

NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTION OF TEENAGERS  
AND PARENTS ON PARENTAL CONTRIBUTION  
TO TEENAGERS' SPIRITUAL FORMATION  
IN DELIVERANCE CHURCH NGONG

BY

PETER G. MATHENGE

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate  
School in Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Christian Education

JULY 2005

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**July, 2005**

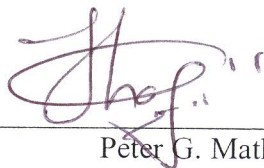
**Student's Declaration**

**A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTION OF TEENAGERS AND PARENTS ON  
PARENTAL CONTRIBUTION TO TEENAGERS' SPIRITUAL  
FORMATION IN DELIVERANCE CHURCH NGONG**

I declare that this study is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit

The views presented herein are not necessarily those of Nairobi Evangelical Graduate school of Theology or the Examiners

(Signed)



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Peter G. Mathenge

July, 2005

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the spiritual development of teens in Deliverance Church Ngong. The overall aim was to explore and develop a theory of the teens' and parents' perception of the critical influences and contribution of parents on the spiritual formation of the teens. Data was collected through face to face semi-structured interviews with 15 participants, ten teens and five parents, and was recorded and transcribed. Observation was also done in participants' homes and in the church.

The findings revealed that all stakeholders (parents and teens) felt that parents were helpful and supportive to teens' spirituality. Parents' perception of godly socialization (passing of godly values to teens by the parents) was dependent on two factors: first, how knowledgeable (informed) they were to their divine educational mandate toward their teens and second, how convinced they were on this mandate. The two factors determined how they acted (responded) and described the quality of their relationship.

Also teens' perception of the same phenomenon (parental support towards teens' spirituality) was based on the extent their parents had influenced the entire (ALL) developmental domain from their tender age, and that helped them develop self-identity. The success of godly socialization was greatly affected by the state of home environment and the surrounding community. Teens' willingness to obey was considered. Parents who were well informed of their divine mandate and were fully convinced of the mandate described the quality of relationship as delightful and rewarding. On the other hand parents who were not informed of their parental mandate and not convicted of the same, described the quality of relationship as difficult and frustrating. Parents who only emphasized spiritual disciplines as the measure of spiritual development were perceived as 'nagging and too much' by the teens. On the other hand, parents who considered holistic development as a yard stick of socialization were considered as having a good relationship. Parents' perception of their spiritual support was primarily based on how they had given themselves toward their teens rather than what became of the teens.

From the findings, recommendations were suggested to parents regarding the best ways to meet the needs of their teens through parental preparedness for teens' changes. At the same time parents evaluated their parenting strategies to fulfill their God given mandate.

**To**

**My dearest and closest friends Ruth my wife and David our son, with love**

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Introduction**

The greatest gift that a parent can give his children is a legacy of introducing them into the ways of the Lord. The seed of godliness planted by the parents in the hearts of their children ensures the perpetuation of life in times to come due to the spiritual formation process.

Spirituality determines one's motives, motivations and destiny. One of the saddest verses in the Bible as far as children's spirituality is concerned is Judges 2:10, which shows the consequences of lack of godly socialization from parents to their children. "...And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel" (NAST). God knew that the way to preserve a people who feared Him in a corrupt world would be through parental spiritual nurture. The Lord commanded Israelite parents to train their children at home (Deut.6:5-9). The home as an institution greatly influences children's process of maturation and interaction by building or destroying their self-image.

This study attempted to explore the teenagers' and parents' perception of the critical influences and contributions of parents on the spiritual development of their teenagers. An assumption was that the descriptive information on family interaction provided by this study, if disseminated, was to have an influence on family functioning.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Today we experience conflicts between parents and their teens especially when teens want to be independent. Petersen asked, what would parents do when the young teenagers in their home first says, “I am not going to church from today” (1977, 44). Parent’s reactions are panic, anger, exasperation or even dismay. The parent has a lot at stake in the responses that his teenager makes to God. The parent has invested prayers, concern, training, and love and he doesn’t want to see it wiped out. The search for independence story is not uncommon today in so many families where teens just decide not to follow the parents again. Larson (1984, 13) pointed out that, the root cause of this conflict is a disagreement over values. Ward (1981, 93) cautioned Christian parents not to be carried away with the imagery of Father so as to pose themselves as God on Earth for the children. A child’s image of God is strongly influenced by his relationship with his parents.

Dobson (1987, 187) said that a parent’s thought of failure is so terrible that it could actually undermine his sanity. Some parents perceive that they have sent their beloved children to hell by their parenting failures. Dobson, Petersen and others have written concerning the parent-teens relationship, but few of these writings address this subject in the African context, which has experienced sudden social, political and spiritual changes due to a high level of technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This study sought to identify and discover factors that contributed to adolescent spiritual growth in Christian homes and parents’ role in the spiritual training. The findings revealed that some of the unconditional love parents demonstrated to their teenagers were quality time, care, acceptance, respect and discipline. The field of this

study was done in Deliverance Church Ngong. The study described the perceptions that both teenagers and parents had towards the parental contribution to the spiritual formation of the teenagers.

### **The Purpose Statement**

This grounded theory study attempted to identify and describe the spiritual development of teens in Deliverance Church Ngong. The study involved 10 teens and 5 parents. The overall aim was to discover the teens' and parents' perception of critical influences and contribution of parents on the spiritual development of the teens, particularly those that belong to church leaders. An assumption was that the descriptive information on family interaction provided by this study, if disseminated, was to have an influence on family functioning. The sites of the research were homes and the church grounds in the months of February and March 2005.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study will have much significance to the parents of the teenagers. An understanding of the relationship between parents and teens can help to reveal the underlying values that guide families. The findings of this study will help parents evaluate their parenting strategies to fulfill their God given mandate. Teenagers are a great asset to the family, to the church of Jesus Christ and to the state at large. Therefore knowledge of the teens' spiritual formation contributes much to determining the future in the homes, church and the state. The study will be a helpful tool to the church leaders,

pastors and Christian educators to evaluate, draw and plan effectively its policies, ministries of the church and its curriculum for the teens.

Researchers will benefit from this study that will address the youth's dynamic way of life. The study also hoped to contribute to a developing body of locally generated material on the subject of teenage spiritual formation. Teachers from schools will also benefit from the study especially when they call the parents to discuss the performances, spiritual formation and morality of their teenagers that might be affected by their perception and their worldviews.

### **Research Questions**

The research was guided by the following central question: (1) *what are the teens' and parents' perception of critical influence and contribution of parents on the spiritual development of their teens in Deliverance Church Ngong.* The sub-questions were

- a) What factors contribute to teenager's spiritual growth in Christian homes?
- b) How have the parents in Deliverance church Ngong contributed toward the spiritual nurture of their teenagers?
- c) How do parents in Deliverance Church Ngong describe their relationship with teenagers while at home?
- d) How do teenagers in Deliverance Church Ngong describe their relationship with their parents while at home?

### **Definition of Terms**

**Teens** – also interchangeably used terms are **teenagers, child, youth, and adolescent.**

They all have been used to mean those children within age bracket of 13-19 years.

**Development-** this term was used here as growth of the children into the expected adults.

**Christian home or family-** this is a home where either one or both parents have believed in their hearts that Jesus is the Savior or they have confessed with their mouth that Jesus is their Lord (Rom. 10:10). The term home was also used in some places in the study to signify the environment set by parents for spiritual development of their teens.

**Spiritual formation/development (spirituality)-**This term was used to refer to the gradual growth of teenagers into a people that have a good relationship with God. This should be seen as an intentional process which promotes the transformation by which Christ is formed in us so that we can become His continually maturing disciples (Dettoni and Wilhoit 1994, 16).

**Parenting /primary socialization or godly socialization-** passing on of the Christian values from the parents to their children.

**Spiritual nurture-** the process of training and helping Christians to grow and mature in the faith through love, nourishment and spiritual direction within the Christian community (Pazmino 1997 ,47).

**Stakeholders** The sampled teens and parents who are able to contribute to the ongoing study.

**Students in transition-** referred to teenagers who were changing from complete dependency in parents to independent living.

**Education mandate or parental mandate-** was used to refer to the order or command God gave each parent to train their children the Law of God (Prov. 22:6; Deut. 6:6-8).

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

This study was limited to teenagers of ages ranging from 13-19 years in Deliverance Church Ngong. The adults' participants were parents who attended Deliverance Church Ngong. The Factors affecting teen's spiritual formation were limited to Christian homes.

This study assumed nuclear families and was not generalized to all areas of parenting like extended families. In this qualitative study the findings could be subject to other interpretations by the audience. The findings were limited by the willingness of the participants to share their experiences.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

“The need for spiritually tuned teenagers who desire to know, love and please God is not only the desire of optimistic parents but of the whole Christendom” (Isoka 1999, 7). The home is the primary place where values are instilled in the teenagers as they come into contact with the outside world. Werner (1981) said that traditionally the child spent the first 18 years in the home. This was the time available to the parents for spiritual training and peaking up of parental influence on the child before he began to test ideas with other persons in other places (202). He advised that in the training, parents should have defined the goals for their children, which should be, to accept Christ as the Savior and to grow in Him through the word of the Lord. Larson (1984, 72-78) suggested that three important guidelines which would help teens to develop into spiritually mature adults are: focusing on God, orienting ourselves to other persons and making love a central theme in life. Werner (1981) cautions,

“If that training focuses on facts and information to the point that it overshadows application of the word to daily living, the teenager may grow to believe that an informed Christian is a mature Christian and the proficiency with the information recited is a gauge of spirituality”( 203)

The researcher knows two teenage girls who, like other teens in the urban centers, have become so independent of their parents that they have abandoned school and wants to stay alone away from the parents. The parents feel they have done much as far as their teens’ spiritual formation is concerned, but these teens claim that their parents have

neglected them. When teens point out to their parents of the feelings of being uncared for, parents get in a dilemma, not knowing what to do. Some parents become militant towards their teens, while others are in panic and anger, and still others are left with feelings of guilt that they have neglected their teens (Petersen 1977, 144).

