
Children are a Heritage of the Lord

בְּנֵי יְהוָה נַחֲלָתָהּ

Pastoral Study of Psalm 127:3a Vis-À-Vis Biblical Parenting in Nigerian Context

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INTRODUCTION:

One of the most important gifts that money cannot buy is the gift of having children. No wonder Stormie Omartian who wrote the book *“The Power of a Praying Husband”* states that; ‘every woman after wedding has a prayer point which is to have her two arms wrapped around her own child, looking at his/her face and breastfeeding the child.’⁵¹⁶ The chosen passage for this study is very clear in conveying to both ancient and modern minds that; children are God’s heritage. It is thus appropriate to say that if children are God’s heritage, parents are only caretakers and stewards.

Parenthood is pivotal in the adventure of progressive societal movement. Parenting is very cardinal in the development of the society. There is no how one would talk about godly parenting without having to reference marital stability. By implication, there must be stability of homes before we can have a “vice-free” (so to speak) society. This is because homes are integral part of the society. Kunhiyop opines that “the home is a key institution

⁵¹⁶ Stormie Omartian, *The Power of a Praying Husband* (Oregon: Harvest House Publisher, 2001), 65.

that shapes individuals and the society.⁵¹⁷ By implication, if families are distorted, it will be replicated in the society.

It is not gainsaying that, if there is any age group the devil has always been targeting from time immemorial especially in the Bible history, it is the children. One would recall that Joseph was sold to slavery as a little boy through the conspiracy of his brothers. The Hebrew boys were taken captive to Babylon at tender age. The life of Jesus was targeted for termination right from His infancy and that unfortunately led to the mass slaughter of children by Herod (Matt. 2:16). Moses' was also enlisted for death while he was a little child (Exodus 2:1ff). The devil's method has not changed, and he is seeking to get as many children as possible; this is why this theme is not a trivial one; it is critical to the life of the church in the nearest future.

This researcher proposes four major implications for this study:

1. No man has an absolute say on what belongs to God;
2. There is no future if children don't know the Lord;
3. Church buildings may later become empty if there is failure in discipleship of children
4. Nigeria will continue to witness dire upheavals until the parents stands to their responsibilities

This study addresses the biblical basis for parenting; did textual analysis of the text inclusively; highlights ungodly attitudes towards children (God's heritage); discusses ways parents can partner with God in raising their children; dangers of neglecting parental responsibilities and gives recommendations.

⁵¹⁷ Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics* (Nairobi: Word alive Hippo Books, 2008), 191. Also in Wilbur O'Donovan, *Biblical Christianity in Africa* (Cumbria: Paternoster Publishing, 200), 80; Danfulani Kore, *Culture and Christian Homes* (Jos Nigeria: ACTS, 1989).

BIBLICAL BASIS FOR PARENTING:

The family according to Young Wolkowitz and Macullagh is an institution of principal importance in socialist society and is a primary target of reforming legislation.⁵¹⁸ This idea of institution comes because it (the family) comprises the father, mother and child or children. In official statements, it is conventionally referred to as the basic cell of society and functions as an agent of socialization. It is the main focus of the day-to-day responsibility for the welfare of children and the elderly.

Parents play significant roles in the development of their offspring. The Bible is very explicit when it comes to the issue of child training. Proverbs 22:6 emphasizes the need to train children in the way of the Lord. This implies that the parents have more roles to play in the development of their children right from cradle. There is a saying that the society coupled with the effort of the parents can help braise up a child.⁵¹⁹ The researcher is not disputing this fact but no matter how sanctimonious the society is, if there is no adequate parental training, the child will only but become a vice to the society.

The importance of Christian parenting in the Bible cannot be overstressed. Christian parents face the difficult task of raising children in a world of “correctness.” In the past, children grew up in a society that clearly defined what was right and what was wrong. Kenneth posits that parents were recognized as the primary authority figure in their children's lives.⁵²⁰ This is because the parents are the immediate pilot of the children. It must be established here as the researcher agrees with Kenneth

⁵¹⁸ Young K. Wolkowitz, and R. Macullagh (Eds.), *Of Marriage and the Market. Women's Subordination Internationally and its Lessons* (London: Routledge, 1991), 89.

⁵¹⁹ Alva J. McClain, *The Greatest of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), 65.

