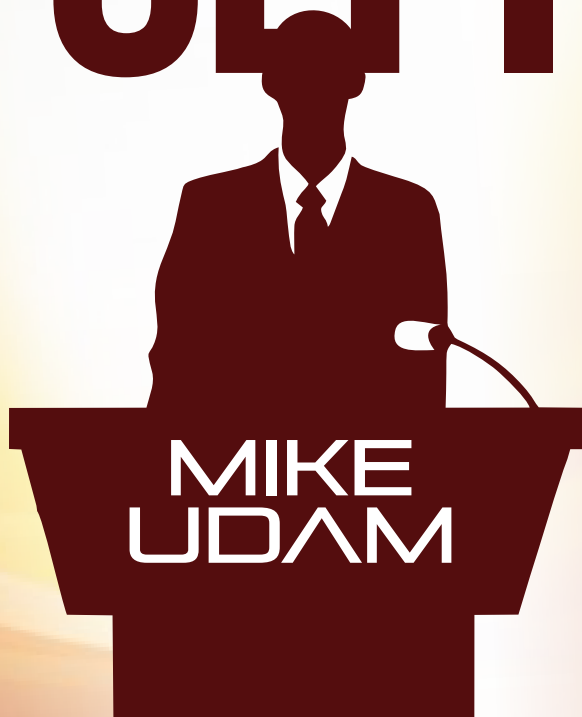


The
**PREACHER
AND THE
PULPIT**



**MIKE
UDAM**

**THE
PREACHER
AND
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PULPIT**

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THE PURITY OF THE PULPIT

The pulpit is the point of flow of the word of God to his people. In Eph 3:10, it is the intension of God that his manifold wisdom should be made known to his people through the church. The pulpit is that point where the message of the almighty flows to his people and the minister or preacher is the vessel or messenger that the message must pass through.

Technically, the preacher of the congregation is the pulpit personified. However, since he alone cannot work in that platform, some men need to join him to feed the church regularly.

Therefore, there is need to discuss the purity of the pulpit so that all who desire to climb it may be properly educated on what it takes to climb there and minister to God's people.

Men desiring to climb the pulpit first ought to be sanctified and purged from all known sin that can destroy the image of the church and pollute the sermon flowing from there.

2Tim 2:19 ¶ Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 20 But in a great house there are not

only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

Not everyone in the church is qualified to mount the pulpit. For you to be useful to the master and fit for use, you must first purge yourself of all known sin, hidden or exposed.

Furthermore, men desiring to lead must be faithful in the Word and character. They must be men that take the work of the lord seriously.

2Tim 2:2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

The technical point here is faithful men. You must be a faithful man to be given the word to teach others.

Next is the requirement of staying true to the Word.

1Pet 4:11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.

The pulpit is not a place for philosophy, psychology or sociology. It is the place where we speak the word as God's oracle speaking as the Lord has said it.

So if the church must grow, great attention should be on the quality of anointing flowing from the pulpit.

The messenger must be sound in all ramification to qualify to mount the pulpit.

1Tim 4:12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Brethren, you cannot climb the pulpit with a polluted life that cannot be a worthy example for the church to follow.

PULPIT ETHICS

Do not assign people to the pulpit on the basis of ethnic or democratic consideration. Assign people on the basis of sound spiritual standing.

Do not use the pulpit to settle scores. It is a place to rebuke sin, encourage the weak and strengthen those already on the right path. This must be done in a loving manner.

Do not assign people with questionable character. You can do well to ask the wife at home if his husband is qualified to lead God's people.

Closing Thought

The message and the messenger are both important to God. The pulpit is the meeting point of the message and the messenger. Weak and unprepared message should not come out of the pulpit. Also a powerful message from a weak character is equally not good for the pulpit. Once the pulpit gets it right, the church will grow.

NO, YOU CAN'T CLIMB THE PULPIT

You were very angry that you were not enlisted to give a sermon or teach a class and that you have been “technically disfellowshipped”. Well, don’t be angry, you cannot go there, the odor of your sin is perceived by the brethren and it is spiritually offensive. The best you can do for yourself is to take time and clean yourself of the mess around your life and allow the smell to die down.

You are aggrieved that beyond your being called to serve in the pulpit, even to lead in prayers, you are denied. Don’t worry brother, maybe you want us to tell you that being a cultist and being a Christian are two different things. The church is planning to meet with you and draw your attention to the rumour making the rounds that you belong to a cult and people in your community know about it. Prayer is not common. When you pray you are leading the entire congregation to God on their behalf.

No you cannot climb there. You were in a funeral recently and saw how the church was chased away by some men who claimed the late church secretary was their member. You noticed how shocked I was and you consoled me that in the

midst of 12 there is bound to be a Judas. I thanked you and today it seems in the 11, there is also another Judas.

Recall that your last sermon was on moral purity and you stressed on fornication, drunkenness and extra marital affairs which you showed from the Bible that God frown heavily at. It seems that you deliberately refuse to talk about belonging to a cult. It was that powerful sermon of yours that caused one bold man to inform me and other church leaders that you are a leader of a known cult group. In shock and disbelieve, he was rebuked and told to go home and repent of his sins. But our preliminary findings seem to indicate it is true. We are still in doubt, but for now while we are looking at your file, we will not ask you to lead God's people in any assignment during the worship of the almighty.

Know it today that God is a jealous God. You cannot serve God and Idol.

1Cor 10:21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

2Cor 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness

Eph 5:11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

No you cannot go there. The pulpit is a place for those standing well to stand and pull others from a pit. For now we don't think you are strong enough to lead in the church.

If you know deep inside you that you are truly a cultist, then come immediately to my office and we will plan the date to renounce your membership right in front of the full glare of the congregation. The devil must be shamed.

No true Christian desirous of heaven can belong to a cult group. Don't be deceived.

Three powerful ingredients define a preacher.

The quality of your personality.

The quality of your family.

The quality of your message.

Your personality and moral standard can damage your eloquent preaching.

Your vibrant preaching can be killed by one vagabond behaviour of your family member.

Worst of it all, if your message is not quality, you are finish. Watch all three and pray for grace to scale through. It goes beyond just preaching.

THERE IS STILL A CRACK

Dear Theophel,

Despite all the passages I have quoted to show you how God and man relates, you are still thinking it is my opinion. Let me try to use another method to make you see reasons why it will be hypocritical for me to allow you hit the pulpit and lead God's people. Like I said before it is not possible or better still, not under my watch as the preacher and angel of the church here.

Isa 59:1-2 clearly states that sin separates one from God. Sin makes God very far from man. But your problem is that you deny that the sin I am drawing your attention to does not exist. Ok let me come out clear. I have on good information that for three years now, you don't eat food prepared by your wife. You are just managing her and for the sake of the church and public opinion, you decided not throw her away. She is living in your house but honestly she is your former lover. The world is seeing both of you as couples but you are inhouse enemies. Take your time to read 1Pet 3:7. You are directed by the holy spirit through the hands of Peter to dwell with her with understanding. Yes, she is wrong to have provoked you, but you see, refusing to eat food both day and night is creating room for the devil to strike in. Apostle Paul warned that your body is hers and hers is yours. Just read again 1Cor 7:1-5. I am speaking from the scriptures.

So instead of desiring to lead God's people in any capacity whatsoever, just go back and amend your ways with your wife. In fact, if you read 1 Pet 3:7. You will know that any man with family issues does not please God and his prayer is not answered.

Hear this for the last time. The pulpit is not for those whose character will destroy the gospel and make people blaspheme the name of the Lord. Anyone coming to the pulpit must sanctify himself and make himself usable by the master.

By the way, are you really sure you are a Christian with that kind of unforgiving spirit that you have? Read this passage by yourself

Matt 6:14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 "But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

So you now know that for three years now, you have been completely working for Satan because you refuse to forgive your wife. The very woman that you lovingly choose from amongst many women and married.

So please don't be angry that I did not allow you to preach a sermon. You are still having an issue to resolve for the good of your salvation. Kindly preach to yourself.

It will be hypocritical and God will count it a sin against me, to know that you are wallowing in sin and still call you to lead God's people. No. Not under my watch.

It is a tough decision, but I just have to make you see the truth in love. There is still a crack in your family. That crack has made you unfit for God's service.

Once you work on the crack, God is ready to use you.

The Lord has always desired purity of thought in His ministers, and He desires it today. We cannot be reminded of this fact too frequently. Anciently, even outward bodily perfection was required. No one who had a blemish was to "dome nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord." Lev. 21:21. If God was so exact as to the personal appearance of His servants, how much more does He require purity in heart and life! Says the Old Testament evangelist: "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out from the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." Isa. 52:11. This has been God's expectation for his ministers in all times, but especially for this very serious time in which we live. God's ministers must be pure in their life-molding thoughts, if they are to bear the vessels of the Lord acceptably.

God bless you.

Your friend and brother

Mike

THE PURITY OF THE CHURCH

The church is a creation of God and his son purchased it with his own blood. ACT 20:28.

Purity is a state of being pure. Free from contaminants.

1. God expects the church to be pure and undefiled.
2. Purity and holiness are strong attributes of God and as such he expects his children to be pure and holy.
3. Purity is attainable.
4. We are to make deliberate and conscious efforts in the direction of purity.

FOCAL POINTS OF PURITY

1. Doctrinal purity
2. Moral purity

Doctrinal purity is attained when we struggle to worship God in his own terms and know the difference between doctrine and opinion on all matter pertaining to live and godliness. 1Tim 4:16.

Poor handling of doctrinal purity will lead to vain worship. Matt 15:7-9.

The emphasis of this lesson is to look more at moral purity. Moral purity is crucial to the total wellbeing of the individual Christian in the church.

There are five focal points in moral purity viz

1. Communication purity
2. Relationship purity
3. Transactional purity
4. Sight purity
5. Heart purity

COMMUNICATION PURITY

A true Christian must watch what comes out of his mouth. So much of our personality is rubbished by what comes out of our mouth. Life and death are in the power of the tongue.

Mt 12:35 "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. 36 "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Col 4:6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Eph 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

Col 3:8 ¶ But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

Eph 5:4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

From these passages, let it be known that

1. The Christian and by extension the church can be corrupted when we drive rough with our mouth.
2. We must stand and give account of the things we say, cooked from our heart on the day of judgment.

So we have to watch what we say, and how we say it. Even truth not said in a loving manner constitute a sin.

RELATIONSHIP PURITY

This is a very difficult zone and has destroyed so many congregations of the lord.

Once our sexual purity is compromised, the church that turns a blind eye is dragged into our sin. The church that reacts is seen by us as very rude and unloving and acting like Pharisee spoken about by the Bible.

Let it be stated here and now that;

1. Sex before marriage is sin.
2. Creating an enabling environment for sex to happen is also sin.

1Thes 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;

Eph 5:3 ¶ But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;

Col 3:5 ¶ Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness,

passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

3. Sex outside marriage for the married is sin.

Heb 13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

TRANSACTIONAL PURITY

This is the very purity that is most often neglected and less attended to by Christians yet very crucial in the formation and bonding of brethren in the church and beyond.

Transaction involves the dealing between two or more persons.

Honesty and integrity promotes our transactional purity.

As at today, so many Christians are deficient of simple truth and lacks integrity in their dealings.

Eph 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

Col 3:9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

The failure of purity in this area has robbed the church of growth in the business sector. If we are honest with ourselves, we can do business with one another and grow into conglomerate.

So many heart breaks before and in the marriage setting are as a result of our impurity in the transaction window.

Imagine that the boy living with you from your wife's village is now known to be the son of your wife she had long before you got married.

Imagine that the young girl that often visit your house from your husband's village as his relative is actually the daughter he got before marrying you.

Imagine for a second how you will feel.

Once we are pure in this area, we will win a major part of the war against impurity.

SIGHT PURITY

The human eyes are the window to the heart.

So many of us are guilty here.

We are very loose and think it does not matter.

We watch pornography in secret and or openly (BBN show).

We destroy the purity of our heart and defile it.

Matt 5:28 but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

2Sam 11:2 And it came to pass at eventide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof

he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

HEART PURITY

The heart is a human organ responsible for pumping blood. The heart is a hollow, muscular organ, which functions as a pump for the movement of blood through the body. Beyond this physical and medical function, the heart also spiritually is responsible for the storage, manipulation and management of our thoughts.

Jesus advised that we should be very careful with the heart.

Matt 15:18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

The heart is the central processing unit of the human system. If you don't watch your heart carefully you will see yourself heading towards hell consciously.

Mrk 7:21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness,

*deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye,
blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23 All
these evil things come from within,
and defile the man.*

So none of those sins listed above happen by mistake. They require some planning and the heart is the manufacturing room.

A godly heart will manufacture a godly product. A devilish heart will display a devilish product.

Jeremiah was inspired to alert us that the heart is deceitful.

*Jer 17:9 - The heart is deceitful above
all things, and desperately wicked:
who can know it?*

So as true children of God, you may be deceived by your heart to think that you are in order.

Your heart may deceive you to think that having a sleeping mate is a good road to marriage. The Bible calls you a fornicator.

Your heart may deceive you to think that lying is a negligible sin and inconsequential, but the Bible says ALL liar have their end in the lake of fire.

*Rev 21:8 But the fearful, and
unbelieving, and the abominable, and
murderers, and whoremongers, and
sorcerers, and idolaters, and all
liars, shall have their part in the lake
which burneth with fire and
brimstone: which is the second death.*

Your heart may deceive you that God will understand and the grace of God will carry you through. Listen very carefully. The Bible knows the mathematics associated with willful sin and the abuse of grace.

*Heb 10:26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,
Rom 6:1 ¶ What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*

Your heart may lead you to think that extra marital affairs is justified because you are unfairly treated at home by your spouse. Relax and think straight. The marriage bed should remain undefiled.

Heb 13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Your heart may deceive you to think that God is not seeing you. You are just joking with fire. Whereas the Lord is good and loving, he is also a consuming fire. The Bible states clearly that everything is open and naked before him Heb 4:13.

Watch your heart brethren and friends. Watch what goes in and watch what comes out.

The world can see the gift but the Lord sees the motive and intention of the giver.

COMMON ROADS TO IMPURITY

1. Peer groups- a large number of Christians stain their records from the quality of friends they keep. The choice of friend you keep to a large extent determine the quality of your purity.
2. Alcohol and drugs – most Christians have been led astray by drugs and alcohol. The charge to be sober and be filled with the holy spirit is set aside by the imbibing of drugs and alcohol.
3. Poor parenting – some of our communication manners and public conduct is a reflection of the quality of home training that was handed down by the parent.

THE WAY FORWARD

We will conclude with a powerful position that was taken by Daniel.

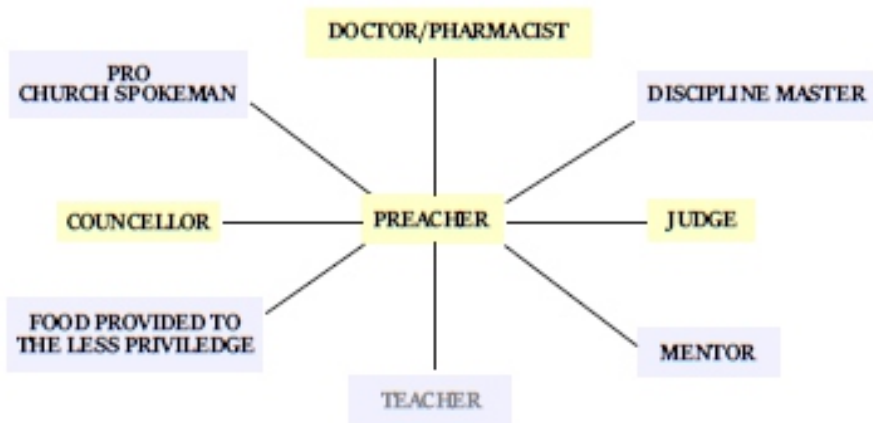
Dan 1:8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's dainties, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

THE 21ST CENTURY PREACHER

The preacher is a Christian leader who offers to serve God as his messenger for a local congregation. Both members and the Bible hold slightly different views about who is a preacher.

To the member of the local congregation, the preacher is as captured in the diagramme below:

MEMBER'S VIEW OF A PREACHER



1Tim 4:16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee

Jas 5:20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

After carefully studying the name preacher, the following leadership roles can be derived from it.

1. **PREACH THE WORD IN SEASON AND OUT OF SEASON.** 2Tim 4:2. It is the job that you signed with Christ to do. It is your primary assignment. How can you lead people you don't have time to talk to them? In preaching to your congregation, you inspire awake in them and help direct them to Christ. The church is made up of different kinds of people.

2Tim2:20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

Your job is to mold them to be better.

2. **REACH OUT TO THE LOST** 1Cor 9:6. If the church must record any meaningful growth under

your watch, then you must go out and preach the good news to the dying world. The only time David stayed at home when kings usually goes to war, he ended up dinning with the devil that sparked off a chain reaction.

2Sa 11:1 ¶ And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

So if you don't provide leadership in this area, you have failed woefully as a preacher.

3. **ENCOURAGE YOUR CONGREGATION TO SERVE THE LORD FAITHFULLY** 1Tim 4:16.

Faith comes from hearing the word of God proclaimed by men who are grounded in the word. Rom 10:17. Show them that their service is not in vain.

1Cor 15:58 ¶ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

4. **AROUSE THE INTEREST OF YOUR MEMBERS IN THEIR QUEST FOR GOD'S WORD.** 2Tim 2:15. Prove to them that success in life comes from painstakingly studying the word of God.

Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him., Jos 1:8 This book of the 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

5. **CHECK THE SPIRITUAL TEMPERATURE OF YOUR CONGREGATION DAILY AS YOU PRAY** 1Thes 5:17.

6. **HEAR QUICK, KEEP SECRETS AND SPEAK BOLDLY.**

Jas 1:19 ¶ Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

as a preacher, you will hear a lot. Develop a filter mechanism to handle all the volume of information at your disposal. You will also learn to hold information

at your disposal. In speaking boldly, you must analyze the person and the time.

- 7. EVOLVE A LEADERSHIP BY EXAMPLE STYLE IN ALL YOUR WAYS.** 1Tim 4:12. Jesus began to do and to teach. The doing must come first. Act 1:1-2. Your dressing, food and family must meet global best practice within the pages of the scriptures. The preacher must be in the front at all times.

- 8. REVIEW YOUR LIFE TO SEE IF IT IS MATCHING WITH YOUR PREACHING**

1Cor 9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

So, in summary

1. Know that you are a leader.
2. You are a model.
3. You are the Public Relations Officer of the church.
4. You are the father of all.
5. You are to fashion out the quality of spiritual food the members will eat always.
6. You are to direct their focus.

7. É ready to answer all their questions 1Tim 3:15

THE PREACHER MODELS

It will be good to look at various models of preachers prevalent today. In doing so we shall look at their strengths and weakness.

THE WORKING-CLASS PREACHER

This model of preachers are men who have a good job in the secular world but still find time to still manage a congregation.

Advantages:

He does not depend much on the church for his survival.

He can even help the church when they are down financially

He is a good model for the children to copy as they look forward to being like him and still serve God.

He can rebuke the church and some stubborn leaders who err without it affecting his job security.

Disadvantages:

The church becomes lazy in the area of caring for a preacher.

He may be epileptic and can't cover much in terms of interpersonal relationship.

