accountability of our children's behaviors. Job was never tired of his children's spiritual obligations.

Many Christian families are good at engaging prayers in the mornings and evenings. How often do you pray and intercede for your children and other families' children? On Sundays when it is time for worship, why do some parents allocate children work to do at home instead of going with them to church for worship? Did you know that restraining your children from attending Sundays for the sake of your personal family errands may become the source of missing direction for the future? Any single church service missed may account for a big fraction of loss in the children's growth. Some of us had good parents who cared to nurture us into the little good men and women we are today, but when it came to us, we bent too low to the social or economic demands around us and thought that our children were the people to meet those demands while for us we could go to church or even sometimes join them, without making mention of the advantages of going before the presence of God. We deny them family prayers at home and Sunday worship with others. Where is their future? Be a "Job" in your family, and your efforts will be rewarded.

(c) The Abraham Character

Abraham is another of the amazing characters of the Bible. In spite of his failure to have children, he lived with his wife faithfully, contented that Eliezer his legal domestic slave would become his heir. But far from that, God had in his wisdom prepared a late coming heir to Abraham, even when he and Sarah misunderstood the promise and wanted to fulfill it their own way. At eighty seven years, Abraham bore a son by Hagah, Sarah's slave maid. Abraham and Sarah seemed contented with that but God reassured them that the promise was with Sarah and not Hagah (Gen.17:15-21). At one hundred years, Abraham got a son by his

wife Sarah and named him Isaac. Influenced by the spirit of jealousy, Sarah forced Abraham to get rid of Hagar and her son Ismael. Abraham could not reason out Sarah as to who was the trouble causer then, and without doubt this later translated into what is even happening now between the sons of Abraham (descendants of Isaac and Ishmael), and the rest of the world. Abraham became a silent parent who left things to take their own course. Biblical scholars tend to give this story a theological interpretation, but we cannot overlook the fact that Abraham neglected his responsibility as the head of the family when things were boiling up between Sarah and Hagar, and he allowed the separation between his sons. When Abraham was in his very end times, he at least showed concern for his son Isaac that he should get him a wife among his maternal uncles' relatives. This was the best preparation Abraham did for his son in order to avoid heathen practices.

Some of the parents practice the "Abraham character". They accept to fall by their wives advice, and when things turn out to be nasty they do not take a firm ground to defend or confess their involvement. The head of the family must take responsibility of his children no matter the bad side of the story. Who we are today as youth, will dictate our tomorrow when we are old. We must seize the best of our lack when we are able to make a difference in our children's lives. The love relationship dynamics between husbands and wives sometimes overshadow the children's plight and they keep moving on as if things are moving normally. Watch out for the worst and the best of Abraham's character, then you will know how to deal with your children.

(d) Isaac/Rebecca Character

Isaac is the type of a father whom the Bible portrays inactive in the life of his sons. Rebecca his wife is another type of woman that knows how to keep secrets from her husband. Isaac seems not to know about what is taking place between his sons, while Rebecca is quite aware. It is

good for women to play very active roles in their families, but should share with their husbands especially when they sense betrayal or treachery. Everything Rebecca knew about their children was completely concealed from her husband and when there was imminent danger of losing life, that is when she started to consult the husband. Even when Isaac learnt of what Jacob had done against his elder brother Esau, we do not see him concerned by reprimanding Jacob. All he did was to accept Rebecca's suggestion. It does not matter whether you have grown very old or you did not know the grudges in your family earlier, you have a responsibility of whatever takes place in your family. Ecclesiastes.4:9-10 tell us: "Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But one who falls alone is in real trouble." If Esau and Jacob's problems were handled by the two parents together, a parental solution would have been reached, and the children helped. It is true that most of the Biblical stories have been given deeper theological interpretation, but on the surface value it was too bad for Rebecca to keep silent about issues concerning her sons, and for Isaac also to seem unconcerned when he learnt that Jacob had betrayed his brother. We cannot wait to officially announce our inheritance Will, on grounds that the lines have already been drawn naturally. To make or not make a Will makes a difference. These are some of the things Parents must keep in mind that they do not cause disaster when they are too old to see or taste life's sweetness. It cannot be said lightly that families where women have the upper hand end up in chaos and disaster. Examples of such families from Biblical stories include Adam and Eve's family (Gen.3) and King Ahab and Jezebel's family (1Kgs.16-22).

(e) The Jacob Character

Jacob has been described as a supplanter, a thief, a struggler and a man who would do anything to get what he wanted. He was so crafty

that to him it did not matter how he lived his life and got going. Biblically we know that what surrounded Jacob was God ordained through an oracle. Whatever he lived as a young man did not go even when he grew up and owned a family. He remained treacherous even before his shrewd uncle who had become his father-in-law as well. Sometimes many people behave like Jacob without minding the pain they cause to others. As a father later, we know that his family was faced with divisionism, jealousy and envy or hatred. He and his mother were the protagonists of trouble in Isaac's home. Many people who stir trouble in their families or communities started when they were young. Mischief, envy, jealousy and enmity grow as years go by unless one receives God's grace through Jesus Christ. One thing that Jesus does in the life of sinners is that he disables the evil spirits in them. Once the spirit is let loose, they will destroy most of what we have achieved. Jacob influenced by the late coming of a son from his most loved wife Rachael, turned all the love he had for other sons to Joseph. This caused despair among his other sons, causing them to hate and scheme bad plans against Joseph. It did not stop at that, but he also gave a favorable ear to whatever Joseph reported against his brothers. He might not have acted carelessly, but Joseph suffered from his father's extreme love, favoritism, and acceptable accusation against his brothers. He ended suffering, although he ended victoriously.

Many of us parents are careless the way we show our love among our children. Any little move we make in favor of some of our children against their siblings, tantamount to long suffering resulting in low esteem of some, and hatred of others. Giving a hearing to some and denying it to others is very dangerous. There are families that are known to have been divided because of the parents' failures to face realities among their children and the children grow never to see each other for life. Our roles cannot be compromised or be handed over to someone else. Once you are a parent, you must accept to swallow your pride and

be ready to take any credit or blame of your children. The old adage goes; “like father, like son”. The good or bad in your son is your contribution, even if it comes from other worlds’ of influence, the parent is responsible to correct it or to appreciate it. Nobody will know the source of trouble. It will always come back to the parent. Reuben slept with his father’s concubine, Judah suggested to sell their brother Joseph as a slave, and also slept with his daughter in-law. These are some characteristics of some weaknesses that may destroy a family because they may be rooted in the family moral values. Some of us find situations when our voices to discipline are gagged down because we hear other voices within us reminding us of our behaviors when we were at the same age and we become silent. A parent may decide to keep silent or quiet about a situation when he or she knows that she has no moral authority to impact discipline in the children. However, it does not matter whether you were once like that or not, time comes when a parent must forget the past and take on what is likely to destroy the family before it is too late. Some of us today may be resenting what happened in our lives. It might have been our parents’ faults or not, but when it comes to carrying out parental responsibilities, we must put the past behind us and make our children the best of the present and future citizens.

(f) The Eli/Samuel Character

Sometimes one would not think that what we read of Eli and Samuel are misplaced. The truth is that children are almost the same everywhere. It becomes worse with children born of Christian and priestly families. They grow under restrictions, and when they get opportunities to be free from the presence of their parents, they behave like birds let out of their cages. The Eli or Samuel in you may not improve on the morals of your children. Eli says; “I have been hearing reports from all the people about the wicked things you are doing... You must stop, my sons! The reports I hear among the Lord’s people are not good... But

Eli's sons wouldn't listen to their father..." (1Sam.2:23-25). If you were Eli, what else would you have done? Some people suggest that Eli had the right to withdraw them from ministering before God while others say that it appeared Eli was so light in talking to the sons. Samuel had a similar problem with his sons. "He appointed his sons to be judges over Israel... But they were not like their father, for they were greedy of money. They accepted bribes and perverted justice." (1Sam.8:1-3). We know the Bible does not follow characters that are not the focus of the story, but what we see of Samuel is that he did not put to task his sons to denounce their sins. The end result was leading the people of Israel to resent Judges and demand for a king. As earlier said, most of the things that happened were God intended, focusing towards a purposeful goal. But why did Samuel like Eli become so lenient with the behaviors of their sons? In some cases when we grow old, we lose the vigor to control. We must get used to doing our parental roles no matter when. The African belief is that it does not matter how old one is or the status, as long as you parents are still alive, you are under their disciplinary powers. Some children gage our abilities to act shrewdly and when they find out that we are not, they step up the level of their indiscipline. We can never save ourselves of the blame there after.