This study attempted to identify and describe factors that contributed to the spiritual development of the teens and the parental role in spiritual training. The teens' and parents' perception of the parental contribution to the spiritual formation of teens was explored. The researcher recommended the response that Christian parents should take when conflict of values happens in their families.

## **Spiritual Formation of the Teens**

### Information on Teenagers for Parents

Werner (1981,146) said that the teenagers with a wide ranging and often colorful characteristics are persons who live in transition period between childhood and adulthood in the age span of 13-19 years. They are too old to be considered children and too young to be counted as adults. Parents must know that every teen has a culture (which defines his habits, beliefs, value system and thought form) and also has definite characteristics (147). So to respond to the youth culture in a Christian way to avoid a lot of frustrations and misunderstanding, parents need to develop a solid biblical philosophy of youth ministry that emphasize the constructive side of youth culture. He cautions that parents should allow for the teens' culture, encouraging the positive aspect but avoiding becoming part of that culture.

The youth period is divided into two major stages- early (12-14) and late (15-19) adolescence. Each parent should aspire to understand the holistic development of the teens, which is physical, mental, social, emotional, and moral. The five aspects of human development are interrelated and are what constitutes a spiritually developed teenager. Also a spiritual teen is evidenced through the five aspects of human development. Our response towards teenagers should help us to see the teens as total persons (151). Teenager' feelings about their appearance affect their social life that may affect their spiritual formation.

Lewis and Narromore (1990) wrote, "Parenting teenagers can be delightful, rewarding, difficult or frustrating" (44). He said that understanding a few basic principles of adolescent development can help maximize the positive side of parenting and minimize the negative. He put forward the following principles:

- God designed personality to go through a series of developmental stages from complete dependency to mature independency and interdependency.
- At each stage of development, children have one or more major needs or challenges they must master in order to move to the next stage of development.
- Most adolescents experience temporary periods of exaggerated childishness alternating with more mature behavior.
- The changes your adolescents are experiencing will open them up to the most significant growth of their lives since infancy.
- The more sensitive you are to your own emotions and your own adolescent struggles, the more helpful you can be to the teenager.

Townsend (1992, 54) says that parents should know and understand that teens are not theirs by right but it is a privilege to have them. Parents should, therefore, take, develop and maintain this gift faithfully because as good stewards they shall give an account to their owner. The Bible confirms that children are a heritage from the Lord and a reward from Him (Psalm 127:3). They are the greatest investment God has ever given anyone. Larson (1984, 49) defines investment as the way we use our time, energy and money. He said that there are two ways of determining investment; one is to keep a log of how one's time is used and two, review one's checkbook to see how money has been spent. Our part is to devote more interest, attention and devotion to teenagers than our multiplied services in the church. Petersen (1977, 258) said that, "investing in our children will bring us the highest rates of interest in time and in eternity."

### The Searching for Identity

Meier (1977) pointed out that teens naturally develop strong interests in ideas and ideologies as they search for personal identity. He noted that at this stage of development, they are extremely ripe for spiritual commitments, even though Christianity may have bored them previously (157). Teens at this time have a powerful need to strengthen their consciences and begin to look for reason and meaning in life. At this stage, Werner (1981, 151) gave some potential helps that should be provided by both parents and teachers to "why" and "how" questions of their teens. He said that they desire clear biblical and spiritual leadership that demonstrates practical Christianity. The following are the principles for parents to apply if they are to be of any assistance to their teens: 1) Get them into the word of the Lord and avoid spoon feeding them; 2) Channel their

efforts into outreach ministries; 3) Help them develop biblical principles and godly habits and also be there to help them and being an example. If these helps are provided to the teens, they will have a positive perspective of the contribution of their parents. The parent that tries to answer the three teens' basic question (who am I, where do I fit and is it worth it?) will have a permanent influence on them.

### Spiritual Climate of the Home: An Example of Jewish Tradition

The Christian home is an institution where values are learnt and internalized through modeling. As teens continue to grow, the kind of environment prevalent at home will largely form their character. Lawrence (1974, 67) in his book "You the Parent" gives three critical factors that characterized bad discipline which does not internalize values. This discipline is, too harsh, too negative and too personal, which focuses on the person rather than the problem. He then pointed the parents to good discipline that has the following characteristics: 1) Show them, don't just tell them; 2) Limit commands; 3) Explain and tell why; 4) Don't lord over them but work with them; 5) Relate punishment with the offense and be patient and consistent. We should note that good discipline is a function of a good parent-child relationship.

Meier (1977, 158) gave an example of Jewish family tradition that has potential for adding in the emotional and spiritual development of teens. At age 13 the Jewish family has a big ceremony where all the relatives are called to witness as the child is declared a young adult with increased responsibility and freedom. The ceremony is made through verbal contract. Today parents can borrow this tradition that would remind their teens of their responsibility before the Lord and encourage them to make personal

commitments to the Lord in the form of personal devotion. Relatives should be asked not to bring gifts so that the child will not confuse the ceremony with material gain. This ceremony could produce more responsible teens especially because of the witnesses.

### A Faith of their Own

Before the teenage years, children generally accept everything the parent says as truth and their religious beliefs are largely the beliefs of their parents. Dettoni and Wilhiot (1994) identified two kinds of faith: affiliative faith and searching faith. Affiliative faith includes the foundation of the experienced faith of childhood, which was gained by affirmations of the Christian story by the parents and the church life. In searching faith they are inclined towards a faith that is their own, where their faith is subjected to critical judgment (169)

Theorists show that, just as there are different stages of cognitive development and stages of moral development, faith development theory presents the possibility of stages of faith (Downs 1994, 111). The way people understand and experience their faith will emerge through predictable stages. Fowler identified six stages of faith through which humans should follow. The third stage of faith which is identified with the adolescent is called synthetic/conventional faith (116). If parents of teens would understand some characteristics of this stage, this would lessen conflict that occurs between them and their teens. Downs points out some main components that emerge in this stage as: 1) beliefs and values of the previous stages are synthesized into some sort of coherent perspective; 2) It is conventional in that it tends to adopt the belief system and forms of a larger community; 3) Church to them is an extended family where social, political and religious

activities are treated equally and due to this it might bring some conflict with authority figures. So an ecclesiastical theology that stresses community and relationships and strong leaders can create and hold people in this stage.

We cannot entirely blame parents because of the spiritual underdevelopment of the teens because teens are expected to exercise their freedom of choice. The Bible shows that our choices have their consequences (Genesis 2:15-17). We must realize that even though Adam and Eve were in a perfect spiritual climate, they decided to sin and disobeyed God. We cannot blame God for their fall (Gen 3). Also the sons of Samuel went contrary to their parents' expectations (1Sam 8) but God did not blame Samuel for that. If the parents have done their work, and their teens go astray, they should not feel as though they are failures or feel that they have neglected their teens.

### **Parents' Contribution to the Faith of their Teens**

#### Methods that Parents can Use to Impact their Teens' Faith

Different models can be used to serve as patterns for the parental role. Some of the models may be: a parent being an architect (who is a designer), a parent being a coach (who is a trainer), and a parent being a teacher (who is an instructor) (Draper 1982, 33). Training through love is the best way in building a teen's self-esteem. Draper gives some specific steps that can be taken to help build that atmosphere of love and caring that is vital to the teen's sense of importance and growth. The steps are:

- Spend time with them, in cooking, in games etc. Kesler (1993, 100) puts it this way: that the way a parent spends time with their teens shows that some parent

love their children but don't like them, just because they don't spend quality time with their teens.

- Make your home the center of your teen's happiness.
- Include teens in your activities.
- Give sincere compliments wherever possible.

Lawrence (1974, 51) pointed out that some family background would influence the teens. He said "when children come into the family, the climate established by the husband and the wife envelops them. They breathe the atmosphere created by their parents that is of love or of tension". Some teens asked to comment on the family unity that influenced them said the following:

- My parents love me. I always knew they cared for me even when I did something wrong. A teen responding that way shows that he/she understands unconditional love.
- My parents have shown respect for my opinion; such respect can be shown in many ways, i.e. giving allowances to their teens, discussing their matters in their family councils. So they feel that their parents respect them as persons.
- My parents and I always talked a lot –a sense of openness in communication that is a tremendous critical thing, a thing on which many of the other things are hinged (53). Communication (heart to heart) is marked by an open heart, the eagerness for reconciliation and harmony, the free flow of forgiveness.