He may be arrogant since he is taking care of himself at some point.

Direction: this model will be good for the rural settings of Nigeria.

THE BUSINESS MAN PREACHER

This model fits for men who are business men and entrepreneurs yet still desire the pulpit.

Advantages

He does not depend much on the church for his survival.

He can even help the church when they are down financially.

The church can benefit from his trade or skills.

He cannot be pushed by leadership of the church anyhow because he is stable and his income is sure.

Disadvantages

His business may becloud him from doing his job effectively.

He may be a bad example to punctuality.

The church becomes lazy in the area of caring for a preacher.

He may be arrogant since he is taking care of himself at some point.

Direction: this model will be good for the semi urban settings of Nigeria like local government headquarters.

THE FULL TIME PREACHER

Like the name implies he is a completely devoted man to do the preaching job.

Advantages

He is always available and as such the job will not suffer.

He has plenty time to do his job.

He also has plenty time to do research.

Disadvantages

He is at the mercy of the congregation for all his needs.

He has to be careful with the power brokers in the congregation.

Gift may influence him not to see some sins around him.

He may be so idle if not well monitored

Direction: This model will be good for big congregations that have the financial muscle to pay that kind of preacher.

SUMMARY

Each congregation should do a need assessment before engaging a preacher.

75% of sound preachers today are either business man preacher or working class preacher.

50% of preachers that are afraid to speak up in the event of sin are full time preachers who have family.

Only 25% of preachers today who are full time are truly doing full time preaching.

THE GENERAL CHALLENGES PREACHERS TODAY IN NIGERIA

There are four basic challenges faced by any preacher of the gospel viz

1. The work efficiency challenge
2. The personal lifestyle challenge
3. The family outlook challenge
4. The congregation outlook challenge

THE WORK EFFICIENCY CHALLENGE

1. Does he know his job?
2. Is he effective at his job?
3. Is he deploying the tools available at his disposal very effectively?
4. Does he command influence while on the job?

THE PERSONAL LIFESTYLE CHALLENGE

1. What kind of personality is he?
2. Does his life match his sermons?
3. Can his members introduce him?

THE FAMILY OUTLOOK CHALLENGE

1. What is the public image of his family?
2. Is the family a good model for the church to copy?
3. Does the family cause the church to be blasphemed?

THE CONGREGATION OUTLOOK CHALLENGE


1. What kind of men is he working with?

2. Is his relationship with church leaders smooth or rough?
3. Is he well motivated to work?

7 COMMON PITFALLS OF A PREACHER

The moment a man becomes a preacher especially for a local congregation, he has landed in a very important job taking the driver seat to lead men to heaven. His job is really challenging because he is the major human resource manager of the church. He is to help balance the spiritual and physical needs of the church.

During this process, the devil has planted several land mines that can explode and destroy his career. We shall attempt to discuss 7 of those land mines capable of shipwrecking even his faith.

1. Don't go near the treasury of the church. Just have a good idea about the figure and only show interest in what belongs to you. If you can, insist in not being one of the signatory of the church account with the bank. The list  pulpit arising from going near the treasury is alarming. Don't go there if you desire your job.
2. Don't admire married or single sisters beyond greeting level.
Inspiration for this advice is drawn from 1Tim5:2. The preacher must be very careful dealing with this group

especially those unmarried. Timothy was told to handle them with all purity. The list of preachers driven away from the pulpit or rubbished in their career from the single mismanagement of this group is alarming. Some that can endure shame manage on, others leave the pulpit completely.

3. Don't allow gifts from members blind your judgment. A lot of preachers lost their grip of the congregation when they shout at any sin committed by the low class and are perceived to condone sin committed by the high class. The single conclusion is that it is the gifts that you have received that have blinded your judgment.
4. Don't allow your family stray enough to infect the quality of your preaching. You must put your family under control. 1Tim3:4 is completely applicable here. Remember, the preacher's daughters sin is always louder than the member daughter's sin. Your family must lead by example in all aspect. 1Tim 4:12.
5. Don't play with prayers. Talk to God regularly about the people you are leading and ask God to help you lead them well. So many people who are weak in the pulpit are weak in prayers.
6. Don't use the pulpit to settle scores. No matter what you do, your sermon must prick people. Be careful

how you transfer information from the inner house talk to the pulpit. Jam 1:19.

8. Don't joke with your self-control mechanism. You need to try your best to control your anger. You will for sure be provoked by the conduct and behavior of your members. Manage them along so that Christ will manage you too. Speak boldly when necessary. Speak softly when applicable. Human management is not an easy task. 1Tim 4;16.

THE WAY FORWARD

All preachers should have this at the back of their minds that

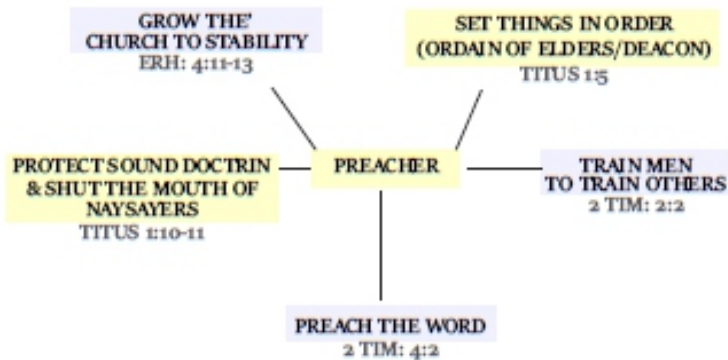
1. They may not see their work being appreciated immediately.
2. The church may be unkind to you even in your take home.
3. You may be unduly criticized,
4. Remain focused or fall out of line. 1Cor 9:27

It is one thing to be a preacher and another to remain a preacher.

Preach the word in season and out of season.

THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE PREACHER AND THE PULPIT

THE 5 BASIC WORK OF A PREACHER



Hold the faith and a good conscience (1 Tim. 1:19). The preacher must trust God implicitly, looking to him for help under all circumstances.

He is to seek to know what is right, then do what he believes to be right. Otherwise, he may be condemned by Jehovah (1 John 3:20).

Be diligent in preparation (1 Tim. 4:13-15). The preacher is obligated to study the whole Bible. He is to give all diligence that he may stand approved of God (2 Tim. 2:15).

Paul instructs that he give himself wholly to his study and work. He should be as well informed as possible in all things that will enable him to do his work well, and not be satisfied with a mere smattering, or merely "getting up a sermon."

Take heed to himself concerning his life and teaching (1 Tim. 4:16). Preachers are prone to seek to correct the faults of others, the church and the community. He should never forget to turn the searchlight inwardly, lest after he has preached to others he himself may be lost (**2 Cor. 13:5; 1 Cor. 9:27**). One should take care to preach the truth and practice it.

Keep himself pure (1 Tim. 5:22; 2 Tim. 2:22). Be free from hasty and unjust actions. Exercise sound judgment. Do not allow self to be used in unethical schemes. Avoid youthful lusts. Avoid questionable places and conduct. Not only should we avoid evil, but also hate evil (**1 Thess. 5:21-22; Rom. 12:9**). Let him also be pure from the blood of all men by declaring the whole counsel of God (**Acts 20:20,26,27**).

Follow after righteousness (1 Tim. 6:11-12). This command is in connection with the warning against love for money. Covetousness is idolatry (**Eph. 5:5**). The mercenary preacher cannot please God. In order to be righteous -- a condition acceptable to God -- one must flee covetousness. When one preaches primarily for money he does not obey this command.

Hold the pattern of sound words (2 Tim. 1:13; Titus 2:7-8). Greatest care should be exercised in stating truth in the

language of inspired writers. The teaching of Christ as given by the Holy Spirit must be upheld (**John 16:13-15**). The truth should be positively

unmixed with the philosophies of men. Preachers must seek to please God (**Rom. 15:3**), not seek the applause of men (**Matt.6:1-6**).

Be sober in all things. Only those influenced by truth have well-balanced minds and clear vision. Turn not aside unto fables, neither strive about words to no profit (**2 Tim. 2:14**). Hold steadfastly to divine truth (**2 Thess. 2:15**).

Suffer hardships (2 Tim. 4:4). Preachers should not be exalted in mind over their accomplishments. Compare them with the sufferings and privations of Paul. He must bear persecutions that come because of preaching the truth (**2 Cor. 11:21-28**).

Protect the church from false teaching (1 Tim. 1:3). Preachers should know the truth; they should know what error is and how to expose it. H. Leo Boles often said, "*One cannot preach the truth without exposing error.*" A different doctrine is a perverted gospel and the anathema of God is upon those who preach it and those overcome thereby (**Gal. 1:6-9**).

Preach the word (2 Tim. 4:1-2). This is prefaced by a most solemn charge. The preacher must adhere strictly to apostolic teaching (**2 Tim. 2:2**). Take care to teach all the apostles taught and only that delivered through them by the Spirit. The word of God is inexhaustible. Preachers should study and

expound the scriptures, give their lives to this -- one of the greatest needs in the church today. Be not content with polishing up sermons of sectarian preachers as too many are now doing. If the preacher devotes himself to unfolding the Scriptures he will never lack for sermon material.

Reprove, rebuke, exhort (2 Tim. 4:1-2). Too long the trend has been to speak softly and tread lightly. Note the force in the meaning of these words: 1) **Reprove:** "convince, refute, confute, convict, bring to light, expose, find fault with, correct, reprehend severely, chide, admonish, to call to account, show one his fault, chasten, punish" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon on *elegcho*). 2) **Rebuke:** "To tax with fault, rate, chide, reprove, censure severely, admonish or charge sharply" (Thayer on *epitimao*). 3) **Exhort:** "To incite by words or advice; to advise or warn earnestly" (Webster). "Admonish" (Thayer on *parakaleo*). Two-thirds of this command is negative. In **Jeremiah 1:10** the prophet was similarly ordered: "*to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.*" This is not to be abused, yet when strong measures are demanded the preacher should not hesitate. Let there be strong denunciation of error and sin, and strong entreaty for souls to turn from them.

Expose sin without partiality (Titus 1:13-16; 1 Tim. 5:20-21). God is no respecter of persons (**Rom. 2:11**). The preacher must be as impartial in his dealings. The church

should be purged of evil. The truth can never be hurt by obeying it. We cannot honor God and wink at evil. The rich should be warned as well as the poor (**1 Tim. 6:16-19**).

Warn against apostasy (1 Tim. 4:1-6). To be a good minister of Christ, the preacher will warn against digression and apostasy. It is presently urgent that all faithful preachers wield the sword of the Spirit against the encroachments of liberalism that now seek to permeate the church of the Lord. Satan is alert to every opportunity to turn souls from truth. We serve Satan's cause when we fail to warn against error.

Bring to remembrance the ways of Paul (1 Cor. 4:17). He followed Christ (**1 Cor. 11:1**); sought no personal glory (**1 Cor. 2:1-5**); was honest (**Acts 23:1**); declared the whole counsel of God (**Acts 20:20,27**); gave himself wholly (**2 Cor. 11:23-31**).

3.15.A fearful responsibility rests upon those who choose to preach. They should determine to know the truth and preach it at all costs. Heavier judgment comes to those who would be teachers from impure motives (**James 3:1**). The work of the preacher may be summed up in Paul's charge: ***"Preach the word!"***

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHURCH TO THE PREACHER

Our attention will now shift to the responsibilities of the church to the preacher. We will first consider the church collective and then narrow down to individual members.

3 SPECIAL DUTIES OF A CHURCH TO THE PREACHER

1. Feed and provide for him
2. Support his work by being available to work with him
3. Pray for him to be successful in his mission.

7 SPECIAL DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN TO THE PREACHER

1. Pray for him, his family, and his work to be a huge success. If he fails, you will suffer the consequences also.
2. Share all good things with him to make his work interesting. As he is polishing your spiritual unit, you help him out in the physical area.
3. Give him technical tips to enhance his success. Tell him more about his field area. Share vital information you think he may need which you know he does not know.
4. Call him to the corner and point out his fault. He may not know that he had blundered.

5. Go close to him and share his pain. He is also first a human being before becoming a preacher.
 6. Present yourself always to be taught by him.
 7. Forgive him always so that your sins will be forgiven you.
- Our congregations will experience fellowship if we put this simple idea to test.
- Think and act. God bless us all.

THINKING ABOUT CHURCH RECORDS

The need to develop a database for the church need not be overemphasized. My recent research has shown that some congregation function without a valid database and those that attempt to keep records do not have a functional record keeping strategy and policy that will endure the taste of time. As a member of the team working on the statistics of the church in Nigeria, I have come to the conclusion that we had long neglected data and it is gradually telling a toll on the church.

Today it my desire to share with you a short lesson on church records with the view of reminding congregations of the need to keep and maintain records that will help it plan and grow the church. The book of Acts is a product of accurate historical record kept by Luke who was not an Apostle. I strongly believe that congregations should take these records seriously.

CHURCH RECORDS

The following are important church records that should be kept if the church desire to grow.

BAPTISM RECORD – This book is used to record all spiritual birth within the congregation and the result of the congregation’s evangelism efforts.

EVENT RECORD – This book is expected to record all major events in the congregation. Marriages, deaths, send forth and reception that took place in the congregation.

RECORD OF ALL CORRESPONDENCE – This folder keeps all incoming and outgoing correspondences within that congregation.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS- Here the basic decisions reached in all meetings of the church is kept especially as a major reference point for the future.

COMMITTEE’S REPORT BOOK. This book or folder keeps all the report submitted by committees set up by the church.

FINANCIAL RECORD- This book keeps record of all financial dealing of the church. All income and expenditure of the church must be found here.

CHURCH DOCUMENTS FOLDERS—All land documents, survey plans, work plan, budget and any other documents useful before the church.

INVENTORY BOOK – This book keeps record of all tangible items that belongs to the church. It is a very powerful book

VISITORS BOOK – This book keeps tab of all those who visited the church both brethren and non-brethren.

MEMBERSHIP REGISTER: A register of all members who places membership in that congregation.

These records can be configured into a simple computer software that will make information retrieval a thing of joy.

A wake up call.

THE WEIGHT OF DISCORD ON CHURCH GROWTH

It is my desire that we examine the impact that discord within the church has on the growth of the church.

This topic is timely and requires serious minded Christians to take out time and reason with one another to chart a way forward.

First let me state here that the growth of the church is given by the creator of the universe.

I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. 1Cor 3:6-9

The minister is the principal actor in determining the growth pattern and profile of the church.

For this reason **I left you in Crete**, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, Tit 1:5

So today, I shall explore three areas of discord in the body of Christ.

1. Discord arising from ministerial inconsistencies

2. Discord arising from inter personal conflicts in the congregation
And
3. Discord arising from inter congregational conflicts

MINISTERIAL INCONSISTENCIES

The minister as the spokesman of God is saddles with the responsibility of speaking as he heard from the master to the flock so that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known through the church.

Once the minister becomes inconsistent with the laid down instruction about his office, a discord will arose and the church will not grow as expected.

1. The quality of his lifestyle and that of his family being not consistent with the scriptures. There will be a discord between him and the word he is preaching and the growth of the church will be affected. 1Tim 4:12 and 16.
2. His approach to discipline can create a discord in the church as people will see him as being partial and practicing favouritism.
3. His attitude to work can create discord in the church. Once brethren tag him as being lazy and not vibrant and spiritually agile and meeting 21st century swag, they will feel cold supporting him and this will in turn cause him not to be effective leading to zero growth of the church.

INTER PERSONAL CONFLICTS IN THE CHURCH

The Corinthian church was the headquarters of personal conflicts as we see reading through the letter of Paul to them.

Interpersonal conflicts kill church growth to an unimaginable proportion.

1. Some conflicts arise from poor understanding of doctrine and opinion.
2. Some conflicts arise from poor handling of discipline of an erring member.
3. Some conflicts arise from poor distribution of benevolence.
4. Some arise from disagreement over what focus the church should choose. Some love evangelism far and above edification and some love edification far and above evangelism. Both camps see each other as enemies.
5. Some conflicts arise from financial resource management and allocation.

These lead to the factionalisation of the church and the growth of the church suffers.

INTER CONGREGATIONAL CONFLICTS

The growth of the church in a area depends on the cooperation of congregations in that area especially in the area of evangelism.

Because of differences in the understanding of the scriptures and the holding of positions that are not seen to be in

conformity with the scriptures by others, some congregations disfellowship others they think are in error and as such the growth of the church in that area is compromised.

At some point the wandering sinner finds it difficult to know where to go.

GOING FORWARD

For the church to make visible growth

1. The preacher must wake up and work on himself, his house and his work ethics.
2. Brethren must grow above petty quarrels and focus on the work of the Lord. The work must not suffer because of our differences. Wake up brethren.
3. Apart from clearly identified doctrinal error, some petty quarrels between two preachers of two congregations should not affect the work of expansion of the kingdom.
4. The church must have a well thought out growth plan and follow it strictly.

CLOSING THOUGHT

Jesus is the owner of the church. No man should fight as if it is their property. Contending for the faith does not include physical or verbal abuse.

PLANNING WHAT TO FEED THE CHURCH

Great Workshop 2019 – Chad Wagner

After Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for forty days and nights (Matthew 4:1-11), Matthew records that “from that time, Jesus began to preach, saying, “repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 4:17). Just following that, Matthew records Jesus’ preaching in the Sermon on the Mount of Matthew 5-7. Likely, the Sermon on the Mount is a similar sermon that Jesus would preach when he went from town to town during his earthly ministry.

In Acts 2, Peter, and the rest of the Apostles, are giving the first full Gospel sermon ever preached in mankind’s history. When preaching to the Jews assembled pressed his point home by saying, “Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” With Peter bringing that point directly home to the Jews in the audience, they were able to respond for baptism.

In Acts 17, when Paul preached to the Gentiles there in Athens, he did not use a sermon intended for a Jewish audience. He was using the pagan idol worship of the day to

prove the fact of the One, True and Living God. In fact, he says in Acts 17:23, “What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.” By knowing his audience, Paul was able to get his message across to a people who needed to hear of the Gospel.

Preaching is God’s chosen method of sharing the Gospel.

In Romans 10:13-15, Paul makes the point that non-Christians need to hear the Gospel and that preachers are needed for that task. God could have chosen to write the Gospel of Jesus on the clouds in the sky, He could speak directly into the hearts and minds of people today, or He could use miraculously move today to ensure that mankind will know and understand the Gospel – but He has chosen none of those methods. He has chosen preaching by human beings to share the Gospel. 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul tells Timothy to preach the Word! We should listen to Paul’s instructions on this matter.

Many of our preachers today have been to school for the purpose of learning more fully the Word of God as well as how to present that Word effectively to your audience. However, many preachers have the problem of waiting until Thursday night, Friday night, Saturday night – or even Sunday morning! – to plan and prepare the sermon for that day. I know from my own ministry, there were times when I was not fully prepared to preach the Gospel due to work demands or family matters. During those times, I feel that my

sermons were not effective like I wanted them to be. Also, I was always stressed about what I was going to preach. I preached on “baptism” last week – what will I say this Lord’s Day? It is a common problem among preachers which is actually hurting the effectiveness of the pulpit, but also adding undue stress on the preacher. When a preacher is trying to scramble to find a sermon for the next Sunday, they begin to be stressed about what to say and always getting ready for the next lesson. You know, Sunday comes every 7 days! Some of you may have not been to preacher school and may feel overwhelmed with the task of bringing the Word every Lord’s Day. It can be quite challenging! How to know what to preach and planning your preaching is the subject of this lesson.