(g) The David Character

Good as he was, he had family issues originating from his personal failures. Because of his polygamous life, his family had problems he was not able to attend to. He never had time for his children even when he knew what was going on. An example is when Amnon raped and defiled his half-sister Tamar. We do not see David reprimanding him for his actions. Then you look back and ask; was it because of his previous engagement with Bathsheba or other women he had? What was it that denied him from reprimanding Amnon for his actions against his step sister? We see that even when Absalom later paid back for his sister's

disgrace, David was again quiet. Does this imply that David had no time to talk to his children? Does silence mean anything in the face of family challenges or is it because our previous sins keep haunting us? Our children may take advantage of our silence and mistake it for acceptance. When Absalom came back from exile, he paraded himself as a fair judge against his father. David did not show any regret for such actions, until Absalom staged a coup against his father. Sometimes David might have judged himself for the sins he had committed earlier or because he was growing old, or may be the family was too big to manage, we cannot tell, but the theologian will tell you that all was God's will. But whatever reason might have been, he had an obligation as a father to put his house in order to avoid anti-social and anti- Godly behavior. Are you a David faced with self- accusation or guilt that you find no courage to reproach or to correct your children? Did you know that your guilt and self- accusation can deny you taking your family responsibilities among your children? We must shake off the fear because each one of us has a role to play in life. Every parent must look beyond the present and see a very, very long future ahead through his or her contributions to the growing generation.

(h) The Joshua Character

What a wonderful parent and head of family? If all of us thought and acted like Joshua, a good percentage of our children would be God fearing and serving. Joshua's commitment to have his family serve the Lord with him is a very great step in forming Children's character. When a parent is committed to specific ideals or values, they become check points for family behavior. There will always be little or no room for immorality or ungodliness in the family. The parent's commitment must be known by the family members. Our faith and service to God is not only personal but also the light to others, especially those in our households. Joshua was a Judge of Israel and therefore had a broad responsi-

bility of maintaining the people's relationship with God, but he was quite aware that his family was the inner part of his ministry to keep them close to the service of God. Most of us might not be aware of what we may term as "A forgotten family". It is very easy to minister to all other families or do all the required civic responsibilities to people under your charge, but fail to serve members of your families. You tell people the testimony of what Jesus has done in your life or you tell people the nature and scope of your ministry, when members of your family have never heard anything about and from you. Joshua is such a character that we parents can learn from. He wants his family to understand his commitment and focus. This would save him from blame or taking responsibility of family failure. Of course there are two sides of the coin; one to speak out or make clear your position, and two, to enforce it. We must present both sides to keep the value of our commitments.

We have been looking at the parent character in us that may determine our children's present and future life. We have of course not exhausted all of it but just shed light on what it might be like in us. We can now turn to the youth character in you as a youth.

(i) The Cain Character

Cain begins like any serious young man who engages the soil to make a living. The Bible does not say why God did not accept Cain's offering. But you need to know that God does not behave like man for he sees beyond where our eyes stop. It might have been deep in the heart of Cain that God rejected his gift, but when both of Adam's sons presented themselves and their gifts from their fields, God accepted Abel's gift and rejected Cain's. Compare the following texts and see which one matches either with Abel or Cain's actions. Malachi.1:6-8 talks of dishonest sacrifices; and 2Cor.9:7 says; "You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. God loves a person who gives cheerfully." In each of the

above two cases, we can try to figure out which could have been the case with Cain and which was for Abel.

When Abel's gift was accepted, Cain's face turned against his brother bitterly as if he was the trouble causer of his failure and he ended killing him. Our Children may have the Cain character when their performance has not been accepted or rewarded. Sometimes personal failure is blamed on others. All of us would want to be appreciated for what we do, but we must work towards that goal. When some of us work hard and achieve the goal, others should not lament and scheme to get rid of us. The Bible tells us that even when Cain got rid of Abel, his situation did not get any better, instead it became worse. Cain had all the opportunity to improve his performance so that the next season he could present a better gift, instead he destroyed the good works of his brother even after he was warned to tame his temper. There are parents who know very well that some of their children are jealousy of what their siblings do better compared to what they themselves do. Instead of stepping in and offer counsel, they keep silent and when something happens, they begin lamenting and sometimes remarking; "I have been watching the way you has been behaving of late." Watching and acting are two different things but complementary.

In the world of competition, youth are the most vulnerable because in some cases they are starters and others do not have enough to live on. They would never like to see competition around them or some of their fellow youth successful. The Cain character destroys focus, relationships and productivity. To avoid it we need to help our children how to make choices of what they do and give to God. Being angry with self or others does not solve personal problems, but rather we are required to understand where the fault or failure lays and repair it for continued service. When something goes wrong, it does not mark the end but rather the beginning of a new focus and adjustment. Cain would have done much better if he cared to listen and know where the failure came from so that

he could refocus his next gift. We need to help our children how to make good choices when they are giving to God and also help them never to compete jealously.

(j) The Esau-Jacob Character

These were twin brothers. We know the Bible is clear about the Oracle concerning their birth. However we cannot restrict ourselves from criticism, because in some ways the Esau-Jacob character exists among our children or youth, and it ends destroying families' relationships and individual life. The Esau- Jacob character should not be seen from one side of the children only, but also from the parents' side. One parent more likely than not set the ground for the two sons into conflict. But we shall not go into that, rather we need to look at these youths.

Esau in his life was destined to lose to his brother. He was a man who did not see much of his future in his birth right. His life was the immediate need. When he was pressed by hunger, he did not see how his future inheritance as the first born could save him from the immediate need of food. In life there are things that can wait for a while and those that cannot wait even for a second. Things that seem to be pressing sometimes may not be the determining factors in life. You will realize that today what disturbs the youth is the immediate. Some young ladies today are the most disadvantaged in the world of no employment. Delicate as they look to be, they do not make delicate decisions when they are looking for means to survive. They can give their bodies for just a day's living, for a phone, for pocket money or even a bottle of beer. Sometimes they want to feel that they are belonging somewhere as a sign of identity. They are not looking far in the future. The hungering for something in the youth will close their eyes and by the time they open, it becomes too late to reverse their innocence. Apart from seeing Esau's careless remark: "Looking, I'm dying of starvation...What good is my birthright to me now?" the Bible does not tell us about his other mis-

takes, until we see him again crying bitterly over his cheated blessings. The future always has a story reflected in the past events. The most surprising thing is that Esau had forgotten all that he had shared with his brother Jacob when he sold off his birth right. It easily said than remembered. On the other had there are many people/youth that scheme either on their own or are aided to take advantage of others when opportunities come. It is very clear in the Bible that Jacob was being aided by his mother to act against his brother Esau. The second worst of Esau's misfortune came as an opportunity for Jacob. This time Esau's end came but he had not prepared for it and never taken a thought about how his present life was going to be responsible for his future. Jacob used his father's wish to bless his first son Esau, to get the benefits of his pottage he had given to Esau as was agreed upon. Biologically Esau had all the rights, but by personal arrangement between him and Jacob, he was no longer legally entitled to be blessed. Some of the youth have got the Jacob character and would do anything to take advantage over their brothers or sisters and take away what legally belongs to them. Such kind of behavior is dangerous especially when it is between blood relatives, whose proximity is almost zero. The whole issue we are examining here is the type of character you have and why you behave that way. It is easy to be crafty or illusive against your brother or sister, but the cost later might be too high. Is it easy to set out crying and regretting like Esau or setting out running away from your own brother or sister because of your betrayal character like Jacob? Whichever character you portray, the truth will always tell the very side of your heart. The question is; can such character be avoided? Youth need to be helped to protect what is due to them, be helped not to betray their brothers and sisters, and to choose the good counsel of their parents. Most likely what became of Jacob throughout his life is a replica of his upbringing which was exclusively the mothers doing. Yes we know the Esau-Jacob example given here was of divine making, but it helps us understand that in

our ordinary life, brothers betray each other and they end up destroying their brotherhood relationship and sometimes; the family fellowship. Youth must learn from Esau's character that short term needs should not override their future and long term benefits. ***What you lose today may be the key to open your tomorrow.***

