THE EFFECTS OF GODLY PARENTING BY EUNICE AND LOIS ON TIMOTHY IN 2 TIMOTHY 1: LESSONS FOR YOUTH UPBRINGING IN NIGERIAN

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Abstract

Nigeria society is confronted with multiplicity of challenges. Topical issues that draw attention include weak leadership potentials, insecurity, corruption and lack of accountability by most public office holders. Other disturbing issues in the Nigerian society are immoral activities such as cultism, sexual abuse, cyber-crime, indecent dressing, kidnapping, drug abuse, drug trafficking, armed robbery and examination malpractices engaged by most Nigerian youth within and outside the nation. Who is to be held responsible? The government, parent, youth or society? How can this societal menace perpetuated by most youth in recent times be abated? What are the effects of godly parenting in relation to the upbringing of youth in the Nigerian society? It is within this context that this paper examines the effects of godly parenting by Eunice and Lois on Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:5 and seeks to draw lessons for youth upbringing in the Nigerian society. The paper employs the socio-historical and descriptive methods, and argues that while the school, church, extended family and society are avenues for socialization, the proper upbringing of the youth lies solely on godly parenting in the family. The paper maintains that although it is the task of government at various levels to provide basic amenities and protect the lives and properties of their citizens, in addition to creating an enabling environment for the citizens, however, the upbringing of youth to abate societal vices lies primarily on parents. The paper recommends that rather than abandoning children in the hands of house helps and day care centres, parents should properly train their children and also be good examples to them in all spheres.

Keywords: Eunice and Lois, Godly Parenting, Nigerian Society, Societal Menace, Youth Upbringing

Introduction

There is no human society that is deprived of youth. The youth represent a very important part in every human society. The presence of the youth assures continuity of human beings and enables transmission of moral values, etiquette

and ethos in the society. Nevertheless, recent happenings in the Nigerian society and the international domain characterized by distasteful attitudes and activities by the youth such as cultism, sexual abuse, cyber-crime, indecent dressing, drug abuse, drug trafficking, armed robbery, examination malpractices, internet fraud, theft, kidnapping, militancy and other related activities with its adverse consequences on the youth and nation, suggests a decline in the numbers of youth in the society, in the near future. This is so stated because when youth who perpetuate this monstrous acts are caught up with by constituted Law enforcement agencies within and outside the shores of the Nigerian spheres, and are consequently arraigned and tried in the court of competent jurisdiction, and thereafter are adjudged guilty, some of the penalties for their offences are either life imprisonment, imprisonment within certain period oftentimes ten to fifteen years, with hard labour or even death sentences depending on the nature of the crime, thereby reducing the population in the society. Who is to be held accountable for this regression in the activities of youths which definitely will not enable them to be leaders of tomorrow as acclaimed by S.O Abogurin? How can this societal menace carried out by most youths in recent times be halted? Besides, what are the effects of godly parenting in relation to the upbringing of youths in the Nigerian society? It is within this context that this paper examines the effects of godly parenting by Eunice and Lois on Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:5 and seeks to draw lessons for youth upbringing in the Nigerian society.

Meaning of Youth

The term youth is difficult to define. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines a youth as "one who is young". It is especially the phase "before a child becomes an adult". This may mean a period between age fifteen and twenty-five years, and it also includes young adults from twenty-five to thirty years (Della Summers 1920). The United Nations Organization (UNO) defines youth as those persons who fall between the ages of 15 and 24 years. Danfulani Dayilim and Ayo Atowoju remark that the specific age range that constitutes youth varies from one culture or society to the other. Moreover, the western definition does not align with non-western definition. They maintain that in the traditional African societies, youth includes younger ages up to 35. In the Nigerian context, the term youth may include young people whose age fall between 15 and 35 years (1-2). The youthful stage is a period when critical decisions that will affect the entire personality of a human being are made. It is the time of opportunities, demands, and foundation for future strength, aspiration, ambitions and character. Pope John Paul 11, according to Dorothy Ezeh asserts that "youth is the age of hope, of

promise, of enthusiasm, of plans and ideal" (309). It could also be an age of regrets. Youth are depositories of talents, potentials, skills and strength for society's sustainability, development, productivity and posterity. Dayilim and Atowoju state that "Enthusiasm, energy and physical strength are significant qualities of youth; however, for these natural endowments to be harnessed, they must be steered in the right course" (6).