Benefits of Planning your Preaching

When you decide to plan ahead for what you’re going to preach, there are many benefits of doing this process. First, planning your preaching **helps you in your ministry**. Ministry is stressful enough when dealing with people. There are deaths in the congregation, members get upset and leave, arguments over whether to purchase plastic chairs or not, and many other areas of ministry that wear upon a preacher. Family is another stressor that can cause a lot of stress to the preacher – especially if your spouse is not fully committed to being a preacher’s wife. Some are – some are not! Facts are that ministry is a stressful position. However, if you add to

that the stress of trying to decide on Saturday night what to preach the next morning, that is big stress that you can actually avoid.

Second, planning your preaching **helps you dig deep into God's Word**. When you make a plan for your preaching, you have to dig deep into God's Word to be able to fully flesh out and prepare the sermons that are in your plan. This *forces you* into being a better student of God's Word. That can only be a good thing!

Third, planning your preaching gives **balanced preaching**. Do you normally preach from the New Testament? Well, plan some sermons from the Old Testament. Are most of your sermons centered around baptism? Why not explore some other topics out of Scripture to preach on. If you constantly preach on baptism (a very important and needed topic), but if you do not preach on proper church leadership or the need for evangelism, the church will not be fully equipped and balanced because of your lack of balance in preaching.

Fourth, planning your preaching **provides consistency** in the pulpit which is seriously needed. When the congregation knows that they will receive Biblical sermons – not the same style or type every Sunday – they will be better equipped to be better Christians. Also, the members can depend on you being there each Sunday consistently giving them the Word

of God which they need. Especially when a congregation has suffered through serious issues – maybe splitting or leadership issues – consistent preaching will help heal wounds and bring the members back around into the fold of the church.

There are many more benefits to planning your preaching and each preacher is challenged to “plan ahead” for the sake of the Gospel and the sake of His Church.

Requirement for Planning your Preaching

Now that we understand the benefits of planning our preaching, what is going to be required for the preacher to be able to plan their preaching? What should he have to do to help him in the process? Let’s explore some of those items below.

The first requirement for planning your preaching is first and foremost: **prayer**. You must seek the Lord upon entering the time when preparing to plan your sermons. Ephesians 6:18-19 says, “praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel.” Prayer must be the first act of any preacher when beginning a plan what to feed the congregation.

The second requirement for planning your preaching is having an **idea of your audience**. Since you will be speaking to the church, you need to make sure that you are feeding the church what it needs to grow in Christ. Consider Hebrews 5:11-14, “About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.” Are we continually giving our congregations *milk* and not the *meat* of the Word? Continually giving evangelistic sermons is good for the non-Christian but does not provide the spiritual food for Christians to grow in their faith. Are you yourself only surviving on the milk of the Gospel? How can you expect for the congregation to grow and thrive if you are only giving milk in your sermons? There is a place for those but focus needs to be given each Sunday on sermons that challenge the faithful, dig deep into the Word, and push the church further and farther each Sunday than it was before.

The third requirement for planning your preaching is to **have quiet time to study and plan**. I am not meaning the study period for your regular sermon preparation which

occurs each week. I am talking about planning a time once-a-year where you can turn off all your phones, turn off the television, perhaps even go somewhere else where no one can come knocking on your door! You need a place where you put away the cares and concerns of every-day life and focus your efforts on planning what you will preach the next year. Perhaps this time comes around in October or November of each year. This is a good time to think about the direction you'd like the pulpit to go in the next year and start making plans for those sermons. Yes! Try and plan a whole year of sermons! There are only 52 Sundays in a year. Trust me, when you start really breaking down your sermon plans for the year, you'll fill up all of those Sundays before you know it!

The fourth requirement for planning your preaching is the **desire to study**. As you have made a plan on your sermons for the new year, you have to be willing to put in the effort of studying and preparing for each sermon. This will be a challenge to you. Don't worry – it will make you a better preacher. If you are one of those preachers who does not have the desire to study and learn more about God's Word, then you would not do well in planning your sermons because as soon as the time comes for a sermon on a subject in which you have little to no knowledge, you'll skip and your plan is finished. You must be willing to take the plan, study up for

the sermons in that series for the year, and adequately prepare yourself for the task ahead.

The fifth requirement for planning your preaching is **knowing your church's calendar** for the year. Does your congregation hold a week-long seminar each year? Does your congregation bring in special speakers at times of the year? Do you plan to be gone for a few weeks during the year? These are all things you need to consider when planning your sermons for the year. Surely, there will be times when the calendar will change but at least you are putting in effort to try and minimize challenges to the preaching plan.

While there are other things to keep in mind when planning your preaching for the year, these are the ones in which I would say would be required for planning your preaching.

Various Types of Sermon Plans

In this section, we will discuss several ways of planning your sermons during the year. Of course, it is always to good to switch formats of sermons throughout the year so that your congregation is continually being fed a “balanced diet” of the Word of God.

The first format of sermons is one in which I prefer: **Expository sermons**. Expository sermons take the text of the Word of God and “unpack” the meaning for the audience.

You take a certain passage of scripture and give the meaning for that passage along with what it means for the people today. This is the best method of feeding the church the *meat* of the Word on a weekly basis for a thriving church.

When you're making your plan of expository sermons, you will decide to begin an expository sermon series on the Gospel of Mark. First, read the book several times. This will help give you a feel for what is going on in the book overall. Second, start looking at specific passages in each chapter where you'll base a sermon. It could be one verse, a portion of verses (like 3 to 5), or even a whole chapter! The sermon plan will help determine how deep into the book you'll be digging. For example, are you planning a series of sermons on the book Hebrews which will last 2 or 3 months? Well, you need to plan your passages and topics from the book of Hebrews on the available number of Sundays for that plan. Or, you could decide to spend 6 months (or more!) on one book of the Bible which would really challenge you to dig deep into the Word to meet the challenge. When I was preaching, I challenged the congregation to read 5 chapters of the New Testament each week. Then, my Sunday morning Bible class, Sunday morning sermon and evening sermon all came from those chapters that they were supposed to read. Be innovative – challenge the congregation – challenge yourself!

Another type of sermon series is **Topical Sermons**. This type of sermons focuses on a certain issue over a 1-2 month (or more!) time period of Sundays. Topics include sermons on marriage, baptism, church leadership, etc. I once spent three months preaching each Sunday evening on God's plan for church leadership (elders and deacons).

One way to consider this is for the preacher to plan for an expository sermon series (let's say the book of Colossians) for a time period of 3 months. After that, the preacher can switch to a topical sermon series on the necessity of baptism today for one month. Then, another switch can come along with expository sermon series from the book of Isaiah. However, this is all planned out so that you know the direction that you want to go with your sermon planning.

A final type of sermon series that I'd like to share with you is **Thematic Sermons**. This is a mixture of both expository and topical sermons. For example, you could do a themed sermon series on how prayer was answered in lives of the Biblical personalities. You would do expository preaching for each of the Biblical characters but they would be grouped together into the theme of "answered prayer." There are other themed sermon series ideas like "marriages in the Bible," "Biblical examples of conversion," etc.

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT AND EFFECTIVE LESSON DELIVERY

The church must be fed from the pulpit whenever she meets.

2Tim 2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

The pulpit must feed the pew with milk and graduate to solid food. **1Pet 2:2** As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

So our lesson today is to discuss how to develop content that will be used to feed the church and how to effectively deliver such a lesson to make the needed impact in the minds of the congregation, edify them and bring growth that will please God.

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

Four basic principles to deploy in developing content

1. Who are you preparing the food for? The pulpit must have 100% knowledge of the audience that you intend to feed. This will help you not to cross feed the church.
2. What is the span of your lesson? Some lessons are design to take more than one presentation to make the needed impact. So there is no sin to split the lesson into two or three weeks period. It is wrong not to finish your lesson under the specified time frame.
3. What is your purpose for the lesson? All lessons coming from the pulpit must have a defined purpose and mission to fulfill.

Is it to inform the congregation of a truth that they do not know? Example: A lesson about Angel

Is it to touch their heart to bring about transformation – A lesson about the enslavement of sin

Is to clear a doubt that you suspect is lingering in the air around your congregation and you have chosen to clear the air. Example - Gambling is still a sin.

May be it a motivational sermon aimed at raising the faith of the members to look unto God. Example – the crossing of the red sea.

The point here is that you must have a defined purpose for any lesson that is emanating from the pulpit.

4. What do you intend to achieve by this lesson? Your lesson must accomplish what you intend to achieve in the lesson.

Your lesson should be able to change the perspective of the thoughts of your congregation.

Your lesson should be able to move one step further to change their world view and by extension change their lifestyles.

Keep it in mind always that the pulpit has all the powers to change and transform the congregation.

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Consult the internet for your research on your topic.

Look at various schools of thought on the same issue.

Find out what other preachers have taught about the same subject matter.

Dig out relevant passages on the topic and be sure that the context is in line with your focus.

EFFECTIVE LESSON DELIVERY

It is one thing to develop great content and another thing to effectively pass it on to the congregation. A good food in a dirty plate is not going to serve the purpose.

1. Focus on your lesson or sermon by first of all announcing the specific objective of the lesson.
2. Avoid wild distraction and if you enter, acknowledge so and be sure it has great link with the lesson.
3. Choose your words well having in mind you are speaking for the all-knowing God
4. There is a sure way of addressing issues with grace.

5. Be sure to summarize your lesson before your time frame.
6. Prov 25:11, Prov 15:23, Isa 50:4, Matt 12:36

CLOSING THOUGHT

A great lesson is first prepared in the mind, drafted in a script and spoken to minds to cause a powerful change in their lives.

Watch yourself. your wife and your family, they may cause your lesson not to make great impact.

Thank you

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP: BUILDING EFFECTIVE TEAMS AND MINISTRIES

My discussion today is centered on how to build effective teams and ministries under the supervision of a solid spiritual leadership. First let me share with us here a letter I wrote sometimes last year 2018.

Dear church Leader,

FORMATING THE CHURCH ALONG THE LINE OF GREAT INTEREST AND COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE

This is the second letter within a month that I am writing to you to continue lovingly to show us small things we can do that will not alter the doctrine of Christ but will enhance our evangelism strategies and by extension bring about church growth both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Today I will like us to look at our collective evangelism policy and strategy. If we look at the church as an army and individual Christians as soldiers, then the church will approach evangelism very differently and get maximum result.

The current state of evangelism in local congregations in Nigeria is the type where every member of the congregation is expected to go out “preach” the gospel to the lost in a one to one contact style. All who fail to participate are seen as not being evangelical and or grossly disobeying the commands of the master.

At the surface level, this position seems right, but subjecting it to critical analysis using the army model, we will see that it is part of what is making us not make significant progress.

Using the army model, the church ought to be grouped into teams/ministries according to the interest, desire and ability of the individual Christian. Based on this model, the leadership of the church personally interviews all youths and adults in the congregation to know their areas of interest in serving God.

The army model suggests the following teams

HOUSE TO HOUSE TEAM – *this team will consist of people who know how to preach the gospel and have been actively involved in house to house evangelism over the years. This team will be responsible to mapping out areas where they will go out and spread the good news.*

BACKSLIDER RECOVERY TEAM – *this team will consist of people who have skills in human psychology and sociology and armed with the scriptures to persuade and recover all*

those who are regularly absent and are not picking up in church activities.

TRACT WRITING AND DISTRIBUTION TEAM – *this team will consist of solid teachers with powerful communications skills that will put it into a tracts or book form. This team must be well learned and equipped with modern communications strategies. Their job descriptions revolve round script writing, tract production, and tract distribution.*

RADIO AND TV PRODUCTION TEAM – *this team will consist of brethren who are interested in the broadcast media. Their job description will cover designing radio and TV programmes with the strength of the scriptures. Highly trained professionals are required here. A CD/DVD ministry can be integrated here. The lessons so presented in the radio and TV can be copied to discs and shared freely.*

PRISON, HOSPITAL AND ORPHANAGE

MONITORING TEAM – *this team will be made up of brethren who will take the gospel to the prison, hospital and orphanage. Their strategy is purely humanitarian in nature which will touch the needs of the lives of those who will hear the gospel.*

ONLINE EVANGELISM TEAM – *this team will be responsible in putting solid bible based materials on the*

website of the church. They will manage the twitter handle of the church, manage the facebook account of the church and handle all outgoing information from the congregation to the world. They will also host the mobile app of the website of the church.

Using these teams as take off base, the church can add more teams and the preacher shall coordinate all these efforts to ensure that all members have what to do for the master.

This is a village man thinking. Those in the town can polish it and make it look better. The idea behind this presentation is that we should format the church. Most brethren will belong to more than one team and that is purely voluntary.

The time has come where we will no longer be seeing evangelism as from only one perspective. All other areas are important.

The overall goal is that everyone will be engaged.

I have a dream that

One day the church in my generation will deposit a digitally prepared monthly magazine in every hotel room in Abuja, Lagos, Port Harcourt and Kano for guests in suite to read.

I have a dream that

One day the church in my generation will have a satellite TV station that will be on DSTV, Startimes and other major satellite brand.

I know it can be done. Once we format well, installation of evangelism applications will be easy and the result tremendous.

Thank you for taking time to read through this very long and boring letter.

God bless you.

Mike Udam

Servant of the most High God

Although this letter concerns teams in the area of evangelism, we can use it to apply to the formation of teams and ministries.

BASIC PRINCIPLES TO CONSIDER IN SETTING UP TEAMS AND MINISTRIES

- 1. SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL QUALIFICATION :**
To qualify to be in a particular team or ministry, you must first be a Christian with very good influence and same applies to the one desiring to lead the team. Then

you must have relevant skills in the circular world that will make your work there effective.

2. **AVAILABILITY:** You must be readily available to work for the master. The term “always” in ICor 15:58 is very significant. Desiring to work in a team, but not always available makes it only a wish.
3. **WILLINGNESS TO WORK:** those on any team must be willing to work in that team. A person can be qualified and available but not willing to work. A person may be willing, available but does not have the capacity to function well. **Neh 4:6** So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

STRATEGIES FOR TEAM WORK APPROACH

Here are 8 basic strategies for effective team building that was found at <http://www.davidsfinch.com/2007/08/8-basic-strategies-for-effective-team-building.html>

Common Goal

The success of any group project is that there must be a clear single goal. Many teams fail when there are multiple agendas. Teams and organizations that succeed are those that have communicated a common purpose and goal.

Clarity Goal

With all communication clarity is a must. Great communication keeps team members from aborting the core of the project due to lack of understanding of the overall purpose. Frequent communication of the project purpose can be vital in keeping the team on track.

Commitment From Each Team Member

For a group of people to function as a productive team, there has to be a commitment from each team member to the team. This can be the fall of many team projects when there is a lack of commitment.

Do What You Do Best

The purpose of assembling a team, is to group together individuals that have specific skills to accomplish a specific project. The purpose in which an individual is selected is based on their skills that they bring to the task. When putting a team together, there are two ways to look at this approach. You can select those that you can guarantee their performance or mingle in new members to set the tone for productive team collaboration.

It's Not About YOU!

The hardest attitude to grasp in playing a role on a team is that "it's not about you." It's not about your resume, what others will think, it's about playing a role to accomplish the goal or task that has been given. The hardest challenge to any project lead or manager is getting a group of individuals to

function as a team and place their personal ambitions to the side.

You've Got to Talk to Each Other

Not only is communication of the project goal vital, but frequent updates of the task is important. With multiple tools at our fingertips like email, mobile phones, wiki's, and project management software, to not communicate is a sure sign of lack of commitment from team members.

Work as a Team, Play as a Team

You can tell when teams have spent time together both in a working and social environment. Successful teams can anticipate what others will do and how they will respond. This can only happen by being together. Any person that is responsible for building teams will factor in the importance of spending time together both on projects and in non-working events.

Everyone Can't Lead

Every task must have a project lead. There are many ways to choose a lead. Some managers choose to select by an individual's area of expertise or their ability to communicate and manage projects and people. The ideal situation is to delegate to an individual that is skilled in both areas.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

A congregation that wants to grow must;

1. Be aggressive in evangelism
2. Be serious in teaching God's word in its pure form.
3. Be serious in building relationship and fellowship within the congregation.
4. Be serious in building capacity of members to face the challenges of the future.
5. Be serious in prayers for God to bless her effort.

The time to strategize for growth is now.

CHURCH GROWTH DESTROYERS

It is my desire that we examine church growth destroyers in our desire to secure revival of the church in Nigeria

A church growth destroyer is a person working in the church for the advancement of the kingdom of satan. He or she usually thinks himself or herself to be useful to the church but on a proper critical assessment, they are working for the devil. The activities of church growth destroyers, like their name destroys the name of the church and the gospel of Christ is not made to manifest in the life of the church and the community.

There are four basic categories of church growth destroyers

1. Destroyers from the top – church leaders with the preacher as arrow head
2. Destroyers at the home front – men and women not living with their children as the Lord directs.
3. Destroyers at the community unit – men and women whose lifestyle stinks within the community and as such make the church a mockery.

4. Destroyers by stinginess and unwilling to grow the church with their substance. – those that their Christian faith has not reached their pocket.

DESTROYERS FROM THE TOP

An inconsistent preacher in his work of evangelism is a church growth destroyer. 2Tim 4:2

A preacher who is angry with his members for their failures and even keep malice with his member is a church growth destroyer.

A preacher that does not prepare a plan to teach his members is a church growth destroyer.

A preacher with a questionable lifestyle and a weak and loose family is a church growth destroyer. 1Tim 4:12 and 16

The shocking part is that the preacher may not know that he is the one making the church not to grow.

DESTROYERS AT THE HOME FRONT

Any man that focuses on his extended family and refuse to build his children that are his gift from God is quietly destroying the Growth of the church. His children ought to grow to become strong members which will in turn qualify him for eldership. 1Tim 5:8, Eph 6:3-4

Any woman that is married but carries the problems of her extended family far and above her immediate family is a church growth destroyer. Her action disqualifies her from being a help meet to the husband. She was married to come and help complete what is lacking in the man so that both of them can raise a world class family acceptable by God. Gen 2:18

Now the effect of these poor parenting and lack of focus is that the church will lack qualitative children who will grow and stay inside the church.

If you are here and you raise your child from birth and now he/she is not in the church, you have affected the growth of the church.

DESTROYERS AT THE COMMUNITY UNIT

Those who live life that is different from what they read in the scriptures but profess to be Christians are church growth destroyers. Phil 2:15 and Matt 5:16

There are in several sub groups.

1. Those who play with alcohol and mess themselves up and drag the name of the church in mud.
2. Those who kidnap people's daughters into their houses and make children from them without obtaining the rightful license to touch her.

3. Those who eat in two tables – on Sunday with the Lord and later in the community with idol practices. 1Cor 10:20-21
4. Those who value their relationship with the world far and above their relationship within the church. They keep enemies with each other and quarrel amongst each other and the community watches on.

The church cannot grow with these kind of people inside.

STINGY BRETHREN

Most times when the church does not grow, it is the presence of these category of brethren.

The emphasize Give as you purpose in your heart far and above give as you have been prospered.

They cry poverty but invest heavily on burials and other social activities.

THE WAY FORWARD

Luke 13:3 is key.