You should however not overlook the fact that when you show weakness in your positioning, someone shrewd will take over. A serious assignment requires a serious person. Esau was never a serious person to become a father of a nation. He was a man who could not stand hunger for a while and yet God was preparing a people who were going to face hard times for a period. Would such a man breed a family of faithful strong people? Youth must prove that they can deliver by standing their ground even when faced with situations like hunger, war or financial shortages. Both characters are not good for our children or youth. We can avoid them by knowing what God wants from us as parents and how best we can deliver our services without causing pain to anyone around us. There are always opportunities for reconciliation, but you can again learn from Jacob how much it cost him to prepare for it. A stich in time saves a nine, so the saying goes. In other words; work on your character before it is too late. Parents are the best or worst to prepare their children's character. The direction they want them to take, in most cases, that is the way they will go. Behavioral change is not a school matter and not a day's program. It is long process that must take place in a well set family environment.

(k) The Joseph Character

What Joseph suffered is mostly not his fault. Sometimes God can set you against others. Joseph's coming into the world at a time Rachael had almost given up hope of producing a child for Jacob, brought all the family love to be concentrated on Joseph. Imagine in your home where things have been running evenly and all of a sudden a child born to your

step mother robs you of your parents love and you begin to appear as if you are none existent in the home and later every gift is given to the young child. As the child grows the father's ear is paid very closely to what he or she says, and then you become victims of all the accusations. On the other side, your brothers or sisters turn against you. To make matters worse, you begin dreaming of your elevated position above them. Unless you do not have feelings, otherwise your adrenalin will begin to run heavily into your blood. "Adrenalin is a hormone secreted by the adrenal glands. It is believed that when one becomes angry the glands secrete certain amounts in the blood stream and eventually speeds up the heartbeat and increases the body energy or reaction and resistance to fatigue"³⁸ The brothers acted fast to make sure they got rid of Joseph so that they could regain the joy of their father's love. Things ran very fast, and indeed Joseph was got rid of, with a hope that he would die and things would be settled for good. It is very disastrous when brothers or sisters unite against one them. Their plan will work either for good or for worse. It worked against Joseph.

Have you ever been involved in a scenario like that, where you participated in getting rid of someone or something you thought was a problem in your life? Young men and women are good at it when they are faced with rivals in love, business, academic excellence and identity. If they do not do it themselves they will hire others to do it for them. They will use all possible means to achieve their goal. The whole idea is to get rid of competition and threats in life. In some cases some of those hated never die, they survive and live to be of use in the lives of those who sought to take their lives. They become a Joseph.

If ever you were a Joseph, nobody knows what you would have done looking back through your life, where your brothers or sisters and sometimes friends had contributed negatively to your life and an opportunity

³⁸ E. L. Thorndike and Clarence L. Barnhart, *Intermediate Dictionary*. (Glenview. Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1983), p.14.

presents itself where you meet later in life when you are well off. It is very obvious that in most cases many of us would retaliate. Joseph is one of the many Biblical characters that had a Godly heart. Even when he had the opportunity to prove the extent of his anger, he left everything in the hands of God. (Gen.50:19-21). Is there any Joseph like character in you? Are you God looking or human looking when it comes to meeting those who sought after your life? A similar thing had faced Jephthah with his brothers and the inhabitants of Gilead (Judges.11:1-10). In queer circumstances life demands the impossible; forgiving your worst enemy. The truth was that what Joseph's brothers had not accepted had come real in their faces: "His brothers also came and fell down before him, and said, "'Behold, we are your servants.'" (Gen.50:18.) Joseph by nature of his position and the nature of his brothers' vows; "My lord, we have all returned to be your slaves- all of us..." (Gen.44:15b) he would not have hesitated to respond positively to their request, but he played it very cool because the spirit of God was with him. He was able to interpret his woes positively and for the good of his father's family. In all, we can see that it was unexceptional in the life of a young man who had proved beyond doubt that he was doing well, not to pay back for the misdeeds of his brothers. In the shadows of the whole truth of Joseph's suffering, there was God's divine plan to fulfill his promises he made to Abraham, and save the fathers of the future nation of Israel. It may not matter who is behind your suffering or pains. If only you can look at it from a divine perspective, you might become the joy of your family or people in future. The path youth take may not necessarily be conclusive for their future, however two points here to note are: (1) never be the trouble causer in the life of others especially your blood relations (2) when you meet those who caused you pain at a time you have the power to pay back, be a Joseph who can forgive and see things God ward rather than human ward. Youth watch out!

(I) The Phinehas/Hophni Character

These were two sons of Eli, the Priest-Judge of Israel. They assisted their father in his priestly role, ministering at the altar before God. In spite of their priestly roles, they dishonestly got involved in ordinary life and ended up losing God's favor. It might be true that some of the youth like working with their parents at their work stations. Sometimes the work is not good and sometimes it is of good service to the people or community. Eli's work was an honorable Temple work, but the sons corrupted themselves with it and ended up losing God's favor. It is true that their father knew what they were doing and would call them and ask them why they behaved like that. We do not see any response from his sons, but they were aware that their father knew their actions (1Sam.2:22-25b). Phinehas and Hophni's behavior did not only affect them as individuals, but also it affected God's Sanctuary by the Philistines capturing the Ark of God. It became a big blow to the effect that Israel no longer felt God's presence. Besides the capture of the Ark, Eli died, his two sons died at war, Phinehas' wife died too. A behavior that cannot be reprimanded is a behavior that for sure can cause disaster.

Some youth take advantage of their aged parents or absence from station of work and they begin doing things contrary to the expected norms. Usually individual failures end up destroying family and community norms and focus. When you are doing something you must be careful because at the end the effects will spill over to other members. We should not see it only from the side of the youth, but also grown-ups do behave in the same way, only that youth have strong drives that controlling them sometimes becomes difficult. As they grow, their social, psychological and biological behaviors put them to tension which they must control or otherwise they lose focus and purpose of life.

(m) The Absalom/Amnon character

The two young men were step brothers. Because King David was such a man that had gotten married to more than one wife intentionally, he ended up having many children born of different mothers. In this story of Absalom-Amnon, we shall not so much look at David but know that his family's dilemmas had been caused by his sin and family neglect. Amnon was over taken by sexual lust towards his step sister; the sister of Absalom: Tamar. He so much wanted to have sex with her, and we know how he relied on his friends' advice leading to raping her. Absalom, like any responsible brother, was not happy with Amnon's action. He planned to have Amnon pay for the rape of Tamar. On the side of Amnon, he thought it was done and forgotten. Absalom was not a man who could let things go without any reprisal, no matter how long it would take. It is easier to forget wrong things done than remembering good things. Amnon having satisfied his ego, he started to live his ordinary life as if nothing happened or he never hurt anybody.

When Absalom's calculated time came, he killed his step brother, Amnon and escaped his father's anger about what he did. In either case, we have youth who are of Absalom's or Amnon's heart. The source of the problem will always go back to our parents. In families where there are more than one mother, the problem of incest goes on and on unchecked, and when it hurts, it breeds vengeance accompanied by loss of lives and sometimes property and relationships in families. It is easy to blame what youth do or do not do without looking back from where they come. Many youth are forced to behave the way they do because parents never see through their minds. In the interest of protecting our youth, it would be very important to sit with them and talk about issues that would help them to avoid crime within their own families. In case they were living in polygamous families, they need to know the conditions under which they must guard their feelings and relationships. Parents must always stand in the way of their children no matter how hard it

might be. It is a responsibility to know everything surrounding them as they grow into adulthood, least they regret as in the Poem; “Knock Knocks” by Daniel Beatty. If you are a youth and you have the heart of Absalom or Amnon, you need to work on it at the earliest, otherwise when it controls you, the end will be too bad to amend.

