RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS AS HOME BUILDERS, A SINE QUA NON FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT
The family, society and morality, to borrow the most ecological terminology, have become "endangered species". Studies on parenting have focused on psychological, sociological, gender roles and traditional perspectives. However much has not been said about the dimension of parents as home builders a sine-qua-non for national development from Christian standpoint. Data for this work were collected through oral interview and consultation of scholarly journals and textbooks. In the 21st century, the families off springs are endangered with multiple social vices that range from internet fraud (yahoo yahoo), kidnapping, lesbianism, drug abuse, homosexuality, bestiality, incest, ritual killing and others. Some of these issues if not all are gaily celebrated in most of our churches and shrines as they are being aided in all front. Parents have self-imposed and natural duty to train up their children without treating it as a second class duty, that there is a link between effective parenting, morality and national development. Findings from this work has indicated that responsible citizenry, reduction in crime rate, healthy nation and preservation of cultural values which are germane to national development are products of responsible parenting. Also discovered, are the salient roles of women (responsibility in children upbringing, character study, mirror of the family and caretakers) which are imperative for effective parenting, tutelage and admonition of children in families. The work recommends.

Introduction

Families are institutions of human society and form the starting point of discipline in the society. Parents connote one's father and mother. Parenthood can also be acquired via adoption and guidance. The father's leadership role in marriage invests him with responsibility before God for the direction of family living, which his wife in her response helps him to accept. This means she is not to sabotage his leadership or usurp it. The wife is to encourage and strengthen rather than eliminate it. Marital partners bear one another burden. His leadership role must be felt, but where there is

masculine ineffectiveness in the home, there are occasional brutal attempts to assert his leadership, which will pose great threat to the building of such home. This work is predicated on responsibility of parents as home builders, a sine qua non for national development, hence the following research questions are germane to the discuss:

i. What is Parenting?

ii. What is Home Building?

iii. Responsibility of Parents as Home builders.

iv. Prominent Roles of Women as Home Builders.

Literature Review

Here, several works of scholars are being reviewed on issues in parental responsibility.

Issues in Parental Responsibility

Omotuyole (2009) opines that, a family and her members have a number of functions and rights. It is the responsibilities of such family to name every child born into the family, to raise the child from childhood till he or she is old enough to take care of him/herself. He argues that the family is expected to educate and transmit societal norms and culture to children and also ensures provision of physical security in terms of food, clothing and shelterand other needs. Omotuyole's contribution is relevant to this research in that it discusses the ideal role of parenting in a normal family structure. However, he undermined the issue of parental responsibility in home building.

Another work relevant to this study is that of Abgana and Oludare (2010) affirm that the society is characterized by socio-economic upheavals, crime-waves such as delinquency brought or necessitated by parental neglect, economic realities and the parents now bestow the early training and education of their children on house maids and care centres. Early childhood care and education centres flourish in this century as a means for the growing needs of the children whose parents/guardians are out in search of economic fortunes. Adebayo (2011), Murdock (1949) and Aggarwal (2010) corroborate Agbana and Oludare's opinion that most children in Nigeria are denied of adequate parental care due to their over involvement in white collar jobs, business and other economic ventures. The contribution of these authors is relevant to this research. We agree with no doubt that their works have added value to this research in the sense that they see delinquency as a spill-over effect of parental negligence resulting from economic realities. However, they completely neglect the aspect of parents as home builders a sine qua non for national development.

Ooye (2013) affirms that a worldwide renowned Evangelist and a well-known notorious armed robber were born alike. The only different is their upbringing or parenting. She insists that the upbringing of a child dictates what he/she will become later in life. Ooye's contribution serves this work right. We agree with her opinion that parenting dictates the later life of a child. And to be brought up by a good parent is priceless. But, she fails to discuss the functional imperative of parents as home builders.

Conceptual Clarification of Terms

Meaning of Parenting

Adeyemi (2010) considers parenting as a process of promoting and supporting the all-round development of a child (physical, emotional, educational, social, intellectual and spiritual) from infancy to adulthood. It is intended for the upbringing of a child that is socially matured and productive who will be able to impact his or her world in the right direction. In the same vein, parenting refers to carrying out the responsibilities of raising and relating to children in such a manner that the child is well prepared to realize his or her full potential as a human being. This implies that parenting involves administering a total care to a new born from birth to adulthood. It can simply mean the process or state of being a parent. Scholars like Nancy (2002), and Jack (1897) agree that parenting involves a process which sometimes continues for many decades. Morrison (1978) also defines parenting as the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for giving birth to, rearing and providing care for newborn. This definition implies that parenting must be planned for and should not be taken for granted. Morrison, further stresses that a qualitative parenting depends on several factors: First, a qualitative parenting depends solidly on parental maturity. Stable marital union largely depends on this factor thirdly; the number of children born by parents could affect the pattern of parenting. Fourthly, when pregnancy is prepared for it will affect their parenting quality. When

parents' least expected the coming of a child it will have a spill-over effect on children. Lastly, the child's temperament and physical attributes play a pivotal role in their upbringing. A troublesome child with visible handicap will make the parenting task more strenouos than a simple newborn with appraised attributes.