If you fall into any category listed and discussed above, kindly repent.

Let it not be that it is because of you that the church will not grow.

1 Cor 4:7 shows that God owns all that we have.

Let us bless the church with our substance and it will be well with us.

THE QUALITY OF THE CHURCH

The church Jesus established by purchasing it with his own blood is meant to be the ground and pillar of truth 1Tim3:15 and the avenue through which the manifold wisdom of God shall be made known Eph 3:10. But inside this church, Paul the apostle told Timothy in his second epistle that so many different types of members shall be found in the church. Some to honour and some to dishonour. 2Tim 2:20. In this short lesson, we shall look at the expanded Nigerian version of that passage as I shall walk us through the different types of church members.

TYPES OF CHURCH MEMBERS

WHEEL BARROW MEMBERS: These members love Jesus and his church so much but cannot move beyond where they have reached spiritually unless they are pushed. They constantly need the push of the church leadership before they can move.

TOUTING MEMBERS: These members love Jesus and his church so much but are cold in working for the Lord but fervent in announcing and directing people to God and his activities but themselves are nowhere to be found. “big boys” in the church are predominantly in this category. You hardly find them in major church activities.

FAULT FINDING MEMBERS: These members love Jesus and his church and as such criticize any move to modify the already existing method in a matter of opinion. They like the status quo, and frown at any move to modify it. From the quality of the English on the pulpit to the method of handling discipline, they find fault. Even the pitch of the song can cause them not to worship acceptably. They are ready to physically fight in a business meeting just to drive home their point.

ACADEMIC MEMBERS: These members love Jesus and his church but are influenced by their academic standing and powerful knowledge. They use their knowledge to analyze any lesson taught in the church. They try to find out the angle the presentation is coming from. They believe so much in schools of thought theory. Some preachers are easily intimidated by their presence. Some are humble while others are proud.

MIRACLE BELIEVING MEMBERS: These members love Jesus and his church but seriously believe the church is misled to think that miracles have ceased. They easily complain about the church members not having sufficient faith capable of moving mountain. They usually love all night prayers and watch a lot of miracle motivated TV channels. Some even sneak to attend prayer houses and crusades.

ALCOHOL DRINKING MEMBERS: These members are very sound when it comes to doctrinal matters especially when it comes to drinking of alcoholic beverages. They are quick to invoke “do not make laws where there is none”. They love 1Tim 5:23 and believe they are taking a little for their stomach sake.

INTELLECTUAL MEMBERS: These members love Jesus to the point of allowing the word to sink inside them but it does not reflect in their lifestyles. They can quote and quote the scriptures very well but lying, immorality and the likes is their brand name. very holy on Sunday but so unholy within the week.

MY FATHER BROUGHT ME HERE MEMBERS: These members are in the church by virtue of their birth. They followed their parent to the church and at some point were baptized. Their love for the church is propelled by the presence of their parents in the church. There are in a hibernating mode. Once they have freedom, they will zoom to denomination.

JOB SEEKING AND CONNECTION MEMBERS: These members are mostly found in industrial towns and mega cities. They identify with any church that has many “heavy weight” in the society as members with the aim of getting close and gaining favour. There are predominantly found in the ushering/protocol team of the church. They usually return to “their church” when they go to the village.

INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS: these members are usually visiting congregations from Sunday to Sunday teaching or assisting in one thing or the other. They don’t belong or identify with any fixed congregation. They cannot be disciplined.

PULPIT CAMPAIGNER’S MEMBERS: these members like to be heard and seen in front especially the pulpit. They may not be very sound in scriptures but like to be in front. Some

are pushed by their society's standing or by their spouse who like their husband to be heard also. They even get angry with the leadership of the church if it takes a long time that they have been "featured" on the pulpit.

Just relax, the Bible is complete.

TRUE MEMBERS

2Ti 2:19 ¶ Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

From this long list, the Lord usually refines and produces the best for heaven.

IF THE CHURCH MUST SURVIVE IN THIS 21ST CENTURY

Then she will need to have

1. A studying membership.
2. A faithful and committed leadership.
3. A well-focused pulpit.
4. Structured food according to need and levels of faith of its members.
5. An evangelistic youth in action.

6. A consistent capacity building programme for its membership from time to time.
7. A rigid approach to doctrine modification and a liberal approach to matters of opinion.
8. Regular self evaluation to see if it is still resembling the church of the Bible.

The church must survive and it depends greatly on me as a member.

KNOW THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A PREACHER AND A PASTOR

A gospel preacher is not a caretaker of the church property or work. A preacher is not to leave the Word to serve tables, but give himself continually to prayer and serving the Word (Acts 6:1-4)

A gospel preacher is not a "pastor," shepherd, elder or counselor. A pastor is a shepherd, the office of an elder, bishop or overseer. He is a different worker for the Lord with a different work.

A pastor's work is to shepherd and oversee the flock, watching for their souls (Acts 20: 17, 28; Heb. 13:17).

A preacher appoints men qualified to do the work of a shepherd, he does not do their work, as he has sufficient of his own (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Tim. 3:1-7).

THE FIVE FINGERS OF A PREACHER

Watch your family; the whole church uses her as a model to copy.

Watch your commitment to the work; it is a measure of how others will follow.

Watch your conduct, the preacher is expected to be right always.

Watch the quality of the food you feed the congregation. Their growth depends greatly on it.

Watch the level of your purity. You are the angel of the church.

Pulpit watch:

The pulpit is not a place for trying new converts. People who are young in faith should be allowed to learn much before hitting the pulpit. One single uncorrected teaching has great damaging effect on the entire church globally

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE 21ST CENTURY CHURCH TO ITS MEMBERS

The church is a gathering of those who have defected from the kingdom of darkness to the marvelous kingdom of light – the kingdom of his dear son through the watery grave of baptism after hearing the word of eternal life being preached to them, believing it, repenting of the sins being so exposed to, and confessing that Jesus is indeed the Christ- the son of the living God.

The Bible describe the church as the ground and pillar of truth – 1Tim 3:15 and the vehicle through which the manifold wisdom of God shall be made known to mankind – Eph 3:10.

Therefore our discussion today shall be focused on the responsibilities of the church towards those who worship God within it precinct. Most often we teach members their responsibilities towards the church. It will be fair that we examine the responsibilities of the church to her members. After all, those who join clubs and associations usually finds out what he/she stands to benefit from such association.

First we shall look at the responsibilities of the church to her members in the area of evangelism.

1. Create an enabling environment for him to function: the congregation must be evangelism driven if they want their members to be evangelical. An evangelistic member is most likely a product of an evangelistic congregation.
2. Encourage him with resources to make him excel: the church ought to have a library with books, a store with tracts, DVDs, CDs and if possible an evangelism bus bought for evangelism. In short the church should have a functional evangelism department that the member can tap anointing from.
3. Bring out the best in him: the church is the training ground while the world is the battlefield. The evangelistic member should be deployed to go preach the gospel. Practice makes perfection.
4. Build capacity in him to develop: the church should organize training and retraining for the members to build their capacity. Sometimes the church ought to sponsor the members to seminars outside their domain to get exposure on the word and evangelism strategies consistent with Biblical principles.

Now we want to look at the other responsibilities under general principles.

1. It is the duties of the church to feed the members with sound teaching to stabilize their faith so that he will not be tossed to and fro by winds of doctrines flying around

- by the deceptive philosophies of me powered by the devil. Eph 4:11-14. 2 Tim 2:2
2. It is the duties of the church to pray and fast for her member in the event of great troubles that has surpassed the strength of the member. Act 12:3-8 show clearly that the church fasted and prayed for Peter when he was imprisoned.
 3. The church is to effect discipline on erring members after it has sufficiently taught on a particular subject matter. 1Cor 5: 1-11 is handy. Any attempt by the church to neglect this area of responsibilities, the church will gradually loss it relationship with the owner of the church. It is on record that the first century church was very strict with discipline. Ananias and the wife were promptly flushed out of the church for what we will trivialize today as just a small lie. Act 5:1-8. Ecl 5:8
 4. The church is to care for the physical needs of those members truly in need. Widows and those with special need are to be cared for by the church. 1Tim 5:9
 5. The church is to help disposed the body of the deceased member. This is only where it is possible. It is not a right of members to demand the church to bury her member. We see Stephen being buried by devout men in Act 8:2. It is only expedient that the church bury her member so that the world can see and in the process hear the word of God. I am yet to see a NT command to define what

and what the church will do in the vent of the death of her member.

6. Members having issues with each other need to know that the church is design to be the first court of arbitration in all matters especially if both parties are Christians. 1Cor 6 1-8 is very clear on this matter.

CLOSING REMARKS

These things should be taught regularly so that members know what the church ought to do for them. Some functions of the church equally overlap in the functions of an individual Christian towards one another. If members love one another as Christ loved us, the church as a body will have less work to do.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTENT AND CONTEXT OF CHURCH DEFINED PROGRAMMES

In the past 25 years, congregations of the Lord have stepped up their desire to edify the body of Christ with serious qualitative food that will trigger growth from all direction.

Most of us who were baptized into Christ some three decades ago met some form of special evangelism and edification programmes that sparingly took place in the brotherhood. The story is different today where congregations are in competitions with each other to execute programmes.

So in this discussion, I intend to try to give a bird eye view of different programmes so that congregations will know exactly what they are doing or planning to do.

We will start with the oldest; **THE GOSPEL MEETING.**

The gospel meeting is usually a forum where the church bring in unbelievers and have Bible talk with them in a organized manner under a theme or focus point. The center of the theme here is usually related to the plan of salvation, the church, and expository lectures on doctrinal error. It is usually more than a day with the nights being used for outdoor preaching.

LECTURESHIP: the lectureship is an expanded form of gospel meeting. It is designed to teach and correct wrong doctrines both within and without. Themes are drawn with edification of the church at the center. Sometimes too, it can be used to address some issues that have crept into the church. Most congregations allocate just a day for their lectureship, while some dedicate days ranging from 2 days to a week of powerful and painstaking studies.

WBS SEMINAR: this is a special type of gospel meeting designed to bring together students enrolled in correspondence courses with World Bible School to meet physically with a teacher or teachers who will explain the word of God more accurately and spend time to take their questions.

MEN, WOMEN AND YOUTH SEMINARS: these are gender and age based Bible lectureship designed to meet the specific needs of the specified population. The theme is mostly drawn from contemporary issues that are affecting the target population.

OUTDOOR EVANGELISM: this involves a multi faceted approach to spreading the good news. A combination of Door knocking, Tract Sharing, and Open Air Preaching are all done with the hope of bringing in the sheaves.

THINKING AND EXECUTION

It is advisable for each congregation to sit down and plan for the programme of their choice. Their choice should be guided by the need within and around their congregation. The theme

too must reflect a strong desire to learn and provoke high level thinking among the congregation.

Congregations must take time out to evaluate the programme to see if it is making serious spiritual impact on the congregation. Doing it every year without evaluation is an effort in futility. If it is an evangelism programme, there is need to evaluate the strategy adopted and other possible approaches to adopt to get good result. Luke was not tired to update us of the successes recorded by the early church. Paul used different methods all in a bid to get the world to Christ.

Congregations should insist to use the best hands especially in outdoor evangelism. Not everyone can deliver the goods.

SUMMARY

We are not in a competition to show who will come first in doing programmes. But it will be good to know what programme you are planning to execute. Calling people for lectureship and taking them to evangelism at the middle of the programme may sound good to you, but that is disorderly programming. Inviting people to WBS seminar and filling the hall with faithful Christians is a deception. It is also wrong to incorporate so many things (variety night, sing song night and acapalla night) into a lectureship.

If we must edify ourselves and desire others to come and share with the spiritual food that will be served, let us do it all to the glory of God.

CHILD PARENTING IN THIS DIGITAL WORLD

Today we are gathered to discuss about the child even without his or her consent.

Parenting is getting tough and the pursuit of money has made families destroy the traditional division of labour between mum and dad in the development of the family.

Moms who before now were home makers are in some cases now bread winners and a new lexicon of single mom (single parenting) quietly crept into the family dictionary.

Because of the quest to meet up the needs of the 21st century expanded family scope, absentee parenting was born and the latest now is Outsourcing Parenting also known as delegated parenting.

All these is done just to ensure the child turns out to be a responsible man or woman that will fit well in the society.

My lesson today is on child parenting in this digital world.

How to raise children in our today's world where that is a global village is the focus is this discussion.

We will start from the Bible and lay the foundation there.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE OF PARENTING

- Start as early as possible. An effective child training starts even when the child is still in the stomach. No wonder the bible

says the training should be when there is still hope. Prov 19:18 Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying

- Define the curriculum. It is technically advisable to use biblical thoughts to lay the foundation. The child should be told much about God. So much that he will not want to hear anything again from atheist. Prov 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it

- The bible clearly gives the parents an approved direction to follow to avoid disaster Prov 29:17 ¶ Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.

- Parenting is a great duty because the child is like raw mixture of sand cement and water. You need a good mould to put the mixture to get a good shape when it is set. Prov 29:15 ¶ The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.

- The cane is an approved biblical tool used to drive away foolish thoughts in the heart of the child. Prov 13:24 ¶ He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. Prov 22:15 ¶ Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

- Some form of punishment is even considered good for the soul of the child. Prov 23:14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.

So the Bible is very clear on the basics of parenting. In the 21st century family, there is need for us parents to go back to the Bible for direction.

PARENTING TIPS FOR FAMILIES OF AFRICAN SETTING

Here I shall run us through 7 tested and proven parenting tips that will give you a solid practical family. These tips will prepare your kids for the needed control you will exert when we get to the discussion of parenting in a digital world.

Point 1

Work on the people your children hang out with. Struggle to let them hangout with people that value education, hard work, and those who strive to earn an honest living. There is a strong relationship between positive thinking and the quality of people you relate with. The emphasis is laid in 1Cor 15:33.

Point 2

Portray a happy disposition before your children. Let them see more of your love for your spouse than your disagreements. Children build healthy relationship skills from what they learn first hand at home. This agrees with the admonition of Paul to Timothy in 1Tim 4:12

It will take an extra grace of God for the children to act differently from what they see as normal.

Point 3

Define and fix a reading time in your house. Make it a duty for your children to read. Bible, Novels and other literature texts should be provided. Reading lead to serious self development. Your job is to ensure compliance. It might interest you to know

that the children know what you take seriously with the quality of attention you give to it. Expect early resistance. Your persistence will win. I started to read Tell, TheNews and Newswatch magazines as early as when i was in junior secondary school.

Point 4

Praise and correct at the right time. When they do well, praise them openly and point out what motivates you to do so. In correcting, make sure that after disciplining the child, you must explain where the child blundered and warn against future occurrence.

Point 5

Create a special family time. Something the children will always remember. In my house we have Friday suya fellowship by 7pm. When things are tough, we alternate with what is available. My children dont joke with that fellowship. We also have a yearly family retreat which they all look up to. You can adopt turn by turn cooking, family story time and or family fun time.

Point 6

Help your children to visit their friends and report back the impact of the outing and the activities that took place during the outing. Let them learn how to build relationships amongst their peers. Your work is just to guide them to choose the right friends and it is theirs to build relationships.

Point 7

Encourage them to have faith in the almighty as the source of everything in life. Impress upon your children that God is the controller of the universe. And that he is a rewarder of those that seek him diligently. Tell them that honesty makes them look like children of God and that there is dignity in honest labour. This agrees with Prov 22:6 and Prov 19:18.

**NOW THAT WE HAVE THE WORLD IN OUR HOMES
(digital world)**

1. Define what is seen and not seen in your home. Activate parental control in your remote control. Take charge of your house and home if not the devil will help you.
2. Regulate the time the children have access to the big screen (TV) and the small screen (Tablet and phones)
3. Link all your children account to your own using a google tool call Family Link.
4. Make friends with your children online and watch what they do on their timelines.
5. Spend small time to know what is trending and make your views known to your children.
6. Engage the children into productive use of ICT to fill up for lost periods.
7. Pray for the children and sanction all those found not following instruction.

Remember

The time they will stay under your control is gradually reduced. It used to be 20 years in those days. But now it is reduced to 16 and 17.

The volume of your control is your investment in the heart of the child and it will help him/her when you will not be there.

See your children always as a tender plant that requires serious attention to grow to the standard expected.

Prov 19:18 should drive you crazy

Testimony

I have tested these few points and it is working.

Just give it a try and support it with special prayers for your children and I can assure you the result will be phenomenal. You can follow this link to get all the software that will help you secure your kids.

<https://www.icirnigeria.org/ten-apps-to-monitor-and-track-your-childs-internet-activities/>

and if you need another lecture on this topic, then visit this website

<https://medium.com/kidsnclinks/5-tips-to-monitor-your-childs-online-activities-b40a985039f3>

God bless and keep you and your family safe.

OPEN LETTER TO SATAN

Mr. Satan,

Today, I have chosen my timeline to speak to you, cognizance of the fact that you will read this post and maybe re strategize to visit me. I was told you have two horns and you look very fearful and I have taken so many years to locate you but to no avail. In my desperation to know you and deal decisively with you, I discovered that you are a spirit and it will be difficult for me to catch you.

When God destroyed the earth in the days of Noah, you were not destroyed, but deep inside, you know that you were the very one that pushed them to consistently think and plot evil in their hearts. When Sodom and Gomorah was destroyed for homosexual activities and other sundry sins, you still escape unhurt. I wished you had burned in that inferno.

I was not surprised when I read how you came close to Jesus my savior and tempted him. The writer of that gospel was inspired to state clearly that you left Jesus for a season. Instructively, you were not happy that Peter gave a valid answer when Jesus demanded to know who the people thought he was. Shortly after that, you got into Peter and

started to plan how to obstruct the pathway to calvary. Thank God, the master spotted you and told you to get behind him.

Today, I am very happy to now know your modus operandi. First you masquerade yourself as an angel of light and enter very close unsuspectingly and until you create the havoc, a lot of people will not know you are around. You attend all church services and take prominent seat in the heart of those who allow you to live in them.

When the sermon is going on, you subtly remind your host to examine the life of the sermoner and that of his family. You quickly bring to memory some of the misdeeds of the sermoner and place it right in front of your host. At that point, if he is still stubborn, you introduce sleep. If he is still stubborn, you make him to notice the wrong pronunciation of the sermoner and the poor concord of his sentences. You don't easily give up. If all attempts by you fail, you sell an idea to him to ask a question he already know the answer and you quickly run to the sermoner and make him give an answer opposite what the questioner expected and the fire is sparked off. You then stay and watch how the drama will play out. I am sorry to inform you that I have educated all my members about your antics. We are ready for you.

Another strong area of your strength that we now know is sowing weeds inside a field planted with wheat. When I teach my youths to live pure lives and remain unspotted in this world, you will come and plant the false idea that purity is no longer

fashionable and that God is a merciful God. Now we know you. Kindly stay away from us. Go and plant in your own field.

We have a long list of people that you derailed from the lane of heading towards heaven. You have packaged sin and make it very attractive and appealing. First you changed the name of sin to something not frightening. Fornication is now called a date or testing. Adultery is now called an affair. Homosexual people now refer to their sin as a lifestyle. Corruption is now called a deal. You have done havoc on our consciences that some now see sin as a norm.