(n) The Rehoboam Character

Equally important to note is the way children are raised in our homes. This goes especially to people who are top leaders. They have little or nothing to do with children because most of the time they are occupied with public engagements more than they are with their families. Some children are assumed to take over after their parents even when they have not been prepared or mentored in the system of business or leadership. Rehoboam seems to have been the type of youth who did not understand how to deal with people and situations. He only had to rely on ill-fated advice that could not produce positive results. He ended up messing up the Kingdom to the extent of division. Many youth tend to overlook good advice from elderly people and take that one from their peers or close friends. Normally where there is lack of wise counsel, there is destruction or people perish (Hos.4:6)

On the surface value, some people think it costs nothing to lose, but in a long run the impact will be felt. Rehoboam was the cause of the division, although it was long started by his father; yet he was the center of controversy leading to the division of the kingdom. There are youth who lose the way to success because they think their actions are the best. You need to be aware that you will take responsibility when things go wrong because of the decisions you make. The Rehoboam character is very destructive and leaves behind a very bad legacy. Many youth find it very easy to listen to the counsels of their peers instead of their elders. Unfortunately when things go wrong, that is when they begin to fidget around looking for help from elders. It is very important to help our

youth as they grow into adulthood that even if all counsel seems to be good, they must take the best of them all. What you reject today, might cause you wounds tomorrow that may never be healed for the rest of your life. Did you know that Rehoboam's failure to take the elders' counsel destroyed the unity of Israel to date? God did not create us to become sources of trouble but instead channels of love and joy for others. If you have a Rehoboam character, for sure you will divide your families, communities and even institutions where you work. It would be too bad to be remembered for the pains you have left behind. Always we should aim at leaving good record to be emulated or appreciated.

(o) The Prodigal son Character

This is one of the stories that present sadness and joy at the same time. It is sad in that the young man received a fatherly counsel but he ignored it and proceeded with his plan of gathering his inheritance to go far away where no one would have a say about his newly acquired property. There are times when youth think that they have reached a stage of managing their own affairs and they forget that management is a skill that must be learnt and tested. Counting years does not make one old. It is only success that qualifies maturity. The Prodigal son's failure to manage his inheritance became disastrous to his life. Never neglect the counsel of your parents especially in relationship to your future. Many youth have left their homes lacking nothing, but anticipating greener fields and better Castles compared to their homes, only to be disappointed when all become null and void. Some decide never to think of returning home and instead they begin to engage some unbecoming life styles. It is not until God's grace befalls them that they begin walking homeward, otherwise many of them never return because they get involved in crime. The good thing is that the Prodigal son never involved himself in some kind of criminal activities but he found himself in a state of despair; all his riches were gone, no clothes around his body and

no food and possibly no place to sleep. When God saw his situation, he felt pity for him and gave him the feeling for home, even when home was never green since the time he had left.

Youth should know that despite their unbecoming way of life, their parents still love them. It does not matter how you come back home, you are still a loved child and your parents will never give up on you or disown you because of your failures and squandered life and property. So the joy part of the story is that when he came back home empty handed and ragged as he was, the father rushed and hugged him not feeling the smell and not even pointing a finger but with open hands and fatherly kiss of welcome. Your character might be even worse than that of the Prodigal son or less. All you need to know is that there are opportunities to repent and walk home ward rather than going farther into the depth of complete despair because of shame.

(p) The Jesus Character

The man of character we cannot avoid or ignore. Although the main focus is on Christians, it does not do any harm to share this man's character with people of other faith, because his character stands out and is more pronounced than the character of other moralists as some scholars prefer to call Jesus. Christians bare their identity after this great personality of all times. One of the most amazing things is that though divine as he was, he lived here on earth through the basic human ladder of growth. By the time he died, he was a young adult, who if he had wanted to marry, should have been looking after a family of about three to four people on average. However his divine characteristics helped him to address life across the board. Since we are addressing ourselves to youth, it is good that there is a lot we can see in Jesus life as a youth, growing in his father and mother's company, and also in the company of the community in Bethlehem, Nazareth and Galilee; of both young and old people.

Most of the time, we learn much of Jesus from his divine ministry and pay less attention to other things he did as a youth in the ordinary family life. However I know that those who have gone through Sunday school have interacted with much of his work as a youth at home. We may say that Jesus was an all- round worker. He served both his parents and was never partial in his service. He portrays a character of a ready to serve, listening to instructions, helping where help was required, but also doing public ministry that was required of him. Although the Bible does not involve in telling readers where Jesus spent most of his youth life until he was thirty, common knowledge can guide us to know that Jesus must have had a lot of exposure to many different activities in life, he must have been exposed to Jewish schools of thought that helped him to understand issues at hand, he must have walked the country to see life in action. So the silence of the Bible does not mean that Jesus was redundant. This is important for our youth to know that engagement in life may be private or public and covering many aspects of life without divorcing oneself from domestic engagements, while in some cases, some people do not notice what you have been doing. Jesus is our standard. We should not only go out to meet him for our spiritual failures. We must go out to meet him for the sake of learning from him (Matt.11:29). He has a lot to teach us as we grow and serve. He has an obedient and humble character, down to earth. To all youth, Jesus is such an example you cannot underrate. As you grow in your homes and communities you may find it hard to live an exemplary character, but if you are willing, then Jesus would spice your life. Christian children must look unto Jesus as the earthly figure whose life was perfect and can influence youth life to that perfectness. Parents cannot disregard their roles and think all is in Jesus' hands. They must take their parental physical roles while Jesus takes care of the spiritual parental roles and assists the parents to see their children as an inheritance from God. If they are an inheritance,

then they must be guarded with envy as their treasure; for tomorrow, parents must give an accountability of what God entrusted to them.

THINKING BEYOND

The journey of growth is very difficult to predict because there are so many things that seem appealing which can derail a growing child. When youth begin to engage in them, they become convinced that they have reached the apex of life, yet the truth will be that they will have jumped on top of the ladder without tasting the middle rungs; whether they are metallic, thorny, strong or weak. In some situations, some youth do not want to face hard life as they work towards their future. Rest be assured that hard conditions shape seasoned characters. As the youth grow, the future must constantly be in front of them, thinking on how it would be determined to make their life worth the efforts from both the parents and themselves.

When you are lucky enough and you find your family well off, you must deny yourself the feeling that you are best placed. Family property or acquisitions are not yours. You must stretch yourself out to familiarize with different challenges and turn them into opportunities of self-reliance. Most of the things we do not sweat for are less protected from being squandered. The prodigal son can be a case in point. There are situations hidden behind curtains and because they are veiled, most youth will never know that they are really there. One of the parental roles is to talk to the children about the ideals of life so that they do not live in ignorance. There are many parents who will not tell their children

the A-Z of life, and will leave the children to find out for themselves. It is fine but dangerous because they do not have a mental and mature filter to sort out the best of their lives' needs.

Simplicity: Constructive or Destructive?

Today the polarity of parenting has changed so drastically to the extent that no parents would want to see anyone pointing a finger or blame to their children. They want their children to live as simple but complex life. Simple in the sense that they should choose what they want to do or even be, in a complex setting where comfort in all its dimensions is enjoyed. Of course as times change, life also changes. Today's family setting is not the same as it were a decade or so back. However parents have to be reminded from time to time that their children must be prepared for a future that is uncertain. In which case; parents should avoid keeping their children in comfort, because when hard times come they will not be able to cope up. Moses helps us to understand life and learn from a negative view point. Had he remained in the comfort of the palace, he would never have become a great leader and deliverer of the great nation of Israel. He would never have been able to take these people through the desert. *Simplicity destroys character and activity.* There are children born with potentials to perform, but when they are not encouraged to do anything, they begin to think that even the future will remain as simple as they see the present. When we allow our children to experience comfort all the time, we kill their curiosity in understanding life on the other side. Children born in palaces never have a feel or taste of how it is outside there not until there is an abrupt change and they begin to feel bad. Michal, David's wife was a daughter of King Saul. She knew nothing else apart from Palace life. When she saw David demonstrating his relationship with God, she became indignant and abusive of what David was doing. The outcome was regrettable. The way life is lived under the roofs of most families is the opposite of what

it is outside. Preparing to enter a different world from the one youth live in with their families is a very good experience, so that when it happens, they should not be ignorant. Simplicity is not the best norm of life.