Petersen (1977, 253) noted the following negative feelings that some teens have towards their parents



1. Grown-ups make promises, and then forget all about them, or else they say it wasn't really a promise but just a maybe.
2. Grown-ups do not do the things they tell the teens to do.
3. Grown-ups never really listen to what teens have to say. They also decide ahead of time what they are going to answer.
4. Grown-ups make mistakes, but they won't admit them. They always pretend that they were not mistakes at all.
5. Grown-ups interrupt teens all the time and think nothing of it but if the teens interrupt a grown-up he gets a sharp quarrel.
6. Sometimes grown-ups punish teens unfairly.

All the above complaints from the teens show how they perceive their parents' contribution towards their growth. It is like saying, "if my parents did those acts differently, I would be a better person than I am now".

#### Factors that Affect Parents in Their Parenting Endeavors

The type of parents' attitude needed for training teenagers is somewhat different than for younger children. Some parents will find the adjustment easier than others. The parental relationship to the teens is much closer to a one-to-one equal relationship, while still assuming the basic parental authority. Draper (1982, 146-147) in his book "Parent, Take Charge" points out four blocks that get in the way of effective parenting with teens.

*Smoldering resentments* on the part of one or both parents teaches the teen to avoid closeness with that person, or makes him fear taking sides. Thus he remains aloof from both parents. This situation closes off the needed communication, and the teen has

to turn outwardly to others for his resources. The tensions in the home will encourage him to be absent as much as possible, which opens doors for further difficulty. This way he is forced to seek out his own devices, and thus misses the valuable support that his parents could be to him during these important years.

*Inability to trust their teens.* The parent may be well aware of the many temptations and difficulties facing his teen, and may show a lack of trust by constant questioning, unwarranted disbelief of the teen's explanations, etc. A teen that is trying very hard to do what is right, but is constantly mistrusted, eventually loses confidence in himself and the motivation to do the right thing. For example, an untrusting parent can easily jump to conclusions that his daughter has become sexually involved if she is an hour late in coming home.

*Undue expectations of the teen from the parent's point of view.* The parent may be demanding all A's in school which may not fit the teen. This also can bring a great deal of frustration, a sense of failure, or outright rebellion.

### **Conclusion**

We have considered the factors that contribute to spiritual formation of the teenagers, the position of parents in influencing their teens according to God's will for the teens. We have also noted some positive and negative perceptions of teens concerning their parent's contributions to their spiritual life. With this kind of information, parents will be armed with godly tools to fulfill the spiritual mandates of their teens. In case a teen falls away after the parent has done all he is supposed to do, he should not feel that he has failed God.

The information that was looked at in the literature review helped the researcher to formulate the semi-structured interviews. This information also helped the researcher reflect on what the applicants said with regard to the literature already found.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Rationale for Choice of Qualitative Research Approach**

“Qualitative research methods have their root in cultural anthropology, but have recently been adopted by educational research” (Creswell 2003, 189).

Creswell (1998, 15) defines qualitative research as:

“Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative research study things in their natural setting, trying to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials--case study, personal experience/ introspective, life story, interview, observation, historical, international, and visual texts--that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives.”

The qualitative paradigm is distinguished from quantitative by many characteristics that are seen in the design (Creswell 2003, 189). The following are some of the characteristics presented by many researchers:

- 1) Qualitative research takes place in natural settings, where human behavior and events occur. This enables the researcher to develop a level of details about the individual, and to be highly involved in actual experiences of the participants.
- 2) The researcher is the primary instrument in data collection.
- 3) The data is descriptive, reported in the words of the participant, rather than in numbers.
- 4) The focus of this research paradigm is in participant's perception and experiences and the way they make sense of their lives, hence the attempt is to understand multiple

realities. This will be an emergent design and is the negotiated outcome because it is the subjects' reality that the researcher attempts to reconstruct.

5) This research method (tradition) relies on the utilization of intuitive and felt knowledge as a way to appreciate multiple realities, since the data is not quantifiable.

The intent of this qualitative study is to understand the perceptions of both parents and teens of the parents' contribution to the spiritual formation of teens. The researcher will enter the informants' world, and through ongoing interaction seek their perspectives and meanings.

### **Grounded-Theory Research Design**

Starcher (2003, 57) defined grounded-theory as "the language that allows us to move from observation to observation and make sense of similarities and differences." This theory is called grounded because it emerges from the data of an in-depth interview. The purpose of the in-depth interview study was to understand the experiences of those who were interviewed, not to predict or to control their experiences. Seidman (1998, 44) advised that the researcher's task is to "present the experiences of the people he is interviewing in compelling enough details and in sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects".

The intent of this grounded theory study was to understand the teenagers' and parents' perception of the parents' contribution of the spiritual development of the teens. Both parents and the teenagers were expected to respond to research questions. The researcher mentioned to the participants, at the beginning of the study, that the purpose

was to generate a theory using the category approach (Creswell 1998, 34). This study included in-depth interviewing and continual and ongoing participant observation of the situation and it attempted to capture the whole picture that showed how teens and parents described and structured their world.

This process used multiple stages of data collection and refinement of the information. Two primary characteristics of grounded theory approach used were the constant comparisons of data with emerging categories and theoretical sampling of different groups to maximize the similarities and the differences of information.

### **Sampling in Grounded Theory**

Sampling here does not mean selecting participants randomly, but choosing them based on their ability to contribute to an evolving theory (Creswell 1998, 118). Seidman (1998) said that purposeful sampling can take several approaches, including “typical case,” “extreme and deviant case,” “sensitive case,” “convenient sampling” and “maximum variation” sampling that can either refer to people or site (45).

This study was conducted at the Deliverance Church in Ngong town. This church has a membership of 250 people without children. Out of the 250 members, around 150 are in their teenage life. Two sets of population were identified based mostly on convenient and maximum variation sampling. The first set is parents in the church of youth of between 13 to 19 years of age. Five parents were interviewed face-to-face by the researcher using a semi-structural interview guide. The second set was the youth of both sexes who are members of this church. The researcher met and conducted interviews with

ten youths. The researcher also observed and talked to the participants in context: their harmony in the home, teen's freedom, teen's self image and sense of acceptance.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Grounded theory is more concerned with data analysis than data collection. Data can come from different sources such as interviews, observations, letters, books and photos (Starcher 2003, 65). Seidman (1998, 63, 78) poses a good suggestion of the technique of data collection. This is what he said:

“Truly effective questions flows from an interviewer's concentrated listening, engaged interest in what is being said and purpose in moving forward. Effective questioning is so context-bound, such a reflection of the relationship that has developed between the interviewer and the participant. The most important personal characteristic interviewers must have is genuine interest in other people and their stories... Sometimes an important question will start out as an ill-defined instinct, which takes time to develop and seems risky to ask.”

The researcher had informed the participants of his intentions in collecting data from them. In being with them in various Church meetings, the participants had developed trust in the researcher. Data was collected from a variety of sources, including active observation. A lot of data in this study was collected from semi structured interviews (face to face, one to one) with about 15 stakeholders' participants (ten teens and five parents). The participants were chosen based on convenience sampling and on their capacity to contribute to a conceptual understanding of issues that informed the study of teens' spiritual formation in a Christian home. Parent-teen relationship is a sensitive issue where audiovisual material may inhibit the progress. However in this study audiovisual material was used to collect data from the participants. Unusual aspects like weeping were noticed during the interview and observation. The researcher was seen

as intrusive into the person's private life. The researcher recorded details related to the observations in a field notebook and kept a field diary (memo) of his own thinking, feeling, experience, reflections and perception throughout the research process.

### **Data Analysis Strategies**

The process of noting what is interesting, labeling it and putting it into appropriate files is called 'classifying' or "coding" data (Seidman 1998, 107). He advises researchers on two things: that labeling should be made tentative making sure that categories are not made too early to avoid dead ends, and that care should be taken not to develop (excerpts, categories and themes) from researchers' minds rather than letting them develop from the experience of the participant as represented in the interview. The reason an interviewer spends so much time talking to participants is to find out what their experiences are and the meaning they make of it (110). The work of the researcher was to make connections among the experiences of people who shared the same structure.

Strauss and Corbin (1998, 101) identified three types of coding: open, axial and selective. The three coding do not represent sequence analytical steps but are part of the constant comparative process. Open coding is the analytical process through which concepts were identified and their properties and dimension are discussed in the data. With the topic under study, categories were formed of the factors that contributed to teens' spiritual growth in a Christian home, parental contribution to teens' spirituality, and perceptions of relationships. Axial coding is the process of relating categories. The researcher identified a single category as the central phenomenon of interest and explored the interrelationships of it to other categories. It is called axial because the analyzing



revolves around the axis of one category at a time (Starcher 2003, 67). Factors looked into included causal conditions, strategies, context, intervening conditions and consequences. A diagram that showed how information related to the central phenomenon was drawn (Creswell 1998, 151). Selective coding is the process by which all categories are unified around a 'core' category. It is the process of integrating and refining the theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998, 143). In selective coding the study's grounded theory emerged clearly.

“In open coding, the analyst is concerned with generating categories and their properties and then seeks to determine how categories vary dimensionally. In axial coding, categories are systematically developed and linked with subcategories. However, it is not until the major categories are finally integrated to form a larger theoretical scheme that the research findings take the form of theory.”

Data analysis provided responses to the research questions. This analysis on teens' spiritual formation involved a continued reflection about the data, asking analysis questions and asking general questions from information supplied by the participants. In this grounded theory, data analysis followed the three methods of coding outlined above. The researcher generated categories of information and measured it against a theoretical model that finally helped the researcher make a story of their interconnections.