The Importance of the Family

The Greek word *oikos* when translated in English ensues as family or household (W.E. Vine 225). The family is the basic social unit in the society. It is the centre for the transmission of basic cultural norms and societal values held by a given people from one generation to another. Ekeopara asserts that, "the family is one of the strongest socio-political institution from which all public life emerged. Life began and ended in the family" (43). While Haralambos and Heald assert that the family is the cornerstone of the society (325), Amamkpa writes that:

> It is in the family that the foundation of national life is laid. It is in the family that the seeds of love, self-denial, truth, courtesy, honesty, self-help and cooperation are sown. If the seeds are germinated in the home, transplanted in the school, and trimmed in the church, the state will expect good fruit (45).

The importance of the family to the society made secular ethicists of the Greco-Roman society to consider the stability of the city-state as solely dependent upon the responsible management of the household. The family bears the burden of nurturing and imparting right virtues and morals into the children.

Youth Upbringing in Jewish Culture

The Jewish culture had an incessant awful view on women. Women were never viewed as persons but mere things. The men dominated all spheres of human endeavours, since the Jewish society was highly patriarchal, and the position of man was apparently and totally over that of the woman in many inscribed writings. In the Jewish culture, the position or status of women and daughters was dreadfully low and belittling. Women and daughters were subordinated in the societal, marital, religious and educational circles. They were completely at the disposal of their fathers, husbands or brothers who decide their fate. The process of bringing up children and youth in the Jewish society lies principally on the mothers. Although at the end of the training, the glory and eulogy was oftentimes given to the father. Amolo remarks that although to the Jews, the responsibility of the mother was to teach a child, the father had the revered responsibility of

teaching the religious truth to his son and giving him overall education. She adds that at the age of five, reading of the Torah (Deut. 6:5-6) was introduced to the children, while at the age of ten, knowledge in the Mishnah was initiated. The process of teaching continues to the age of thirteen, which saw to the learning of the commandments, and at fifteen, the children were exposed to the reading of the Talmud. Marriage for the Jewish son was initiated at the age of eighteen, while pursuit of trade or commercial activities was established at the age of twenty. At thirty, the youth was fully grown and at forty they were seen to be matured in reasoning and taking other responsibilities. By fifty years of age, they could be consulted for counsel while at the age of sixty, agedness begins. In addition, the age of seventy brought about grey age; at eighty advanced old age; at ninety, bowed down; at hundred, as if he were dead and gone and taken from the world (242). Consequently, Timothy was born in Lystra of a Greek father and a Jewish mother (Acts 16:1-3), who brought him up in the strictest Jewish belief and under whose teaching he learned the holy writings from childhood (2 Timothy 3:14-15). Timothy was brought up by his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois. Amolo asserts that Lois, being a Jew and later converted to Christianity became a model of faith that enabled Timothy to grow in the way of God, that even led to Timothy becoming a formidable force in the early church, thus, "impacting hundreds or even thousands of lives with the gospel of truth" (245). The dedication and impact of Lois and Eunice on Timothy as a youth, resulted to him becoming a voice and personality to reckon with, in that Timothy ended up as the first prelate of the church in Ephesus.

Vos writing in relation to Paul and Timothy submits that Timothy joined Paul at Lystra on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:1), and remained with him to accomplish the evangelization of Ephesus. Subsequently, he was with Paul in Rome during his first imprisonment in the capital (Col. 1:1; Phil. 1). As Paul's true child in the faith of Christ (1 Tim. 1:3), Timothy was then positioned at Ephesus to meet some of the pressing needs of the church (1 Tim. 1:3). At the end of his ministerial assignment in Ephesus, he joined Paul in Rome during his second incarceration; in which he also suffered (328). Apparently, it is a child that has under-gone godly parenting in the family, that will be able to accept the rigours of ministerial activities.

Youth Upbringing in the African Traditional Society

The upbringing of youth in the African traditional society is practically the same with the upbringing of youth in the Jewish society which is patriarchal in nature. Amolo asserts that in the African traditional society "children were under the authority of their parents whose responsibility it was to give them necessary education, through strict obedience that was often enforced by physical punishment. Therefore, any child who did an honourable deed was a source of blessing and joy to his parents,' while a child who was a failure was a source of disgrace and agony to his parents" (246-247). In the traditional parenting of children which falls under informal education, the task to teach children the correct manner and societal accepted ethics depends to a large extend on the women. As educators, women educate their young ones in the richness and diversity of the community cultures, customs, traditions, moral and general etiquette of the society. Children, when very young, remained with their mothers, who took after both boys and girls until they reach a given age. In other to actualize the purpose of bringing up morally sound children, strict rules to be complied with on how to dress, speak, eat, walk and sit especially for the girls were made (Okoro, 27). Women teach their children the basic necessities in the society through the mediums of proverbs, stories and songs. The songs, proverbs, stories and adages taught to the children by their mothers contain simple, but clear messages and moral teaching. The stories and songs were composed to instil in the children, societal customs. Moreover, children through the traditional education of their mothers were taught the importance of chastity, uprightness, kindness, love of one's neighbour, respect for life, moderation, solidarity, respect for the truth and willingness to work and strive, respect for authority, sense of goodness, tolerance, sense of honesty and humility (Okoro 28).