When we talk of simplicity as destructive, we must not think in terms of denying children specific rights and benefits, not even giving them freedom, but we must think in terms of having them exposed to the realities of life. We always think that all will remain bread and butter and we forget the times when there will not even be a glass of spoiled milk. When Uganda experienced political take overs of 1971 and 1979 respectively, many of the families that had lived in simplicity and luxurious comfort, found it very difficult to adjust to the changes. So parents should always live knowing that there will be a time when situations will come requiring hardened people who will be able to swallow whatever will be offered. After all, life is not meant to be simple. God decreed that we must toil and sweat in order to get what to eat (Gen.3:19). Allow children to venture into all types of good work, guided and advised so that when you are no longer, they can stand by themselves.

Many families have been blessed and they have sets of television sets even for the children in their bed rooms. Some children have phones and can access different programs. There is no limitation to what they should watch or whom they should communicate to. Some children have been seen with more than one phone. Sometimes it is disturbing because they have no control over how they use them. In classes they carry them along and as teachers are teaching they are on WhatsApp, they are receiving and sending messages, sometimes they are not ashamed that they are watching pornography either of some erotic human engagements or their selfies. Parents are quite well aware that their children do these things but they cannot intervene, may be because they themselves engage the same or they have no time to find out what goes on with them. Children grow a simple but dangerous life. In institutions of learning where there are no restrictions to phones or no monitoring against

pornography watching, students will receive all sorts of material they think is good but not knowing that their future is in jeopardy. You should not be surprised that some men and women you see today who are very difficult in their private as well as public life to control are the very ones who faced life from its simplicity, and had no attention to be shaped for the better. But the writer of Proverbs 4:1- 4 teaches a lot on how parents should deal with their children, and how children should pay attention to their parents teaching.

Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. For I, too was a son to my father, still tender, and cherished by my mother. Then he taught me, and said to me, "Take hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live."

There is no way children will know what to do unless the parents take the initiative to teach them the way to go (Gen.1:5; Prov.22:6). However note must be taken that there are four things to be considered: thinking, talking, listening, and understanding. It is very important that parents who want to talk to their children must first 'think' about what they are going to talk to the children. When it comes to talking, choose the best opportunity and mode and subject and make sure that the child is really listening. Do not do the talking alone as if the child has nothing to say. Even if it may appear childish in your sight, it is one way to capture the child's attention to what you say because you have also given the child a hearing. From either the parent or the child, depending on who is talking; the other must understand what is being talked about. Understanding is the last stage of communication. Unless understanding is achieved, all the talking is wasted. One cannot understand what has not been listened to and one cannot listen to something not said and something said cannot make any sense if it has not been first thought about.

In Whose Hands Is Your Future?

Whenever you wake up, think beyond the day. If you still have parents, ask yourself in case you woke up and found all of them were no more or a misfortune had befallen you and you are separated like those who lived in Rwanda or Sudan or Northern Uganda during the Kony war. In other words, you should avoid living as though everyday will be a sunny day forgetting that there will be a time when there will be shadows and stormy rains. There are many shadows and storms in life that need you to be aware so that when they come you do not begin to fidget and complain that your grains were not yet dry. There will be time when there will be no one to sympathize with you. Your future started when you were born. As you grow, you begin to see yourself walking a journey in a wilderness alone, able to defend yourself where there is no one to stand by your side, where you can throw a spear against a wild animal threatening you, like a Jacob at Bethel in dreams and so on and so forth. In case you throw the single spear in your hands and missed to strike the animal, what next? When the Proverbs writer says, “My son, hear your father’s instructions” (Prov.1:8), it is upon you to listen or not to listen. You know it is one thing to speak and another to listen. Do not be deceived that when you speak, automatically your children are listening. They might be hearing but not listening. Children must pay attention and listen, otherwise there will come a time when they will begin to regret saying, “I wish I had listened”. To avoid such a situation, see your life as the only and most precious possession you have in life. It is your visa to the world of success. Remember success is relative, so do not measure your success against the success of others, because there is no universal ladder of success. From the Spiritual point of view, success can only be judged from one who Obeys God. The Politician would measure success from the way he or she controls a nation. The academician will measure success in terms of academic credentials. Business people will measure their success in terms of profits made, and others will measure their

success from how much they possess in terms of property. So we may not have to determine our success in any way specific. However obeying God and respecting ones parents, is a biblical measure of success. Otherwise, there will never be a person who can become successful in all areas of life because to get there, the toil and sweat are very much regrettable. But we need to prepare the youth to find success within the biblical parameters.

There has been a very nasty situation where you find many a young men and women fighting for their parents' property in case they departed without pronouncing themselves over their property. Some of them you will hear have killed one another or have killed their parents demanding their share of inheritance. I believe each one of us is entitled to an inheritance but it is not mandatory because there are specific natural drives that determine who should have what and how much and when. All in all, as you grow, you must work out your own way of survival because you may wake up and find that your father's property had been attached for some reasons, or has been sold off or to the worst, a rich man has claimed it as it has been a common case here in Uganda. You will not be able to get this property because first of all you may not have the financial capacity to gain the Courts of law, and if you have, you may not be conversant with the systems and you end up losing even the little you have. In short it is easy to find your own property or success which you are sure of, rather than looking at your parents' possessions that may eventually disappear like the morning mist.

When it comes to education for example, no one can study for you and then after wards hands over the certificate to you to go and get employment. When you sit to eat, the person who sits watching you might be hungrier than you and begins swallowing nothing as you swallow. At the end of the meal, this person will not be stomach full or satisfied simply because you were eating. You cannot eat on behalf of someone. Life is lived personally and not delegated or representatively. Youth are

the only architectures or artisans of their own lives. The way they order it is the way it will come out. However, as long as they are still under the care of their parents, parents are responsible for modeling them and helping them to realize the goals of their future dreams.

When we were still young, we never liked questions like; “What do you want to be in future?” First of all we never had any plan of what to be or not to be. We thought we would find the future waiting for us. Indeed in most cases it waited for us, but negatively because we had failed to plan for it. We found ourselves having wasted a lot of time looking for a befitting life, because we never planned well how our future would be. This costed most of us a lot of time and energy. By the time we got settled, we had spent many years of fruitless search for comfort and “success” with no productive spiritual, socially or economical life. How many youth of that type do behave like that? Today many of us look back and feel pity for the youth who behave like we did. It may surely not be their fault because there are many forces at play that can make youth fail or succeed, but if we take Solomon’s advice above, we could save many youth from failure. In other words, parents have the duty to instruct their children while children have the duty to listen to their parents. Children may be having the ear and heart to hear and listen, but the parent may be saying nothing or speaking out what the youth is not ready to listen to. It requires both to be involved positively to make communication meaningful and profitable.

Samson was a good boy born a Nazirite. He was obliged to abide by the Nazirite vows. We remember when one day he fell in love with a Philistine woman and wanted his parents to get her for him in marriage. The father snapped; “Isn’t there even one woman in our tribe or among the Israelites you could marry? Why must you go to the pagan Philistines to find a wife?” But Samson told his father, “Get her for me! She looks good to me.” (Judges.14:2-3). Although we read that God was behind all these, if we look at it from the surface value, we can see that

the parents did the talking or offered the advice, Samson did the hearing but not the listening and the consequences were aggressive and bitter. You might be the kind of parent who would speak to your children and on the other hand you might be the kind of youth who is self- driven or driven by sensuality and therefore cannot pay attention to the parental advice. When the regrettable happens, then you know who will be badly affected.

