Practical Proposals for raising the profile of Children's Ministry
in the Ethiopian Full Gospel Believer's Church

By

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Abbreviations

1. EFGBC – Ethiopian Full Gospel Believers Church
2. EFGTC –   Ethiopian Full Gospel Theological College
3. NZEFGBC – Northern Zone Ethiopian Full Gospel Believers Church
4. SZEFGBC - Southern Zone Ethiopian Full Gospel Believers Church
5. EZEFGBC - Eastern Zone Ethiopian Full Gospel Believers Church
6. WZEFGBC – Western Zone Ethiopian Full Gospel Believers Church
7. CZEFGBC - Central Zone Ethiopian Full Gospel Believers Church
8. ENEC - Ethiopian National Evangelical Congress

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Chapter One
Introduction

1.1. Background

The Bible tells us that children are gifts of God created in His image (Ps 127:3). In the Old Testament we see how God was concerned about children. He commanded His people to nurture, discipline and teach their children (Gen 18:19, Deut 6:6-7, Pr 22:6) in order to have a godly generation and produce future leaders. Similarly in the New Testament, though not the same as the OT on how to deal with children, parents are commanded to instruct and train their children (Eph 6:4b, Col 3:21,1Tim 5:10) in the way of the Lord.

Children are an integral part of our society, and they have needs and feelings just as do young people and older men and women, even though there may be differences due to their age and knowledge and experience of life. Children 0 -14 are most of the time divided into three groups (3- 6, 7-10, 11 -14), according to the standard educational division in Ethiopia. Children under three years old are considered, by many writers, to be under their mother's care. Bergen (1996:72), Baldwin (1988:53), Payne (1982:11) and Sproul (1995:378) have suggested that weaning took more than two years in the east which is much longer than is normal in modern western society.

Wyper (1988:1033) has argue that though the length of time for nursing a child varied considerably over the ages, the process was lengthy in ancient time. For instance, 2 Macc. 7:27 refers to a period of three years. Similarly, in Ethiopia for the first two and three years children are entrusted to the mother till weaned at the age of three.

According to Kilbourn's statistics there are more than 2.5 billion children in the world and most of them are neglected and mistreated. As a result, many are

suffering from addictions and diseases and from the effects of war. Kilbourn continues by saying that some missiologists claim that 85 percent of people who give their life to Christ do so between the age of 4 and 14, but that, of all the money given to missions only 15 percent is spent on children (Kilbourn 1996:4).

In Ethiopia about 43.7 percent of the total population is under 15 years of age but fewer than 3 percent of them are converted believers. Even the remaining few who are converted believers are not being properly taught, or given the pastoral care that they need for healthy spiritual growth (Yirga 2006:29).

I will therefore try to discover the status and condition of children in the Ethiopian Full Gospel Believers' church.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a republic, officially the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia situated in northeastern Africa. It is bordered on the northeast by Eritrea and Djibouti, on the east and southeast by Somalia, on the southwest by Kenya, and on the west and northwest by Sudan. A high plateau capped with rugged mountains covers much of Ethiopia; lowland deserts surround the plateau region. Agriculture, the country's chief economic activity, is carried out in the fertile plateau area. Ethiopia has a diverse population, with more than 70 distinct ethnic and linguistic groups (Keller 2008).

The Ethiopian Full Gospel Believer's Church is an indigenous Pentecostal church, in Ethiopia, started by high school and Addis Ababa University students' revival which was spread all over the nation, starting from 1965. Though the church has gone through periods of severe persecution, it has seen significant growth both in the number of members and the number of congregations all over the nation (Englesviken 1975:18, 33).[1] According to a

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[1] Tormond Engelsviken was a missionary in ~~to~~ Ethiopia for the Norwegian Lutheran Mission from 1971 to 1973. He was a lecturer in Systematic theology at the Mekane Yesus Seminary in Addis Ababa. At the request of Pentecostal Christians who were suffering heavy persecution in September, 1972, Tormod Engelsviken prepared a documentary report of the Full Gospel Church and its persecution. The report was 150 pages long and the source

report presented in August 2007 in the meeting of the general assembly of the church, at present the Church has 950 self supporting local churches. The "Ethiopian Full Gospel Believer's Church", hereafter will be mentioned as the "EFGBC".

1.2. Significance of the Problem

Many children in Ethiopia have wandered away from the Church in part because of the lack of concern and care given to them. Children who have been brought up in ~~of~~ the believing community are not all born again. Even those who are converted believers are not being nurtured in a way that is likely to lead them to mature spiritually.

God wants everyone to be saved, for everyone has sinned (Jn 3:16; Rom 3:23). Although the Bible does not specify the age of accountability for children, it remains true that children need to be saved and nurtured spiritually. However, today's church is giving no attention to them, especially in the EFGBC, because most of the leaders of the church are more focused on adults' ministry, spiritual activities and evangelism within their church and outside.