### **Steps of Analysis: Interpreting the Materials**

Strauss and Corbin (1998, 42) said “Analysis begins with the first interview and observation, which leads to the next interview or observation, followed by more interview and fieldwork”. They cautioned us that, we need to balance between objectivity and sensitivity, as both are necessary for making discovery. The interplay between the research and the researcher means that the researcher is an instrument of analysis (53). In

this study the researcher analyzed words, phrases and sentences and finally made comparisons. The researcher built a creative, grounded and dense theory by being sensitive to what the data said. The researcher was careful not to allow his biases or that of his participants to intrude into the analysis (99). The researcher carried out the following process of analysis:

1. Organized and prepared the data by sorting and arraying the data into different types depending on the source, whether from parents or teens.
2. Read through all the data generally and reflected on its overall meaning. He wrote down general thoughts in the margin of the notebook. Seidman (1998, 100) said that reducing the text, is to read it and mark with brackets the passages that are interesting. He cautioned what was to happen in the process of analyzing , that, “you lose confidence in your ability to sort out what is important and wonder if you are making it at all, you get worried that you are falling into the trap of self delusion.” He called this feeling “an anxiety that you learn to live with.”
3. Described the data into small number of themes that was interpreted into the lessons learned in the ideas captured. In this study, sharing of data was done by crafting profiles in the participant’s own words from their story, which allowed the words to reflect the person’s conscience (102). The researcher raised issues relating to teens’ and parents’ perception to teen’s spiritual formation, then connected these profiles to the experiences of others in the sample. Another method that the researcher used was to organize excerpts from the transcript into categories, searching for connecting threads and patterns between the excerpts within those categories and for connection between the various categories that were called themes (107).

### **The Researcher's Role**

“No interviewer can enter into the study of an interview as a clean slate. All responses to text are interactions between the reader and the text. The researcher identified his interest in the subject and examined it, making sure that his interest is neither unhealthy nor infused with anger, bias or prejudice” (Seidman 1998, 100). The interviewer came to the transcript prepared to let the interview ‘breathe and speak’ for itself.

The researcher has been a co-pastor in the church for the last two years. He has been involved in youth ministries, counseling with them and visiting them. With this exposure, the researcher has the knowledge and sensitivity to many of the challenges that teens struggle with. At the same time the researcher has been participating in the counseling of parents. He therefore knows the challenges and problems parents face in parenting their teens. With the past experience, the researcher brought certain biases and values to the study, though he ensured that the interview spoke for itself. These biases shaped the way the researcher understood the data and how he interpreted their experiences.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The researcher respected the rights, needs, values and desires of all the participants. The following safeguards were employed to protect the participants' rights:

- 1) The researcher masked names of the people and activities by giving them codes.
- 2) The researcher acquired permission from the participants before the study.
- 3) The researcher informed participants of all data collection devices and activities.

### **Validation and Verification Strategies**

Validity is seen as strength of the qualitative research, and determines the accuracy of the findings from researchers, participant and readers' point of view (Creswell 2003, 195). The researcher evaluated (triangulated) different data by examining evidences from the teens to build a coherent theme.

The researcher hoped to use member-checking method, by taking the report back to the participants to determine how they felt about the accuracy of these findings, but it was not possible. The researcher clarified some biases that he brought to the study. This self-reflective study created an open and honest narrative that matched with the readers.

The research presented contrasting information that ran counter to the theme but the researcher allowed the study to speak for itself. The researcher worked with a peer debriefer who constantly reviewed the task and asked questions so that the study resonated with participants rather than the researcher. He also used the lecturer who reviewed the entire project. Finally, the researcher conducted a pilot study with two close families who have teens.

### **Conclusion**

The results were presented in descriptive form rather than scientific report. This presentation was a vehicle for communicating a holistic picture of the perception of both parents and teens of the contribution that parents made to the spiritual formation of the teens. These conclusions will be of great importance to Christian parents who wish to pattern the lives of their teens according to biblical principles. The report will also help church leaders who wish to advise parents regarding their teens' spiritual growth.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

Data analysis was directed at identifying and describing salient issues and concerns of parents and teens regarding their interaction with each other at home, as well as their general perceptions regarding the critical influence parents have on teens' spiritual growth. This section, therefore, discusses the findings from the interviews and observations made among parents and teens in the Deliverance Church Ngong. The researcher created categories from the information teens and parents provided. Excerpts from interviews were used to provide data for the assertions made. The categories were framed along the lines of the purpose and objectives of the study and answers were sought towards the research questions in chapter one. The data analysis, using the grounded theory procedure as discussed in chapter three, generated the following theory.

#### **Theory Explanations**

From the interviews and the observations, it becomes apparent that all stakeholders (teens and parents) felt that parents were helpful and supportive to teens' spirituality. Parents' perception of godly socialization (passing of godly values to teens by the parents) was dependent on how informed (knowledgeable) parents were on their divine educational mandate (which is communicated in relational dimensions) towards teenagers, and their convictions of this mandate. The two factors determined how parents

responded (acted) towards the training of their children and how they described the quality of their relationship with their teens.

Also, teens' perception of parental support towards teens' spirituality was based on the extent their parents had influenced the entire (ALL) developmental domain from their tender age. The success of godly socialization was greatly affected by the state of home environment and the surrounding community. The teens' willingness to obey was considered. Parents who were well informed of their divine mandate and whose personalities were well developed described the quality of their relationship with their teens as delightful and rewarding. On the other hand, parents who were not informed of their parental mandate and not convicted of the same described the quality of their relationship with their teens as difficult and frustrating. The parents who put emphasis on the spiritual disciplines as the measure of spiritual development were perceived by the teens as "nagging." On the other hand, parents who considered holistic development as a yard stick of socialization were considered as having good relationships with their teens.

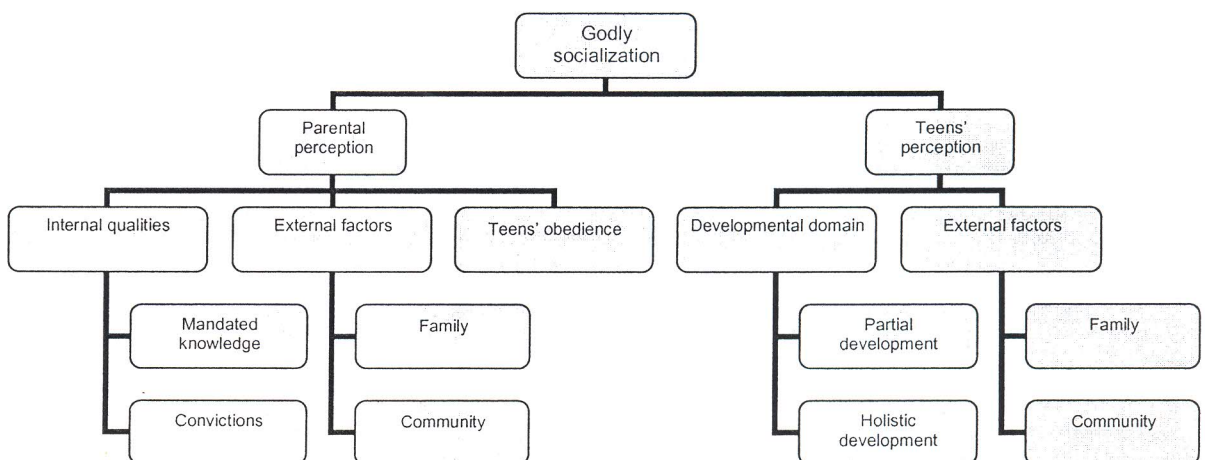


Figure 4.1: Visual model of stakeholders' perception

## **The Factors Contributing to Teens' Spiritual Growth in a Christian Home**

### **A Model of Understanding Socialization**

The term “primary socialization” in this study was used to mean passing on of Christian values from the parents to their teens. A model of relay race runners, passing on the baton, was used to represent parents passing on the baton of faith to their teens. In such a race, true victory was realized when the whole team had finished. The motto of the race could have been “You are not successful until your successor succeeds.” However the researcher considered the successor’s (teens) willingness to receive the baton of faith. In the analysis of the data given by both parents and teens, the researcher used the ‘relay race’ truth of the model to ask: “How effective did the parents feel they had been in passing on the baton of faith to their teens?” “How informed and willing were the teens to receive the baton from their parents?”

From the analysis, all parents felt that they had successively passed on the baton of faith to their teens. One respondent said “I have sacrificed so much for them; including selling family estate for their colorful future...my biblical belief for my teens is that they may live for Christ and love him with all their hearts so that the banner of salvation that I personally received from my mother, I will pass to them. I sincerely pray that they will pass it to their children and their children’s children and to the generations to come.”

Several teens also affirmed that they were willing to receive counsel from their parents. One teen had the following to say, “My parents don’t choose friends for me, but they always advise me not to be in bad company. This I have always agreed and so I love them for their advice...” Parents considered their teens’ obedience as the best service their teens would ever offer to them. One of the parents noted a prayer she made to God

when her teen seemed to rebel, “God it feels so bad to see him rebel against the things of God...” and she confessed that she would pray the whole night for him.

### Parents’ Knowledge of their Divine Educational Mandate

The parents’ understanding of an educational mandate as given in Deut 6:4-6 was a key factor in passing on godly values to their children. Understanding teachable moments to the teens was of prime importance since teens are students in transition. The study showed that all parents understood their greatest role as being a teacher to their teens. They talked of educational terms such as: “seeking for a teachable moment to teach their teens, others called it “right or ripe moment to...,” others talked of “training their children through love and disciplining them according to the word of God.”

