

CHRISTIAN COUPLES RETREAT 2023

SEMINAR TOPIC: ONENESS IN RAISING GODLY CHILDREN

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BURDEN:

“Several couples become divided when it comes to the upbringing of their children. Even in the Bible we saw the difficulty in the raising up of Jacob and Esau because of parental preferences. We shall explore in this seminar the oneness of our matrimony, the inputs of husband and wife as one in raising children in the fear of God. This seminar will help us explore even the way of handling other children from both sides that may come to the family and others who are disciples in our homes. What God has joined together, let not man put asunder, even if they be the children.” Brother Gbile Akanni

INTRODUCTION

Too many children today are being raised in dysfunctional homes, and such have become great menace in the society. God’s plan is that children be born and brought up in harmonious marriage, and not outside it. For this reason, even though our Lord Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, He had to be born and brought up in a proper home where He was subjected to parental oversight and control. Joseph himself was a partner in this upbringing together with Mary, Jesus’ mother. Matt. 1:19-21.

“Wherefore did He make them one? God is seeking a godly seed.” Mal. 2:15. The reason God demands for oneness between a man and his wife in their relationship is for godly offspring to result from their marriage. The offspring is primarily biological. It is only such children that can carry out God’s purposes here on earth. Ungodly children will only add to the darkness and confusion in our present world. The offspring can also include spiritual children or even a specific ministry that God would cause your marriage to fulfil here on earth. Marital harmony and joint responsibility over the children will provide them with the correct examples, the enabling environment and equipping they needed to make it in life.

Children are seeds; and to nurture seeds you must create a correct and conducive habitat for them to survive and grow well. Oneness in marriage and in child-upbringing creates the conducive environment for the child to grow well. Environment surely affects a child’s development in character and in function. For the child, the environment that is homely and pleasurable makes him not to seek happiness outside, and his godly parents eventually turn out to become his immediate role models whom he seeks to copy and to impress. No matter one parent’s competence, the training of the child remains incomplete without the input of the second parent. Both parents must discharge their responsibilities jointly to achieve the desired wholesomeness in their child.

Raise: to cause or help to rise to a standing position. To raise godly children is thus to help our children to rise to stand in the Lord, and to stand straight and strong in the society. Physically, children are born naturally in a lying position (Prov 22:15); never standing. Raising the child will involve a skillful training that chases out the childish foolishness and self-centeredness that constitute his nature. It will further involve the inculcation of values, disciplines, attitudes and skills that will enable him to stand and function well as an independent individual.

Oneness: the state of being completely united with or a part of someone or something; the quality or state of being one. Synonyms include Singleness, Wholeness, Unity, Harmony. A couple that will achieve

a proper raising of a child will be such that are in marital harmony with each other first of all. They must be completely united with and part-owners of one another. Secondly, there is the need to have such harmonious partners to be completely united in the raising of their children, such that their individual inputs will bring about a wholeness in the children. Oneness is the 'standing position' from where a couple can raise their child up.

Gen. 2:18, 24; 11:6. Oneness is God's critical goal in marriage, and His hope for having godly seed. It is not God's will that you will operate as 'single parent' while your partner is still alive. If you should hear God, He will say to you: "It is not good that the man [or the woman] should be [operate] alone". Infact, in our own home, we call such exclusive and independent labours on a child or a disciple, the begetting of a 'Bastard'! Truly, the absence of oneness in raising children is an offence to God, since He has already declared that it is not good.

ASPECTS OF ONENESS IN RAISING GODLY CHILDREN

(A) *Oneness in Finding Out God's Purpose for Each Child.* Judg. 13:2-14; Luke 1:30-38; Matt. 1:18-21.

Manoah's wife received the revelation of the child they were to have, and God's purpose for his life. She was swift to tell her husband, who personally besought the Lord for the angel to come back with the message. He did not stop at receiving God's promise of a son to them, but asked the Lord, "How shall we order the child and how shall we do unto him?" thus, the two of them received the vision respectively. Similarly, the Angel Gabriel revealed the birth and God's purpose for Jesus to both Mary and Joseph individually. In all these cases, the Lord revealed His purpose for the children to the parents. The visions they received guided their handling of and responses to the children even in their adulthood. Their oneness in receiving the vision enhanced their commitment to God's purpose. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his **parents**, because **they** saw he was a proper child; and **they** were not afraid of the king's commandment." Heb. 11:23.

What is the quest of your heart for your children? When you pray for them, what is the content of your prayer? Have you received from God His plan concerning each of your children? This enquiry prayers must involve both of you. That's what made Manoah and his wife to succeed over Sampson. On the other hand, Isaac and Rebecca struggled when it came to their pursuing God's purposes for their sons. There must be oneness in receiving God's vision for your children. If you are seeing your child growing to be a traditional ruler, while your partner is seeing him becoming a missionary teacher, there is a problem already. Two of cannot walk together on the matter, nor pray any agreement prayer for the child's future.