I know a long list of people that you have held them captive with unforgiving spirit hovering over them. Some are keeping people in heart for over 20 years now. You know they will head to heaven when they die. That is your plan. Or do you want me to tell you that you are the chairman of liars and have made lying a normal thing. As at today, you have sold a dummy to people that lying is no longer a sin. Hmmmmm. So many captive indeed.

Know it today, that my brethren and i have decided to have nothing to do with you. Please stay away from us. If you can lead Ananias and his wife Saphira to lie about their own money, then we know you are powerful. But God has given us victory above you.

I will earn my letter by alerting you of my working principles.

First, I will make friends with friends of God. Together we will resist your influence in our lives.

Then I am resolved to flee from all appearances of evil. A stick of cigarette, a bottle of beer, or a glass of wine, even though you will push me to see it as harmless, I have decided to stay very far from it.

Lastly, I have resolved to study the word of my master God and stay active in fellowship of the saints. You pushed Peter to warm fire with unbelievers and it was easy for him to deny his master. Recall that you even obtained permission to sieve him like chaff.

Thank you for reading through my letter.

My life is hidden in Christ in God.

I know you will not repent, but I have told you my mind.

Mike Udam

Village Preacher

BASIC KINGDOM PRINCIPLES

Politician and leadership experts make sure they read 48 Laws of Power. Beyond reading the book, they make sure that it becomes part of their daily routine.

As mentees, today it is my desire to share with you some basic Kingdom principles that will shape your future as we take of this very important journey in life.

All the points stated here have been tested with empirical evidence and so many can attest to the validity of it truth.

Don't just gloss over it. Take your time and read it slowly and think deep about the points raised and you will be amazed at the truth revealed.

PRINCIPLE 1: PUT GOD FIRST

God existed before you were created and will exist after your demise. So it is appropriate to make God first in your life not verbally but practically. Absenteeism and latecoming are clear evidence that God is not first in your life. When God is first in your life, it will influence the entire life you will live. When God is first, all other things quickly fall in place. Matt 6:33. Ecl 12:13. No man has ever put God second and come first in this life. Mark it down.

PRINCIPLE 2: THE POWER OF GIVING

The gift of a man opens way for him. The moment your Christianity does not reach your pocket to influence your giving, you are far from resembling God. God is a great giver. Those who desire him to open doors for them must give liberally. Reading through Psm 41:1-2, Prov 19:17 and Act 20:35, we clearly see that giving is a powerful tool to attract the blessings of God. The road to getting is giving. Most people who are always happy and cheerful are those who give. When you give, you build your prayer band team that will consciously pray for you such that even if you don't personally pray to God daily, others will be praying for you.

PRINCIPLE 3: THE POWER OF A FORGIVING HEART

The easiest road to personal growth and freedom in Christ is to develop a forgiving heart. David gave a strong Old testament example by letting Saul live even when he had a clear chance of killing him twice. Jesus our master pleaded "father forgive them for they know not what they are doing. Lk 23:34. Any Christian having difficulties forgiving people is very far from eating on the table with Jesus. You cannot serve God when your heart is harbouring names of people who offended you. And the load of unforgiving spirit will make you not go far in life. Mark it down. Read Matt 6:14 and you will understand.

PRINCIPLE 4: LOOK WELL BEFORE YOU CHOOSE A LIFE PARTNER

There are 9 very important choices that man must make between his birth and his death. The most important of all the choices is the person you choose to spend your lifetime with. So many will not meet God in heaven because of the person they choose. You need serious self-control and discipline coupled with real simple prayers on the need to make a right choice. Once you blunder here, amendment is only through death of one of the partner or you manage separation. As at today, those who are true Christians know the power of a life partner. So look well before you make your choice. Marriage is interesting. It is more interesting if you marry your friend. It is exciting if you marry a friend who is a Christian. It is captivating and refreshing if you marry a faithful Christian. It is heaven on earth if you sort out things prayerfully before stepping into marriage.

PRINCIPLE 5: READ THE MANUAL FIRST

Most manufacturers insert a user manual in most of their product and it is expected that users read through it first before putting the appliance to use. This is strictly applicable to real life but unfortunately so many people living on planet earth start using the product and if they encounter challenge, then they now look for the manual. Some simply apply knowledge of how a similar appliances worked before to use it now to operate the new one. So if you must move ahead in

life positively, ask plenty questions before moving into any decision in life. Once you fail to read the manual, you are most likely going to hang on luck. Reading the manual is asking God for his approval before embarking on a journey. Most Kings that did consult God first lost their battles.

PRINCIPLE 6: THE LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING

The moment you become a professed Christian, please just be very careful about deliberately committing sin. Take your time and read Heb 10:26 very well. Once you finish that passage, then read Gal 6:7. The Bible is very fair to a sinner and firm to a Christian. The sinner can claim ignorance. But as a Christian, you cannot claim ignorance. Watch what you sow on earth. Watch your words, actions and activities all day round. If you sow hatred, you must reap hatred. God can forgive you of your sins, but you must face the music of the sin. No one will escape what he has sown. Just be careful what you sow. Most people you see having difficulties in life know it is coming from what they sow, sometimes ignorantly and sometimes they may have forgotten. All seed sown must germinate and bear fruit. A true Christian must watch the seeds sown today. I have been trying to sow love and peace and mercy and forgiveness so that I will reap it in the future. Watch what you are sowing.

THE MISTAKES OF CAIN

Today we open a study in the lives of some personalities in the Bible with a view of learning from the very mistakes that destroyed them. The scripture is basically written for our learning. Rom 15:4.

1Cor 10:6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

To discuss the mistake of Cain, we will first of all get a better perspective of the event that we will draw inference from. The story is found in Genesis 4:1-16.

1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.¹ 2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.^{2 3}

3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.⁴ 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:⁵ 5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

6 And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance

fallen? ⁷ If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee [shall be] his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.^{6,7}

8 And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

9 And the LORD said unto Cain, Where [is] Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: [Am] I my brother's keeper? **10** And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.⁸ **11** And now [art] thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; **12** When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

13 And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment [is] greater than I can bear.⁹

14 Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, [that] every one that findeth me shall slay me. **15** And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

16 And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden

From the story we can pick out four major mistakes of Cain.

First Cain undergave to God. We don't have a detail account of the interaction between God and Cain about the need to give him a sacrifice. But peeping through the works of the Hebrew writer, we see that it seems he was told what he ought to give God. **Heb 11:4** By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

Giving is driven by a command to be measured by how one is blessed. **1Cor 16:2** Upon the first [*day*] of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, **as [God] hath prospered him**, that there be no gatherings when I come.

Once a man does not give as he has been prospered, an intrinsic feeling of guilt is activated. That is exactly what generated the anger and envy in the heart of Cain.

Secondly, Cain could not handle his envy. It is natural to be envious of the growth or successes of others. But allowing the envy to trigger your anger is very dangerous. From the narrative, we see that it was not the fault of Abel that his sacrifice was rejected. He simply misdirected his anger. God even warned him in verse 7.

Gen 4: 7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto

thee [shall be] his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

Since God cannot be seen and felt with the human hands, he decided to touch his fellow brother who was created in the image of God. Cain will not be the last. David suffered in the hands of Saul for killing Goliath. Instead of being angry with the Jerusalem women for singing the praises of David, King Saul rather faced David with all arsenals to eliminate him.

Thirdly, Cain did not see the big picture. He did not evaluate the impact of his action. His simple consideration was to just eliminate Able from his sight. No, he got it all wrong. He became the first murderer, the first fugitive and vagabond man on earth. He was driven away from the presence of God. He lost his relationship with his creator. He was overwhelmed to the point of crying about his punishment being too heavy to bear. **13** *And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment [is] greater than I can bear* It is always good to see the big picture. To be honest, no one sees the big picture under the state of anger, especially if it is fuelled by envy.

Lastly Cain did not understand the modus Operandi of his creator. He did not know that God knows everything.

Heb 4:13 *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things [are] naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

Ps 139:2 *Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.*

He thought no one will see him. Unfortunately, he got it all wrong. We can smell it from the way he tried helplessly to evade the question about the whereabouts of his brother.

Lessons for young people today.

1. Listen carefully to instructions, especially when it pertains to things about the creator. Keep your emotions out of it. Do not think for him.
2. Learn to blame self and look for how to correct the situation. It is totally wrong to blame your failures on another person especially if that person is successful.
3. Put your anger under control. Once your anger takes control over you, you will surely land into trouble.
4. Try to paint the big picture. Relax and paint the big picture always. It is in your best interest to do so. Have it at the back of your mind that God sees all your moves and intent.

CLOSING REMARKS

Cain killed his brother and lost favour with God. He used his own hand to destroy his relationship with his maker. He did not earn well.

May this lesson inspire a resolve in us to watch out for actions of ours that may jeopardize and shipwreck our faith.

Amen

THE MISTAKES OF ESAU

Esau is a very important personality that deserves our attention in our quest to look out for lessons to learn from the mistakes of young people in the Bible. The story associated with his mistakes is located in Genesis 25:29 – 34

29 Now Jacob cooked some stew, and when Esau came in from the open fields, he was famished. 30 So Esau said to Jacob, “Feed me some of the red stuff – yes, this red stuff – because I’m starving!” (That is why he was also called Edom.) 31 But Jacob replied, “First sell me your birthright.” 32 “Look,” said Esau, “I’m about to die! What use is the birthright to me?” 33 But Jacob said, “Swear an oath to me now.” So Esau swore an oath to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew;

Esau ate and drank, then got up and went out. So Esau despised his birthright.

At the surface, all we see is the fact that Esau made a choice to satisfy his hunger and traded it with his birthright. But a careful and close observation on the matter we see three glaring mistakes that Esau made then that we ought to completely avoid today.

LACK OF SELF CONTROL: Esau completely could not control himself on the sighting of food and the torture of hunger. He was devastated by the hunger and as such needed food through any means, even if the means was to sell his birthright. Esau is not alone here. Picture yourself in public function and how you react towards food especially when it is passing in your front and you are yet to be considered. I have seen people mess themselves up struggling for food in a public function. In proverbs 25:28, a man without self control is pictured as a city without walls. Any young man that can build up 60% self control is 90% close to heaven. It is self control that activates abstinence instead of indulgence.

CHOICE OF TEMPORAL GAIN OVER PERMANENT LOSS: Esau made a choice of a temporal gain far and above a permanent loss. He temporarily gained food and was filled for just a day and lost his birthright for life. The food expired in his system after some hours, but his birthright lost forever. One night of sex before marriage changes a young person to a fornicator, exposes the person to sexually transmitted infections, lost being a virgin, risk being pregnant (most teenage pregnancy are “one shot” activity), and destroys the already existing relationship with God. Like Esau, so many young people today most likely will choose temporal gain over permanent loss.

Matt 16:26 “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

A whole world is temporal compared to eternity. Fame and beauty is temporal compared eternity. Make your choices well.

POOR ANALYTICAL SKILLS OF THE FUTURE: Esau had very poor analytical skills. He was not smart to think deep about the importance of his birthright. He allowed his hunger to blindfold him. He even openly announced that his birthright was nothing to him. **32** “Look,” said Esau, “I’m about to die! What use is the birthright to me? Most young people today jump into marriage on the strength of the outward appearances of their intended. Some jump in because of what they see that may not survive the test of time. Young people need to be critical even of suggestions handed down to them. Amnon in 2Sam13:1-15 did not analyze the advice of his friend Jonandab well and the result was that of the raping of his sister and his ultimate payment of the prize with his life. Poor analysis of the future has landed so many people into trouble. Samson is one good example. His lust for Deliala amidst the protest by his family landed him a captive in the hands of the Philistine.

All in all, Esau did not value the position God gave him. He was made to be first, but he despised it. He made light his being first in the family. We are told in Heb 12:16-17 that he later on regretted his mistake. **16** “Lest there [*be*] any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. **17** For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”

QUICK LESSONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY

Develop a strong self control mechanism. You will need it always to enable you wade off pressure from the evil one. For sure, there will be pressure especially from the evil one, but once you wear your self control cap, victory is very sure in your direction.

Watch your choices and choose wisely. There is a strong relationship between the choice you make today and the way your life will be tomorrow. The choice of who you marry, the choice of Job and the choice of friends you keep will to a large extent influence your lifestyle in life. Solomon made a choice of playing with foreign women and he ended up an idol worshipper. No wonder Paul said in 1Cor 15:33

*“Be not deceived: evil
communications corrupt good
manners.”*

Always do a thorough analysis of the situation before taking a position. Once you fail to analyse the situation, you will have yourself to blame.

Value what you have. You may not know how much you have been blessed until you meet someone looking for what you have desperately.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

The moment you don't hold what God has blessed you with, he will take it away and give it to someone else.

THE MISTAKES OF THE BROTHERS OF JOSEPH – CHILDREN OF JACOB

The politics within a family can be greater than that of a political party. As we focus our lenses on the brothers of Joseph, we see a lot lessons that we can learn from the mistakes of those young men. Their story is found in the book of Genesis 37:5-11.

5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told [it] his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. 6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: 7 For, behold, we [were] binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. 8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. 9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. 10 And he told [it] to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What [is] this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? 11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

From the story we can pick out three principal mistakes of the brothers of Joseph.

First they allowed the progress of another person to trigger their hatred for him. This simply implies that Joseph was literally controlling their happiness or anger. Once he is mentioned, the spirit of hatred is activated in them. Today there are so many people who become angry once your name is mentioned especially in a positive light. But one shocking attribute of this type of anger is that the one making you angry is completely unaware that his progress is killing you with hatred. Hatred is a state of mind expressed when a person dislikes a thing or a person or a situation. This expression is usually expressed in words and in action.

Hatred is traceable most often from envy. It helps to manifest the state of envy. It is envy in action.

The Bible describes it with fine poetry.

*Prov 15:17 Better is a dinner of herbs
where love is than a fatted ox and
hatred with it. (RSV)*

It was supposed to be a thing of the past. God knows it is one big human sickness and we have to deal with.

*Tit 3:3 For we ourselves also were
sometimes foolish, disobedient,
deceived, serving divers lusts and
pleasures, living in malice and envy,
hateful, and hating one another.*

You can cause people to hate you.

1. If you are proud and full of yourself.
2. If you are successful and still stingy and crafty.

3. If you speak the truth when you ought to lie.

2 Chron 18:7 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil: the same is Micaiah the son of Imla. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.

People can hate you for no just cause.

Saul hated David for no just cause. Psalms 69:4 *They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me*

The Jews hated Jesus for no just cause

The next mistake they made was to envy him for being a dreamer and being loved and pampered by their father. It was obviously not the fault of Joseph to be loved in a special way by his dad. Envy is a depraved affection or passion of the mind, disposing a man to hate or malign another for some good or achievement belonging to him, which the envious person judges him unworthy of, and which for the most part he wants himself. Or yet more briefly: envy is a certain grief of mind conceived upon the sight of another's felicity, whether real or supposed.

TYPES OF ENVY

FRIENDSHIP-TRIGGERED ENVY: Envy caused by simple overtaking of another in the pursuit of life. Cain and Abel in Gen 4.

BLIND ENVY: Here the one envying the other does not know any detail about the things he is envying the person about.

MANIFESTATION OF ENVY

The one envying someone first feels inferior and greatly desires that which the other has as what he or she ought to have.

It is a feeling that breeds covetousness.

CAUSES OF ENVY

Envy is **caused** by a dissatisfaction with self-image—your perception of your actual stature. This dissatisfaction is also called low self-esteem—a poor self-appraisal of your actual stature. Because you feel inferior to the person you **envy**, **envy** is related to shame.

Lack of contentment.

Lack of self-discipline and self-control.

Misunderstanding of body language and moves.

Pride on the part of the one being envied

The one who is being envied most often does not know he is being envied.

Maybe he is promoted.

Maybe he has achieved something good and that makes him popular.

Maybe he is rich in material things

Undue promoting by others as it was in the case of David and Saul

Lastly they did not see the big picture. In their heart and plans, Joseph being sold into slavery has ended his reign over them. They thought he has been destroyed. Just reflect on the powerful speech made by Joseph during their reunion ceremony. Gen 25:3-5 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I

MISTAKES OF THE DAUGHTERS OF LOT

Our attention today is shifted to the family of Lot. Lot was taken from the land of Ur with his uncle Abraham to the land of Caanan. In the process of time, Lot married and got two daughters who lived with him in the land of Sodom and Gomora. The land of Sodom and Gomora was so corrupt that sexual immorality was at its peak. Homosexuality was the order of the day. God was sad with the people and decided to destroy the city. Lot was advised to escape with his family which landed them in a place called Zoar.

Gen 19:30 And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters. ³¹ And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father [is] old, and [there is] not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: ³² Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. ³³ And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. ³⁴ And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and thou in, [and] lie

with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. 35 And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. 36 Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. 37 And the firstborn bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same [is] the father of the Moabites unto this day. 38 And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Benammi: the same [is] the father of the children of Ammon unto this day.

From the story we can pick out three basic mistakes made by the daughters of Lot.

First they had a problem of poor management of self control. It is natural that at their age, the need for sex exists and will certainly trouble them. Self control is one basic lesson that runs through the entire Bible and any one that lacks it will not do well in the sight of God. Solomon described it in his proverbs in a very powerful simile. Prov 25:28 He that [*hath*] no rule over his own spirit [*is like*] a city [*that is*] broken down, [*and*] without walls.

Self control in the area of sexual matter is one key area that so many people have failed especially young people who are growing up. Several campaigns have been organized to teach young people to zip up and wait for the right time to do sex. Paul spoke much about it in respect of husbands and wife. 1Cor 7:5 Do not deprive each other, except by mutual agreement for a specified time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then resume your relationship, so that

Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

The daughters of Lot just could no longer wait, they had to do it with their own father and satisfy their lust thereof. It is surprising that the same girls that were able to be virgins in the land of Sodom and Gomora where sexual immorality was so high could condescend so low as to give themselves to their father. Today some youths are like the daughters of Lot. They appear very reserved and holy when in the family house but turn something else when they arrive the school.

The next mistake they made was to resort to self help. They were influenced by the fact that there was no very close nearby town where they could get men to marry them. So they resorted to self help and got their father to lay with them and get a child through him. Abraham and Sarah attempted to help God when Sarah recommended her house help to Abraham to go into and get here a child. **Gen 16:2** So Sarai said to Abram, "Since the LORD has prevented me from having children, please sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have a family by her." Abram did what Sarai told him.

The result is still staring on our faces today. Historians trace the origin of Islam to that child born out of wedlock. It is on record that most people who troubled Israelite on their journey to the promise land were the Moabites who were the result of that unholy affair between Lot and the daughters.

The last mistake made the daughters is to kill the resistance of their father with the aid of alcohol. It was a deliberate mistake. Although they were virgins, their ears were not closed to hear gossip about the impact alcohol consumption

has on the thinking faculty of the consumer. With clear eyes, no right thinking father will want to have carnal knowledge of his daughters. Up till today, alcohol is one main road through which sexual immorality is committed. It dulls the judgment of the one enjoying it. His sense of reasoning is blurred and this is done progressively as he takes the drink. Lot was made to bear children through his own daughters under the influence of alcohol. **Prov 20:1** Wine [*is*] a mocker, strong drink [*is*] raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

QUICK LESSONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY

Do not try to help God. Resorting to self help is very dangerous and can shipwreck your faith in Christ.

Develop a strong self control mechanism. You will need it always to enable you wade off pressure from the evil one.