W.O. Wotogbe-Weneka consenting to this view asserts that to ensure that the training of young ones is achieved, children are sent to live in the homes of elderly women, relations/friends who are well known for their impeachable character and integrity for months, and sometimes years for mentorship. The purpose of this act is to inculcate the moral integrity of such personalities on the young ones. Women teach their progenies the importance of perseverance in pursuing a positive course. This they recount through song to their children that nothing good comes easily, but through handwork; determination and perseverance, a positive goal can be achieved. Moreover, women through traditional education enlighten their ward on the value for life, respect for constituted authority, and importance of honesty, humility and integrity. Women engage their female children in

IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities. Vol. 8. No. 2, (2022)
ISSN: 2488- 9210 (Print) 2504-9038 (Online)
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assignment like cooking, house upkeep, and caring for the young ones. This is to prepare them for marriage. The females as well as the males are taught the importance of chastity and maintenance of their virginity. When a progeny does anything good, such a person receives commendation(s) from the parent, but when the reverse is the case, such a person is blamed and condemned. Through this process, the offspring are taught to refrain from acts that are capable of attracting condemnation(s) to them.

Apart from being acquainted with the traditional customs and moral values, women in the traditional society also teach their children, especially the girls vocational skills like weaving, farming, cooking and knitting, while the male was taught vocational skills like construction of local farming implement. The traditional education of children by the women enabled the children to participate actively in family and community affairs. It also enabled the children to appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of their community. Though women are vested with such enormous obligation(s), when accomplished and the children are grown and well behaved, it is disheartening that the men rather than the women are often eulogized. If the reverse becomes the case, whereby the progenies are not properly behaved, the women rather than the men are blamed.

The Effects of Poor Upbringing of Youth in the Nigerian Society

The effects of poor upbringing of youths in the Nigerian society are grave. The present day Nigerian society is burdened with varieties of anti-social and anti-human activities masterminded by youths in the area. Worthy of note is the fact that the six geo-political zones in Nigeria which are; the North-Central, North-East, North-West, South-West, South-East and South-South are characterized by one or more of the unpleasant activities enumerated above, and this reveals the societal perception and conception of people living in such zones. For instance, in the South-South and South-East zones, due to the availability of crude oil and multi-national oil companies' and other endowed natural resources; militancy, kidnapping/hostage taking, armed robbery, illegal refining of crude oil, prostitution, human trafficking, drug smuggling and cult related activities, are on the high side, while in the South-West kidnapping, killing for ritual purposes, prostitution, human trafficking, internet fraud (also known as Yahoo Yahoo), rape, drug abuse and armed robbery are predominant. On the other hand, in the North-Central, North-East and North-West regions, Boko Haram insurgency, Fulani herdsmen attack, ethno-religious crisis, armed banditry, rape and illicit drug marketing are prevalent. With the increase in this anti-social and humane menace in the society, there is a relapse in the numbers of youths, in the society, due to a

clamp down on the youth by security agencies such as the Nigerian Police Force, Nigerian Securities and Civil Defence Corps, Nigerian Immigration, Nigerian Army and Navy.

In all this, what can be done to halt these heinous crimes in the Nigeria society is the task of the next section. The section considers what parents, government and the church could do to curtail societal menace in the Nigerian society.

Parental Attitude

The present situation in the Nigeria society, which has negatively affected the country, calls for serious concern by Nigerian parents. Most Nigerian parent needs to change their attitude of being absent from home, which results in their inability to perform their divine responsibility to train their children in the way of the Lord (Prov. 22:6; 29:15-17, Deut. 5:6-8). Udofia corroborating this fact asserts that "being absent from home or harsh parental attitude should give way to assurance, encouragement and supportive spirit by the parent. In addition, interest, intimacy and regular counselling, should be parent's daily routine duties towards their children" (79). When parent spend quality time with their children, they are better informed of the activities and conducts of their children; thus, commendation or rebuke could be administered where necessary. Similarly, when parents spend time with their children, proper sex education especially among the females are comprehended and wrong sex education from newspaper and magazines written by people of doubtful character which may be accessible to the youth are corrected.