The church needs to get back to the scriptural principles of nurturing children in the spiritual truths of the Gospel, so that children may be saved and nurtured in their spiritual and social life. The result of this will mean that the church will have godly believers and leaders in the coming generation. Today's world is led by yesterday's children and tomorrow's world will be led by today's children. The way we build our children today affects the way we build our world tomorrow (Sport Friends, 2007:40).

Based on the preliminary enquiry and my personal observation as one who is a leader within the EFGBC, it is possible to say that children are neglected spiritually and socially. It is for this reason that I have chosen to concentrate

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documents are deposited in the Norwegian Library of Oslo. This copy is also available in the library of the Mekane Yesus Seminary and in the Ethiopian Full Gospel Theological College Library.

on children's ministry in the EFGBC. As a result of my research I will seek to show that children's needs, spiritual and social, are being neglected by the EFGBC and I will then go on to suggest steps that the EFGBC can take to meet those needs.

1.3. Research Question

"What practical steps should we take to raise and improve the profile of the state of children's ministry in the EFGBC?"

Sub Questions

"What are the real problems of Children's ministry in the EFGBC?"

"What solutions can be suggested to solve the problems of the children's ministry in the EFGBC?

1.4. Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1.4.1. To understand and evaluate the weaknesses and strengths of children's ministry in the EFGBC.

1.4.2. To understand and develop biblically based method.

1.4.3. To present suggested strategies or solutions for pastors and parents to improve the church's ministry to children.

1.5. Limitations/Delimitations

The study will be limited to children's ministry in the EFGBC and the focus will be upon the spiritual need of children as seen in the Bible and in the EFGBC. In particular, the study will focus on the subjects of evangelism, teaching, nurturing, and care of children in the Church.

Therefore, this study will not include other Evangelical and similar churches, nor will I consider the physical, psychological or other activities in the life of children.

1.6. Research Methodology

This research focuses on practical ministerial issues. Therefore the methods that will be implemented to analyze this research are a study to discover the main problems through data collection, observation and reading recent information related to children's life.

The description will be based on written interviews with carefully selected leaders, ministers and mentors of EFGBC. The selected interviewees are 90 people, from five zones of the country, North, South, East, West and Central EFGBC local Churches. The number of interviewees differs from zone to zone based on the number of the local churches. For instance, more than 60 percent of the local churches in EFGBC are situated in the Western Zone of the nation. Then I will try to discuss the data gathered using relevant graphs and try to compare and contrast the results with the biblical scenario. Finally, the process will naturally lead to proposed solutions.

The break down of the chapters will be:

Chapter 1 focuses on the background that covers introduction; the significance of the problem; definition of terms; research questions; objectives; limitations and delimitations; and research methodology. I shall use journal articles and recent books written on children related issues.

In chapter 2, I will look at the biblical ideal of children in relation to their spiritual and social life. This will be done by exploring the Old Testament and New Testament books, giving special attention to children in their relationship with God, family and the covenant community. I shall mainly use some parts of Deuteronomy, Proverbs, Colossians and Ephesians because these books teach on children related matters but other books will also be considered as supplementary references. I shall also use major technical commentaries such as New International Greek NT Commentary on Colossians and The New American Commentaries, as well as books written on children's spiritual and social life. In addition the Theological Dictionary of the NT, the New

International Dictionary of the NT and the Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible will be used for word study.

In Chapter 3, Data gathered, from the 90 male and female respondents, will be analyzed, discussed, and interpreted. Graphs will also be used in the discussion. Finally, the process naturally will lead to the suggested solutions.

In Chapter 4, I will deal with the actual current situation of children in the EFGBC, based on the data collected.

Chapter 5 contains suggestions and recommendations to the EFGBC leaders, parents and the whole body of believers in the church, so that we may raise up godly leaders and believers in the coming generation. I will use the litreture on children's spiritual and social life, ministry and related issues, such as Critical Problems in Children and Youth, Spiritual Growth for Children, How to Disciple Your Child, How to Rear Children and Child Education in the Church.

Chapter 6 will include a review of the logical argument and the conclusions reached through the research.