Try your best to avoid alcoholic beverages. It will not do you any good but will take so much from you.

Learn to wait for God and his time is always the best for us.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

God is powerful and all knowing. He does not need you to help him in whatever form.

THE MISTAKES OF THE SONS OF AARON – NADAB AND ABIHU

Today we continue our search into the scriptures to look at the lives of young people who made a few mistakes that we think we can learn from and adjust our lives. The focus today is on Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron the priest of God and brother of Moses. The story is found in Lev 10:1-2 and bothers on a “small neglect” of the commands of God.

Lev 10:1 And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not.

Lev 10:2 And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

Reading through these passages of the scriptures, we will notice that Nadab And Abihu made three mistakes that led to their paying the ultimate price – death.

First they made light the commands of God. The fact that they were children of the priest and had been offering sacrifices before now in the tent suggest and rightly so, that

they knew exactly what God commanded as regards the sacrifice they were about to offer to the Lord. By adjusting the instruction is a simple way of saying the instructor is not very serious and anything given to him goes. No human being has the right to introduce into the laws of God what he has not commanded. Once God sets the standard, it is man's duty to simply obey and follow same. Today we see young people make light God's instruction in relationship development. In the mind of God, sex should be inside marriage only. Today sex is introduced even before marriage and people are ok with it. The marriage bond in the mind of God is between a single man and a single woman, but today, we see a man with many wives, we see a woman with many men and the latest is we see male marry male and female marry female all in gross disobedience to the will of God.

The second mistake they made was to think that if majority of the items in the sacrificial process are correct, just a single item cannot render the entire exercise faulty. They got the timing right. They got the right implements and added incense correctly, but failed in the area of the choice of fire to use. In their mind, any fire will be ok with the Lord. That single change failed to show God as holy and capable of giving an instruction. In 1Sam 15, God instructed Saul to go and destroy the Amalekites. In obeying the command, he decided to destroy everything but spared the life of Agag his

friend. He was rejected by God and told that he has lost favour in the sight of God for just sparing only Agag.

The last mistake they did was to underrate or underestimate the anger of the Lord when his instructions are violated. They may have thought that God is not going to worry much about “all these petty details”. They also may have been seeing God from the prism of a merciful God which indeed he is. They forgot that God is also a consuming fire.

LESSONS TO TAKE HOME

Take time to study the commands of God and be sure you understand it well.

Be careful not to add to or subtract from his commands if you must be pleasing to him.

Put it at the back of your mind, the God that is a merciful God is also a consuming fire. His anger is activated once we neglect his laws, or adjust it or make a substitute where there ought to be none.

else he owned, and brought them to the Valley of Achor. 25“Why have you brought this trouble upon us?” said Joshua. “Today the LORD will bring trouble upon you!” And all Israel stoned him to death. Then they stoned the others and burned their bodies.

Let us picture another story in the book of Jonah

Jonah offended God when he disobeyed his instruction to go and preach to the people of Nineveh.

The ship owners were not aware of the sin of Jonah.

In an attempt to give a human solution to their shaking ship and to forestall any mishap, they had to let some of its cargos overboard. The owners of those cargos had to suffer loss for the sin of one man who was at this time sleeping and unconcerned about the situation.

Jonah 1:4Then the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship was in danger of breaking apart. 5The sailors were afraid, and each cried out to his own god. And they

Pray not to be a victim of another person's sin.

Preach to those around you to run away from sin. Eph 5:11

And lastly, live a life that will draw you close to the creator.
Phil 1:27

Always know that everything on earth has an expiry date.
Ecl 3:1-3

Ask God for wisdom to live successfully through the
problem and period.

For corona virus, it is very close and shortly, we shall have
a sigh of relief in Jesus name Amen.

HOW FAR ARE YOU AWAY FROM JESUS?

arly this morning, I was doing a personal reflection on the level of closeness of Jesus apostles to him in the time of crisis and compared it with what is going on today.

E Matt 26:55 In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. 56 "But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled. 57 ¶ And those who had laid hold of Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. 58 But Peter followed Him at a distance to the high priest's courtyard. And he went in and sat with the servants to see the end.

First, all the disciples fled when he was arrested. The situation was tensed and it was indeed a trying moment for them all. Jesus had warned them and advised them to pray. But peter even boasted that “no weapon formed against his relationship with Jesus will prosper”.

Mt 26:31 ¶ Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' 32 "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." 33 Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if all are

made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble." 34 Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." 35 Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And so said all the disciples.

Talk is cheap and we can see it here. It seems later on, Peter realized himself and decided not to be counted amongst those that dissented the master during his trying moment. He simply followed from a distance. Biblical analysis of that "from a distance" is so much interesting. From a distance could mean a position that will not put him into danger but could enable him have first hand account of what is about to happen to the master. It was a humanly devised strategy but it also had its risk.

From that distance, Peter was far away from the other apostles and far away from Christ. Because of that distance, like a chick far from the mother hen, the kite feels safe to attack and pick the chick with little stress.

No wonder Peter started to answer questions about his relationship with Christ. In order to play safe, he had to deny his relationship with Christ. Even when his voice and accent betrayed him, he still said he did not know him.

Today you and I are daily denying Christ. At the time Christ expects us to boldly show the world we are his followers, we deny him. One will be bold to ask where and when?

When you promote falsehood on your timeline, you deny Christ and make the devil win you hands down.

When you promote idolatry in the form of holding an event far and above a church service, you deny him hands down.

When you promote premarital sex under the umbrella of “testing to confirm the status” you have drifted away from Christ and that is the manifestation. When you promote adultery by flexing with a woman or man not your spouse, you have long ago denied him. Check the distance that you are following along.

When you promote religious theft by being brainwashed to tithe for the man of God and you return home with grudges in your heart, you have long ago denied Christ.

When you have two lives to live. One on Sunday during worship and by extent the rest of Sunday and the other life on week days, you have denied Christ big time.

Don't bother to ask me how again, it is very dangerous to follow Christ afar off. You are either with him and very close or you are with the devil and very close too.

Spend today to quietly review your life. Are you close to him or you are following him from a distance?

I have drifted and am seriously working on how fast I can return to be very close to the author and finisher of our faith. Perhaps you desire to be a Christian from the Bible standpoint and be pleasing to the Almighty it is very simple.

First Hear the gospel Rom 10:17, it will generate a believe in you about Jesus John 8:24, this conviction will provoke repentance of your misdoings both morally and doctrinally like those on the day of Pentecost Act 2:37 which will propel you to confess Jesus openly before men Matt 10:33 and surrender yourself to the watery grave of baptism Mark 16:16 and Act 2:37-38 so that your sins can be forgiven. Then you can start your journey to meet the saviour living faithfully Rev 2:10.

For total liberation and thought provoking discussion on God's word, locate a church of Christ near you and enjoy spiritual food undiluted.

THE CHRISTIAN YOUNG PERSON AND THE SYSTEM

GOING BACK TO THE BEGINNING

When the church started in Jerusalem in AD 33, so many things happened that motivated Luke to pen it down in the Acts of Apostles for us to study and work on our congregations today to meet with the desires and aspirations of the Owner of the church, Jesus Christ.

The concept of the system is to direct our minds to how things were done in the original format. The best place to check the original is to check the early church and take off from there.

Beyond the book of Acts, some extra biblical books can also give us a bird eye view of the first century church and this will give us a sound footing to reorganize our congregations to meet the standard left behind by the Master of the church housing the young people.

The goal in this study is to look into the work of the foremost Christians and see their challenges and pick out lessons from there that will help shape the church today and the young persons gathered here today.

The justification of this study is borne out of the fact that most people act without learning from history, and from the events we see every day in the church, we are forced to undertake this study to bring out very salient issues about the church at its infancy and the lessons we can learn thereof.

We will narrow our discussion to four critical areas: Evangelism, Church Discipline, Persecution Management, and Apostasy.

A. EVANGELISM

The first century church was very aggressive in evangelism. From 3000 souls on the day of Pentecost in chapter 2 of Acts of the Apostles, to 5000 in chapter 4 and to multitude in chapter 5, we see the primitive church very excited to share the good news of Jesus to the dying world. Within a span of 50 years after the death of Christ, the church was established in more than 50 cities in Asia and Eastern Europe.

We need to borrow a leaf from the first century church in this regard. So many congregations today are not even interested in evangelism or are doing very little in the area of evangelism. We have been blessed with several tools that the first century Christian did not have to use to carry out their evangelism. Today we have the internet, multimedia, mass communication tools and even the print media. The question begging answers now is how well are we doing in this area of evangelism?

YOUTH APPLICATION: wake up from today and know that it is a duty to preach the gospel.

Woe unto you if you don't preach daily: 1Cor 9:16

We are to reconcile the world to Christ: 2Cor 5:17-19

Evangelism starts from your dressing, your conversation, your conduct, your choice of friends and the packaging of your online social media presence.

One big question? Can someone come to Christ by visiting your social media feed? If the answer is no, repent right away.

B CHURCH DISCIPLINE

The first century church was very firm in the discharge of discipline on anyone found culpable.

Ananias and Sapphira died on the spot simply for trying to mislead the Christians in Act 5:1-10. Simon the sorcerer was openly rebuked and shunned when he offered bribe to Peter in order to be given powers to be able to lay his hands on people to receive the Holy Spirit (Act 8:19-20). Paul told the church at Corinth to withdraw fellowship from a brother living in sin in the full glare of the church and even added that such a person be handed over the devil (1Cor 5:1-11). At some point when Paul discovered some inconsistencies in the lifestyle of Peter as regards his relationship with the Gentiles, he was rebuked to his face. Sin was not pampered. Sin was openly rebuked and the sinner told in the open to repent. All of these were done in the spirit of love.

This is one area the church today seems to be playing with. Today in some congregations, sin is pampered. Sin is condoned and it is one area some preachers are not permitted to bring up. To this effect, the church becomes spiritually sick and unholy men lead the assembly and the devil takes the glory as opposed to God.

We need to learn that when discipline is administered on the erring Christian, God takes the glory and the church grows.

“So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things. And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.” (Act 5:11-13)

The church today must tackle sin and keep the church clean to the satisfaction of the owner Jesus the Christ.

YOUTH APPLICATION: live a life today that will attract praise and not disfellowship.

Isa 59:1 is very clear about heavenly disfellowship. Once you live in sin, even when the church does not know, you stand disfellowshipped before God.

Heb 4:13 is nearby. God knows everything.

As young people, our goal is to be the light Phil 2:15, Matt 5:16 and have great influence around us.

Watch it, evil company can stain your white shirt. 1Cor 15:33

C. PERSECUTION MANAGEMENT

The first century church suffered a heavy dose of persecution. From imprisonments to flogging and being banned from preaching, to outright murder. Those passages in the book of

Acts alluded to that fact that the early disciples didn't see it as an issue.

Act 4:17-18 *“But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name.” And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.”*

Act 5:40 *“And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.”*

They had one attitude towards persecution. *“So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.”* (Act 5:41)

From the writings of Paul in 2 Timothy 3:12 and of Peter in 1 Peter 4:13-14, we agree with the position penned down by Luke in Acts 14:22 that the first century church had a positive mind-set towards persecution. They knew it was part of the bargain and were prepared to weather the storm. Just imagine for a minute, how the church in Jerusalem felt when Stephen was killed and James beheaded.

I think the church today ought to learn from this history. Just from the fear of Covid-19, the entire world is shaken. There is nothing wrong in following the Covid-19 protocols, but as a church we ought to immediately respond to the *New Normal* by making adjustment to still reach out souls even in the pandemic. If we know the pain the church fathers like Polycarp passed through to be in faith, you will know that we are living in luxury as God's children today. I submit that the

church today should wake up and strike the kingdom of darkness hard to rescue all that have been held captive.

YOUTH APPLICATION: the young people should know that it is not going to be easy to arrive at the top. They must strive and persevere to get there.

Say no to cultism to get to the top.

Say no to selling of your bodies to get to the top.

Say no to being used as a thug to get to the top.

Let 2Tim 3:12 be your guide.

D. APOSTACY

Both Paul and Peter warned the early church about the possibility of apostasy creeping into the church.

Act 20:28-30 *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves."*

2 Peter 2:1-2 *"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And*

many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.”

1 Timothy 4:1 *“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,”*

2 Timothy 4:3 *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers”*

Both apostles struggled to remain true to Christ amidst these tendencies. It was tough then and at some point Paul even swore with an oath in Galatians 1:6-9 with himself inclusive. Jude told his audience to contend earnestly for the faith that has once and for all been delivered.

The battle was won in the first two centuries, but from the third century, apostasy won and the church was led astray though history tells us that there was still a remnant that remained true to the gospel.

Today, so many congregations are gradually tilting towards apostasy. They are gradually resembling denominational groups in their thinking and worship.

Like the first century church, the drift was gradual. Today, the role of women is gradually changing under our watch. Instrumental music is “tactically” returning to our worship services. Today homosexuality that is a sin, is about to be christened a *lifestyle* like our denominational neighbours have done.

YOUTH APPLICATION: our young people today must take out time to study. 2Tim 2:15. They must subject any teaching to rigorous checks to ensure that it has the signature of Christ.

So many youths today are not studying the word and as such are not successful.

Read Joshus 1:8 and Psm 1:1-4 and you will know the importance of taking out time to study.

If you study, you will know who is qualified to ordained and who is not. You will know if your minister is misfiring and when he is inline. Just study and God will approve you.

GOING FORWARD

The church today and indeed young people as you are gathered here, need to return to serious studies to stay on the old path using the simply formula of Book, Chapter, and verse for any doctrinal practice of the church. The history of the church has reminded us to be fervent in prayers and evangelism for God in order to win souls for His vineyard through our combined efforts.

We must not play with sin in our congregations. We must enforce discipline as Paul stated in Romans 6:1. *“Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid.”*

We must wake up our level of fellowship and be prepared to suffer persecution for standing for the truth.

It is compulsory that we teach our children church history so that they will not make the same mistakes that the first century church made that resulted in apostasy.

BENEFIT OF PRAYERS

Prayer is a discussion between a creature with his creator where adoration, thanksgiving, supplication and request are placed before the creator all with a view of convincing the creator of the needs of a creature.

BASIC FOUNDATION OF PRAYER

For us to effectively pray, we need to understand some basic foundations of prayers.

You don't need to shout for God to hear. Psm 139:1-4 clearly agrees with this position. God knows all your needs before you even ask him.

Your life in Christ is important to the prayers you are presenting. In fact your lifestyle in itself is a prayer point to God. 1John3:22 agrees with this position. Once we are pleasing to God, he answers our prayers.

It is a waste of time to plead with God to destroy your enemies. He is too holy to obey your request. In Prov 16:7, God gave a standing formula. Take time and reflect on that portion of the scriptures.

There is not a stipulated time that God usually answers prayers. God is some inches away from you at all times.

Anytime you desire to speak to him, you are 100% free to go to him.

Luke 18:1 clearly teaches us that consistency is very important in the process of prayers. The woman was consistent in her request and it attracted her favour.

People can pray for you as stated in James 5:14-16. But the prayer you undertake by yourself is very powerful. It is against this background that I desire to share with us the benefit of being a prayerful woman.

Benefit of prayers

There are several benefits of prayers and in this lesson, I shall outline five basic benefit that I consider very cogent that will motivate us all to pray.

Prayers draws the individual close to God. When you regularly talk to your friend, a bond is created and your friendship runs smooth. It is the same with you and your creator. In prayers, you get to become more intimate with God.

Prayers demonstrate total dependency on God. It makes you humble to place a request before your God knowing fully well that you cannot do by your strength. **Ps 121:2** My help [*cometh*] from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

Prayers helps to build faith in the one praying. Hannah in 1Sam 1:4-18 clearly shows a woman that used prayers to get what she wanted. Prayers strengthened her faith in God. She cried to the Lord with total dependancy on him for the answer.

DON'T PUSH GOD VERY FAR

So many Christians today, because of their shallow understanding about God look at God from only one side. They see God from the eyes of a merciful God and thus continue to live carelessly with the strong thinking that God will always understand with them and show mercy.

Yes our God is plentiful in mercy. P sm 103:17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting On those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children,

He is very patient with us all. 2Pet 3:9 ¶ The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance

But unknown to so many he is also a consuming fire.

And it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands.

In our lesson today, we want discuss some things that God can actually do that so many of his children don't know that he can do it. They equally don't know that he can only do that when we cross the line of failing to change within the given time frame of his patience.

1. GOD CAN HARDEN YOUR HEART

Exo 9:12 And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses.

2. GOD CAN CAUSE YOU TO BELIEVE A LIE

1King 22:20 "And the LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. 21 "Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.' 22 "The LORD said to him, 'In what way?' So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the LORD said, 'You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.' 23 "Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you."

2Thes 2:11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,

3. GOD CAN STIR UP REBELLION AGAINST YOU.

1King 11:14 ¶ Now the LORD raised up an adversary against Solomon.....

1Chron 5:26 So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, that is, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria. He carried the Reubenites, the Gadites, and

the half-tribe of Manasseh into captivity. He took them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and the river of Gozan to this day.

4. GOD CAN GIVE YOU UP

Psm 81:12 So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, To walk in their own counsels. Ro 1:24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions.

The major reason for God turning against his creature is disobedience to his laid down rules. Once you refuse to accept the truth as standard of God's law, you immediately provoke him. As a merciful God, he will certainly give you time. Once your time is exhausted, he will hand you over to satan to deal ruthlessly with you.

1Cor 5:5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

1Tim 1:18 ¶ This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, 19 having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected,

concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, 20 of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme

Heb 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

2Co 5:11 Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

CLOSING REMARKS

God loves us very dearly. He has commanded us to respond by living a life worthy of our calling. Once we reject him and behave the way we like, we are pushing him to activate the big stick.

Our prayer is that no one should push God to that limit. No one has ever escaped once he has crossed that limit.

Rev 3:20 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me

Joh 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

May God bless the preaching of his words.

THINKING ABOUT MARRIAGE LIST

Dear Preachers,

I am motivated to share my thoughts with you knowing very well that this issue that I shall raise is one that has the ability of subtly rubbishing the image of the church.

And it is for this very singular reason that I have decided that we bring it to the front burner and discuss it and possibly take a stand that we will try to influence the brotherhood to adopt.

Over the years, the church has been plagued with “marry in the lord” trouble till it has forgotten the real issue that ought to be nipped in the bud.

Today I will like us to discuss the issue of marriage list in the light of the prevailing circumstances. Brethren, this discussion is not about the marriage list given by non-brethren who our brethren marry their children. It is about the list given by brethren whose children are being married. It about the list, given by a brother, to another brother, for his daughter to be married by that brother.

My research before writing this letter is very shocking. Out of 100 marriages conducted in the past two years within ourselves, only 20% went the way of a manageable list. The

rest 80%, the suitors were made to pay close to half a million naira to their in-laws that are brethren looking towards heaven.

The simple argument is that “my son, you see, it is my family that prepares the list and there is nothing I can do”.

That is not completely true. It is true to the extent that the said brother had consistently participated in the preparation of the marriage list for that family and did not frown it. He stood there when his brother’s daughters were married and gave approval of the list and therefore does not have the powers to say something different when it is the turn of his daughter. The real truth is that the brother likes the size of the list. He is part and parcel of the list but now pretending not to be a part and using his family as a cover.