⁵²⁰ Boa Kenneth, *Child Training in the Old Dispensation* (Wheaton: Victor's Book, 1990), 85.

that the home is the first educational platform for the children; school is a late comer. Thus the type or kind of upbringing a child has is capable of making or marring the future of the child. Now as the world conforms, children react to the unprecedented immorality, anti-family, and anti-parent concepts in schools and media.

Parents show increasing concern as their children are encouraged to shun strict rules and biblical truths. Whenever the application of God's laws is mentioned, a flurry of organizations warns parents not to impose their own values upon their children. But the Christian parent understands the wickedness of exchanging God's truth for a lie. The Bible speaks of the *"insolent, arrogant, and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents..."* (Romans 1:30). Rebellion and disobedience are just as pervasive today as parental authority disintegrates. Today, parents must choose who and what shapes their children's lives. According to Ford, without a doubt, God still holds parents responsible for their children - to instruct them and to discipline them.⁵²¹ One could allude to Proverbs 22:6 in this regard.

In the Old Testament, Moses reminds the Israelites of their responsibility to their children and grandchildren.

Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them (Deuteronomy 4:9-10).

Everyone would like to believe that children will make the right choices based on lessons taught. If one's child found a dollar at the playground, what would he do with it? What sort of "measuring rod" will a child apply as his benchmark for

⁵²¹ Anderson Ford, *Modern Theologians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1997), 38.

honesty? Perhaps that child will recall how his father returned over-paid change to a cashier. That is practical and native intelligence. According to Trancy, “when we instruct our children, we are not simply presenting a list of rules to follow, but we are letting our actions speak by training them according to God's standards.”⁵²² Looking at this view, by living a righteous life, parents provide their children with the understanding of how God's rules govern all their lives. Then, as the children mature, they develop a habit of doing right, serving God by making their own decisions.”⁵²³ This does not just come automatically; there must be decisive and committed efforts by the parents.

It is the goal of every parent to see their children accept responsibility for their decisions. If children learn from their mistakes and accept godly correction, then they are on the right course. One father tried to take a short-cut in explaining responsibility by saying, "It's not what you do, but whether or not you get caught. And if you get caught be willing to pay the consequences!" Obviously, there is no fast-track for instructing children. Parental instruction is an arduous journey that begins at birth and continues for many years. And there may be countless times when children make careless decisions and even choose to reject instruction. These are the times when discipline is most necessary.

One of the obligations of Christian parenting is to discipline their children. Theories on “correct” discipline change every few years - the Bible never changes. By implication, the Bible remains the infallible standard to godly parenting. If children do not obey, they must receive correction. The Bible teaches that this should be done by using a rod of correction. “*The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgrace his mother*” (Proverbs 29:15). Often parents become weary of disciplining young children. This can be established in the view

⁵²² Tenny Trancy, *Christian Parenting* (London: Baker Book House, 1989), 47.

⁵²³Tenny Trancy, *Christian Parenting*, 47.

of Traize who said, “at times, a typical day seems to consist of nagging and scolding.”⁵²⁴ Parents wonder if they have ruined every chance for a loving relationship with their children. The issue here is that using of rod on the children will corroborate the effort of the parents in putting the children in proper livelihood.

God chooses each parent with great care. “*For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just...*” (Genesis 18:19). God entrusts children to parental specific care. He wants parents to know that kind; firm correction will train their children to obey Him. “*Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord*” (Colossians 3:20). Consistent, loving correction helps children learn biblical truths like self-discipline. God knew Abraham would raise godly children and God blessed him. By applying God's standards, one too can receive God's blessings as parents.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS:

Psalm 127, unequivocally contrasts human effort with divine dependence, asserting that without God, building, security, and human tireless labour are all in vain. It highlights that success and family (“children”) are gifts from the Lord, not merely products of our toils, promoting rest over anxious striving. As a song of Ascents, Tokunbo Adeyemo in *African Bible Commentary* conveys that “it was sung by pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem for feasts.”⁵²⁵ He (Adeyemo) also noted that it belongs to the Wisdom genre of psalms, offering practical advice for living under God’s sovereignty.”⁵²⁶ The Psalm was attributed to Solomon, who is significant because he was a builder (of the

⁵²⁴ Philip Traize, *The Understanding of Children World* (Italy: Fortress Publishers, 2003), 85.