The application of the above terms in parents’ communication meant that they understood the position and role of a teacher, students (teens), curriculum, and the contents to be taught. One parent said, “Yes, I teach them life lessons” and then she added, “You don’t just start a topic; you need to slot it in as you talk naturally. Just bring it in when both of you are very happy.” Another participant said that parent-teen teaching should be informal and not like a classroom. She said, “In our house, we are jovial people. When I come to teach them I don’t take a classroom context. I would start with a joke...teaching them in parables and riddles.” Pointing to the nature of content, one participant said, “I don’t tell them in black and white.”

However, a few parents felt differently on how open they should be with their teens. One of the participants commented, “I have learned to tell them every thing, including sex, including their life with their unsaved father. I put things very clear, telling



them that, ‘now that you are grown ups, I can’t force you to do anything but you must choose for yourself.’ I asked them, ‘do you like the other way, or, are you comfortable in it?’” The extent of how open the parent was while teaching their teens depended on some factors such as how sensitive the issue was, were the teens alone or with others and was the parent teaching the teen before an incident happened or after. The research revealed that if the incident had not happened and the parent was warning or advising, then he would not tell it “in black and white.” If the incident had already happened, the parent tended to be very open, hiding nothing.

One participant narrated the importance of sharing life experiences of teachers (parents) with the students (teens). She considered parents and teens both to be learners. Pointing to what she considered an effective means of teaching she said, “We need to involve our teens in our lives. Parents should talk to them about day to day activities, and about work... share with them your challenges in life.” This shows the teen that it is neither wrong nor a sign of weakness for him to talk about his failures. As a teacher, the parent should let the teen(s) know that parents are also vulnerable and imperfect beings. Parents who share their lives with their teens considered themselves to be coaches or co-pilgrims and not as manufacturers of goods from raw material.

#### Parents’ Conviction of their Mandate

Another important point that determined the success of godly socialization of a teen is a parent’s conviction that this mandate is the primary assignment God has given them. This conviction resulted in the parents being optimistic, and being willing to risk to invest in the teen even in the face of danger and scarcity. Parents can learn from Paul’s

writing to Timothy that “it is not enough to know, we need to be persuaded that it is our reason of being...” (2 Tim 2:14).

In Numbers 14 the Bible speaks about two spies out of the twelve who inherited God’s Promised Land and were commended because of their optimistic spirit. One participant narrated how she had maintained her positive attitude with her rebellious teen. Her hope that her teen would change come from her diary confession about their relationship. She would tell God, “Father, it feels so bad for him to talk to me like that.” Another mother said that she would open the door to her daughter even when she had “messed up.”

Optimistic parents see hope where there is little of it. Optimistic parents see the future potential of their teens rather than their past mistakes. A parent who received news that her son was evil said, “My son will be ok.” When you observe water in a glass which is at the middle, different people describe the water level differently. Optimistic people would call the glass “half full” while pessimistic people would call it “half empty.” This study showed that parents who were optimistic about their teens were also not afraid to invest in them and to associate with the teens even when they were rebellious. In socialization, they considered various factors including the age of the teen.

#### Teen’s Willingness to Obey

A teen’s willingness to obey authority was a factor to be considered by parents while socializing them. During teenage years, teens can make the decision to follow God or not. One teenager respondent said, “There are times our relationship is not good at home; sometimes up and sometimes down there are things I would not tell mum because

I don't know how she will respond and thus I distance myself and watch, but mostly I respect her; listen to what she says. At times she says that I am rude, that I should not have answered like that, however, this does not distance our friendship. She is still my mom and I must do the way she wants it done ...” Teenagers respected their parents as authority figures. The findings showed that all the teens were willing to obey their parents, as long as the parents considered teens to be mature people. God does not force our choices, but he encourages us to choose right, and so should the parents of teens.

### **Parental Contributions to Teens' Spirituality**

#### **Quality Time Given**

Our children's first need is time. Most participants, both parents and teens, affirmed that their time together was rare. Some of the reasons given by participants for little time together were parents' schedule of work and teen's assignments to be done at home. One respondent (parent) said "I confess that I don't have enough time with my son, because I go to work very early and I get home at the evening while he is doing his school assignments, and before long we have supper and he has gone to sleep. This process repeats itself again and again." Another parent who seemed to have very little time with his teen even when his child was young said remorsefully, "I sent my child to school at age two for babysitting .... Most of the time till now he has been in boarding school, and today as a teen he can't listen to me. It gave me 'headache' because he has developed a difficult character. When I send him to go to shop or do some thing, he tells me that he has something else to do or that he has his own visitors..."

It is seemed hard for parents to spend a large quantity of time with their teens. The little time they do have with them should be maximized to the fullest, using it to befriend and build healthy relationships. One mother of a teen said, “On days like weekends I would go with him to the market, and to some other sites. Instead of using a vehicle we would walk so that we can talk. So if he had a problem he tells me and all sort of things. We also involve him in our family agenda, like when we want to buy our own car or build our house. This makes him to feel special. This time of our outing gives me ‘food’ for prayer in my private time, telling God to intervene in my teen’s life...”

A few parents felt that teens no longer require them. One respondent commented, “Most of the time it is beyond us to be with them anyway!” Another one had this to say, “When they are teenagers, their own schedules fill most of their days and we can feel that they are too grown up to need us as they used to.” Because teens have a lifestyle of their own, parents may think their teens do not want time and input from them. Yet, the teen’s years are the most crucial stage in which the child needs parent’s appraisal of their identity.

One respondent commented on the changing trend of parent-teen relationship, “We will always be their parents but our relationship with them is changing towards mutual respect and friendship.” Any friendship that is worthwhile takes time and effort. Parents of teens must know that good friendships take time. They are founded on shared interests, the exchange of ideas, acceptance, respect and the fun of doing things together. To develop this friendship means giving the teens time when they need it, being prepared to drop everything and make the teens’ concern a priority. One respondent said that

giving time was costly and inconvenient. “I had to completely adjust my programme,” said a participant.

Some parents experienced a conflict between their church activities and time with their families. One teenager respondent complained of her mother’s absence. “From Monday to Saturday my mom is not available; she is in the market. On Sunday she wakes up early to go to church and comes back at night—she is never at home mostly.” From the literature review, (see page 9) we discovered that our families should receive priority over church activities. Our part is to devote more time, interest, attention and devotion to our teens rather than attend multiple services in church. We concluded the literature review by saying that “investing in our children will bring us the highest rates of interest in this time and eternity.” One way to avoid a clash between time with our teens and our church is to get involved in the church life together.

### Offering Unconditional Love

We show our teenagers unconditional love by our patience, kindness, trust and respect. True love, that is God’s kind of love, focuses on relationships and not on what the other person does. Many respondents felt that teenagers needed to feel loved even when they displeased their parents, for this gave the teen a secure environment in which to make mistakes and try again. One participant passionately spoke of how she had offered unconditional love to her teens, “The greatest gift a parent has to give her teen is love. I try to know her heart, be close to her, associate with her in her weaknesses and in her strong points. This is the only way I can know her wants and what she doesn’t want.” She then continued to speak of what teens do when parents do not give unconditional

love. “If you fight teenage children they rebel; they really rebel, but when you give love even when they are very wrong, show them love. They keep on saying I did wrong but mom was there for me.” Loving teens unconditionally will open them up to you as a parent and they will in turn love. In accepting your teens regardless of what they do, the parent gets to know their hearts; what they like and what they do not like.

Another participant described the kind of love she gives to her teens. “This love is self sacrificing. I have learnt to humble more than my daughters even when I know they are in the wrong. Sometimes I behave as though I did not know what was happening. I go so much down to be able to attract even their attention. When the child has done so badly, I go there and tell her, you are still my child no matter how bad the situation looks...” Some respondents felt that this self-sacrificing love, when teens are doing wrong will win their hearts. As one mother said, “When they know that there is somebody who can associate with them, they will open up.”

Expressing unconditional love required the parent not to respond instantly over an evil done by the teens. All parents felt that when a teen has done something very bad, it is always important not to react immediately, and out of anger for fear of getting caught up in the confusion of their teens. One respondent said, “Many times I feel like cursing my daughter, especially when she sleeps out but after staying like three days I find that my bitterness has gone and we are able to talk. I have never made enemies with my teens for more than three days.” Another participant said, “I take like two or three days without asking what had happened, until he forget(s) what had happened. I go in prayer and then ask him when he is alone. Teens feel protected when others are not listening. When teens

were questioned in the presence of other people, they either became rude or remained silent.”

After some time, both the parent and the teen will be ready to discuss the incident reasonably, after having time to reflect on the issue. In the absence of an attack, teens may be able to apologize and ask for forgiveness. The clear demonstration of acceptance of them, in spite of their behaviors, will open the way for life lessons to be learned and even for attitudes to change.

Our acceptance from God in our fallen state was how He demonstrated love to us (John 3: 16). This acceptance was the greatest act of love the world has ever known and He is our best example. Expressing love in our actions and reactions will often speak louder than words.