1.7. Definition of Terms

1.7.1. Child

The term "child" may be understood literally as a child of a particular society or figuratively as teacher-pupil relationship or member of a particular group (Braumann 1986 281). There are various Greek, Hebrew terms and other concepts used for the word child.

a. According to Braumann (1986:281), Hebrew terms used for the word "child" are:
  - *yônēq* – baby, suckling (Isa 11:8)
  - *'ôlēl* – little child (1Sam 15:3)
  - *ṭap̄* – little child (Ezek 9:6)a person from birth to age twenty but usually indicates some   one younger
  - *Na'ar* – boy, child (Prov. 22:6, 23:13)

In Jewish culture, young children were not expected to keep the Mosaic Law. They are only expected to take on this responsibility when they reach the age of twelve, when they become "Sons of the Covenant" (Richards 1983:158).

b. According to Brown (1986:283-286) different Greek terms used for the word "child" are:
- *bréphos* - denotes the unborn child, baby, infant (Lk 1:41, 2:12)
- *paidion* - designates baby or little child, very young child, infant, a child up to age seven.
- *nēpios* - infant, babes, it is also used for being simple, that is dull and foolish (Prov 1:32)
- *pais* - a child between 7 and 14 years old and also suggests the child's lowly position in society as servant or slave. Verbruggue (2000:951) has also contended that *"pais"* usually mean son, though it can also denotes a daughter in relation to decent. He further adds that it normally denote a child between seven and fourteen years of age as distinct from the little child and the youth. It also occurs in Luke 2:43 of the twelve year-old Jesus.
- *téknon* - a child as viewed in relation to his parents or family as a picture of our relationship with God (Mt 7:11; Lk 11:13). This word has also theological significance, when the Bible refers to believers as the children of God.

c. Various concepts on the word "child"
- Meseretekiristos' teaching material (2007:10) states that "children are from the age of three up to the age of 15.
- Tenny states that being age 14 and above is the age of adolescence, we can call someone a child up to the age of fourteen (Tenny 1976:794).
- Circuit Teaching for Children, teacher training II, material from South Africa suggests that children's age groups are 3-6, 7-9, and 10-13 (Ronaldson 1999: I).
- Different schools divide children according to their similar interest and needs, usually based on their age groups, 0-5, 6-11, and 12-15 (Shaw 1995:51).

- The Ethiopian Ministry of Education constitution divides children into three groups: – 3-6 - kindergarten, 7-10 – early elementary, and 11-14 – late elementary and junior secondary.

In different ways all of the above definitions are helpful in our understanding of what we mean by the term "child", but in this research I will use the Ethiopian Ministry of Education's way of children's age groupings. That is, 3-6, 7-10 and 11-14.

1.7.2. Mentor

Mentor is defined as follows:

- "An experienced person who advises and helps somebody with less experience over a period of time" (Wehmeier 2001:737).
- "A wise, loyal adviser, a teacher or coach" (Guralnik 1979:459).
- "A person who habitually advises and helps another person who knows less than him" (Procter 1981:679).

As to this research, mentor is the one who teaches, trains and nurtures children in their spiritual life, especially in the Sunday school.

Chapter Two
Children in the Bible

The Bible clearly teaches that, children are to be regarded as divine gifts (Ps 127:3), for God is the one who created the child in the womb of his/her mother (Ps 139:13-16) and He did so after His own image and likeness. This chapter will deal with the biblical ideal in so far as it concerns children, and special focus will be given to the teachings on children's spiritual and social life, in all the Old and New Testaments.

2.1. Spiritual Life

The Bible teaches us very important issues in relation to children's spiritual life and activity. The Israelites were commanded to keep the Law and regulations when they arrived in the Promised Land, and not to forget to pass them to their children and grand children (Deut 4:9-10, 6:7, 20-21; 11:18; 30:2; 31:9). Children were also accepted, in the NT, as equal members of the believing community (Eph 5:21- 6:9, Col 3:18-4:1). In fact to be member in the believing community, one has to believe and accept Christ as his/her personal savior; the same is with children, though the age of accountability is not known.

Parents are the ones who have the primary responsible for nurturing the spiritual life of children. As we see in the Old Testament the Passover was celebrated as a family thanks giving meal (Ex 12:3, 4, 46). The same is true in New Testament times, in that the communion meals in the Jerusalem church took place by households (Acts 2:46). From the above biblical ideas we can understand that children can be members of God's community and are capable of glorifying God (Ps 148:12, 14, 8:2, Mt 21:16). Furthermore, God wants children to obey His commandments and honor Him (Deut 4:10, 30:2, Luke 2:41, 45) and honor their parents (Ex 20:12; Eph 6:1-2).

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Issues related to spiritual life of children are evangelism and spiritual nurture which includes teaching and caring, discipline and equipping for ministry.

2.1.1. Evangelism

In the Old Testament, children were considered to be part of God's community through the covenant given to Abraham, that is, circumcision (Gen 17:9-14). We see from the relationship between Abraham and his children; that children were included in the covenant which God made with Abraham. The concept of covenant included the fundamental relationship of the child to the community (Clark 1986:401).