⁵²⁵ Tokunbo Adeyemo, ed., “Psalm” *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 976.

⁵²⁶ Tokunbo Adeyemo, *African Bible Commentary*

Temple) and a ruler, yet he recognised that human effort independent of God is useless.

There are two main themes in Psalm 127 which are: the sovereignty of God (vs. 1-2) and the blessing of the sovereignty of God (vs. 3-5). For clarity they are better put as:

1. Vain Labour (vv. 1-2): Without God's blessing, building homes and guarding cities is pointless. It warns against excessive, anxious work, noting that God gives rest to those He loves. The psalm states that houses don't get built unless the Lord blesses the efforts (Psalm 127:1a). Cities are not protected unless the Lord guards them (Psalm 127:1b). Rising early and retiring late is meaningless unless God blesses the efforts in between, and He is capable of blessing His people even while they sleep (Psalm 127:2). In other words, human endeavors are only of value if engaged with Him in mind and with His blessing.
2. Children as a Heritage (vv. 3-5): Children are gifts and rewards from God, not burdens. This is further exposed in the textual analysis:

Psalm 127:3 cannot be interpreted in isolation of the singular context of the entire chapter; thus, allusion is made to other verses in the same context. References are also made to other cross-references outside the chapter for robust understanding. Many Bible translations use the word "heritage" instead of "blessing" and "reward" in place of "gift." For example, "Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him" (NIV), and "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward" (ESV).

In the original language, the Hebrew word translated as "heritage" or "blessing" is *nachalah* – נַחֲלָה which means "inheritance, possession, property, portion, belonging etc." Solomon affirms the ancient Near East belief that children are

God's gracious gift imparted to parents. The cardinal aspects of *nachalah* – נַחֲלָה in this context include:

- a. Divinely Given: It implies that children are not earned but bestowed by God;
- b. Valuable Possession: It signifies they are cherished blessings rather than burdens;
- c. Stewardship: It indicates that parents are guardians/caretakers of a gift belonging to God in their own custody.

Psalm 127:3 begins with the Hebrew word “hineh” – “הִנֵּה” is translated as “Lo” in the King James Translation and synonymous to “behold or see”. The interjection objectively calls the attention of readers to keenly observe a profound truth that is about to be introduced and then to have a change of perspective on children. “Behold or Lo” at the beginning of Psalm 127:3 is not just a mere observation; it implies more of a theological declaration.⁵²⁷ The word is like a billboard that points ones attention to a particular framework for careful recognition.

For robust understanding, this research draws reader's attention to the phrase projected in the verse under study (Psalm 127:3a) - “*nachalah YAHWEH Banim* – “בָּנִים נַחֲלַת יְהוָה.” This is translated:

Roughly as **“inheritance, possession, heritage OF YAHWEH is children”**

Smoothly as **“children are inheritance, possession, heritage OF YAHWEH”**

Biblically speaking, an inheritance is a treasured possession, typically passed down to secure the future of a family. Children

⁵²⁷ DeClaise-Walford, Jacobson and Tanner, *Psalms, New International Commentary of the Old Testament* (London: SMC, 1989), 47.

in the context of Psalm 127:3 are not “property” to be managed, but a “heritage” (gifted legacy) to be stewarded.

“...of the Lord/Yahweh” in “Psalm 127:3a” denotes that the source of the “inheritance” is not the social construct or biological outcome through natural copulation, but the Sovereign LORD himself. Yahweh as used in the text is the personal covenant name of God, indicating relational specificity. This is not a generic deity but the Holy One of Israel.

The verse can be translated in two primary ways: In the subjective genitive, it will read “the inheritance or heritage that Yahweh GIVES” while in the objective genitive; it will read the inheritance or heritage that Yahweh POSSESSES. The nexus therefore is God POSSESSES children and He also GIVES to people as stewardship.

Summarily, “Hineh nachalat YAHWEH banim” (בָּנִים נַחֲלַת יְהוָה הִנֵּה) teaches that God places a profound spiritual and earthly value on children, viewing them as valuable, unique, blessed, and heaven-sent “heritage” that contributes to the security and legacy of the family.