### Acceptance and Respect

The study showed that a few respondents were struggling to accept the teens the way they were. These parents kept on wishing that their teens were somehow different. For example, after having a heated quarrel with her daughter, the parent told her, “When I was a teen I did not rebel against my parents.” Being very angry she continued to say to her teen, “If today I was called by your name I would not answer...! That was not the right thing to say, but I felt I did not want anything to do with her, but as a Christian I remember the word of God and I went back to the cross and confessed my anger.”

However one single mother who was parenting her fourth teen said “I would now not compare my son with myself or with his brothers and sisters, because when I was young I was not exposed as he is now in modern times.” Some respondents revealed that

they respected their teenagers as adults. These parents involved their teens in the family decision making, plans and budgeting. A respondent made a remark that showed the value she had accorded to her teenager son. She said, “I try to talk to him about all family issues being as open as I can especially when he asks for it. I do ask him what his views were...” In the buying of our car and the building of our house, we actively involved him.” A teenage girl affirmed how respected she felt from her parents “...they listen to me, appraising me that I am important. I feel special because my ideas are wanted and appreciated. In fact my mom accepts my friend as hers.”

As parents we should never embarrass our teens in front of their friends. We should make our home a place where their friends want to come. Parents should make an effort to know the names of their teenagers’ friends and even their families being available to them without interfering. The balance between being available to the teens and at the same time not interfering with their lives as teens needs a deliberate change of attitudes. We must start to see teens as junior partners. Our relationship ought to be that of two friends and not of a master servant relationship. In John 15, Jesus told his disciples, “You are my friends and not my slaves...” (NIV). When parents accept and respect their teens the way they are, without wishing that they were somebody else, this adds value to the teen. This adding of value will lower teens’ propensity to sin. One respondent told the researcher that one of their family’s covenant clauses was, “when the teen meets the parent’s visitors, he should greet them and respect them, and vice versa.”

### Freedom and Firmness

All teenagers said that freedom was a necessity to them. One teen said if parents do not give their teens freedom, they rebel. She gave an example on the choice of



clothing which seemed to be an issue of contention between parents and their teens. She said, “If for example, you tell your teen not to wear jeans like others, she feels the odd person out. ‘Why not me! and others are doing it’.? So when she starts wearing it she won’t go back, you will quarrel and she will not listen.” Another teenager said “parent of teens, especially for girls, should not be too strict on them. Some don’t want to see their teen talking to anybody, wearing jeans or even plaiting hair. Parents should know that it is just a stage which teens are passing.”

Teenagers, just like other people, were created to be free, and God took risks to give that freedom. Some parents put a lot of rules on their teens because of fear of losing them, but those Christians who love God have to learn to trust him with the lives and futures of their teens. Parents should give teens boundaries, because boundaries protect the teens. However if the rules are too harsh and the boundaries are too narrow, teens will feel imprisoned leading them to rebellion. One parent participant said “In my family, I have given teens freedom of many things, but still there are rules, and at times these rules are so bad that teens struggle to keep. One teen wants to be left alone and have her freedom even when she has gone for her ‘happies.’” Parents of teens should therefore strive for balance on freedom and firmness.

#### Parental Influence on Teens’ Entire Developmental Domain

Teens’ perception of the primary socialization was based on the extent that their parents had influenced their entire developmental domain, beginning from their childhood. This progressive socialization enabled teens to develop their self-identity. Teenagers perceived as “good friends, or as having good relationship or as second god,

and/or as indispensable to their lives' parents who had affected them holistically. Parents who only emphasized on spiritual disciplines (like prayers, bible reading, and salvation) as the measure of spiritual development were perceived as "nagging" by the teens. From the literature review (see 7) parents were encouraged to understand the holistic development of their teens that is, physical, mental, emotional, moral, social and spiritual. Teens' feelings about their appearance affect their social life that finally affects their spiritual formation. By understanding the developmental process, parents can help to affirm the image of God in their teens.

Teens were not very detailed in their responses to the interview questions. However, while responding to the question: "How have the parents in Deliverance Church contributed toward the spiritual nurture of their teens?" Teen's responses touched all the developmental domains. The following are some of their responses,

"My parents help me, to do my school homework; sometimes they stay too late at night helping me in academic," "my parents gave me money to go to camp," "my dad helped me to socialize with my friends by buying me a soccer ball. He also helps me love God by showing me how to pray." A teen narrated a story of how his parents had affected his social and moral domains by saying "My parents have told me not to engage in sexual life before marriage so that it will not affect my education." Another one said, "When a program on the TV shows up, my parents discourages me to watch it saying that it will corrupt my morality." Another teen said, "my mom helps me when I am in problem, she help me chose my friend, advising me not to walk with some people for they would destroy my morals; we pray together in the house in turns and read the bible before we go to sleep." More comments from the teens were, "We watch a program

together with my parents, and we don't watch pornography for they will make me think about bad things. Another teen said, "We go for an outing together with my mom, when we come back she helps me in my school activity, and on Sunday she encourages me to go to church."

The above comments from teens showed that parents who influenced them holistically were considered to have contributed to teens' spiritual growth. Parents should help teens take care of their bodies, minds and emotions. Basically what comes out of those teens is simply a response to what has gone in. Parents should do the following for their teens where possible: watch their teens' diet, guard against bad influence of television, encourage them to read good books and articles that open teens' world and increase their positive imaginations, help them to discern good from bad, urgent from the important.

Parents must be deliberate in order to influence the holistic nature of their teens. Parents can effectively affect teens' spiritual domain through participating in spiritual discipline; cognitive or mental domain through parents support in teens' study (learning); teens' emotive domain can be affected through parental acts of love. Teens' physical domain can be affected through acts that prepare them in living, like teaching them how to handle money. Teens' social and moral domain can be influenced by parents becoming a model or an example. The act of parents leaving a legacy behind for their children, speak louder than a word of instruction. All the domains are interrelated and should be treated as a whole unit.

One parent pointed out how he taught his teen to handle money. "My son who used to commute to school in town complained to me that I was mean to him. So we

agreed with him that we both calculate enough fare for the month and gave him the money to keep (about Ksh 3000). The condition was if he finishes this money before month end he should not come to me. One week to the end of the month, he finished the money and came to me humbly...” The action of giving him the money taught him some life lessons such as loving his parents and learning how to handle money.

Parents should learn the challenge of contemporary tendencies of compartmentalization of life. In this tendency, faith is often relegated to those limited occasions when one is involved in church related activities, mostly on a Sunday morning. But faith in God is related to all of life.

### Parents Vs Teens Relationship Perceptions

#### *Perception of Relationship*

As already indicated in the theory, the success of Godly socialization was greatly affected by the state of the home environment and the surrounding community. Parents who were well informed of their divine mandate and who then practiced that mandate described the quality of relationship with their teens as delightful and rewarding. One parent commented, “Our relationship with my son is very close, but he would open up only when I am interested with his story.” Another parent said, “Me and him, we are intimate. He hugs me and tells me, ‘Mom you are beautiful,’ but when other people are there, he doesn’t want to be associated with mother. However we are very good buddies.”

On the other hand parents who were not informed of the divine mandate described the quality of relationship as difficult and frustrating. One parent participant said, “Before a child gets to 12 years he is normal. You can send him to the shop and go,

but after 13 years he changes abruptly. This change took me time to know what was happening. It gave me a headache...he had developed a difficult character.” Parents who only emphasized on spiritual disciplines as the measure of spiritual development were perceived as “nagging” by the teens. On the other hand, parents who considered holistic development as a yard stick of socialization were considered as having a good relationship with their teens.

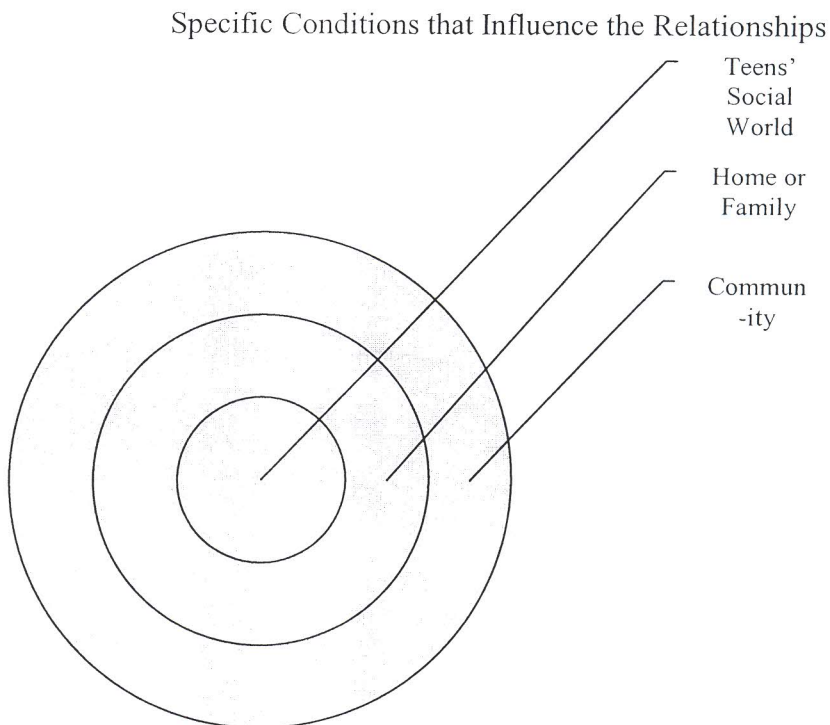


Figure 4.2: influence of teens' social world

*Nature of the Home Environment*

The child's social world, which begins within his family, progresses toward the outside world through relationships with friends at school and in the neighborhood. In an ideal world, our home should be an oasis of harmony in a hard and hurtful environment. With the contemporary enemies of divine institutions of secularism (removing of God), this harmony is not possible to achieve. But if we work at our family relationships we will begin to find new joy and unity together. One parent said, "Every member of the family must realize that their actions and behaviors affect everyone else. To improve on the environment, the whole family is encouraged to practice family altar. We read the Bible together and pray, confess our weakness to God. As parents we encourage cooperation, free sharing, and listening, understanding and genuine interest in each other. As already indicated in literature, (see 12,) harmony between the husband and the wife filters down through the family. This study showed that where parents loved each other, then the whole family tended to be functional and open. On the other hand, if the husband and the wife did not love each other, the entire family tended to be closed and dysfunctional.