God has also commanded the Israelites to deliver the commandments and the account of His amazing delivery of their ancestors from Egypt to future generations of children (Deut 6:20-25). God's promises to Abraham and to his descendents could only be fulfilled if the children of Abraham were enabled to partake in the covenant. Furthermore, the people were not only to concern themselves with their attitudes towards the Lord, but also with impressing these same attitudes on their children (Deut 6:7).

When we come to the New Testament, the book of Acts contains examples of ethnic families being converted to Christianity (Acts 10:24, 44-48; 16:15, 31-32). At the same time the New Testament makes it clear that the only way to become a member of God's people and inherit the promised heaven is by grace through faith in Jesus (Gal 3:22, Eph 2:4, 8-9). Jesus is the only one who died, paid the penalty and was raised to save mankind (1 Cor 15:3). Paul the apostle said to Timothy: *"from infancy you have known the holy scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus"* (2 Tim 3:15). Timothy learned the Gospel from his grandmother from his childhood (2 Tim 1:5).

Jesus said: "*Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation …."* (Mark 16:15). Even Paul, in his epistle to Romans, said "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Rom 3:23). The word "all" in both verses shows that every member of the human race in every generation is

included, regardless of age, sex, education or social status. We therefore conclude that all mankind has sinned but also that the love of God is available to all (John 3:16).

In the above discussion, though the word "all" signifies all mankind including children, the age of accountability in children should be taken into consideration. Children mature at different ages depending on where they are born, the culture in which they are brought up, their differing natural abilities and their access to teaching materials. Meseretekiristos (2007:10) believes that a child of four, who lives in a big city, may understand what is right and wrong better than a child with of eight, who lives in the countryside. This is ~~so~~ because of lack of access to education, mass media, books and level of understanding of things their parents have.

Some missiologists say that 85 percent of people who give their life to Christ do so between the age of 4 and 14, considering 4 as the age of accountability (Kilbourn 1996:4).

The problem of identifying the age of accountability is what led Augustine to introduce the concept of baptismal regeneration, in the belief that the sacrament of baptism can convey to the infant all the benefits of grace. In contrast those who resist infant baptism claim that faith is essential. Their ground for this is that a personal act of faith and repentance would seem necessary as in adult conversion, a conscious turning from sin and a turning toward God (Act 9:35, 11:34-35, 26:20) (Clark 1986:404).

The age of accountability is therefore the age at which a personal declaration of faith is possible. It is this recognition that a child is capable of sinning, and is also capable of receiving salvation which leads us to our understanding of what we mean by the age of accountability. Nowhere in Scripture are we told at what age a child is deemed to be accountable – we are left to come to our own conclusion. Furthermore, God's sovereign Spirit is not limited by fixed days and years when He chooses to do His work of regeneration. It is also difficult to state a given age as a proper one for a declaration of faith.

Therefore as the Bible does not spell out the exact age of accountability, that evangelism of the child should be as early as possible for two reasons: firstly, saving the child from damnation saves a life (Jn 3:16); and secondly, early conversion often leads to recommitment in late childhood.

2.1.2. Spiritual Nurture

Nurture means to care for, feed anything that nourishes, protects and helps somebody to develop or grow and be successful (Wehemeir 2001:802). Based on the definition above, we may say nurture is to teach and give care to someone in order to help him grow and be successful in his life.

The family unit of the Old Testament had the purposes of reproduction, instruction, caring, maintaining tradition, conveying wisdom and teaching religion (Butler 1991:476). The same is true in the New Testament. Parents are responsible for nurturing their children (2 Tim 1:5).

Issues related to spiritual nurture in our time are teaching, caring, disciplining, and equipping for ministry.

2.1.2.1. Teaching and caring

Moses commanded the Israelites to keep God's Law without any deviation either to the right or to the left and then to teach it to their offspring (Deut 6:7). Moses also exhorted them not to forget what the Lord had done for them (6:10-12), and commanded them to pass this knowledge to their children (6:20-25). Warren says that the Israelites in Deuteronomy (Deut 6:7) were not to focus only on their own dedication to Lord but also on their children as well (Warren 2004). Thompson (1974:123) says that the demand of love towards God implies both to obey His commandments and to impart them to the children of the following generations. This is to maintain an attitude of love and obedience among the people of God from age to age. Similarly, Cole (1973:156) and Merrill (1994:167) say that Moses admonished parents to discuss God's Word in the home, among the children, and to allow the Word to guide their minds and hands as they worked throughout the day because

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childhood, as well as maturity, belongs to God and the commandments must be impressed on each succeeding generation.