In Old Testament times, a large family with many sons and daughters was a sign of the Lord’s blessing and expression of divine favor (Genesis 33:5; Deuteronomy 7:13-14; Joshua 24:3). In Genesis 1:28, God commanded His people to “be fruitful and multiply.” After the flood, God told Noah, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth” (Genesis 9:1). As God’s covenant people, the ancient Hebrews appreciated the importance of procreation. The Lord told Abraham, “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you . . . and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:2-3). Israel’s physical, emotional, and economic strength and security were expressed through large families.

The pursuit of bearing and rearing children is only fulfilled if God blesses. Children are not ultimately the product of human

effort, but “children are a heritage (or gift) from the Lord.” The fruit of the womb is a reward granted by God (Psalm 127:3b). Solomon compares the children of one’s youth to arrows in the hands of a warrior (Psalm 127:4). The warrior sends arrows skillfully toward their target in hopes that they will hit their mark. Solomon’s expectation is that those arrows will hit their target, as the man who has many arrows is blessed (Psalm 127:5). Those who have children will always have someone to stand with them (Psalm 127:5b).

An event in the life of Jacob illustrates that “children are a heritage from the Lord.” When his wife Rachel was childless, she demanded of Jacob, “Give me children, or I’ll die!” (Genesis 30:1). Jacob responded in Genesis 30:2, by asking rhetorically, **“Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?”** (NKJV). When Rachel eventually gave birth to a child of her own, it was because “God listened to her and opened her womb” (Genesis 30:22, NKJV). Similarly, Eve, when she gave birth to her firstborn, recognized that God had provided her the child (Genesis 4:1). Perhaps Hannah’s is the most poignant acknowledgment of God’s role in providing her child (1 Samuel 1:20; 2:1-10).

The statement that **“children are a heritage from the Lord”** is an important reminder that even the most significant of human achievements are not actually human achievements; they are divine blessings and gifts from the Creator.⁵²⁸ It is because of this principle that James challenges his readers not to speak of tomorrow as if we have total control, but instead to recognize that “if it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that” (James 4:15).

Children are a source of great joy and pleasure (Proverbs 23:24). At the same time, when they disobey and rebel, they can cause much heartache and grief for their parents. No one can deny

⁵²⁸ Chuck Swindoll, *The Great Lives from God's Word Series* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academy, 2004), 74.

that children are an enormous responsibility, but they are also one of life's greatest assets. No wonder Richard Templar avers that 'raising children requires a huge investment of time, resources, and love, but the resulting rewards are immeasurable.'⁵²⁹ Jesus acknowledged, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48). Instead of seeing children as a burden or liability, believers are to accept them as a legacy and gift from God (Exodus 23:25-26).

Solomon continues:

"Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court" (Psalm 127:4-5).

These lines portray a father as a warrior and his children as arrows in his quiver. A soldier with his "quiver full" was fully armed and ready for battle. In families that are established on a godly foundation, children are a vital weapon against the forces of evil in the world. Children, like arrows, can be sent out into the world to advance the cause of God's kingdom.

The Lord commanded the Israelites to teach their children His ways. This is expressed in Deuteronomy 6:6-7; 11:19 which states, "*these commandment that I give you today are to be on your hearts. **Impress** them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*" This responsibility remains with Christian parents today as we see Ephesians 6:4 which says "*...and ye fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*")

⁵²⁹ Richard Templar, *Rule of Parenting* (New York: Pearson Publishers, 2008), 87.

Fortunately, the Bible offers much wisdom and instruction for raising godly children. The end goal is to produce wise children who will honor and glorify God and serve Him throughout their lives. Proverbs 22:6 is affirmative in this regard *“Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”*

Children are also a blessing from the Lord because they provide future protection and security to their families. In ancient Israel, a household with many sons offered safety and defense; more children equaled less vulnerability. Parents who have children when they are young are blessed because those children will grow up in time to provide support and financial stability for their parents later in life. Grown children safeguard the family inheritance from those who might try to take legal or financial advantage of elderly parents. They also carry on the family heritage to future generations.