Home Building

The home represents the family. The family in turn, is the smallest unit of the society. We can therefore conclude that the family or home is the mirror of the future of the society. If the future generation is not well groomed, the norms and values of the society may be extinct. Overton (1935) sees home as a peculiarly precious social institution, which houses some of the most sacred of all human relationship**.** Onah (1999) defines the home as 'a private living quarters of a person, family or household.' It also connotes a place where one was born and brought up. The home is a family unit. There are three key elements in building a peaceful home life: the relationship between family members, the atmosphere of the home itself, and the way the home is run. When a family shares principles and values, they grow together. The home becomes a foundation for the family to grow together. The home becomes a foundation for the family's shared sense of purpose while providing a springboard for each member to pursue his/her own goals. In such a home, family stay up late talking heart-to-heart about what's on their minds. Children crowd around grandparents to hear stories. Teenagers debate meaningful issues with each other and with their parents. The whole family gets together and not just on holidays but also for evenings of songs, games, folktales (which indirectly teach morals) and reminiscing. The home becomes alive, a source of energy and hope, of urgency and love. It is not the tranquility of a home that makes it peaceful; it is the life within.

Responsibility of Parents as Home Builders

Parents are to live in harmony. After addressing the wives and the husbands separately, Paul instructed the two sexes (in the congregation): "All of you, live in harmony with one another, is sympathetic, love as brothers, and be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil for evil or insult with insult, but with blessings, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing," I Peter 3: 8-9. This is their responsibility to one another. It is their practical way of teaching their children to live in harmony with their spouses and other people. Though all the aforementioned obligations are directly expected between husband and wife, they have their side effects indirectly on the children. Nevertheless, there are some roles to be directly played by the parents on the children. Parents are to train their children, (Proverbs 22:6), and part of the training is to give various instructions. It is the responsibility of the father to instruct his children to obey their mother. In Proverbs 1:8, the wise father instructs his son "do not forsake your mother's teaching." Against the happenings in some homes today where one parent will be instigating the children against the other parent, we can see how the wise father is teaching the children to be obedient to their mother. This is applicable to the mother too. Mothers are very influential. Often times whatever they say is believed and followed by the children. If they do not want the children to fear and honour their father, they can do it. A clear example is found when Jacob deceived his father and was blessed instead of Esau! Jacob feared his father and would not want his curse. But Rebecca encouraged, supported and taught him how he would deceive his father. She totally dispelled the fear from his heart that Jacob eventually confidently sat before his father and deceived him (Genesis 27). This is not encouraged in the Bible. What happened between Rebecca and Isaac was touching; how they handled their children almost claimed Jacob's life as Esau wanted to kill him. This shall later be discussed under favouritism. In essence, for a godly and pleasant relationship that will benefit every member of the family and the society at large, the two parents should work hand in hand and see that their children respect and obey the two of them. The two of them have different roles to play on the children, they complement each other.

It is the responsibility of parents to instruct their children to preserve sound judgement, as a parent gives an instruction, "My son, preserve sound judgement and discernment." (Proverbs 3:21). This is one of the ways to solve the problems of injustice in our country. People pervert judgement. Many people have suffered injustice; this is even affecting Nigeria politically. But all our judges and lawyers were raised by some parents. Though many factors are responsible for the act of injustice, parent – child relationship may minimize it. Let the parents train their children from the beginning of their lives, to be godly in all their dealings. As part of training the child is to maintain justice, the parent in the book of Proverbs exposes his child to the attached benefits. According to him, if the child will maintain justice, it will be an ornament to grace his neck, he will go on his way to safety and he will not stumble. When he lies down, he will not be afraid; when he lies down, his sleep will be sweet, (proverbs 3: 22-24). It means maintaining justice which beautifies the one who does it. There are also safety and peace

of mind for him or her. There are social and medical benefits of maintaining justice.