Emphasis on Teaching

The task to teach children the correct manner and societal accepted ethics depends to a large extend on the parents. As teachers, Nigerian parents are to educate their children in the richness and diversity of the cultures, customs, traditions, moral and general etiquette of the society. Strict rules ought to be introduced in the family, which is aimed at developing the entire personality of the youth. In the good old days of the African traditional society as posited previously, children were usually sent to live in the homes of elderly parents, relations/friends who are well known for their impeachable character and veracity for months and sometimes years for mentorship. The purpose of this act is to inculcate the moral integrity of such personalities in the young ones. In the process of training, vices such as greed, get-rich quick syndrome, lust and worldliness are condemned and the right virtues such as humility, honesty, truth and love are instilled. Besides, through the process of teaching, the children are taught to refrain from acts that

are capable of attracting condemnation(s) to them. Parents are responsible for training their children and teaching them compassion, respect, as well as acceptable dos and don'ts in line with societal values and religious dictates. As such, they become responsible for their children's action or inaction, behaviour and attitudes towards others from childhood to maturity. If a child behaves well, people conclude that the child is from a godly home, but if the child behaves badly, people fault the parents for not training the child properly. Consequently, the era when youth are left in the hands of house helps and nannies should be discouraged in the Nigeria society. Like Eunice and Lois who spent their time in teaching and training Timothy, which enabled him to become a remarkable figure in Christianity, especially in the church at Ephesus, Nigeria parents must be willing and ready to fully partake in the process of teaching their children the right societal ethos to maintain a viable Nigerian society.

Provision of Basic Needs to Youth

Parents must ensure the provision of basic needs such as clothing, shelter, feeding and education for their children. Studies have revealed that most of the youth who engage in unpleasant activities in the Nigerian society, are either school dropout or wards from single parent, who are unable to carter for their children as a result of poverty, and resorts to prostitution which is the last resort, especially for the females. Recently, the electronic and print media has been agog with the death of Mr. Usifo Ataga the Chief Executive Officer of Super TV, who was allegedly murdered by Miss. Chidinma Ojukwu, a 300 level Mass Communication student of the University of Lagos. Evelyn Usman reports that the 21-year-old had been disengaged from her widowed mother for almost a decade due to some misunderstanding, leading her to fend for herself; an act that later resulted her to drinking all sort of alcohols, smoking marijuana and other unfriendly health substances, and prostituting (www.vanguardngr.com). The untamed life, being lived by Chidinma, which began at an early age, may not be far from the lack of provision of her basic needs as a youth, and also lack of parental guidance. Nigerian parents must see to it that the era when youth are abandoned to fend for themselves as youth are discouraged, rather, parents must take responsibility of their roles as providers and breadwinners. The reason adduced to this is that early exposure of youths to search and secure their basic needs, may at the end, lead to societal problems and abuse of the youth.

Auditing of Youth ICT Platforms

ICT is an acronym which means Information and Communication Technology. It is a joint term given to the second and third generation of information technology generated by the combination of computer and telecommunications. Information and communication technology is an overall term that refers to any communication devices or application comprising of radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network, hardware and software, satellite systems as well as the various services and applications related to them such as video conferencing and distance learning (Wobodo, 279-280). Information and communication technology is a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, create, disseminate, store and manage information. Thus, Nigerian parents must be proactive to check and know the sites their youth visits on a regular basis. This is because, the role of Information and communication technology (media) in the society which is to inform, educate, entertain and serve as the watch-dog of the society, is gradually being defeated. For instance, through information and communication technology music, videos, movies and some publications online, have successfully polluted the minds of most Nigerian youth, thereby, promoting indecent dressing, drinking of alcohol, e-smoking and other dangerous intoxicants. The implication is that, youths who watch such sites unguarded, model their lives in accordance with any of their favourite actors, actresses, musicians, models and the like. On this note, Nigerian parents, must be ready not only to recharge ICT devices for their children and wards, but to monitor their contents, so as to safeguard the posterity of the youths.

Job Creation by Government

Nigerian government at the Federal, State and Local levels must rise to tackle the high rate of unemployment, which has contributed to the high-level of unwholesome activities perpetuated by Nigerian youth in the society. Unemployment is an issue that has bedevilled Nigeria for quite some time. It is a state of not having a job or work to earn a living. People who cannot earn a living are prone to social vices such as armed robbery, drug abuse, and illicit sex and so on. Apart from these social vices, they look at themselves as second class citizens unable to contribute to the society. The state of unemployment can lead to depression, low self-esteem and frustration. Rather than loot government treasury as practised by some Nigerian military and democratic leaders; politicians and government officials can invest in Nigeria, and gainfully employ graduates from Nigerian colleges, polytechnic and universities. This will assist in reducing the rate of crime in the society. If everyone is profitably employed and is self-reliant, there