As I write today, let us all church leaders wake up.

First let us teach our members to distance themselves in making inputs in the marriage list of their relatives so that they can speak authoritatively about the size of their own.

Second, let the church begin to screen marriage list presented by a brother to another brother. It is sad that we are gradually becoming inhuman to each other. A situation where a young brother who is finding his feet to stand in Abuja where house rent is about a quarter of a million is asked to pay half a million in the name of marriage list is totally inhuman. The

church leaders are 90% the bulk of those with children either to give out or to bring in. So the time to sit down and talk is now. A Christian list ought not to have alcoholic beverages and idolatry laden items.

Third, all youths willing to marry should shun families with high list and look elsewhere. I know a brother who is yet to recover from the impact of a marriage list. To become a man, he had to borrow just to please the family and today he is living in penury since his salary was mortgaged in the process. I have said it somewhere and I am saying here. Let us teach our youths to marry from families that have human face. Maybe that will force those brethren with high marital list to have a rethink or that will motivate their daughters to advise them to tone it down or marry them to themselves.

Fourth, we preachers should teach parents to stop thinking high about their daughters in terms of the marriage items. The success of a marriage is not dependent on the high quality of the marriage list given to the suitor. That she is a graduate or has a master degree is not what should cause you to inflate the list.

Brethren I married 15 years ago and all I paid from start to finish was less than 100k. My father in-law is a brother and father to me till date.

We cannot pretend to be Christians and even leaders at that and sell our children in the name of marriage. Rather, as

parents, we should encourage young men to come and marry our children by making the requirements minimal.

So many singles living in fornication today are scared of the high marital requirement. While waiting for their hands to be strong, they now resort to fornication and cohabitation. In the process we rise up and withdraw fellowship from them, unknown that we are the ones indirectly responsible for their actions.

Let it be on record today, that when my daughters are ready for marriage, lord willing, I shall discuss with the intending brother as my son. We will talk and arrive at a position that he will leave my house rejoicing that he has found a Christian indeed. If I am strong, I will even empower him and equip him to make his home stable. I will not sell my daughter.

May God help us church leaders to start discussing this issue. Let every preacher convene a meeting of his men and women and let the conversation begin.

Let us think deep and make the church pure by removing the things that promote covetousness, greed and immorality.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Udam

Village Preacher

UNDERSTANDING THE PRINCIPLE OF FIRST FRUIT IN THE SCRIPTURES

My attention was drawn recently by a brother who insisted that I do an article on first fruit after reading my piece on Tithe payment today. First fruit is a religious offering of the first agricultural produce of the harvest to the priests who offered them to God. It was a source created by God to sustain the priesthood and teach mankind how to show appreciation for what God has done for him and therefore open the windows of blessing upon the giver. A good student of the Bible will agree that the Old Testament is littered with several synonymous instructions concerning the process of obtaining this first fruit.

First fruit In the old testament

Proverbs 3:9–10 says, “Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.”

Nehemiah 10:35—“We obligate ourselves to bring the firstfruits of our ground and the firstfruits of all fruit of every tree, year by year, to the house of the Lord.”

Ezekiel 44:30—“And the first of all the firstfruits of all kinds, and every offering of all kinds from all your offerings, shall belong to the priests. You shall also give to the priests the first of your dough, that a blessing may rest on your house.”

2 Kings 4:42—“A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. And Elisha said, “Give to the men, that they may eat.”

Leviticus 23:20- “And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the Lord, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the Lord for the priest.”

Exodus 23:19a: “The best of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God.”

Numbers 18:13—“The first ripe fruits of all that is in their land, which they bring to the Lord, shall be yours. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it.”

2 Chronicles 31:5—“As soon as the command was spread abroad, the people of Israel gave in abundance the first fruits of grain, wine, oil, honey, and of all the produce of the field. And they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything.”

However, in the New Testament the Jewish concept of first fruit was done away with and the term first fruit rather meant those people who were first to obey the gospel of Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:13—“But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.”

Romans 16:5 and 1Cor 16:15 clearly states that humans are today first fruits.

In 2Tim 2:6, Paul clearly states that it is the prerogative of the farmer to eat first from his labour.

Technical conclusion from the forgoing:

1. First fruit was a command of God for the people of Israel as a nation and these commands did not include the Gentiles.
2. Those who first embraced the gospel in a particular place are the first fruits of the missionary or evangelist who worked there.
3. There is no single command in the entire New Testament which is the operational guide of Christians that point to the fact that Christian ought to give first fruits.
4. God provided how his servants ought to be taken cared of. Gal 6:6 is very clear and if all of us practice it,

those leading us will not need to twist the scriptures to seek food for their stomach.

5. It is not correct to impose a Jewish Old testament command on Christians today.
6. The blessings of God come from complete obedience and not in disobedience.

The time to make a u turn is now. Don't be a slave to man while God will still punish you for disobedience. Acts 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

God deserves the best and as such it not out of place to give him all from your farm or your salary if you so desire. But to do it as a religious ordinance as directed by the Jewish law is not right. We can borrow the principle and apply to motivate us to place God first in our lives in all we do. Giving requires a willing mind. 2Cor 8:12

It is pure deception to be tricked into handing over your January salary in the name of first fruit. God expects you to care for your family and will not make such a law that will destroy the fabrics of the family. 1Timothy 5:8 But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

Think deep about these things and pursue things that promote holiness and obedience.

WHY WE PLACE MUCH EMPHASIS ON BAPTISM AND HOLY LIVING AFTERWARDS?

In our contemporary world today, you here people ask why we the church of Christ place much emphasis on baptism as if it is the only important command. We shall attempt to explain the rationale behind this position of ours.

Baptism is one very important step in the Bible plan of salvation. After hearing the gospel, believing its message and the repentance of your sins propelling a confessing of your faith in Christ, baptism is the last thing to do (Act 9:6) before the conversion exercise is completed.

Although not given prominence by others, the Bible is very concerned about the believer knowing the relevance of baptism to his eternal salvation.

The command for baptism came days after the thief on the cross had a miraculous victory ticket to paradise. Even Apostle Paul that met Christ on his way to Damascus was still told to “do” something. Act 9:6-17.

Baptism is vital because

1. It is for the forgiveness of our sin – Act 2: 36-38
2. At baptism, we put on Christ Gal 3:27
3. Baptism puts us into his body the church 1Cor 12:13
4. It allows you free access to call on his name Act 22:16
5. It afford us the opportunity of sharing a glimpse of his death, burial and resurrection Col 2:12, Rom 6:3
6. It now saves us 1Pet 3:20-21

In the early beginning of the church, all who came to be known as Christians we all baptized.

1. 3000 souls on the day of Pentecost Act 2:41
2. Converts in Samaria Act 8:12
3. The Ethiopian eunuch Act 8:26-38
4. Saul of Tarsus Act 9:18
5. Cornelius and his household Act 10:47-48
6. Lydia of Thyatira Act 16:15
7. Philippian Jailer and Household Act 16:33
8. Believers in Corinth Act 18:8
9. Ephesian Disciples Act 19:5

There was no exception then and will not be today. Don't be deceived to think of a replay of the scenes like that of the thief on the cross.

Mark 16:15-16 summarizes it thus: He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.

Baptism is the entry point and holy living is another vital basic component that will keep the one saved to stay safe. Heb 12:14-15 clearly placed emphasis on the need to maintain holiness and purity. One who is baptized but is living unholy is heading to hell unless he/she repents. Equally one who is not baptized but struggling to live holy is only warming up outside the pitch because he/she is yet to put on Christ.

As you read through this short article, you may have realized that you are still far away from the savior but thought you were very close. We will be glad that you take matters about your eternal destiny very seriously.

We sincerely invite you to fellowship with any church of Christ near you, which is the approved orientation agency built by Christ, purchased with his own blood and where in all things he has preeminence.

GET RICH QUICK SYNDROME

#	Occupation	Hourly Wage	Annual Wage
1	Anesthesiologists	\$127.88	\$266,000
2	Surgeons	\$121.10	\$251,900
3	Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons	\$116.70	\$242,700
4	Obstetricians and Gynecologists	\$113.10	\$235,200
5	Orthodontists	\$110.28	\$229,400
6	Psychiatrists	\$103.89	\$216,100
7	Physicians and Surgeons, All Other	\$101.63	\$211,400
8	Family and General Practitioners	\$100.27	\$208,600
9	Dentists, All Other Specialists	\$96.15	\$200,000
10	Internists, General	\$95.37	\$198,400
11	Prosthodontists	\$94.69	\$197,000
12	Chief Executives	\$94.25	\$196,100
13	Pediatricians, General	\$90.16	\$187,500
14	Dentists, General	\$83.71	\$174,100
15	Nurse Anesthetists	\$81.47	\$169,500
16	Airline Pilots, Copilots, and Flight Engineers	N/A	\$161,300

The point here is that you can arrive at riches just by the career path you choose and working very hard in that area couple with the grace and favour from God almighty.

You can also be rich by inheritance. You are the son or daughter of a rich parent.

RICHES AND HUMAN THOUGHT PROCESS

1. Riches require much planning for it to come.
2. Riches require much planning for it to stay long with you.
3. Get rich quick method not included in the plans of God.
4. Man brought it in to enable him meet up since the train has left him behind.

BIBLICAL INPUT

So what does the Bible say? Does God condone anywhere that we should have that mentality or that it's even okay? Are there any places in Scripture where God reveals His heart on the topic of getting rich quick and the drive to accumulate massive amounts of wealth over a very short period of time from things such as playing the lottery – Gambling (nairabet and the likes), money ritual, or joining any venture that promises lots of money with little or no work or time invested?

The answer is yes and, as we will see, the root of the issue lies within the attitude and motivation of our hearts.

1. Proverbs 12:11

Those who work their land will have abundant food, but those who chase fantasies have no sense. – Proverbs 12:11 NIV

Contrasted here are two types of people: those who work hard and those who follow “chase fantasies” (i.e. – get rich quick

schemes, dishonest gain, etc.). One earns their money by diligently working with what God has entrusted to them. The other is void of understanding and will do whatever it takes to get things the quick and easy way. The latter, in contrast to the former, will end up hungry and become a burden on others because of their worthless pursuits. A very similar verse to this is found in Proverbs 28:19-20.

2. Proverbs 13:11

Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it. – Proverbs 13:11 ESV

The ESV Study Bible describes this verse perfectly. It says, “The person who receives sudden wealth has not worked for it enough to understand its value and has not gained sufficient skill in managing it. By contrast, Proverbs prefers diligent, patient, careful labor that will increase wealth over time.”

3. Proverbs 20:21

An inheritance claimed too soon will not be blessed at the end. – Proverbs 20:21 NIV

The principle here is that *too* much wealth gathered *too* quickly may be spent *too* soon. This could be from an early inheritance that was gained by asking for it or by dishonest means. Either way, it was not gained in the proper way, which can lead to reckless spending and mishandling due to irresponsibility.

4. Proverbs 23:4-5

Do not wear yourself out to get rich; do not trust your own cleverness. Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle. – Proverbs 23:4-5 NIV

Wealth is fleeting. Be wise enough to know when enough is enough in regards to how many hours you spend working to build it. Don't wear yourself out trying to get rich. Spend your time on what matters most rather than chasing after money, which flies away very quickly.

5. Ecclesiastes 5:10

Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless. – Ecclesiastes 5:10 NIV

For those who seek after riches and gaining them quickly, their appetite will never be satisfied. The root of these desires is greed and the pursuit for more will never end. The cure for this type of heart condition is contentment in what you have and what you have worked for.

6. 1 Timothy 6:9

Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. – 1 Timothy 6:9 NIV

Note that this verse is not condemning being rich, rather it details the desire and pursuit of such, which can steer your heart in directions you may never have thought possible.

It's safe to say that this list of Bible verses is not exhaustive and there are certainly many more that speak on the topic of money. These particular verses focus on the pursuit of riches, getting rich quick, and the desire to be rich beyond imagination.

THINK DEEP

Luke 12:15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Matt 16:26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

1Tim 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

God does not like get quick rich syndrome.

It does not place you near God but near Satan.

It steals your joy away and focus you to hell as your life will be driven towards how to meet up.

Your spiritual activism will die gradually once you activate the get rich quick syndrome.

The power to bless and curse is still in the hands of God.

CLOSING REMARKS

First, when Jesus met the rich young ruler, he did not say, “Follow me *by* giving your money away.” He said, “First give your money away, and *then* follow me.” His ensuing conversation with the disciples suggests this order is the rule, not the exception.

Today, we should stick to the plan. I will work and God will surely bless the labours of my hands.

The desire to get rich quick is sold by the devil and we must reject it completely.

I have resolved not to pursue wealth to the detriment of my soul.

I pray God will redirect our thoughts to stay focus to him and avoid this great distraction.

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MY WIFE AND SIDE CHIC

When this topic hits the social media, it attracted so many comments especially as people criticized the formation of the topic.

A side chic is defined as any know major distraction of a man that is capable of destroying the family life of a man and perpetually place him on harm's way spiritually.

The idea behind a side chic goes beyond the basic thinking of a woman apart from your wife. A side chic could also be your phone, your laptop, the internet, social media and your office. It is anything that destroys your relationship with your wife. So many marriages are hanging in the balance because of the presence of a side chic.

In this presentation, an attempt shall be made to look at the two major forms of side chics and explain human justification for side chic and highlight the danger it portends in the family.

First Who is a wife?

A wife is a special woman that you choose amongst over 4 billion women in the world to come and help you build a family. The Bible refer to a woman as a help meet.

Gen 2:18 And the LORD God said, [It is] not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

She is a special personality that qualified you the man as a complete man. No wonder Peter warned us to dwell with them with understanding, knowing that poor management of them will take us to hell fire.

1Pet 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with [them] according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

A wife is that special specie created by God that you deployed all known techniques to woo her to your bosom. As a man, take a minute to reflect on what you did to get your wife home.

Then why the desire for a side chic?

Several reasons have been adduced for men going out to cool off with a side chic. In this presentation, I shall work on four principal points I consider are key to motivate men to look outside their marriage window.

UNMET EXPECTATION

This is not the woman I married.

My wife is no longer attractive.

It seems she does not love me again.

She seems to shift attention to her children and

I am left in the cold.

She is not able to give me a child.

She is producing only one sex of babies.

Therefore let me look outside and get a side chic who will fill this gap.

MATHEMATICS OF SEX

Men need sex to be excited in the marriage and women may deny them due to several factors ranging from tiredness, unresolved anger, not in the mood concept, hygiene related requirement, and or condition response offer.

Instead of the man to deploy technical strategies to overcome and get his need, most men get upset and the idea of a side chic is conceived. When the situation remains unresolved, the option of a side chic is activated and executed.

POOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Most men lack basic conflict management skills and as such begin to avoid the wife. The bottom line is that he will be pulled away by a side chic who will fill the vacuum created by his inability to deal with the problem at home.

BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH AN ELEVATED POSITION IN LIFE.

As men climb the ladder of life, side chics are regular addendum in seminars and conferences across the country and globe. Men with weak moral fiber easily fall for these booby traps and after a little while, it becomes normal.

NON HUMAN SIDE CHIC

These are inanimate objects that have been found guilty of taking away the love life of the man.

PHONE AND LAPTOP

Most men do not physically flirt with a woman. They flirt with their phones or laptops. They spend so much time with their laptops that they don't have any single time left for quality relationship building. From the phone, pornography, masturbation and an illicit affair takes the man captive.

OFFICE/WORKPLACE

Some men love their office so much that they work till late hours. This affects their relationship with their wife is seen as a single married woman. No leave, no vacation, crowded weekends and even bringing office work at home over the weekend. The wife is not captured in the scheme of things. She is now married to the children.

EFFECT OF SIDE CHIC ON THE CHRISTIAN MAN

He will use his hand to destroy his family.

Low spiritual growth – when such men are seen as leading members and now involved in adultery.

Financial mismanagement and sharing of resources between the wife and the side chic.

Possibilities of the acquisition of Sexually transmitted diseases.

The bond of marriage is broken. **Heb 13:4** Marriage [*is*] honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. He will head to hellfire straight.

THE WAY FORWARD

1. Don't create an enabling environment for side chic to exist in your life.
2. Try to balance between work and family.
3. Women need attention and you must supply it accordingly.
4. Develop conflict management skills.
5. Pray for your wife daily to be the woman you will love and cherish all the days of your life.

WHO IS ON THE LORD'S SIDE?

Right from the time the heavens and earth were created by the almighty, and the puncture of the blissful state of man by the cunning craftiness of the evil one, there had always been the need to count all those on the Lord's side.

Writing to his personal assistant now turned minister, Young Timothy in the second epistle, the second chapter and the nineteenth verse, Paul the Apostle declared that **THE LORD KNOWS THOSE THAT ARE HIS.**

This declaration is piercing to the bone marrow as it alerts the man to know that God know all those on his side.

Scanning through the inspired word of God, we see that man has an idea to know if they are on the Lord's side.

Joshua declared in Joshua 24:14-15 that for him and his family, they are on the side of the Lord.

In the great battle of Mount Carmel in 1King 18:16-45, there was need to know the side where the children of Israel actually belonged. According to Elijah, they have been swimming between two opinions. Either they stand with Baal as introduced by their first lady Jezebel or the follow the God of their fore fathers. After the contest and the victory of Elijah

over the four hundred prophets of Baal, it was clear that the people choose to be on the side of the Lord.

So today, it is my desire to remind you that there is no middle ground.

You are either on the Lord's side or you are recruit of the devil.

So on who's side are you as you take a critical self-evaluation?

I think I am on the Lord's side.

I pray that he affirms that I am on his side.

I have a serious work to do. As a man and leader of my family, it is my responsibility to mobilize my family to be on the Lord's side. It is the responsibility of my wife to cooperate with me to ensure that the family train does not derail.

Think very deep about this short clip.

ROLL THAT STONE AWAY

When Lazarus the friend of Jesus died and was buried. His two sisters who knew how close he was with Jesus were sad that the master did not attend the funeral of their brother even when he sent a message to him about his death.

Jesus arrived late by human reckoning since Lazarus has been buried for four days now and the obvious decay process has begun and the associated pungent smell will discourage anyone to peep into the tomb well secured with a huge tomb stone.

When Jesus arrived at the place where his very good friend was buried, he demanded that the stone at the mouth of the tomb be rolled away. Even when Martha filed in a protest, Jesus still demanded that his instructions be carried out of she wanted God to do something great in her sight.

Martha mobilized the people around to get the stone rolled away and a few minutes later he brother was brought back to the land of the living.

Just take out time to read this beautiful episode in John 11: 20-44.

Beloved friends and brethren, so many of us have been imprisoned by so many things that we need Jesus to bring us

out alive again. But we must be willing to roll the stone away from the mouth of the cave.

Do a thorough research about yourself and your inner and know what is keeping you inside the prison.

Lust, pornography, gambling, idolatry and alcohol and drug addiction are listed amongst the top issues that have imprisoned so many people on earth today. So many are struggling with it.

Permit me to inform you that there is a solution. You need to partner with Jesus Christ to get rid of these things. You will first roll the stone away and then call on him to clean you up.

Living inside sin and be calling on the name of the Lord for mercy and help is not the solution. You must start now to remove your hands from that sin that easily besets you.

If you don't roll that stone away, he cannot enter your heart.

Read Rev 3:20 and you will understand.