Parents are to instruct their children not to join bad company. Proverbs 1:10 instructs, "My son if sinners entice you, do not give in to them." I Corinthians 15:33 also confirms, "Do not be misled, 'Bad company corrupts good character." Part of what the bad company can do is to lie in wait to kill and shed harmless innocent blood (Proverbs 1:11). They do such just to get money and wealth (1:13) but eventually, they resulted in killing one another (1:18), the reason for the warning not to join them. It is very clear that an average Christian finds it difficult to kill fellow human beings. One of the reasons can be traced to the value biblical teaching attached to life. If all parents care about lives of others, a healthy parent child relationship that teaches sanctity of life and discourages the children from joining a bad company will minimize the killing of innocent souls in our society.

Parents should care to instruct their children against adultery. Apart from the fact that the bible is against adultery and fornication, it also guides the parents to teach their children to resist sexual immorality. An example is found in proverb 5:1-10. Other passages include proverbs 2:16ff, 6:24ff, 7:6ff, 22:14, 23:27-28, 31:2-3, Exodus 20:14, Matthew 5:27-30, Galatians 5:19.

To discipline a child is also part of training him or her, and this is a responsibility of the parents to the child. Proverbs 19:18a states, "Discipline your child with rod; while verse 24 explains how punishing a child with rod can save a child's soul from death. In essence, it is ethical and acceptable to punish or beat a child when necessary (Salifu, 2021). It is equally cultural. Nonetheless, Coon (2000) is of the opinion that punishment is most effective when it is immediate, consistent and intense. It also has some side effects such as "conditioning of fear; the learning of escape and avoidance of responses; and the encouragement of aggression" (Coon, 2000). It can even be misused. In the process of punishing or beating, a parent can become violent – the reason for the warning in Proverbs 19:18 "Discipline your son for in it there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death." In other words, Sharon (1985) corroborate Coonas he considers "correction, criticism and expectation should only have one aim – to elevate the child … to remove the dross. They should never be used to hurt or humiliate.

Discipline has many benefits for both the parents and the child trained with it. When a child is trained with discipline, his soul will be rescued from unnecessary death (Proverbs 19:24). The wayward life some people lived had claimed their lives. Such death can be averted by living a disciplined life. Though discipline is not always pleasant, it eventually produces fruit of righteousness and peace for those trained by it (Hebrew 12:11). Such righteous peaceful life gladdens the hearts of the parent (proverbs 23:15-16), and because "a cheerful heart is good medicine," (Proverbs 17:22a), it can be said that such parent will experience a sound health and long life, but reverse will be the case if a child is a foolish (unwise) son as a result of being not well-trained. Such child will not only bring trouble to himself or herself, he or she will equally bring grief to the father and the mother (Proverbs 17:25). Consequently, as cheerful heart is good medicine, a cursed spirit dries up the bones (Proverbs 17:22b). Unger (1987) renders the verse as follows: "A merry heart (a cheerful mind) does good like a medicine (lit. 'causes good healing'), meaning, "A cheerful spirit (which can be brought about by, when is well trained and is wise as grieved) spirit, producing a gloomy outlook, drieth (up) the bones and so affects the whole body with ill health".

Parents are to religiously guide their children. God expects them to direct their children to knowing, following and fearing God. This is found in Gen 18:19 where God said, "I have chosen him (Abraham), so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just." A good relationship between parents and the children could encourage children to be godly. In the situation where the parents themselves do not care about God, or they are not godly themselves, it will be hard for them to direct their children to the way of God. God's instruction to parents in Deuteronomy 6: 2-5 is to love and serve their God as a way of teaching their children. "That you, your children, and their children after them may fear the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength." This will be a practical way of worshipping God which will naturally influence the children. A parent can be religiously influential as it will be noticed in the letter of Paul to Timothy. Paul wrote, "I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which fist live in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and I am persuaded, now lives in you also," II Timothy 1:5.

Guiding a child not to "join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat," as in Proverbs 23: 19-20, is another responsibility of the parents. The reason being that 'drunkards and gluttons become poor and drowsiness clothes them in rags' (Proverbs 23:21). It means the act has social and financial implications. Too much wine has caused so many irreversible havocs. It has caused many people to misbehave, it has caused fatal

accidents on the roads, and unfortunately, there is no measure to determine excessive drinking of wine. The measurement that intoxicates a person is a starting point for another person. To add more to this problem is the fact that like some other things and drinks, alcoholic wine has addictive nature. A parent that will effectively guide

his children from being addicted or being a drunkard must be a parent that does not drink alcohol at all. This will prevent him from being addicted or misleading people around him. In this trend Shields (2004) explains:

> *Because wines and beers can make a person drunk and can be the introduction to distilled liquors (spirits), many Christian go further and feel compelled to abstain from alcoholic drinks. They know the danger of addiction and the damage alcohol does in many lives. They fear similar effects in their own lives and in the lives of those, who might, by following their example become addicted. They see the use of alcoholic drink as the cause, not just of drunkenness, but of dishonour to the Lord. Just as Paul decided to abstain from eating meat that has been offered to an idol (I Corinthians 8:13), so they decide not to drink wine. (Romans 14:20). They voluntarily become total-abstainers as a matter of conscience.*

It is the responsibility of the parents to teach their children hospitality but encouraging children to care about others is something that is best accomplished by example, rather than by preaching. It begins with the parents' own attitudes towards their children and with the climate they establish within their homes (Berman, 1977). The woman of good attitude "cares for the poor and provides also for the needy", (Proverbs 31:20). Abraham's household entertained some three visitors in Genesis 18: 1-10. This is expected of a Christian home. It will be a practical way of teaching the children to be hospitable.

Fathers are instructed not to embitter their children so that the children will not be discouraged (Colossians 3:21). To err is human but to keep on doing what is irritating and ungodly to a child may discourage him or her from keeping God's command to honour his parents (Exodus 20:12). Doing ungodly things especially to children, will hinder a godly and healthy parent-child relationship. Children should not always be maltreated. When they are offended, the situation should be explained and apologized.

Parents should not play favouritism, unfairly favouring a person or group. This can be a form of giving a special treatment to a child irrespective of sex; but when it is done basically because of the sex, and then it becomes gender discrimination. The household of Isaac gave birth to only a set of twins and the two of them were males. The mother chose to love Jacob more than Esau; while the father loved Esau more than Jacob! That each of the two children was loved by different parents shows that each of them was good and lovable. It was just by choice that each parent preferred one of them to the other. In Genesis 27, when Isaac was about to die, he wanted to pray for his favorite son, Esau, instead of the two children. Rebecca too wanted only Jacob to receive the blessing of the dying father. Jacob was eventually blessed, and Esau planned to kill him – Genesis 27:41. Jacob had to flee for his life. This is one of the reasons it is not good to play favoritism. Parents are to be caring. It is part of being caring to wake up while it is still dark, to prepare food for the family (the husband and the children), Proverbs 3:15. It is part of being caring to be concerned not only on major but also on the seemingly minor issues of the children. A good father admonished his child, "Eat honey, my son, for it is good," Proverbs 24:13. Though, contextually, verse 13 is part of verse 14 and the two verses compare the goodness of wisdom to the sweetness of honey, the fact still remains that the father urges his son to eat honey – which is "extremely nutritious".

In Proverbs 25:27a, he also advised: "It is not good to eat much honey," an advice against excessive eating of anything, irrespective of its good taste.

Prominent Roles of the Woman in Home Building

The prominent role of women in home building could be viewed from different perspectives. For instance, Iwe (1999) opines that traditionally, women play their basic roles in life as daughter, sister, wife, and other more recently as wage earner. The role as wife is more important here, some of these prominent roles are hereby discussed.

Responsibility in Children Upbringing: it is a fact that, according to Meckenzie, (1978), it is the duty of both parents to teach children, but Raymond Smith (1972) stresses further that "the relationship between mother and child appears to be in a rather special category, since the human being is part of its mother physical being before birth." In the same vein, Elizabeth, John and Comfort (interview respondents on the 5th of April, 2024) remark that "next to God, we are indebted to mother, first for

life and then making it worth living." Therefore, the role of a mother to breastfeed, nurse and nurture children is an all-important event in human life. Children learn best through association with parents because their values are passed on to them (especially mothers). Children are born helpless, and then they remain dependent on adult care for a longer period. They need to be taken care of socially, emotionally and spiritually (Pastors Solomon, Ezekiel and James, interviewed on 27th April, 2024).

Character Study: a measure of integrity and reliability is needed in a family. Some patience is needed to accommodate some husbands. To maintain stability and good character, the woman must be firm with herself. She cannot afford to retaliate for whatever blunders the man commits Mrs. Funmilayo S, (interviewed on 30th April, 2024). She has to overlook certain things in the Christian spirit in order to resist or avoid divorce. This will help in no small measure to maintain the much desired stability in families and even in the entire society at large.

Mirror of the family: an unfavourable condition in a home can be concealed by a dedicated wife. Somebody can only pry into, find out facts about, and gossip on another family if he or she gets a clue. A woman i expected to create a positive impression of her matrimonial home outside. This is so because the way a woman talks, appears and comforts herself outside can reveal the situation of the family. Probably this is why the catholic women organization of both Enugu and Nsukka dioceses have this as their slogan: Ndi Nne Mama Igegbe Ezina-Uno! Meaning: Hello Mothers: The Mirror of the Family! So while the catholic men organization play the role of Ide Ji Uni (the pillar holding the house), the mothers act as the mirror of the family (Mrs. Nduka and Obinna, interview respondents on 1st May, 2024).