Moreover, children are a blessing from the Lord in that they demonstrate many character qualities that God wants His kingdom servants to cultivate. These qualities are enshrined in the following scriptural New Testament passages:

1. Matthew 18:3-4 – humility of children and the kingdom of God;
2. Matthew 19:14 & Mark 10:14-15 – the kingdom of God belongs to children;
3. 1 Peter 2:2 – the desire of the word like new born babies

AN INCLUSIVE LOOK AT INTERPRETATION OF THE TEXT:

Solomon’s statement that “children are a blessing from the Lord” does not mean God has not blessed waiting couples or that children are the only sign of His favour. We must take note of the indefinite article in the text - **Psalm 127:3 “A” HERITAGE NOT “THE” HERITAGE.** Those who are still

waiting on the Lord for childbearing have also received one blessing or the order that money cannot buy. Children are not the ONLY blessing (heritage) from the Lord; the verse only stresses an aspect of God's heritage. It simply means that children are to be received as an expression of God's goodness and grace and not as a curse or an inconvenience. When God chooses to bless us with children, He intends to bring great joy, pleasure, security, protection, and reward to our home and family through them. Simply put, the verse celebrates God's gift of children but does not imply that those without children lack God's blessing thus, the passage must be handled with pastoral sensitivity.

UNGODLY ATTITUDES TOWARDS GOD'S HERITAGE (CHILDREN):

It has been clearly established that children are a heritage of the Lord. If that is held to, we want to call our attention to some ungodly attitudes and practices in our times against God's heritage either by individuals or the society. They may look mild but are cancerous and inimical to the holistic development of our children.

1. **Condemnation:** this can damage children's self-esteem. It fosters deep shame, anxiety and rejection mentality in children. Condemnation makes them become fearful of mistakes. It has the capacity to impact emotional damage thereby leading to emotional withdrawal. It can be very traumatic for children to face tense condemnation at the slightest error committed.
2. **Comparison:** no two children are the same thing whether in physique, reasoning or in action even if they are identical twins. Most parents compare their children with other children especially when they (parents) expect better performance. This often affect the mental health of our children therefore, we must watch it.

3. **Molestation or CSA Child Sexual Abuse:** the news of parents molesting their children is much over social media. There are fathers having carnal knowledge of their daughters and it will shock you to hear that there are mothers also molesting their male children. Research carried out by UNICEF in February 2025 reveals that globally, nearly 1 in 8 girls experience sexual abuse before the age of 18.⁵³⁰ The implication of this is that over 370 million girls and women currently alive have experienced sexual abuse before turning 18. Among the boys, the research shows that; between 240 - 310 million have experienced molestation at childhood. This is totally condemned because it is an assault against a heritage of the Lord (children).
4. **Negligence of parental presence:** every child desires to feel the warmth of the parents but most parents leave the care of their children to caregivers especially by enrolling children in boarding schools. Most parents give excuses of making money so they can meet up with the demands of catering for the needs of those children; that is a misplaced priority. Negligence of parental availability on the ground of being busy is not a good attitude towards God's heritage.
5. **Indulgence:** making available everything a child needs without showing Christ to such child will lead to indulgence. Allowing them to have their way at all times is indulgence. It is bizarre to hear that as parents, your child stays back at home when you left for church; that is indulgence; it is not a good attitude. Proverbs 22:6 is clear in instructing us to train them in the way they should go and when they advance in age, they will not depart elsewhere.

⁵³⁰ UNICEF in February 2025.

6. **Child trafficking:** this is literally physical child abuse which sometimes leads to sexual abuse. It refers to children being illegally procured, relocated and forced into exploitation, usually for labour, organ harvesting slavery or sexual exploitation. This totally sabotages their liberty as real human beings. Anyone who understands that children are the heritage of the Lord will never engage in such heinous act. The law of our land criminalizes child trafficking as culprits receive due prosecution.

PARTNERING WITH GOD IN RAISING HIS HERITAGE:

1. **Understanding God's plan for children and God's perception about children:** as earlier stated, children in God's perspective are not burden but a heritage. We must consciously remind ourselves the attitude of Jesus towards children in His days based on the plan of God for children. In Matthew 19:13-15, some children were brought to Him so that He could lay hands on them and pray for them and bless them (Matthew 19:13). But the disciples tried to turn the children away by rebuking them. One may infer that it may be because they did not understand that children are God's heritage or because of the cultural and social orientation in the Jewish culture that children are more or less "property" of their parents. Mark 10:14 tells us that Jesus was "much displeased" with His disciples for their actions. So, we see in Matthew 19:14 the response of Jesus *Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these*". If the Psalm chosen for this year's synod says **children are God's heritage** and Jesus in the New Testament says **...theirs is the kingdom of heaven**, then, we need to understand God's perception about children and God's plan for children; this will inform our attitude toward children.