Distortion (Falsehood)

It is very easy to see life from the eye glasses of others. It becomes deceptive to think that things will work out the way they have worked out for others. It is not true to think that the going will always be smooth. It is very important that we must tell the truth so that the youth do not assume that things will be well with them as they may appear for others. There is a saying that “the luck of a quail in the forest is not the same for the hen”³⁹. You cannot deceive yourself that by engaging soft life you will be ready for the tough world a head. Sometimes stories distort the reality and we begin to fantasize the world a head as bright and promising. The assurance of consistence is not a promise. Parents must toughen and tighten their parental role if they have got to get the best out of their children. Distorted life mostly is rooted in looking at the best side of life others enjoy. People will never tell the truth of their experiences and when it comes to their expectations they will always print out the best. They will always see themselves at the apex of success, and if need be, they will earn good living at the expense of others. Youth can easily build Castles in the air, because what they see around them seems to be natural and constant. They do not know that people have taken a lot of time to realize what they are. They need to know that

³⁹ A Kinyankore proverb about opportunities and luck. (Banyankolre are one of the big ethnic groups in Uganda)

life is a process or a long time of build-up, with failures here and there and few occasional successes. To those who never give up, “slowly by slowly they make it.” Life is not a one sport event, but a long time process that goes through hiccups until a point when problem statements are formulated, and new focus is sought. A life that has not written its own problem statement has no future. Life is made up of challenges, and lived successfully by seeking for solutions. Many parents these days are behind the failures of their children because they do not want to tell them the reality of life. They want to provide soft landing as if it will always be the same. Behind most of the failures of the youth, there is a good percentage of their parents’ contribution. The reverse is most likely true. If you want to have a tough child, roll him or her on rough ground ready to face a rough world. Do not pretend that you will always be available when things prove tough. There will be that time when parents will not be there while the children will need them. The world needs tough goers just as the saying goes: “When the going becomes tough, the tough get going.” Parents should not prepare their children for good things only, but also for bad ones and tougher days ahead.

Conceit (Arrogance or Self-Importance)

Normally this is a feeling of importance above others or of having what you think others do not have. When we were growing during our teens, it was very common to feel that you have something within you that people should pay attention to. It was a very rare opportunity to find a number of youth in one village attending high schools. Should you find yourself among the few, you would want to make the village headlines, you would want to make yourself recognized, you would want to pronounce your school above others, and even emphasize where you come from by naming your parents. Those were personal great achievements one did not want to keep silent about. It appeared as if people would lose something if they didn’t know you. As some of us grew up,

we realized that it was characteristic of most youth in an attempt to overlook others and later sideline them from most of the village ordinary life. The arrogant fall quickly. They cannot remain hiked at the top of the ladder where they place themselves. This usually happened when academic results had to prove the self-worthiness of such individuals. When things never worked out well for them, they started to fall backwards until they surface no more in the village news. Arrogance is deceptive. It lifts individuals higher and withdraws itself suddenly only to let them fall without any support, and they crash. The example of high school youth is one among many because there are many other areas of life that youth can be influenced to become conceited. In the Bible there are characters of conceit and they ended disappointed and others lost their lives without any pity. Isaiah .14:1ff, gives a picture of one of the great Babylonian Kings who was arrogant before the Israelites and other kings. When he died, he was rejected by the spirits of the kings he had killed before. The story does not portray a good picture. We need to be conscious when dealing with life because sooner than later things will bounce back to us, and what we thought was for others become ours with negative effects.

SEEKING ANCIENT PATHS

“Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your soul.” (Jer.6:16)

Families, communities and societies survive because of keeping “historical traditions”. I have called them historical because some traditions are short lived and sometimes bear no historical importance for keeping. A community cannot build itself from nowhere. There must be outstanding behaviors that overlap generations. However, with modern innovations, mobility, civilization levels and interactions with much of the Western world, most of the basic and valuable norms of our present community life styles in Africa have changed completely, leading to loss of right direction. We are not our real selves and neither are we the real others. We are swaying in all directions like wind- blown trees or a pendulum. Matters become worse when a clock’s pendulum is standing still. It will imply that the clock or the pendulum has a mechanical problem. When culture is not moving forth and backwards, it dies. However it must move within itself and not outside itself. Some of our people have been blown off their traditional and cultural roots, and can never stand straight in the storm of cultural challenges or shocks. Even when the cultural wind stops blowing, they cannot stand again. They appear

like a pendulum that is standing still. Is it true then, that we must lose ourselves to new cultures and life styles in order to be recognized real men and women in the name of civilization or elitism? To be real is to remain rooted in our culture and traditions, but we can accept to adopt foreign life styles if they do not undermine our origins.

Our youth today are facing challenges of real extinction of culture and traditions of their ancestors because: (1) Families have lost real contact with the youth world. (2) The youth have been lured into much of what has been termed “modern”. (3) The educational system today does not allow and give youth time to discover themselves within their families or communities’ life setting. (4) What is taught in schools, addresses white collar world of work, and yet from our family and community setting, our real life style is lived in the fields. An African was a hunter, black smith, animal keeper, cultivator, wood worker and potter. Most of today’s generation has lost contact with these traditional occupations, and their focus as determined by the education system is “Office”. This is not bad at all, but the problem is that not all who go to school will succeed and get office work. Besides the classroom education, the child must get to learn other life skills so that when one side of the matter fails, the other one can be relied upon. When this is not realized, they become hostile because the world they begin to experience is hostile too. The African way of life has the advantage of being accessed by everybody; educated and non-educated, but also can be modified using the western knowledge without undermining its importance in the life of the upcoming young generation.

Kaihura Nkuba Rwacumika⁴⁰, in his teaching and sensitization of Africans on their heritage, he challenges the mentality of Western out-

⁴⁰Dr. Kaihura Nkuba Rwacumika is a lecturer in Classical African History. He can be accessed on <http://www.youtube.com/watch> and also on Greater African Radio; a local FM Broadcast. On these two public media he teaches a number of cultural and traditional values that Africans must guard from losing.

look and practices as a means of determining the level of one's education. He perceives and asserts that an African man who locally specialized in banana and coffee growing, animal keeping and many other areas of human life can be an equivalent of a degree holder specialized in western education in other fields. His argument is that a degree is not only earned from a classroom and blackboard, but as well as from other fields of practice and activity. This is where African life was lived, cherished and celebrated, and families regenerated from one generation to another generation. Parents and other old people were the custodians of all traditional and cultural values that were to be passed on to the young generation. Today, generations are only identified or determined by a span of few years, whereas traditionally generations were identified by age and activity e.g. the Iron Age. We as parents must be challenged to take our children back to our roots. When our children are with us at home, let us use that opportunity to engage them in whatever little we know such that when at one time the classroom knowledge fails the home knowledge takes over, so that the growing person is not lost in the job market.

Among the Baganda (one of the largest tribes of Uganda), one cannot prove oneself as a Muganda because of age, but must identify oneself with at least five previous generations back, identify his or her totem and other additional traditional indicators that one is truly a Muganda. But this also does not make one a Muganda, because identifying oneself by names and clan is not convincingly enough without identifying oneself with generational activities of the past to which one is attached. That means one must be rooted in traditional work and beliefs a Muganda was part of and be able to continue the same by passing it on to the generation coming next. Today in many families the trend to knowing people's ancient norms that contribute to stability is shaky due to the fact that the path to parenting had long closed its doors. As we had earlier said, the parent that would have provided the means is the type who

also went through the same problems and therefore knows no way out. There has been a very strong impression from the outside that both parent and child have been strongly affected and there is if any, minimal turn around to what matters most in family making or formation. Whether we agree or not, the truth is that there is the right way to take if our children are to become a hopeful future nation.

Jeremiah 6:13-17 called upon the children of Israel to seek the Ancient paths and walk in them so that all might be well with them. He says that the old path is the right one, the old Godly way. We must all know very well that God speaks to every tribe and nation, especially to every parent for the sake of continuity. God will never reveal ungodly ways for building families, communities and nations. The unfortunate thing is that even the present parents know little if any about ancient paths. Just like Rip Van Winkle⁴¹, there has been a serious deep long sleep that by the time we woke up we found ourselves overtaken by events of which we could not overlook or under estimate their impact on the present and future generations. Unless we wake up completely and find out at what point we went to sleep and start the journey again, our youth will never find the ancient true cultural and traditional path, they will never know that parents must have time with their children and children must have time with their parents. Jeremiah advised that if the Israelites find the ancient path and they walk in it, that is where they would find the rest for their souls. Many a families today are restless because the search for ancient path has either failed or has not been attempted at all. We need to listen to Jeremiah's advice so that parents and children can find rest for their souls. There is however one important thing parents and children must take note of; families cannot be built on human knowledge but God's wisdom. The Psalmist says: "Un-

⁴¹ Rip Van Winkle was reported to have overslept for years and when he woke up, he found the environment where he had slept had completely changed and his gun covered with bushes. (A local Banyankole folk tale)

less the Lord builds a house, the work of the builders is wasted.” (Ps.127:1). This basically tells us of God’s spiritual involvement in family building. There is no any other source of moral formation other than God. That is the only old and right path to turn to. Families have lost this path because by nature of the current trends, members are never together, to pray together, to share their experiences and help one another. Each one is on personal concerns and it does not matter who is affected or not. The future will take care of itself. Oh no! The future begins with us now. The future moves with us or dies with us here and now.