(B) *Oneness in Training the Child According to God's Purpose.*

Studies have shown that the foundation for a major percentage of a child's personality is already formed by the age of eight. If you train a child properly before that age in the right and godly way of life, even God says when he is old, he will not depart from it. In the same vein, if you give him an ungodly training, he will not depart from it for life except God intervenes. However, for this training to be effective, it must be done together as a couple. Prov. 6:20-23 NIV, LB. Several examples abound in this case:

- Manoah and Wife in bringing up Sampson. Judges 13:12; 14:2-3, 8-9.

- Zacharias and Elizabeth in bringing up John. Lk 1:13-17, 59-60, 80
- Joseph and Mary in bringing up Jesus. Luke 1:30-33; Matt. 1:19-21; 2:12-15; Luke 2:21-22, 41-51.

In each of these couples, oneness was displayed in their dealings with their children. For example, Zacharias and Elizabeth's oneness was remarkably demonstrated in their naming of their son. Even though Zacharias had become dumb, he still communicated the name God gave their son to his wife, who wholly accepted it. At the point where the kindred elders wanted to give the boy a different name, Elizabeth defended the name she had earlier agreed upon with her husband, until her husband was signaled to confirm it. They also, being mindful of what the Lord told them about their son (John) before he was conceived, did not insist that John be trained to become a Levitical Priest, though his father Zacharias was one. He was brought up to live according to God's purpose for his life.

Many parents make life plans for their children without knowing the purpose of God for their lives. Such children may end up being 'big men and women' in the world in such careers (outside the will of God), but spiritual wrecks eternally. Even when your plans are right, or you have big dreams for your children, you must be completely united in carrying them out. "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour." Eccl. 4:9. Two of you and God will form the three-fold cord that is not easily broken. Hence you will chase 'ten thousand', instead of your individual 'one thousand', in the pursuit of God's will for your children!

(C) Oneness in Providing Discipline for the Child.

Prov. 13:34, 19:18, 22:15; 1Tim. 3:4; Gen. 18:19; Luke 2:51-52; Judg. 14:2-3.

Discipline for the child is a crucial issue in the Scriptures. Rebukes and correction bring wisdom. Any child left to himself without discipline and supervision will doubtlessly grow up foolish. Such a child will bring shame to his mother and ruin to his father. This discipline involves instruction and correction using the rod of God's word, plus the physical rod of beating the child, or any other form of loving chastisement when necessary. Even the Lord Jesus learnt obedience through the things He suffered! Heb. 5:8. And every son who does not receive discipline is not a legitimate child. Heb. 12:7-8.

This responsibility must be jointly carried out by both parents. Whenever one partner is disciplining a child, the other must agree with him and support him, so that the child gets to know that two of you are taking the same position in that case. Even if you don't see the justice in your partner's discipline to your child, you can call his or her attention to it privately; never in the presence or to the knowledge of the child. Both of you must speak the "one language" even in the matter of disciplining your child. Gen. 11:6. Discharging this parental duty must not bring a crack in your union. A parent must not use corporal punishment or afflict injuries upon the child; neither should he or she prove to be too soft, and over-pampering to the child. Either extreme can bring a conflict between parents in this matter. How do you fare on this scale of divine responsibility?

(D) Oneness in Making Physical Provision for the Child. Prov. 19:14A, 31:15, 21; 1Tim. 5:8;

It is our duty to provide physical sustenance (food, clothes, house), academic training and skills acquisition for every child we bring into this world. It is not in God's plan for parents to leave their young

ones to fend for themselves, even though they should be thought the dignity of working with their own hands. For every child brought into the world, God has enough provision to meet his needs if only you care as a parent to ask Him, and to labour. He who cares enough to feed the sparrows and clothe the lilies, how shall he not care for children who are His heritage?

There must be oneness in discharging this responsibility as well. Parents must not divide their children either by showing partiality among them or by cornering affections at the expense of the other partner. You should never use your providing for the child as a bait to make him obey you and despise your partner. Let it be known to the children that you both jointly provide the finance and for every other need of theirs. A situation where one of you is seen as the sole 'sponsor' of the family needs, introduces an obvious corruption. Carry your partner along each time you provide resources, even though it came from your own source. In the final analysis, let your child also know that it is God, the Father of us all, who provides for the family, through both parents and beyond.

When a child is left to fend for himself too early in life, he grows not to respect, obey or value his parents' discipline. Having been exposed too early to the hardship of thinking and fending for himself, he develops a thick skin to whatever the father or mother says. Such a child is more likely to become prey to the wolves of this world and become wayward. Eventually, except there is a divine intervention, he may never fulfill the will of God for his life.