2. **Discipleship:** to partner with God, every parent must know that discipleship of children at home is God's plan. The first people children come in contact with are the parents. God's expectation from the parents is that they will disciple the children and make them "battle axes" for God. Discipleship is about growing to become like Christ so, as children grow at home, parents are expected to make them conform to Christ's image; following every precept of the Lord. I ask everyone seated here today; **are your children disciples of Christ through your parentage from your home?**
3. **Adopting the owner's manual for raising God's heritage.** A manual is a guide of operation. In it you find the manufacturer's direction for use. The Bible is the manual for us as Christians therefore; raising our children must be deeply informed by biblical dictates. Where God's injunction says we should rebuke children in love, let us so do. Sometimes when we over pamper children, decadence sets in and we will be held accountable for it. Where the Bible enjoins us to provide for them, let us so do as parents. Where the Bible stresses training in righteousness, let us do it prayerfully. Please note this: **Adherence to God's manual for training our children is the route to our peace at old age.**
4. **Scriptural Empowerment:** children are to be empowered by the word of God; this is a core duty for parents. Parents must see it as a point of duty to begin this by recitation for children, allow children to memorize and duly apply to their lives. We cannot overemphasize Deuteronomy 6:6-9 in this regard which says "*these commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. IMPRESS them on your children. TALK about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. TIE them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. WRITE them on the doorframes of your houses and on*

your gates.” This will create in them a hunger for meditation. The scripture is cardinal as it has the capacity to prosper our children in all areas of life provided they are empowered by the word of God. God’s instruction to Joshua stresses the importance of meditation “*this book of law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success*” Joshua 1:8. Children who are empowered by the scriptures usually live according to God’s precepts (Psalm 119:9) and they make headway in life.

5. **Giving premium attention to children ministry than ever before:** the word attention in Greek is *prosoche* – *προσοχή* which literally suggests directing ones attention toward something with **care** and **focus**. *Prosoche* – *προσοχή* refers to both general and mental focus. It is also the act of being careful, watchful and concentrating.⁵³¹ Partnership with God in raising our children needs **constant and undivided attention**. It relates to deeper devotion toward child upbringing. This is what God is calling us to as a Diocese and as individuals. Children ministry must receive our larger attention if the future of our church is anything meaningful to us. We must therefore, get people trained for children ministry for proper nurturing; core biblical teaching must be the focus of our Sunday School teachers.
6. **Modeling Godliness through mentorship:** this has to do with living a life that can be a template for our children. Imagine a parent who instructs the child: “**tell Mr. X that I am not around when he comes**” whereas he is around. Such a parent is modeling lies for the child. Parents must create good learning environment for. I

⁵³¹ Jeremy Duff, *The Element of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 155.

beseech us to model godliness and righteousness that we intend to see in our children beginning from our various homes and parishes.

7. **Firm discipline / Rebuking in love:** it is not bad to rebuke children but the “HOW” is very important. The way children were trained in the 1960s may not be applicable in our generation. In our days, we listen to parental instructions without questioning but today, our children ask several questions on one instruction given and you may be compelled to give them explanation. It would be wrong to turn them down just because of the generation we belonged to. We must ensure we tenderly rebuke them in love else, they may lose confidence in us.
8. **Remunerating good Behaviour:** children do better when we reward their good exhibitions. In practical terms, we must be willing to tell them “well done” to children for good deeds not just chastise them for wrongdoing. We can appreciate them with kind words, gifts, etc; this will develop their self-esteem. Let us ensure we appraise the strength of children much more than their weaknesses. If we want our children to be better at something, we must praise them at such thing the more. In doing this, we are also partnering with God in raising His heritage.
9. **Daily Intercession for Children:** “A child of many prayers cannot get lost” says Monica the mother of St. Augustine. The devil wants to own our children because they are battle axes and arrows in the hand of the mighty; but God says they are His heritage. It thus suggests that there is a spiritual battle for us to fight to own them and make them remain on the side of the Lord; this must be birthed in the place of prayer.