Today in most of the African societies, parents and their children are limping on one leg, which is also half way wounded. The wounds may never heal unless parents turn to the recommended ancient path. There are “thorns” from within and without on our way that cannot allow us walk straight our culture and traditions. We have not modernized our life styles, but have replaced them with “foreign” which has buried or covered most of our family and community life styles. When it comes to the youth, everything goes out of control. This has left us with a life style we do not know how to live or walk it; thus limping like chimpanzees imitating human behaviors. One time I was sharing with a very seasoned person who told me something I thought to be true. He told me that because the western world has lost their place among their children, a few who thought it is still important to close the gaps have decided to do parenting on Television and internet through cartoon stories, knowing very well that their children will find information there and also save them from ‘wasting’ their time with children. Today in the developing countries the Television and internet have also taken or occupied the best of the children’s time whether parents are there or not, because they have already become addicted and they find it more satisfying to attend to them than their parents. This has now formed part of the parenting method in the developing countries and parents have become contented

that what children watch on Television and internet are good enough, without knowing their character or behavioral impact.

We need to establish village traditional schools or institutions where we can re-consider reconstructing and re-rooting ourselves in order to bring the youth back to the ancient paths where they should belong or where our society should be. We should avoid being lost in a labyrinth of cultural and traditional mix up where our own is excluded. If we want to leave behind a rich African cultural heritage embedded in various and different social settings, we must see the importance of our identity and culture as determined by clans, tribes, nations or races with emphasis on our defined values and activities. Even if we get western education, we must not cut ourselves off from our roots. Even if our public work takes much of our family time, we must seek for the ancient ways for the good of our children and continuity. “If there is no transformation inside each one of us, all the structural change in the world will have no impact on our institutions...”⁴² The parent as well as the child must be ready to transform from within in order to change for the better, tuned to the realities of cultural and family norms of ancient, which at the same time do not deny modernity but modification, and which must conform to religious truth.

The Israelites are a good example of people who at different periods got swallowed up by foreign cultures which destroyed their cultural and religious institutions. The Intertestamental period especially during the Greek Hellenization⁴³ (336-165 BC) is one of the many examples of foreign influence that led the Jews to lose both their religious and cultural identity.⁴⁴ It is reported that the Greek culture presented a very negative impact to the Jewish way of life, which meant a challenge to

⁴² Peter, p.77

⁴³ John Holder, *The Inter Testamental Period*. (London: SPCK, 1994), P.18

⁴⁴ Pat and David Alexander, *Zondervan Handbook to the Bible*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999)p.523

their religion.⁴⁵ They lost their religious focus and started to worship foreign gods. They lost touch and appreciation of God's grace in their everyday life. Note should be taken that foreign cultural practices are not all condemned, but there is a likelihood of over doing and adopting cultures that will erase our well- intended cultural practices especially where our youth lose contact with the right people for direction. The bigger picture of a continuous African identity has been found to be a rich ground for planting the seed that is losing meaning but sensible elsewhere and at the same time a seed that seem to benefit the proponents of such unbecoming cultural and religious vices.

Today the situation has reached alarming levels where our youth have moved far away from the realities of family life, because their traditional families are no longer in control, the fact that more than three quarters of their wake life is spent before the teachers, work places, Television or Internet, and one quarter of their life is for sleeping. The parents themselves are rarely present to attend to their parental responsibilities as we saw in the "world of parents". Traditional societies do not have in place institutions that can propagate and inculcate ancient values that must be upheld and lived apart from the church. Unfortunately as we know today not many families are pro-church. The Western mentality that has allowed children freedom of choice cannot enforce Christian teaching to the children. That alone is illegal. Such practices have found their ways in our African families. To sit before a religious leader for instructions is optional. For schools that emphasize chapel attendance, the content may not be for the sake of modeling a future responsible citizen. The whole process is complicated because of the new cultural trends. Otherwise there are so many foreign practices which seem to be appealing, that many youth have decided to move that direction. Every culture and nation has a responsibility to defend its cultural territories without compromising and undermining their custodial responsibilities.

⁴⁵ John, 22

Many of the Western world practices that are introduced on the African continent take root slowly but surely while our own get destroyed quickly and surely because the custodians have either slept or entrusted their responsibilities to other people who are not concerned about what will happen to future generation. They act like some step mothers. You will find a time when there is almost a vacuum between the new and old practices, a period when youth will be in transition and not sure of which is right or wrong for them. That is the most crucial time in their lives, because vacuums are not permissive to growth or development in character. Anything that will appear more pressing and appealing whether with or without tangible sense, will take root more quickly than the other. In this case that is why we find newly introduced practices tend to draw many youth towards them than keeping them away. The advocates for the new practices will make sure that even when well knowing that those practices are for personal goals, they will “spice” them to make them more appealing and practicable. As a result the cultural heritage lived and enjoyed for generations becomes a forgotten case. No sooner has the new culture taken root than another purportedly newest comes and rubbishes the one in practice. Unfortunately, most of the so called new life styles from outside our own that come our way are always many years back and outdated- they have been lived and outlived until they have been discarded. For us we receive them as if they were very new. Indeed to us they are, but the reality is that they have been thrown in the dust bin. Now the question is: Are we on the same page or are we living our modern times from their past? In other words we are like eating the left overs or to put better still we are recycling to make what would look like new to us.

Can It Be Possible?

Can our youth find it possible to learn of the ancient ways to survive? Can they let go the ego of their youthfulness and grow to the hu-

man realities of ‘what is’ rather than ‘what will’. When we do not see the way today, we cannot convince ourselves that we can see it tomorrow, unless we can begin searching for it now. Can it be possible for our youth to find the old path that led families, clans, tribes and nations to where they are now? Jeremiah 6:16 was challenging the Israelites to go at the cross-roads and find the ancient path and when they find it, they will find rest. The reason our youth are restless today, is because they have deserted or lost the old ways and sometimes many of them are not ready to find or look for it. Globalization, urbanization, industrialization and secularism have become agents of dilemma. They have formed part of the crossroads in their lives. They have unleashed a number of dangerous behaviors that cannot allow them to think why things are happening the way they do. Most of them live in an idealistic world, a world of fantasies. They see all things possible when they are still under the roof of their parents; food available, accommodation no doubt, family care in most cases a sure deal but little do they ever see the day when almost none of these would be available, and they are left to themselves. Behind this shadow, rests the truth that sooner than later, the youth will face it alone, when sometimes there will no longer be a single parent to intervene. A young eaglet stays in the nest being fed until a time the mother begins to phase out the feeding times. One day it carries it on her wings and soars high and lets it go off her wings. This is its first experience, but because the eaglet has not been used, it begins to fall like stone and the mother comes beneath it and carries it again. There comes a day when the mother eagle will not return to the nest. The eaglet must find its own way and food. Listen young ones, that day will come when you will be on your own. Can it be possible then, like God had spoken to Israelites that: ‘O that today you would hearken to his voice! Harden not your hearts ...’ (Ps.95:7b-9) that today is the right time for the youth to begin mapping for tomorrow. Youth should not harden their hearts against words of wisdom. It is our responsibility as parents to show the

ancient paths, and the youth's duty to follow it if the future must come. All of us are because our parents were! ***Ignore your role, be blamed for the outcome.***

One time a preacher said that we must share our gifts with others and that when we keep our hands closed, even when God is ready to give us more gifts, the hands will not receive because they are closed. So he challenged his listeners to be open handed and minded in order to receive. Thinking over those words, one would look at the ways we miss out opportunities because of maintaining our mental capacities closed. A parent must unleash the potentials of feeling independence but with choices of dependence of certain degree among their children. There are parents who are or feel too empty to release anything, even when they see the existing gaps; they have no means to bridge them. The only consolation is nature to take its course by default. Sometimes parents find it difficult to put up with the youth because they appear to be in an enclosed environment of their own, not that it is a real world, but that it comes and goes with the changing times. Therefore there are lots of deceptions and assumptions. In most cases our youth are overblown with what they are incapable of accommodating because it is beyond their capacity, and as a result they end up messing up and coming out empty handed. There must be a resolution, such a resolution that can bring together the parent and the child if the shadows are to be removed so that both the parent and child can build their families and communities and above all a shadow free world.