For Other Wards & Disciples: It is important to note that all the principles of raising our biological children equally apply to other wards and disciples under our over-sight. Discipleship is actually like adoption, in which we also labour to raise lives for them to become what God ordained for their lives. The peculiarity comes from the fact that, unlike our children, we have a choice whether or not to receive wards and prospective disciples. In receiving a ward or disciple, therefore, both husband and wife must prayerfully agree with each other before he or she can come into the family's life. There must be oneness in receiving such a ward or disciple. As he or she is jointly received, so must the training be a joint matter. If he or she refuses to be available to the input of both, then such a person is becoming a suspect. It is necessary, more useful and safer also that the female be particularly disciplined by the wife, while the male should be more attached to the husband. Furthermore, at any time the presence of the ward or disciple tends to clearly cause a rift between the partners, they should check with God and with each other if it was time to release such a person.

Few Salient Elements in the Child's Development

1. Understanding the Basic nature of the Child: Every baby born first learns to be self-centered. From cradle, parents and everyone else naturally pay much attention and pour affections on the baby. It soon learns to be demanding and receives all he seeks. He grows up as a child and starts dictating and manipulating his minders to give him all his desires, no more just his needs. At this point in time, both parents must mutually be strong to break the child's tendency to form a selfish will. And this must begin early. He must be lovingly taught that there are limits to his liberty. This is the beginning of a child's training in obedience. Even the child Jesus was restricted by Joseph and Mary from pushing on with Ministry at the tender age of twelve.
2. The next issue of focus in the child's development is the stage of Indoctrination. Parents have the privilege and duty to write what they want (godly values ofcourse), upon the clean slate of the

child's mind and heart. It is not correct to be 'democratic' at this time. No child should be left to decide for himself what he deems right to choose. He must be taught the way of life. Neither must this teaching be left for the government or schools to determine exclusively. This is why it is not good to take a child to school too early in life. The child's world view has to be formulated by the parents who bore them. This is part of parents' fundamental right over their children. They must not be blackmailed or intimidated into relinquishing that divine pedagogy. As the child matures to be fully responsible and accountable for his decisions and actions, he can then be free to choose what he would learn.

3. From a child's Teen age to young adulthood there is a change of strategy that parents must make. It can no longer be as with the child or toddler. The teenager is now at the stage of *Forming Personal Convictions*. As he grows in independent thinking, he will start to query and process the things which parents and the environment have put as Template in his mind. He is in search of his own perception and definitions in life. He increasingly interacts with his environment and social media, mingles with his mates, and endeavours to process all these together. At this point, both parents must be deliberate to befriend him in a way that he will feel safe and at liberty to be real and open with them. They must show understanding of the issues he is now grappling with, and lovingly but convincingly provide answers to his many questions. Some offensive actions by him may simply be to 'test the ground' to see if he can be transparent with you. Where you fail in this, the child will certainly turn to his mates or to the social media to find answers that will form his personal perspectives of issues. This would be the beginning of his wrong attitudes and lifestyles.
4. Transferring Family Values and Spiritual Inheritance. Abraham did not waste time to initiate his son, Isaac, into his covenant relationship with God, through the ritual of circumcision. Thereafter, he taught him the Altar life, the Tent life, etc. Job also had all his children in spiritual subjection, even as young adults living in their own homes. Parents must begin early (and continue thereafter) to inculcate in their children the family culture of Family Devotions, fasting and retreats, Church life and active participation, basic habits and home training skills, etc. these are non-negotiables. This is reinforced when parents practicalize those activities themselves and provide family relaxation and discussion times as well.
5. Intentional Praying for Your Child: This begins right from the point of desiring the gift of baby from God. Then as the baby is carried in the womb in the period of pregnancy, the prayer progresses. The baby Jesus and Baby John were already being moved by the Holy Spirit even in the womb. This prayer progresses as the baby is born and grows. "And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children." Isa. 54:13. You and your partner have a great promise upon which to keep calling on the God at every stage of the child's development. Even if you have seen deviations in the formation of your child, you dare not become overwhelmed. Instead, rise up and respond to the Master's instruction: "Bring him hither to me."! Matt. 17:17.

All these must be jointly and committedly carried out by both parents.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES OF ONENESS IN RAISING OUR CHILDREN

Having Joint Vision of God's Purpose for the Child

Understanding the Basic Nature of the Child

Training in Obedience

Use of the Rod

Breaking of the Child's Will

Stage of Indoctrination

Stage of Forming Personal Convictions

Oneness in Transferring Family Values/Spiritual Inheritance

Oneness in Training the Child

Oneness in Disciplining the Child

Oneness in Interceding for the Child

Oneness in Disciplining Other people

CONCLUSION

We can see clearly that one principal reason for our marital oneness is the raising of our children to become godly seeds. This divine calling upon parents is to be done as a joint responsibility and in mutual agreement. No matter the issue, and no matter how zealous any of the partners is over the training and nurturing of the child, God will not be pleased if you leave your partner behind. There must be no "putting away" even in the matter of your children's upbringing. So beloved, take this charge seriously as one who must give account. You dare not mis-manage the development of your child by being sluggish over the training of your own child, or by doing it independent of your wife or husband. Determine to work together henceforth, no matter the challenge. Both of you should hold hands together and call upon the Lord for your children to break forth into their divine destinies.