I agree with what Warren, Thompson, Cole and Merrill say, for the Bible gives instruction for parents and teachers about teaching their children (Deut 32:46; Pr 22:6). God wants parents to take care of their children and teach them the word of God (Gen 18:19), so that they will be a godly generation who will honor God. Moreover, parents are commanded to bring their children up in the training and instruction of the Lord and teach them to obey, so that when they grow up they will obey God as they obeyed their parents (Gen 18:18; Eph 6:4). In fact Jewish parents, normally the mother begins instructing children in the scriptures from their fifth year (Lea and Griffin 1992:233).

The theme of the book of Proverbs "the fear of the Lord" (1:7, 9:10), gives good instruction to mankind especially to parents and children. The book of Proverbs mentions the phrase "my son" at the beginning of each section (1:8-9:18). Then it continues to exhort and encourage saying: listen to your father's instruction (1:8,8:33), accept my words and store them in your heart (2:1,7:1), do not forget my teaching (3:1), do not forsake my teaching (4:1, 6:20), pay attention to my wisdom (5:1), do what I have said to you (6:1). All these instructions show that parents are responsible for teaching and training their children, and children are to be obedient to the instructions of their parents and honor them (Eph 6:1-3, Col 3:20).

In fact, there are two views in relation to training a child in the context of Proverbs 22:6 which says: *"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it".* Garrett (1993:177-88) argues that verse 6 deals with training a child in accordance with his nature, meaning that the teacher must take into account the interest of the child and customize the method of training accordingly. Then he will come back to the right way in later years or will persevere in the right way. So the whole could be translated *"train a child in a manner befitting a child and even as he grows old he will not turn from it".* Ross (1994:987) says in recent years it has become popular to interpret this verse to mean that the training should be according to the child's

way, meaning that the wise parent will discern the natural bent of the individual child and train him/her accordingly. This may be a practical and useful idea but it is not likely that this is what the author of Proverbs had in mind. So the whole could be translated as *"start a boy on the right road, that is, in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it"*.

Similarly, Alden (1983:160-61) indicates that verse 6 is a favorite of people today who are concerned about proper parenting, yet the ancient Greek translation does not include this verse. He adds that some scholars say the usual idiom in this verse, translated *"the way he should go"* really says in Hebrew *"on the mouth of his way"* and translated it as *"if you encourage a child to peruse the things he is most interested in, then he will really excel in them later in life".* I prefer the traditional view that accepts the translation *"the way he should go"* for it seems to fit in better with other verses about child rearing in Proverbs*.*

Waltke (2005:204) thinks that the etymology of the word train, *"ḥānak"* in Hebrew*,* probably means initiate, inaugurate or put into use for the first time. It indicates continual training by verbal instruction. The term *"ḥānak"* also refers to religious and moral direction not professional activity. So *"the way he should go"* is best translated as *"the way the child wants to go".*

Both views agree in saying that what a child learns stays with him when he grows up. The question is about what we shall teach him, what he wants to learn or what we think he should learn. Garrett said that the teacher must take in to account the interest of the child and customize the method of training accordingly. As Ross (1994:987) says, it is practical and useful that one should train a child using vocabulary, concepts and illustrations a child can understand. But, first of all, in the book of Proverbs there are two ways a child can go, the way of the fool and the wicked; this shows that there is a standard of life to which children should adhere. So a parent is expected to train his child in the way, he should go. Secondly, when we see the whole chapter, Proverbs does speak about spiritual matters, than professional activities. So as Alden says, the traditional view *"the way he should go"* looks right,

because it seems to fit with other verses about child rearing in the book of Proverbs, although the second view is possible.

Therefore, children should be nurtured by loving parents who encourage and create a comfortable atmosphere of learning by living exemplary lives, for parents are mostly viewed as the primary teachers of children (Deut 4:9-10; 31:1). If they obey the Law their children will follow their godly ways, for the Law is for them and their children (Deut 29:22, 29). In addition to this, Moses told Joshua to keep the Law, so that he may command his children to be careful to obey it (Deut 32:46). But at the same time, parents have to be aware of not binding children to their own interest, for it can stop their development and this is likely to rob both them and society in general (Payne 1982:12).

Moreover, the believing community is involved in teaching children about God and His principles (Ex 12:25-27, Deut 11:19-20, Joshua 4:5-7, Ps 78:5-7). When Joshua asked the Israelites to choose between serving the Lord or the gods of the Amorites, he told them that his decision was "to serve the Lord with his household" (Joshua 24:25), in which 'the household' seems to include children.

Synagogues among the Jews were used during the week as schools for the Jews because there were no schools. From the Talmud we learn that the first school for children was instituted about 100 BC and by the time of Jesus schools were fairly common (Martin 1997:85).

The New Testament does not explain about instruction on teaching children as clearly as the Old Testament, but it shows the right relationship that should be between parents and children in the nurturing process (Eph 6:1-4, Col 3:21). In fact, as the children were included in Jewish worship, when Christian worship began, the pattern of including children continued, as we see in Acts 12:12-13 where Rhoda was at the prayer meeting.