will be no problem about unemployment, which is the key factor that triggers youths or young school leavers to go into acts capable of causing mayhem to individuals, states etc., all for the sole drive of meeting up survival needs (Jacob David Gofwan, Goshi Mandung Shedrach and Jonathan Ishaya 32). In addition, Government could create sustainable youth empowerment programs, with the sole objective to positively develop the minds of the youths, in order to guarantee financial liberation. The Federal government of Nigeria Social Investment program, Npower and other programs targeted towards emancipation of poverty, should be reformed and restructured, in such a manner that would enable youths to be financially self-reliant, and not depend on a certain monetary allocation from the Federal government on a monthly basis.

Church Organizations

Church organizations as a veritable instrument for the propagation of the gospel of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20) can enhance the curb of societal menace by the youth in Nigeria. This is achievable through sound theological exposition of God's word in religious centres through teachings, preaching and organization of youth seminars geared towards refocusing the youth in the right direction. Similarly, church organizations can discourage the 'get rich quickly syndrome' by concentrating on the truth while discouraging prosperity messages. On the other hand, churches in Nigeria could embark on the building of rehabilitation centres, where sound morality and vocational skills could be taught (especially for those who have been salvaged), thereby enabling the youths to attain faith in God and eventually turn them into useful members of the society. The establishment of rehabilitation centres could enhance the promotion of ethical standard, and assist in the impartation of vocational skills. This is in line with D.B. Usman's assertion that "The Church must de-emphasize concentration of resources on gigantic edifices and look outwards by embarking on charity ventures to reach out or address the problems of the needy, and the homeless street boys and girls in the African societies" (259). John questions that "But whoever has this world's good, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? (1 John 3:17). Church organizations could also establish prison ministry with the aim of bringing youths who have been found culpable of crimes, and consequently incarcerated into the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, supporting them spiritually, physically and materially, while in prison and after their release. This is in addition to offering legal counsel/ assistance to secure their release, especially the repentant ones and also assisting in their medical upkeep. It is important to state that some mainline churches such as the Anglican, Roman

Catholic, evangelicals such as Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) and Pentecostal churches such as The Redeemed Evangelical Missions (TREM) in the Nigerian nation, are involved in this charitable services (www.ncronline.org). However, the emphasis being made here is for them to improve in their services to humanity, and also for other churches that do not have such policy and vision to incorporate same in their mission and vision statements and also strive to actualize them.

Conclusion

This paper examined the effect of godly parenting in 2 Timothy 1:5: Lessons for youth upbringing in the Nigerian society. Having chronicled numerous unpleasant activities perpetuated by youths in the Nigerian society, the paper sustains that for a viable Nigerian society devoid of all societal menace, parents must rise to the challenge of parenting their youth in the right manner, teaching them societally accepted norms and customs. Like Eunice and Lois who took great pain in parenting Timothy in the way of Lord, and resulted in his usefulness in the family, church and society; parents must ensure that parenting of their children are not left in the hands of nannies, house helps or single parenting. This is because; youths who emanate from homes that are not healthy ethically are capable of becoming societal nuisances and making mess of the revered customs, norms and values of the society.

Recommendations

In view of the fact that children and youths are influenced by the wrong information disseminated on the social media and even learn by imitating what they see their elders doing, the paper recommends that:

1 In order to have a Nigerian society devoid of the myriads of societal vices, parent must be ready and willing to be an example to their children in words, character and deeds. Parents must be available to their children, know their basic needs and be committed to providing them. Also, parents/guardians must have an honest means of income, provide the basic needs for their children, teach their children to be hard working, engage them in honest trade, and also watch the type of friends they keep and ICT sites they watch at home regularly.

2 Government must improve the economy by providing job opportunities for the youth and regulatory bodies such as Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), must ensure that they censor television stations and video films that are immoral, while discouraging viewers, especially youths, should sanction the

IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities. Vol. 8. No. 2, (2022)
ISSN: 2488- 9210 (Print) 2504-9038 (Online)
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defaulters and also ensure enough public awareness on the evils of such activities, as related to the public. The promotion of immoral programs and films by the media must be discouraged by the government, since the youths, are often the first target of such programs. Through this, the youths will grow to appreciate the dignity of moral discipline and not seek to imitate something that run contrary to decency.

3 Religious leaders must ensure that the undiluted word of God is preached and taught in the religious centres. The word of God must be proclaimed with sincerity of purpose. The preaching and teaching of God's word must be to recover lost souls, rebuke, correct and exhort where necessary and not for selfish ambition or commercialization.

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