Moral Obligation: the moral obligations in the family lies squarely in the hands of the parents; but women by virtue of their closeness to the children undertake early inculcation of initial etiquette and moral education. Moral education in the family comes simultaneously with the natural preliminary instructions on basic etiquette.

A Guide to the Family: instability in the home can emanate in Genesis reveals how Eve led Adam to disobey God by eating of the forbidden fruit. This was the first big and permanent instance of instability/ women's guide and advice mane many Israelites kings derail from God's order and worship strange gods, thereby, creating instability. A woman in the home should be able to guide the affairs of the family and offer pieces of advice to the advance of the family in cases of dilemma because two (good) heads are believed to be better than one.

Caretakers: this woman duty as a caretaker is multifarious. In the first instance she should be very close to the man in times of distress and frustrations and play the role of a comforter. Meckenzie (1978) comments on the work of women: The work of women was long and hard-milling, baking, the care of the house, the care of children, attention to the husband.

Imperative of Responsible Parenting to National Development

Responsible parenting is Imperative to national development in the following ways:

Responsible citizenry: When parents train their children and bring them up with sound moral values; such children grow up to be responsible citizens of the country and will be law abiding. This is because children who are well-trained have respect for elders and possess sound education that will enable them to contribute meaningfully to the society at large. They are also well brought up to be able to uphold their moral duties as responsible citizens of the country.

Reduction in Crime Rate: Most of the youths that engage themselves in criminal activities and social ills such as robbery, theft, prostitution, cultism etc., are from broken homes or homes with irresponsible parents. Such children will end up becoming a liability to the society. An ideal parenting will help the child to disassociate himself from hoodlums and other groups that are prone to committing crimes. This will eventually decrease the crime level in the country. Country with reduced crime rate will experience progress and development.

Healthy Nation: Responsible parenting is important if we want a nation that is practically, socially and economically healthy. Children from good homes have sound education and eventually grow up to contribute economically to the nation by being productive. People are productive when they can work or set up their own businesses that will enable them to employ other people to work for them. Children from responsible homes also grow up to participate actively in a country's political activities and process. In the final submission, no country can be healthy economically, socially and politically if parents are not responsible. No nation can be sure of the future if there is no responsible parenthood because the home is the first institution of learning for every child.

Preservation of Cultural Values: A child is able to learn culture and values of his or her parents from the family. Once they learn these cultural values, thy can pass it on and on to generations to come. It therefore means that if we as a nation will retain our cultural values and integrity, we must pay necessary attention to promoting responsible parenthood because the home is an important institution for transmitting culture from one generation to another.

Recommendations

Cooperation Among Parents

Parental cooperation is a sine-qua-non for effective parenting. Cooperation entails building of family solidarity where by one's need becomes the need of all the members of the family. The welfare of each other must be sought diligently.

Parents Should Uphold High Moral Probity

Parent should ensure to input moral consciousness in their children. This is because children that are groomed early in life with moral values such as discipline, truth telling, keeping of promise and honesty are most likely to exhibit behaviour that are in conformity swith the societal ethics. The easiest way parent can achieve this is by ensuring that they too should live a life that is worthy of emulation by their children.

Mutual Trust Among Parents and Children

It is against domestic ethics for parent to betray the trust their children conferred in them. Parents are supposed to be confidants to their children. This would go a long way strengthening the family bond and social compatibility. Where children are mistrusted, they tend to seek solace in friends and peer group. Unfortunately, this could have a devastating concomitant effect on children especially when they fall into wrong hands.

Parents Should Discourage Materialism

One of the greatest gifts parents can give their children is contentment. This can be developed very early in life by encouraging our children to give thanks to God for all they have by discouraging materialism by word and example, and by counting the blessings every night and remembering the less fortunate.

Teaching Children value of Prudence

When children live extravagant life, they can hardly survive in an atmosphere of lack and want. Parent should teach their child the virtue of prudence early in life.

Conclusion

This work hasexamined responsibility of parents as home builders, a sine qua non for national development from a Christian perspective. Due to continuous social change that emanates from globalization and the entire human ecological system, children are prone to these changes with varying negative and positive effects. This research shows that only responsible parental guide can salvage children from the hazard such changes could bring and hence insulate them from the prevailing moral decadence in the society at large.

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