Richards (1983:38) reports that, there is a general agreement that for at least two centuries the Christian church has existed in home sized groupings, for there were no great meeting halls (Rom 16:5, 1Cor 16:19, Philemon 2). Even archeology knows of no early church buildings at all except ruins of small synagogue like structures dated from the third century.

The early church fathers also exhorted parents to nurture their children though they failed to explain it in detail.

> Clement (AD 110) says, "Let our children partake of the training that is in Christ. Let them learn how humility avails with God, what pure love can do with Him, how the fear of Him is good and great and saves those who live there in holiness and a pure mind (To the Corinthians 21:7-8).

> Josephus, the historian, has also said "Our ground is good and we work it to the utmost, but our chief ambition is for the education of our children" (Richards 1983:37, 96).

> Similarly, Policarp (AD 150) adds this: "Let us teach, first of all ourselves to walk in the commandments of the Lord. Next, teach your wives to walk in the faith given to them, in love and in purity to love their own husbands in all truth and to love all others equally in all chastity; and to train up their children in the knowledge and fear of God (to the Philippians 4:2)" (Ricahrds 1983:37)

When it speaks about the future glory of Zion, the Bible says "All your sons will be taught by the Lord and great will be your children's peace" (Isa 54:13). This shows that children are to be taught, as a result their lives will be in peace and fruitful.

In addition to giving instruction and care, parents are responsible to pray for their children regularly. As a result, God may forgive and help them to understand His word and make it alive in their lives so that they grow spiritually. Alden (1993:52) and Hartley (1988:69) said that when parents teach, train and pray for their children on a regular basis, they can keep them from being involved in doing evil deeds. Furthermore, the enemy, Satan, who wants to demoralize abuse and robe children of their love for God and their right to know the earthly model of an ideal family, will not have a chance to attack them. So parents have to pray for their children, filled with God's love,

for faithfulness, self control, and self discipline and also guide them to Christ-likeness (Black and Gregory 1993:312).

2.1.2.2. Proper Discipline

Wehmeier (2001:330) defines discipline as training or control, often using a system of punishment, aimed at producing obedience to rules or training people to obey rules and orders and punishing them if they do not. In the New Testament the Greek word for discipline is *"paideía"*, which means upbringing, training and instruction. The term *"paideía"* is found as early as the 6th century B.C. in the sense of education, which indicates the process of education and development of culture (Verbrugge 2000:947).

The biblical concept of discipline has both a positive side (instruction, knowledge and training) and a negative aspect (correction, punishment and reproof) (Lockyer 1986:302). Funderburk (1976:131) says that Hebrew and Greek words commonly rendered discipline as reproof, warning, restraint, correction or chastisement. He further adds that Old Testament usage of discipline is more negative than in the New Testament. Zodihiates (1991:1744) defines *"paideía"* as instruction of children, meaning chastening, though this is mainly by word.

Based on the above definitions discipline is to instruct, to train and correct people to produce obedience to rules. So the aim of discipline is to protect the child from the bad influence of the wicked who encourage sin and to produce a good character, of Christ-likeness, in them that honors God. A child who grows up under discipline brings peace and delight to his parents and honors God (Pr 29:15-17).

Discipline is to be modeled according to the word of God and must be used to impart wisdom (Pr 22:15), because if used improperly discipline can affect the spiritual, social, psychological, and emotional life of children negatively.

a. *Parent's Responsibility*

Parents are responsible for teaching their children to honor God (Pr 1:8-19), especially in their relationships, that is, not co-operating with wicked ones who enjoy committing sin. Even if they relate with them it should be in wisdom and in the fear of God. The book of Proverbs shows that this can be done by warning them against rejecting the truth (Pr 1:20-33) and showing them godly value systems in their relationships with others (Pr 4:18, 23-27).

They have also to guide their children in the right way by teaching the characteristics and benefits of true wisdom (Pr 1:20-4:27). Such characteristics include love and faithfulness (Pr 3:3), trust in the Lord (Pr 3:5), and honoring the Lord with their wealth (Pr 3:9). The benefits are God's blessings, such as living victorious life (Pr 2:7), having God's protection (Pr 2:8) and protection from the adulteress (Pr 2:16). He also blesses them with health (Pr 3:8), meeting their needs (Pr 3:10), long life (Pr 3:16) and safety in life will be for them (Pr 3:22-23).