THE PARENTAL GOAL

Every journey started has a destination. The parental journey begins as early as the time we begin thinking about making families. We begin to think about the type of partners we want, how many children we should have, what type of education we should provide and which schools they should attend. In most cases, we think through like running water without any disturbance. We least think of other interferences that might block our plans not forgetting that even the children we plan for may never come or if they do come, they may never fit in our plans. One thing we forget is that all are possible with the help of God. Not many of us think about what God's plan for us is all about. We never even think about religious or spiritual formation of our children. When we think of good schools, we are thinking academics mostly or sometimes where tuition is less demanding. We forget that unless our children are built on a strong spiritual foundation, their academic achievements might end in jeopardy. As parents, the starting point for our children's success is the spiritual foundation. Our score board as parents is in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, where we are advised to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness first and the rest would be given to us as well. (Matt.6:33). This is our goal if we are to make good parents and good families.

The truth cannot be ignored that children are our inheritance. Anyone who disregards his or her inheritance ends up regretting like Esau. Whether we know it or not, our parental roles have been veiled from our childhood times and the realities of life overshadowed by pretense. The shadows that were cast on our brains have evolved to the point that our children have now become the victims. It is like a journey of no return. However this can only be reversed by our direct involvement and acceptance of the wrong past and stretch out to achieve a goal long lost. Spare our time more than usual for the sake of building up a future generation. Joseph says; “The treasure house is within you. Look within for the answer to your heart’s desire.”⁴⁶ We cannot keep shielding children from knowledge or truth because of our ignorance and pretend thinking we are nurturing a future generation. At least as a parent there is something you desire for your child that is within you. Let it out. Joseph continues to say; “If you want to make progress in any field of endeavor, there is an essential first step. You must discover a working basis that is universal in its application.”⁴⁷ I do agree with Joseph that the success of our parenting roles must be an endeavor to discovering the basis of parenting which does not rely on individual sentiments, but that which must have a universal perspective. Our children are community assets and therefore cannot be mentored on personal bearings. Yes, it can be, but within universal parenting dynamics. A child’s parent is never appreciated until the child proves a community worth. If you decide to do parenting alone, you may be successful, but you may miss the community gist of acclaim.

There are things parents may not determine in their children because of being good or bad parents, but they can act as guides. When you are guiding someone where to put his or her next foot and that person refus-

⁴⁶ Joseph Murphy, *The Power of your subconscious mind*, (UK: Pocket Books, 2006),p.12

⁴⁷ Joseph, p.3

es, you will not be faulted for the fall. We must learn that bad parenting models sometimes have good behaving children while the opposite is true. However our goal as parents is to give direction so that children might avoid crashing in their later years. We must produce the best out of our worst. Generations must not be duplicated and we end up concluding that it is a “generational problem”. If that be the case, then we are running the problem of stagnation, where generations come and go, but the status quo remains inherent. Joseph’s saying that the treasure house is within you might be very true for us parents and later our children. Look within for the answer to your heart’s desire. The parent is the custodian of values that must be passed on to the children. Whether you will be there as a beneficiary or not, at least the future generation will. In a relay the team is charged with the responsibility of passing on the button from one person to another until the last one, who must finish the race. Should one of the team members mess up, the goal will not be achieved. From time immemorial, parents have been doing the parental relay without compromising, but when it comes to our generation things have fallen apart just as Chinua Achebe said that the center cannot hold. There is therefore a great disconnection in communication, in work, in relationships and many other areas of life. The devil is now targeting the parent and the child to destroy what has been built over centuries of human existence. Unless we identify our goals and demarcate them properly, the future is too dim and regrettable.

Human knowledge cannot do this without looking beyond. The best guide to achieve the parental goal is God through his son Jesus Christ and his parents; Joseph and Mary. Jesus was a child who was humble and showed a good example of a listening child while Joseph and Mary were the model parents. Parenting has no limitations. It goes on until death. The writer of Proverbs was always referring to; “my child...” he definitively was not looking at the age of the child, but to someone who had a father and a father who had a child. In that case the parent had an

obligation to pass on important knowledge, while the child had to listen. Without compromising, fear or favor, the parental role is one of the very much portrayed in the Bible. There is no way we can shun our roles as if God's blessing and inheritance have been thrown to the dogs.

The youth expectations are like Jim Reeves' sounding the distant drums. As they grow, life's expectations keep sounding at a distance of which they are optimistic to reach and exploit. As the parent is talking, their eyes and minds are quite above the words said. If you are a youth with sound minds listen to this timely warning: "My child listen to what I say, and treasure my commands." (Prov.2:1). Should you be a parent and you are blessed with children, find the time and relate with them without compromising important areas of their future. You will have saved the children, yourself and the community.

Parents are like the sheep and the shepherd. They must shepherd their children towards specific goals that the future may yield fruits, not only for individuals but for the family and the wider community. The source of power is within the parent to harness all possible resources and pass them over to the child, who will in the process of growing, will utilize them to become a better citizen in the society without regrets at all. It does not auger well when people doubt you as a youth or question about your family. It will end in blaming the parents for their failure to tame the child into acceptable behavior. Parenting is not an option, as long as you have children whether by choice or not, you must know that your journey of parenting has begun until death. It is upon you as a parent to look for the best parenting options so that your child does not become a disgrace in the family or society.

Whether children are at home or not, pray for them. When they are at home, the parent is the family priest. Call them from wherever they might be for family prayer. Challenge each one of them to lead prayers. Build confidence in them that they can feel closer to their parents and even talk to them without any fear. Build a very strong rapport that even

in your absence they can program themselves towards a goal. Teach them how to read the Scriptures and even interpret them to situations. That way you will not only be a parent when at home, but even when you are away. Accept your weaknesses and try to work on them as a parent. When you realize that your child has a problem, do not blast him or her in the face of others, because that will distance him or her from you. Some of us parents think that when we speak loudly and harshly, we will have communicated or driven our point home. Deal with them moderately and calmly. Your point will be listened to. My late father was a man of tremendous parenting potentials which I personally had not bothered to appreciate until I became old and married. Whenever he had a grievance with any one of us, he swallowed his anger. At an opportune time he would call you to accompany him just to the nearby gardens or tree plantation and he would talk to you and you promised never to disappoint him again. Because of private talk between the two, in most cases, that made the matters settled for good. I learnt that it was not the public openness of the harshness that put sense in us, but the tactic of parenting by gaining confidence of the child. Soft words tame the hard hearted character. The curtains must be drawn open to allow visibility of the whole truth as our children move to their future.

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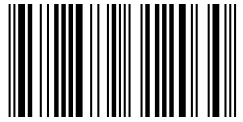
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In the Shadows of Truth

The Polarized Family



Rev. Can. Dr. Elly K. Kansiime is an ordained priest (1989) in the Anglican Church of Uganda, a theologian and Senior Lecturer at Uganda Christian University. He is a scholar and graduate of Theology of Work and Transformational Leadership at Bakke Graduate University Seattle –USA (2012). Elly teaches Biblical studies in Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology and in the Department of Foundation Studies.

In this book the author deals with the hidden realities posed by parents who spend much of their time occupied with work and leisure, while the children are left to their own devices. In the course of these long time period of separation, children build inappropriate relationships and indulge in detrimental practices that pose both short- and long-term effects to themselves and the family at large.

This book therefore focuses on parental ethical roles in the Uganda African context. It is a very moving family ethical exposition that will build up parents and help them to rethink their approach to family practices. It is a book intended to raise awareness of the subtle dangers that unintentional neglect can cause, potentially damaging their families and their children's future.