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**INFLUENCES OF THE HOME ON
CHRISTIAN FAITH DEVELOPMENT OF
CHILDREN**

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ABSTRACT

The society is made up of many institutions - the school, the church and the home being some of them. The society consists of people - young and old, big and small. However, the society is "for adults" and "by adults". It is an adult world¹. These adults give birth to children and under normal circumstances, children grow up in homes. Adults have their expectations from children but they need to live up to what is expected of them too.

Christian adults especially need to be considerate of the children in the home. Adults around subtly and subconsciously pass on values to children as they live practically each day. They must therefore be conscious as christians of the type of values they pass on in appearance, speech and action.

Christians have been commissioned by the owner and creator of all things himself to bring children up in the way of the Lord (Proverbs 22:6). These children, as an end result will shine in this wicked and perverse generation as lights.

This paper looks into this great need for good Christian example and how the experiences of childhood affect christian faith development.

Chapter one gives an overview of the problem or the need for good things to influence the child's experiences. Chapter one also includes the implications of the child's

¹Hugh Missildine Your Inner Child of The Past.
New York: Simon and Schuster, c1963, p.34.

experiences on later life, the definition of key terms used, the motivation of the writer, aims/purposes the paper is meant to achieve and the methodology used among other things.

Chapter two is a compilation of writings on the influences of the home on faith development. Since Christianity transcends religiousity and church attendance, different aspects of christian life at home are researched.

These include:

- (i) the physical atmosphere aspect (pictures, books and music)
- (ii) the relationship area (parent-child and sibling-child),
- (iii) the social aspect (TV, media and how it affects social relationships)
- (iv) the devotional aspect (Bible study, prayers and church)
- (v) the salvation aspect (of each and individual child and growth following).

Chapter three presents an analysis of responses from questionnaires distributed to twenty three people randomly chosen during the 1994 Baptist Ministers' Conference. Also analysed are reports from interviews of twenty people on how their upbringing has affected their christian faith development.

Chapter four is a sum of the paper. This chapter also gives this writer's suggestions to parents/guardinas, church workers, the leaders, church members and christians generally. These suggestions emanate from the writers reading, research, findings from interviews and questionnaires, observation and personal experience. This chapter ends with a conclusion and a challenge to all christians.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS² to parents ...

(a) Recommendations on Parent's personal life

- (i) If you have a partner who is a non-Christian, pray for his or her salvation but do your part to live a life of example for your child to learn from.
- (ii) If you are in a polygamous situation, now that you have accepted Christ, teach your child the truth of the gospel and live this truth out for the child to see and learn from. Live in love and at peace in your home.
- (iii) If your family is nominally Christian, accept the salvation that Jesus Christ gives and live changed lives to His glory.
- (iv) If you are a single parent, God understands your plight - BUT you must still do your very best to live a Christian life and lead your child(ren) to Christ.
- (v) Have a personal regular genuine time of Bible study and prayer.
- (vi) Listen to God's word, read it, meditate on it, practise it and share it. Your children will "get the message" to "do likewise".

² All the recommendations in this section are a summary of the writer's recommendations based on experience, research findings and observations. Recommendations from respondents are found in Appendix XII.

(vii) Have a genuine deeply rooted Christian faith. Children see through "fakes".

(viii) Attend worship services with a mind to worship. Teach your children to worship God by modelling worship. Take them along with you to church. Prepare all week for Sunday worship.

(b) Recommendations on Atmosphere of the Home

(i) Buy good educative and Christian books for your children. Make sure each child has his or her Bible and encourage him to read it. Build a library of wholesome christian books. Next time you go buy a good adult book, buy one for your child too.

(ii) Put good wholesome pictures on display for your child to look at and study. Display them around the house. Make them part of your presents. Have Bible verses and inscriptions all around your house. Obey Deuteronomy 6:7-9 literally!

(c) Recommendations on Social life

(i) Allow your child to mix and play with other children so (s)he will grow. "Play is the child's number one business."

(ii) Decide as a family how many hours of television and video watching will be allowed. Make sure everyone understands why. Make sure the programmes chosen are wholesome and profitable for Christians.

(iii) If possible, watch whatever TV programmes your child watches with him or her. Discuss these

things openly and "non judgementally". Let your child express his/her views.

(iv) Show interest in your child's interests and achievements. Welcome and study his/her friends to be sure (s)he is keeping good company.

(v) Accept each child as (s)he is and affirm him/her.

(vii) Discipline your child fairly, prayerfully and with a purpose - self discipline.

(d) Recommendations on Spiritual aspect of life

(i) Have regular family devotions. Make the time, length and "contents" appropriate to meet the needs, ages and personalities of children and adults in your home.

(ii) Make sure your family devotions are varied. Give each child something to do.

(iii) Allow children to lead family devotion. Even those who cannot read can lead in singing choruses, choosing what hymn to be sung, praying and so on.

(iv) Have your devotions when everyone is alert.

(v) Work on your child's spiritual growth.

Consciously pray for him everyday by name. Speak with him on spiritual things. Naturally discuss feelings and attitudes. Lead him to have his own "quiet time". Seek to lead your child to a personal commitment for christ.

(vi) Help your child to learn to express his new-found-faith and to grow in Bible study and prayer.

Lay the foundation for your child's quiet time from