In addition, parents have to show their children the two paths in life, the wicked and the righteous, and how they should make choices (Pr 4:14-19; 9:1-18). Parents should also warn them against the dangers of sexual immorality (Pr 2:20-22, 5:15-23, 6:20-7:27). Marital faithfulness and its benefits should also be taught to them (Pr 2:16-19). Parents have primary responsibility for disciplining their children. The rod of correction for children is necessary, for it imparts wisdom (Pr 22:15, 29:15). Furthermore, discipline is an expression of love for the child because the parent who loves his child disciplines him (Pr 13:24).

Parents are also commanded to rebuke and direct their children according to the will of God. If not, they will leave them to be wicked people who dishonor God as we can see in the life of Eli and his children. The Bible tells us that God rebuked Eli the priest because he failed to restrain his sinful sons (1 Sam 3:13), for he honored them more than God (1 Sam 2:29). As a result, God spoke against him and then he and his sons died (1 Sam 4:11, 18).

Keener (1993:552) says that Jewish and Greco Roman writers recorded that children were often taught through beating, which was the standard way of life in child rearing and education. Similarly, Garland (1998:246) says that children were legally regarded as their fathers' property and their status was little better than that of slaves. But Paul is among the minority of ancient writers who seems to disapprove of excessive discipline (Eph 6:4, Col 3:21). The reason why Paul was against excessive discipline was that probably in the Colossians church, a too strong fatherly reaction could have driven children away or they were embarrassed (Dunn 1996:252).

According to Vaughan (1978:219) parents should never exercise their authority unreasonably, in fault finding or by always ~~by~~ nagging their children. Firm discipline may be necessary, but it must be administered in the right spirit. Similarly, Datiri (2006:1437) tells parents, *"not to exasperate their children"* (Eph 6:4), meaning that ~~the~~ parents are not to make unreasonable demands of their children. Rather they should be tenderhearted and considerate in dealing with their children. Datiri further goes on to say that the word *"embitter"* in Colossians 3:21 can be translated as "do not over correct", "do not treat or harass" or "do not abuse to resentment" which shows that parents are to exercise discipline in the right way.

So parents have to know that though firm discipline is sometimes needed, the correction shouldn't be severe so that children might not be injured, feel bitter or discouraged. Instead parents should act in the right way, with the right motive and love, applying a corrective rather than a bitter form of punishment, because love and discipline must go together equally. Hendrickson (1996:258) suggested some ways in which parents may become guilty of error in bringing up their children. These are: by over protection, by discouragement, by failure to make allowance for the fact that the child has a right to have ideas of his own, by neglecting, by bitter words, by scolding and by inflicting severe physical punishment.

Furthermore, the Bible clearly shows us that the favoritism that took place in the house of Isaac and Rebecca resulted in hatred between their twin

children, Jacob and Esau (Gen 25-27). Isaac admired and loved his valiant hunter son, Esau, because "he did eat of his venison". But "Rebecca loved Jacob", because he was always with her at home. From this biblical story we can understand that parents have to show equal love to all their children, because favoritism in the family can end with hatred and faction among brothers, which is against the will of God (Lockyer 1970:135). Moreover, parents should care more for the loyalty of their children to Christ, than for their health, their intellectual vigor and brilliance, their material prosperity, social position and their exemption from great misfortunes (Foulkes 1989:173).

b. *Children's Responsibility*

Children are commanded to honor and listen to the godly instruction of their parents (Pr 1:8; 2:1; 4:1; 5:1; 6:1, 20) and not to forget it, rather to keep it in their hearts (Pr 3:1; 7:1). They are also commanded not to despise the Lord's discipline, rather to accept it as a sign of love and as being for their benefit (Pr 3:11-12). In addition to this, they have to accept the warnings of their parents, such as warning against folly, adultery and the wicked path (Pr 5:1-23, 6:1-35, 7:1-27). Similarly, both Jewish and Greco-Roman writers state that children need to honor their parents and, at least until they grow up, need to obey them as well (Keener 1993:552).

The one obligation Paul places on children is obedience to their parents (Col 3:20, Eph 6:1-3). The word *"obey"* in Colossians 3:20, in Greek *"hupakoúete"*, implies a readiness to hear and carry out orders (Vaughan 1978:218). Wood (1978:80) says that obedience on the part of children consists of listening to the advice given by parents. So the child is to listen to and carry out the instructions of his parents. In Ephesians 6:1-3, two things are said about the obedience children owe their parents. First, it is to be *"in everything"* that is, completely and second, the obedience of children to their parents *"pleases the Lord"*.

Knowing that discipline is an expression of the love of God as well as that of their parents and is done for their benefit, children need to learn to accept the rebuke or discipline of God and of their parents (Pr 3:11-12, 13:24; Heb 12:6).