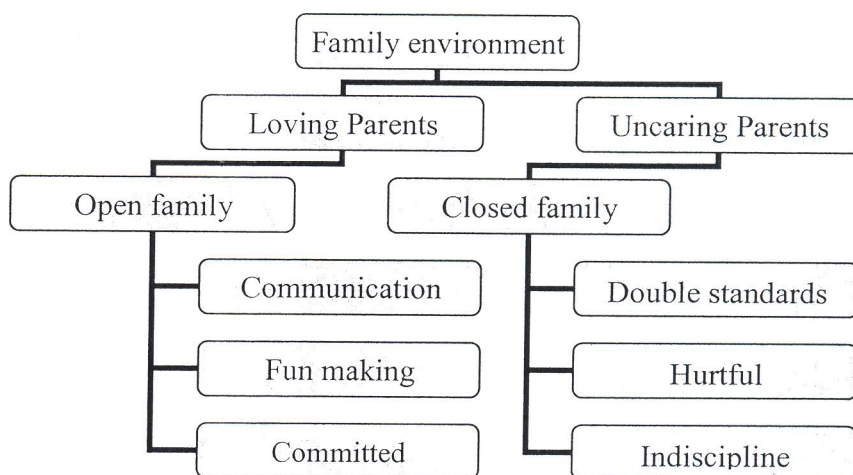


Figure 4.3: The effects of home environment

Some of the elements in a functional family were cited from the study as:

**Functional families----“some of participants’ comments”**

- Communication: “not only talking and listening but sharing and spending time together; heart to heart communication.”
- Fun making: “allow space for playing games and laughter.”
- Committed to happiness and welfare of the other members of the family; “Surrender one’s prejudices. Seek to be selfless and sacrificial.”
- Team work in the family: “Strive for family unity, saying sorry and apologize. Be patient”

**Dysfunctional families--- “some participants’ comments”**

- Lack of emotional nourishment: “I dealt with him in front of his friends and we almost became enemies...”

- Lack of love: “I was so hard on him (teen) after he dropped out of school and became a drunkard, I lectured him, told him that he had wasted his time and my resources and he was hopeless... but I later on repented.”
- Lack discipline that teens needs: “I don’t mind whatever she sees on the TV.”
- Double standard: “I am saved and their dad is not. Now here are children that are torn between the world of their father and their mom. I would tell them to go to the conference while their father would pay them for discos...”

The environment in a home or the quality of relationships usually has a deeper, more lasting influence on members than does direct teaching.

### ***How Community Context Influences the Relationship***

The home and the family is the basic institution of socialization for children. Our homes are greatly influenced by our neighboring community. The new technology and media make the world like a village. What is happening in the USA, for example, can be accessed by both parent and teens right in their homes. The study showed that the effects of the community have caused two major challenges which ultimately influenced the interactions and relationships in a Christian family. The challenges are educational challenges and relational challenges.

**Educational challenges.** All participants agreed that the educational system had significant effects on a teen’s way of life. One parent respondent said, “I will tell you the



difference between young people and old people it's a matter of perspective; how they perceive the world." Most of the teens began school at a very early age, and this has affected their relationship with their parents. One respondent told the researcher, "because of my job, I began to take this teen to school when he was two years old for babysitting. When he was in class four he started to board up to this day when he is in high school." Educational challenges lead to the relational challenges. Teens know too much in comparison with their parents who sometimes feel like aliens towards them.

**Relational challenge:** The majority of parent participants felt that media was the greatest negative influence on their teens. One respondent with tears in her eyes said, "Media is a cruel teacher. It is the most sensitive area. You can not stop them to watch even when you are there, because when you are not there they will watch. If you don't have TV your daughter will go to the theater in town and watch worse movies. So, for me to be able to keep her in the house is to provide these things. Also your child may look the odd person out, because the first thing to discuss in the morning at school is what they saw from the program last night..."

TV today gives instant news. A teenager and a parent can see the same event at the same time. Long ago, in our African culture, parents were viewed as authority figures, but today, we are facing a great crisis in authority. People are bypassing the authority figure and going directly to the source of information resulting in teens knowing so much that they ignore the counsel of their parents. Because of many "teachers" today, parents tend to feel helpless towards their teens. Teens on the other hand, might become proud and tend to feel that their parents have contributed very little.

## Conclusion

The findings revealed that understanding of the importance of relationships in the home greatly enhanced how parents lived their God-given purposes on earth without regrets. Relationship work must be deliberate and intentional in order to have a lasting effect and to positively affect the generations to come. The environment in a home or the quality of relationships usually has a deeper, more lasting influence on members than does direct teachings.

Throughout this chapter, the researcher was attempting to come to grips with the gap between what teens need and what the parent can give to them. God seemingly gave parents a huge mandate. This mandate can be compared with the command Jesus gave his disciples to feed five thousand people with only five loaves and two fish (John 6). The need was great just as it appears from parents' point of view.

For effective parenting, just as the disciple did obey Jesus, parents are not to complain of lack, but must bring what they have to Jesus. Their duties are to present their teens to Jesus and the other responsibilities of changing them belong to Him.

All parents talked about depending on God and trusting on His faithfulness to finish the parenting task effectively. Trusting on God was manifested through their priestly duties towards their families. One of them actually advised, "I always put my children in prayer; I pray for them by their names and by their needs..." This mandate is not the parents' duty only, but it is a partnership with the God who created teens in his own image. Parents are just stewards of the mysteries of God, of which teenagers are one. What is required from the parents in parenting is faithfulness and availability but not their ability.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The literature review indicated that during the teens' transitional years, the relationship between teens and their parents is drastically affected. As the teens personality goes through a series of development stages from complete dependency to mature independency, many parents are left with a sense of failure, in that, their inputs (prayers, concern, training and love) doesn't match their expectations from the teens (See page 1). This study revealed otherwise. Parents felt successful in this parenting.

This study was an attempt to identify and discover factors that contributed to adolescent spiritual growth in Christian homes and parents' role in their spiritual training. The study also sought to describe the perceptions that both teens and parents had towards the parental contribution to the spiritual formation of the teens. Finally the study attempted to recommend to parents some practical ways that would help them be more fruitful in their parenting endeavors.

The research was guided by the following central question: (1) what are the teens' and parents' perception of critical influence and contribution of parents on the spiritual development of their teens in Deliverance Church? The sub-questions were

- a) What factors contributed to teens' spiritual growth in Christian homes?
- b) How have the parents in Deliverance Church contributed toward the spiritual nurture of their teens?

c) How do parents in Deliverance Church Ngong describe their relationship with teens while at home?

d) How do teens in Deliverance Church Ngong describe their relationship with their parents while at home?

### **Summary of the Findings**

The research findings revealed that all stakeholders (parents and teens) felt that parents were helpful and supportive to teens' spirituality. Parent's perception of godly socialization (passing of godly values to teens by the parents) was dependent on two factors: 1. how knowledgeable (informed) they were about the biblical educational mandate toward their teens and 2. how convinced they were about this mandate. The two factors determined how they acted (responded) and described the quality of their relationship.

Parents who were well informed of their divine mandate and were fully convinced of the mandate described the quality of relationship as delightful and rewarding. On the other hand, parents who were not informed of their parental mandate and not convicted of the same, described the quality of relationship as difficult and frustrating. Parents' satisfaction with their spiritual support towards the teens was primarily based on how the parents had given themselves toward finishing their parental task rather than the outcome of these teens. One parent said, "my first born son doesn't go to church, but we are still good friends. The influence of God is still in him, he keeps on telling me 'mom, pray for me because I am going to a medical test...' He still knows that the priority is God...I am still praying for him, we are good friends." The findings revealed that some of the

unconditional love parents demonstrated to their teens were quality time, care, acceptance, respect, freedom and discipline.

The teens' perception of the parental support towards their spirituality was based on the extent their parents had influenced their entire (ALL) developmental domains (physical, social, mental, emotional, moral and spiritual) beginning from childhood. This total influence built self identity in teens and caused a willingness to obey parental authority. Parents who only emphasized spiritual disciplines (prayers, Bible reading and salvation) as the measure of spiritual development were perceived by teens as "nagging". On the other hand parents who considered holistic development as a yard stick of socialization were considered as having good relationship with their teens. The success of godly socialization was greatly affected by the state of home environment and the surrounding community. This success depended on the extent to which both parents practiced unconditional love.