10. **Engaging the “3, 6, 9, 12” rule for children:** it was Serge Tisseron – (a French Psychiatrist and Psychoanalyst) who proposed this rule for better upbringing of children. The rule says: **no screens/media for children before the age of 3** (parents should be available to play with them); **no game consoles for children before age 6; no internet surfing before the age of 9 and “free” internet use starting at 12 must be supervised.** This rule is set out toward moderation of children’s early exposure to the media world.

THE DANGERS OF NEGLECTING PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD CHILDREN:

The list is enormous but I will like to call our attention to four points:

1. Parents may lose them even when they are under the parents.
2. They may not belief in the God their parents serve thereby following other routes
3. They may result to alternatives by joining bad gangs which may lead to drug addiction and other vicious behaviours. At such points, it may be difficult to bring them back
4. Poor performance in life can be as a result of parental negligence

PASTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS

As a wrap up, I make the following recommendations:

- a. Parents are challenged to lead their children to Christ at early stage
- b. There must be a shift in perspective. Children must be seen as the future of the church; its living foundation and vital force in natural transformation

- c. Children's Ministry as a frontline in all denominations should braze up and become more active than ever before
- d. Churches are to integrate Children Ministry into strategic plan with clear goals and this must be properly funded
- e. Churches must move beyond programme-based activities and adopt structured discipleship models in all parishes. Only disciplined children will endure the pressure of life
- f. It was an established home that raised Timothy and Paul commended such (1 Timothy 1:5-8) therefore; we need to establish Christian homes as light to correct evil in the society. "ile la ti n ko eso r'ode" – "charity they say begins at home."
- g. Finally this paper recommends that elders should avoid mobilising the young ones into political or religious thugerry thereby causing unrest in the society. Research has shown that there is no singular act of thugerry among the young ones that has no sponsorship of the elders. Let us not forget the injunction of Christ in Matthew 18:6. Let us read in the Amplified translation for better understanding. **"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble and sin [by LEADING him away from My teaching, it would be better for him to have heavy milestone [as large as one turned by a donkey hung around his neck and to be DROWNED in the DEPTH of the sea. RATHER THAN LEAD THEM AWAY FROM THE RIGHT PATH, ELDERS SHOULD LEAD THEM TOWARD THE RIGHT PATH – CHRIST.**

CONCLUSION

Parents must note that their children are our future. When the fleeting of time takes away strength from parents and they begin to fade away like the stars of the morning, children (God's heritage) should be able to raise them up and be a shoulder upon which parents would lean. This does not come by default; it will take deliberate and concerted efforts of parental investments today. It may be expensive now, but worth it. One of the Yoruba proverbs drives home the point which is; *"enikan lo n b'imo sugbon, igba eniyan ni n woo"* this translates thus: "it usually take just two parents to birth a child but it takes concerted effort of many to nurture the child."

The message in the Hymn titled; "Jesus Loves the Little Children, All the children of the World..." written by Herbet Woolston stresses that Jesus' interest in Children is profound; this must be the primary concern of all as parents. Irrespective of their color and level of naivety, Jesus loves them and we must invest in them.

If children are God's heritage as the scripture says affirmatively, this paper argues that parents must NOT be like Prophet Elisha who wasted the destiny of many children with his anointing because of their little mistakes as we have it in 2Kings 2:23-24:

23. From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, there came forth little children out of the city and they mocked him and said; "Get out of here, bald head.

24. he turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the Lord. THEN TWO BEARS CAME OUT OF THE WOODS AND MAULED FORTY-TWO OF THE CHILDREN.

Instead, in love and accommodation, parents must collectively use all that God has given to them to build the destiny of

children (whether biological or adopted) just as Christ love and accommodated them. Inclusively speaking, if we build beautify edifies without building these children, we have wasted resources because those edifies will later become empty if there are no properly disciplined / built children. Parenting in Nigeria is a complex one by reason of diversities of cultural orientation, but it is not an impossible task.

Therefore, parents are encouraged to get actively involved in nurturing God's heritage by imbibing the instructions enshrined in Deuteronomy 6:6-9, in training children. For emphasis, readers are encouraged to study this devotionally **"Deuteronomy 6:6-9"**

- These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.
- IMPRESS them on your children. TALK about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up
- TIE them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads
- WRITE them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates

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