The truth of God can only set you free if you know what is holding you captive. The bible knows only repent and repentance. The Bible does not know REPENTING. It is not a process. Until you remove your hands from the pot, it is still in the pot.

God bless you.

FAITH DESTROYERS

A faith destroyer is an active Christian working for the devil in the church of God. So many people can hardly dictate a faith destroyer and as such I have taken the pains to publish here the clear cut out characteristics for all to see and repent thereof if in the event you are one.

Faith destroyers reject the plain teachings of God. They pay great attention to the teaching but deep inside them, that teaching is not for them.

Faith destroyers easily find faults in a lesson presented in church. They murmur over the lesson and wonder why the minister is repeating this lesson over and over especially if it bothers on what they do.

They discourage those within the framework of their influence to disobey the teachings like them and gradually drift from the truth.

They doubt the practicability of the truth being taught. “can a man stay with just his wife alone” “how can I dwell with her with understanding when she is stubborn” “leave that thing, it is not easy to be a Christian at all time in this naija”. By their actions, they gradually poison the heart of their friends within their friendship circle.

They do everything to conceal their sin and are experts in helping other bubble inside sin.

Above all, they pretend to be good Christians even when inside of them is rotten.

Run away from faith destroyers

A
POEM

WHEN THE LAST CURTAIN FALLS

If when I die
And cross over to the other side
And discover there is no heaven or hell and life itself was a
scam,
I will still be grateful
I lived a life that impacted mankind positively
With a mind of going to heaven.
I will have no regret at all.
How sad it will be if there is a heaven and a hell and I was
not prepared.

If when I die
And cross over to the other side
And discover that life ended here and no life exist after now
I will still have no regret
I lived a fulfilled life of service to humanity
It is far better than shortchanging my fellow man because
life ends here.
How sad it will be to be told that my works here on earth
shall lead me to hell and it was so.

If when I die
And cross over to the other world
And discover that everyone is qualified to go to heaven
I will still be happy that I made the list with others
inclusive,

Afterall, the more, the merrier.
How sad it will be that for those who thought so and
discover that
No repentance is allowed in the grave

My hope when I die
Is to be carried by his grace
To meet my saviour over there
Where there will be no more sorrows and pain
For all my toils here are for a crown of righteousness
Which I am struggling by his grace to enter.

You are free to mock at me
Plagued by the frivolities of this world
I am not bothered
I know where I am going and hope to be there
One day when I die.

Mike Udam
The Village Preacher

HAVE YOU CHECKED YOUR GROWTH PROFILE

Does it bother you how much growth you are making

1Pet 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

Milk is for babies

Meat is for adults

Heb 5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which [*be*] the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

God expect babes to grow up and be able to teach others – can you teach someone the Word? If you cannot then, you are still a baby and need spiritual doctor immediately.

Can you make sound judgment from principles instead of waiting for each command to be handed down to you? If you cannot handle things on your own, then you are a baby.

Can you identify a need in the church and quietly cover the need without being told to do so? If you are pushed to do everything and guided to do it then, we are still a baby.

God is interested that you grow.

You need to step up your game.

If you wait to be motivated to give to God that created you, then you are still a baby.

If you wait for the church to fix evangelism before you can speak to someone about Jesus and his church, then you are still a babe.

If you wait to be reminded that you ought to visit with backsliders and check on those who skip services, then you are still a baby.

So how do you see yourself?

Are you sure you don't deserve to be taken to the hospital?

Do you know that mothers are not proud of their children that do not grow as expected?

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

Matthew 22:35 **35** And one of them, an expert in religious law, asked him a question to test him: **36** “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?”

37 Jesus said to him, “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.* **38** This is the first and greatest commandment. **39** The second is like it: ‘*Love your neighbor as yourself.*’

Love God with all your heart

Love God with all your soul

Love God with all your mind

You cannot love God with all your heart when your heart is with the devil.

You cannot love God with all your heart when you are not committed in his work

To love God means we are ready to Obey his commandments.

To love God means we are ready to make sacrifices about his mission.

We must be ready to give our time, energy and resources to advance the cause of the gospel.

It goes beyond mouth talk and rhetoric.

The demonstration of love for the father demands total obedience to his will and a strong bond between man and his neighbor.

In your heart of heart, do you truly love God?

THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF

Dear preachers online and offline,

I will like to draw your attention to two passages that are very important to our ministry.

1Tim 4:16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

1Cor 9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

We need to watch the content of our preaching.

We need to watch the quality of family we lead.

We need to watch our lifestyle.

We need to watch the spiritual temperature our audience.

May we always remember that we are vessels that God will use to serve the people his spiritual food.

May God help us to preach his word and be rewarded with eternity with him when the last curtain falls.

Have a wonderful worship experience. Happy Lords day.

Mike Udam

SUICIDE IS NOT THE SOLUTION

Dear Christian young people,
Moved by current spate of suicides across the length and breadth of the country, I have chosen to speak to you today. I am convinced that you will spare me a little time of yours.

Suicide is the voluntary doing away of one's life motivated by so many factors and not limited to depression, unmet expectations, rejection and disappointment especially arising from relationship and "remote control". One major feature of suicide is that it is self inflicted.

Suicide is a sin and condemned by God, no one has the right to take another person's life, not to talk of taking one's life.
Exod 20:13 Thou shalt not kill.

Know it today that if the word of God dwells in you richly, you will never contemplate suicide.

Let me quickly outline five basic principle that will help you fight the urge and drift for suicide.

Firstly, never expect too much from man, but put your trust in God. The Bible clearly states that the heart of man is desperately wicked and deceitful. **Jer 17:9** The heart [*is*] deceitful above all [*things*], and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Most who kill themselves mistakenly put their whole trust on man and once the true character or picture plays out, their disappointment triggers the urge for suicide and if not checked, it is executed.

Secondly, always know that what is not yours cannot be yours. So if you are in any relationship, keep it at the back of your mind that it may not end well. Some psychologist have advocated for a 35% failure rate buffer. Remind yourself that this excellent relationship can fail any moment, even though it is not your desire. Keep it in mind that, if God says yes, no man can say no. and if the same God says no, not even you can say yes.

Thirdly, see failure and poverty as temporal setback all with expiry dates. This too shall pass away. Invoke the theory of “no condition is permanent”. David was formerly a shepherd boy; he ended up as a king. Bill Gates was a dropout from School, today he is amongst the richest in the world. Peter that denied Jesus three times was the one that preached to establish the church on the day of Pentecost. His fellow Apostles Judas, that could not manage his situation, took away his life.

Fourthly, learn how to manage shame. The shame of pregnancy, out of wedlock, the shame of belonging to the class of “never do well”, the shame of rejection even after you had bragged about your relationship especially on social media, the shame of falling from grace to grass and recalling the former days, the list is long. Apostle Paul managed his shame well. He went to the house of Ananias in Damascus to be led to baptism, even when it was obvious Ananias was amongst his numerous target to destroy in Damascus if he was not arrested by Christ. Paul was rejected by the Apostles in Jerusalem if not for the strong backing he got from Barnabas. But that did not deter him.

Lastly, speak to God about your situation and pray for open doors. God can turn things around for anyone. Joseph is a typical example. Sold to slavery, false accused and sent to prison and with no hope. But God changed his story. I read on social media that if man can make a good soup from bitter leaf, then there is no situation God cannot change for Good.

Dear young people, it is not all over until it is over. Killing yourself is not the solution to your depression. God expects you to give him thanks in everything that happens to you. **1Thess 5:18** In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

A critical look at the situation that you are in will reveal that it was self inflicted. So why not wake up and learn from the mistake and move on. The future is pregnant and the

possibilities of turning things for good is higher than remaining the same. The Bible declares **Rom 8:28** And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to [*his*] purpose.

Suicide is not the solution. Share your problem with those who can help you out. There are still good people out there.

Yours sincerely

Mike

ARE YOU BETTER THAN THE DEVIL

The devil is described as terrible in the Bible. We are disgusted with the works of the devil. No one wants to be identified with the devil, so to say. And as such we sometimes claim that we are better than it.

Today it is my desire to explore the possibility of being less better than the devil, yet thinking that you are better than the devil.

If you think believing in God is what makes you better than the devil, relax, the devil believes and even tremble at the presence of God. Job 1:6 places the devil among those who hang around the presence of God. James 2:19. Believing in God alone does not make you better than the devil. You have to put your faith in action beyond being hearers alone. If not, you are on the same level with the devil.

If you think you fear God and respect him, step up your game to be ahead of the devil.

If you think you can quote the scriptures, the devil can quote the bible as well and even bring it when you least expect. At the temptation of Jesus, the devil cited a scripture to make Jesus bow to him. Matt 4:6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they

shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

If you think you know God, relax the devil knows him better. In fact, even before Peter could explain who Jesus was, it was the demons that identified him and announce him.

Mark 5:2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, 3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: 4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. 5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. 6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, 7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

Mark 1:34 And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him

So you need to do more work on your relationship with God. If you think you can pretend to be a Christian, know that the devil is a professor in that act. He is pictured as masquerading himself as an angel of light. 2Cor 11:14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. If you and the devil are pretenders, then you are not better than him.

The bottom line is that we need to do more work to be classified as being better than the devil.

First we need to surrender to the will of God for our lives and live lives that will be pleasing to him and only him alone.

John Sammis captured it in his song Trust and Obey

When we walk with the Lord
in the light of his word,
what a glory he sheds on our way!
While we do his good will,
he abides with us still,
and with all who will trust and obey.
Trust and obey, for there's no other way
to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

It is far better to start now to work on your lifestyle so that you don't stay in the church but not better than the devil.

The devil is hard working in the wrong direction.

I am struggling to be better than the devil and be referred to as the child of God.

God bless you as you start today to work to improve your rating to be better than the devil.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MENTORSHIP

What is mentorship?

noun

1. the guidance provided by a mentor, especially an experienced person in a company or educational institution.

"Mentoring is to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximise their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be." Eric Parsloe, The Oxford School of Coaching & Mentoring

Mentoring is a powerful personal development and empowerment tool. It is an effective way of helping people to progress in their careers and is becoming increasingly popular as its potential is realised. It is a partnership between two people (mentor and mentee) normally working in a similar field or sharing similar experiences. It is a helpful relationship based upon mutual trust and respect.

A mentor is a guide who can help the mentee to find the right direction and who can help them to develop solutions to career issues. Mentors rely upon having had similar

experiences to gain an empathy with the mentee and an understanding of their issues. Mentoring provides the mentee with an opportunity to think about career options and progress.

A mentor should help the mentee to believe in herself and boost her confidence. A mentor should ask questions and challenge, while providing guidance and encouragement. Mentoring allows the mentee to explore new ideas in confidence. It is a chance to look more closely at yourself, your issues, opportunities and what you want in life. Mentoring is about becoming more self aware, taking responsibility for your life and directing your life in the direction you decide, rather than leaving it to chance

CHARACTERISTICS OF A MENTOR

1. He must be a Christian
2. He must be a faithful Christian
3. He must be a married personality.
4. He must have very high self control mechanism.
5. He must be willing to associate and accommodate and tolerate.
6. He must be willing, able and ready to mentor young people.
7. He must be full of wisdom and intellect to shape and mould souls.

WHO IS A MENTEE?

1. A young person willing to learn by observation and followership.
2. A person ready for correction, willing to accept correction.
3. A person thinking of better options on how to develop self from looking at how others do things.

BASIC PRINCIPLE OF MENTORSHIP

1. Mentorship is not compulsory. It is voluntary.
2. Mentorship is not for everyone. Some may not need it and still grow, others actually needs it.
3. Not everyone can even mentor someone.

CHALLENGES TO MENTORSHIP TODAY

1. Young people have been distracted by football and music/movie stars as their mentors. This is reflected in their dressing and hairstyles.
2. The adults supposed mentors are too far away from the young people.
3. The theory of supposition. The adult and young people argue over who should approach each other first.

4. Poor enabling environment: mentorship programme can not thrive in a congregation where fellowship is sick.
5. Ego and pride. Some are too big to be mentored and some are too much to mentor others.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF MENTORSHIP

Moses Joshua model: Moses trained and mentored Joshua till he later took over from him. Exo 17:8-16, Joshua 1:1-6

Eli Samuel model: Samuel was mentored by Eli. He even lived with Eli till he became a man. 1 Sam 2:11

Jesus and the twelve model: Jesus choose 12 men that he used to set up Christianity.

Peter and John mark model: early church history technically assert that John Mark was a companion of Peter and this relationship led him to write the Gospel of Mark

Paul and Silas and Timothy model : Paul took these “small” brethren as his children in the Lord. 1Tim 1:2

TYPES OF MENTORSHIP

PHYSICAL RELATIONSHIP MENTORSHIP: the mentor and the mentee have physical contact regularly and even know each other before now.

ONLINE MENTORSHIP: mentorship where both mentor and mentee may not have a physical contact but meet regularly online especially on social media sites and they relate.

QUIET MODE MENTORSHIP: here the mentor does not know that he has mentees who are closely watching him and quietly modelling their lives styles to that of the mentor.

SUMMARY

Your life as a Christian leader should attract people to come to you for mentorship.

Your life as a youth should motivate an elder brother in faith to volunteer to mentor you.

Jesus is the greatest mentor on who ever lived this planet. Just in three years he turned fishermen into great evangelist that started Christianity that has reached us today.

UNDERSTANDING THE WOMAN AS THE WORLD CREATED HER

The creator of the universe took time to create a woman to completely fill in the gap that existed when God created man. The woman was designed to be a help meet to the man. She was designed to work with the man to grow the family and the man to provide her with all her needs.

But the devil decided to exploit her weakness and caused her to rebel against God in the garden of Eden. She took the fruit and it landed her and the man in trouble.

Today the woman has forgotten her first line charge of being a help meet to the man. She is made to see herself as co-equal with the man.

She now can own a church and lead men in prayers. She does not care whether it contravenes the scriptures or not. **1Cor 11:3** But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God.

1Tim 2:12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

1Cor 14:34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

1Cor 14:35 And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

Today the woman is made to kill herself to care for her body so that she can be loved and look presentable and be attractive and considered happening and in vogue. The real inner woman is neglected. This explains why so many marriages are failing. Paul and Peter in their writings pleaded with women of old and today to work on the inner woman.

1Pet 3:3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; **1Pet 3:4** But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

1Tim 2:9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; **1Tim 2:10** But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

The woman is saddled with so many responsibilities by her family so much so that she is made to work to help cater for the needs of the family and in that case loose the family to the devil. 80% of failed families is simply because the woman has abandoned her traditional role of helping the man from the home.

She can now own her own job and live on her own.

This has given birth to the development and spread of single parent families.

But this was not how God created her.

But what makes a woman in the eyes of the world?

The answer to this single question is the main discussion of this seminar.

According to the world, a fulfilled woman is easily identified by the following characteristics

1. They love their physical appearance more than their spiritual inside. They can spend more than an a hour looking for cloths that will match their shoes and face and hair make up, but cant spend 10 minute with the almighty in personal devotion. 1Pet 3:3 Do not let your adornment be merely outward--arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel 4 rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.
2. They love their work and business so much above their family. Their work or business is first and family last. Their desire is to make money and meet up with the demands of the society. They want to be seen as doing something rather than home keepers. At least if

they are doing something, no man will mess around with them.

3. In the process of pursuing money, their basic responsibilities are left in the hands of house helps who become afternoon mothers and assistant wife.
4. Because they have money and are very beautiful in appearance not in heart, it affects their submissiveness to their husbands. They even are known and heard in their houses more than their husbands. They silently take over the leadership of the house and run it the way they like.
5. They don't have complete hope in their marriage and the future and as such they prepare for the day the marriage will finish by engaging in hidden investments which lead to empowerment of those not even relatives but willing to front the runs for them.
6. With these kinds of activities lined up for these women, it is a fertile ground for extramarital affairs. To get promotion, to get top political appointments, to be famous all come with a price tag. You either pay it or leave it.
7. They can go at all length to secure their homes using several means. Even if it means going to a prayer house or juju house just to keep the home intact which they have destroyed, they will go.

TECHNICAL ADVICE

To the world these women are fulfilled, some of us may even envy them and desire to be like them. But to Christ and the church, they have lost it all.

As a woman listen all of us.

Once you cannot lead your children to Christ by your conduct and comportment, you have lost it all.

Once you cannot manage your husband and make him see you and you alone, you have lost it all.

Once you cannot manage your home and manage your inlaws and manage your time well, you have lost it all.

Once the beauty of Christ is not seen in you, you may be fulfilled by the standard of the world but empty by the standard of Christ.

Rom 10:2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

You may say, it does not concern me and as such it is not me this lesson is talking about. Very good. But the moment you

admire and give approval of those in these practice, you are inside.

Rom 1:32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Think and be fulfilled like God expects you to be.

UNDERSTANDING THE WOMAN AS THE CHURCH CREATED HER

The church is a call out of people from darkness to light. It a training ground for fellowship and devotion to God.

It is a place where reformation takes place in the life of the one who decides to obey the gospel of Christ through baptism.

So once a woman is baptized and added to the church, the church begins her work of transforming her back to the original form and design God created her.

It is the desire of the church that the woman is made a godly and holy, Heb 12:14

It is the desire of the church that the woman is made to love the church and invest in her. ICor 15:58

It is the desire of the church that the woman be submissive to her husband if she is married and humble if she is unmarried. Eph 5:22, James 4:6-7

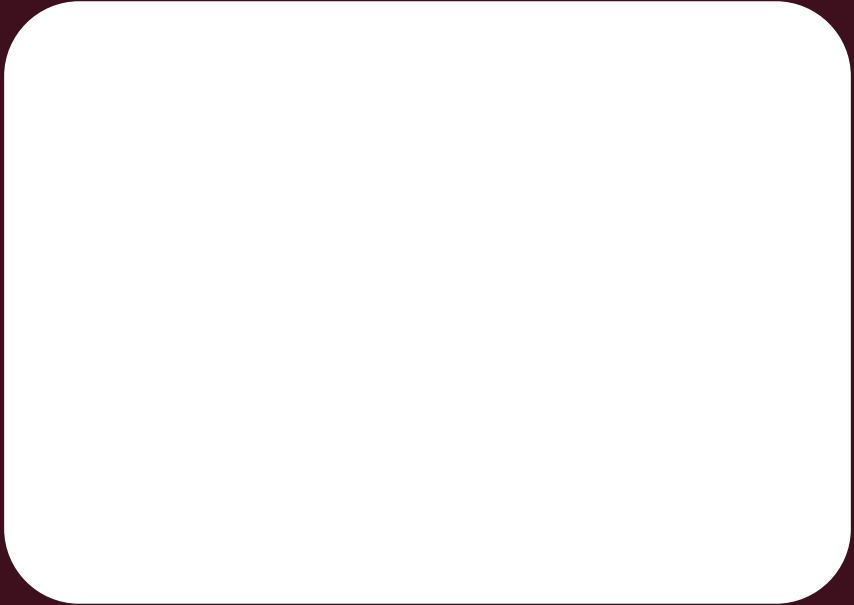
It is the desire of the church that the woman is made to join the man in disciplining the children.

But the woman must submit herself to the teachings of the church before the character mold made by the church will work. James 4:7

So it is in our hands to be molded for good by the church.

Are you sure you are allowing the church to mold you into the shape God wants?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



ABOUT THE BOOK