### **Recommendations**

#### Prepare for change of your teen(s)

The findings revealed that many parents were not prepared for transition of their teens. They were caught off guard. One parent described her teen's changed character that disturbed her for a long time. She said, "when young, my children grew deeply rooted in the ways of the Lord, but when they grew to teenage years, they rebelled against me, and said that mom's way was boring...they said 'let us live our own way....'" Another parent revealed her lack of training by saying, "before a child get to 12 years, she is normal. You can send her for errands, but after 13 year she changes abruptly. This took

me by surprise. I had a headache because I could not comprehend what had happened to her.” The arrival of the teenage years has taken many parents by surprise. When the child is still a pre-teen, parents need to start the process of honest dialogue. The research revealed that children are often very open between the ages of nine and twelve. Parents ought to enjoy their time to interact, planning ahead and looking together to the changes along the way.

One parent who seemed to understand the sequences through which the process of teens changes took place said, “My first child who is 20 years old now wants the company of the mother, and she tells me, ‘mom, let me accompany you to the market...’ But the 13 year old child always tries to detach herself from me.” If the sequence of teen development is made aware to parents, then they would minister effectively. The sequence of teens’ development was found as; children draw closer to their parents when young, then they are in need of freedom when in teenage years, and returning to the company of parents when they are beyond the teenage years.

#### Learn to Let Go

One definite thing that each parent needs to do in order to adjust to this new stage in life is to learn to “let go.” The findings revealed that one of the difficult steps that parents have to take is to learn to “let go” of their children thus enabling them to handle life’s problems. A parent’s instinct is to rush in and protect the teen from ending in failure. However, parents ought to give their teen space and opportunities to exercise responsibility. One parent narrated how her two teens had learned from their respective experiences,

“My teens told me that they wanted to experience life as we did... I knew that God watched over them and the world is cruel. I would plead with them not to go

but their father is open towards them, when they return the response was, oh! We went to that carnivore and it's devastating, we would not go there again. As their mom then I was so glad that they had seen the negative side of it. This tells me that the seed that I had planted in their hearts when they were still young is still rooted..."

In Luke 15, the father of the prodigal son was willing to part with his son. God our father also does likewise. He is able to force our will but refuses to do it. He does not block the path of our travel. Instead he gives a freedom of choice. Parents of teenagers can learn some practical ways to respond when teens begin to resist parental authority and the traditional habits. If they have done their part, in up bringing their children, they should not be afraid to exercise freedom. The reason parents are afraid to exercise their freedom is fear instead of love. Parents should trust God for the salvation of their teens, and the reverence of living god-fearing lives.

White (1979, 218) in his book "Parents in Pain" encourages parents who might be feeling a sense of hopelessness as they see their teens move away from home, "All is not lost when our children make foolish choices. It will be painful for us to watch them eat pig's food, but there is hope that when that happens they will learn from experience what they never could have learned from precept."

Parents should not assume too much responsibility for what their children become. God asks nothing beyond their willingness to cooperate with him in his work in people's lives. Parents are in partnership with God.

### Involvement of Both Parents

If you are part of a two-parent family, be sure that both of you stay in touch with the teens. One parent said she felt less responsible for being the primary communicator

and discipliner of teens. She noticed that when teens were found going astray, she would tell them, "...when your father comes home I will report you." That's a very critical point in the family's relationship. Whenever either a parent or a child begins to withdraw from the relationship, problems tend to intensify.

Two parents working together can support and encourage each other, especially at those times when the parent-child relationship is strained. Both parents strive to provide emotional support and to exercise a suitable degree of control. As already noted in the study, adolescents need first the deep friendship with their parents plus their support and availability. Only then can parents exercise control over their adolescent children.

Double standards (where parents act contrary to each other) amongst parents was an issue that strained the family relationship. This was witnessed in different ways. For example, in one family a parent might say one thing today and a different thing the following day. Sometimes one parent said one thing and acted on it differently. Another form of double standard was seen when the mother of the teen said one thing and the father said a contrasting statement deliberately to test each other. One mother told the researcher, "I would tell the teens not to go out in the evenings; while their dad would tell them that it is all right to be out of the house in the evenings. Furthermore he would give them pocket money... this act was so hurting." Double standards actually separate the teen(s) between the parents and they are confused.

### **Utility of Results of the Study**

An assumption is that the descriptive information on family interaction provided by this study, if disseminated, will have an influence on family functioning. This study



will have much significance to the parents of the teens. An understanding of the relationship between parents and teens helped to reveal the underlying values that guided families. The findings of this study will help parents evaluate their parenting strategies to fulfill their God given mandate. Teenagers are a great asset to the family, to the church of Jesus Christ and to the state at large. Therefore knowledge of the teens' spiritual formation contributes much to determining the future in the homes, church and the state. The study will be a helpful tool to the church leaders, pastors and Christian educators to evaluate, draw and plan effectively its policies, ministries of the church and its curriculum for the teens. The study also can contribute to a developing body of locally generated material on the subject of teenage spiritual formation.

### **Areas for Further Research**

The research revealed that both parents and teens perceived that parents were very supportive in the teens' spiritual formation. In the light of these findings, the following are suggestions for further research.

1. A study could be conducted on the parents' and teens' perception of parental contribution to teens' spirituality in a different Deliverance Church or other denominations (Churches).
2. An exploration into the parents' and their teens' perception on the parental influence to the spiritual development of the youth of participants that are not Christians.

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## APPENDICES

### General Guideline for Interview

The interview questions will derive from the research questions from chapter one. The respondents will be ensured of confidentiality of any information they give to the interviewer. Sweiss (1994, 74) said that there is no ‘magic’ question in qualitative study. To him any question is a good question if it directs the respondents to the study and makes it easy for him to provide the data.

During the interview, the researcher will consider to ask six basic questions to the respondents which are adopted from Wallen (2000, 512).

1. **Background or demographic questions.** They are routine questions that include education, previous occupation, age and income.
2. **Knowledge question.** These are factual information as opposed to opinions and beliefs.
3. **Experience and behavior questions.** What respondents are currently doing or have done in the past. They elicit description of experiences, behaviors or activities that could have been observed, but were not.
4. **Opinion or value questions.** What respondents think about issues. This shows the respondents’ goals, beliefs, attitudes and values.
5. **Feeling questions.** The questions help us to find out how respondents feel about things. They are directed towards the emotional responses of people to their experiences
6. **Sensory question.** What respondents have seen, heard, smelled and touched.

## Parent Interview Guide

**Major question:** please explain to me what you feel are your critical influences and contributions to the spiritual development of your teen? That is,-what do you think you have you done or have not done that you feel/think has affected their spiritual growth? - What do you encourage them to do?

1. Please tell me something about yourself? (back ground)
2. (Facts) to your assessment: what factors contribute to the teen's spiritual growth in a Christian home?
3. What would you feel and do if your teen would tell you that he/she is not going to the church again?
4. Please explain to me how you feel you have spent 1) your time with the teen (*please give me an account for a recent day this week*) (2) Your money with your teen (from young age till now)?
5. How would you describe the quality of your relationship with the teen while at home?
6. How do you show your teen(s) that you LOVE them?
7. How do you define your teen's boundaries (by non negotiable rules and goals for your children); how do your teens put their feelings across (communication)? Do the teens in your family know what the rules are? How were they made? How are they communicated?
8. Since conflicts over values/interests are normal for a healthy family, how do you handle them in your home in a way which is constructive for the whole family?

9. In your response towards the teens, to what extent are you sensitive to your own emotions and struggles as an adolescent?
10. Please finish the sentence: my goal ( biblical belief) of the family /teens is \_\_\_\_\_
11. If you are called to give advice to your fellow parents of teens , what would you tell them?

## Teens Interview Questionnaire Guide

**Main Question.** Please explain what in your view or perception /feeling are the influences or contributions your parents have made in your spiritual growth.

- a) Please tell me something concerning yourself (your background).
- b) What factors do you think makes your fellow teens grow spiritually in Christian home? (What activities are you encouraged to do while at home? what goals do they have for you, what limits and boundaries have they kept for you?)
- c) How would you describe the quality of the relationship with your parent while at home?
- d) Please explain to me how you feel your parent(s) have spent time and money on you?
- e) Why do you think most teens refuses to go church these days?
- f) Who is your parent to you (how would you describe your parent to your life?).  
Finish this sentence: my parents to me are \_\_\_\_\_
- g) What were the most important lessons and values you learned from your parent—how were they taught?
- i) How do your parents solve a conflict with you?
- j) If you were called to advise the parents of teens concerning their relationship with their teens, what would tell them to do or not to do?

## VITA

### Personal data

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Postal Address: P.O.Box 246, Ngong Hills.  
Gender: Male  
Marital Status: Married  
Nationality: Kenyan

### Educational Background

NEGST	Masters of Arts (C.E.)	2003-2005
Christian Fellowship School of ministry:	Christian Workers Diploma	2002-2003
Egerton University	Bachelors of Arts (Economics)	1993-1998
Nanyuki boys High School	K C S E	1988-1991
Chereta Primary School	K C P E	1976-1987

### Professional Experience

Pastor	Ngong Deliverance Church	2003-To date
Pastor	Nyahururu Deliverance Church	2001-2003
Teacher	Marmanet Sec School	2000-2001
Teacher	Gatudia Sec. School	1999-2000
Pastor	Muhotetu Deliverance Church	1997-2001
Missionary	Eastern Province (Makueni)	1996-1997
Follow-up Pastor	Egerton University (Njoro)	1994-1996
School Captain	Chereta School	1982-1987