In general, the obligation of children toward their parents and God is to honor and obey. As a result, they will be blessed (Deut 5:16; Eph 6:3). The Bible clearly states that a wise son is the one who obeys his parent's instruction (Pr 13:1). Penalties for children who dishonor God with their wickedness and who despise their parents are clearly mentioned in the Bible (Deut 27:16, Pr 30:17 Ezekiel 20:18-21).

c. *The Church's Responsibility*

Parents are not the only ones who instruct and discipline their children. In the Old Testament, when the priests were teaching the believing adult community, children were included. After Moses had received the law, he gave it to the priests and commanded them to read the law at the end of every seven years, during the feast of tabernacles by assembling the people, men, women and children. At this time, the children who did not know the law were required to hear it and learn to fear the Lord (Deut 31:9-13). Moreover, God's promise that the people of Israel would prosper would only be fulfilled if the people and their children return to the Lord and obey Him (Deut 30:2).

Even in the New Testament Christian children are addressed as responsible members with in the congregation (Col 3:20). In the apostolic era, Christian churches met in the homes of the members (Rom 16:5, 1Cor 16:19). Children would almost certainly be part of these households and when all the members met to pray, to study the Bible and to worship the Lord, children would participate and benefit (Carson and Motyer 1994:1274). In fact in the ancient world children follow their parents' religion and similarly happens in Ethiopia.

2.1.2.3. *Equipping for Ministry*

Children were also dedicated to the service of God as we see in the life of Samuel (1 Sam 1:11, 24) and others, because children who are correctly guided are able to participate in the service of the Lord (1 Sam 2:11, 3:1;

Judge 13:2-5; Luke 1:13-17, 57-80). During His earthly ministry, Jesus said that God has ordained praise from the lips of children and infants (Mt 21:16). God calls his people to serve Him even in early childhood. The child Samuel had worshiped the Lord (1 Sam 1:28) and ministered to the Lord before Eli the priest (1Sam 2:11; 3:1). Samuel was set apart for lifelong service before the Lord (1Sam 1:27-28), then grew up as a child prophet (1 Sam 2:26; 3:19) and it was he who conveyed God's revelation to Eli (1 Sam 3:15-18).

When the Moabites and Ammonites came to make a war on Judah, King Jehoshaphat prayed to God for victory over his enemies. The whole of Jerusalem came before the Lord in prayer - men, their wives, their children and their little ones (2 Ch 20:13). This shows us that children were involving in prayer ministry with the covenant people.

A young Jewish girl who seems to be have been well taught about God was taken captive to Syria and became a servant to Naaman's wife. Naaman was a commander of the Syrian army and was a leper. This Jewish girl served the Lord by witnessing to His healing power and became a means for Naaman's healing (2 Kings 5:1-15). This was the result of the nurture she must have received in her family.

Joash became king of Judah at seven years of age (2 Kings 12:1). As long as Jehoiada the high priest was his counselor, Joash served the Lord. However, after Jehoiada's death, Joash forsook the Lord and began to serve idols (2Ch 24:17-18). Though this king was called to serve the Lord in his early age and served faithfully for a while (2 Kings 12:3), he did not remain faithful in his service of the Lord. Then finally, Joash was killed by his own officials (2 Kings 24:20).

Another king who was called at an early age, at the age of eight, was Josiah. Though his grandfather, Manasseh, who came to the throne at the age of twelve and his father, Ammon, both filled Jerusalem with innocent blood and were bad men who worshiped idols (2 Kings 21:1-25; 2 Ch 33:1-25), Josiah was different. At the age of eight he began to seek the Lord and sought to do

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that which was right in the sight of the Lord (2 Kings 22:1-2; 2 Ch 34:3). When he grew up he hated sin in himself and in the society and reformed the spiritual life of the community (2 Kings 23).

The names of Isaiah's two sons were given by God. The first son's name: "the remnant shall return", attested to the sealing of God's promise to His people. (Isa 1:2-22) and the second one meaning "haste to the spoil, quick to the prey" (Isa 8:3): was also a prophetic word to God's people. In general, we can say that both Isaiah's children were used by God as a living witnesses of His signs and wonders (Isa 8:19). Even Jeremiah was chosen to be a prophet before he was born and started serving the Lord while still a child (Jer 1:5-7).

The New Testament opens with the birth and childhood of Jesus Christ and John the Baptist. John the Baptist's coming was divinely proclaimed and his ministry was divinely prescribed. He was chosen before he was born to serve the Lord, to bring back the people of Israel to the Lord their God as a forerunner to Jesus Christ (Luke 1:11-16). He began to serve the Lord while still a child (Lk 1:80). Similarly, Jesus at the age of twelve was in the temple with the teachers of the Law asking and answering questions, and many were amazed at His understanding and at the answers which he gave (Luke 2:47-48). His entire childhood was a preparation for the fulfillment of his mission to save mankind (Lk 2:40, 46-47, 52).

Timothy was called to serve the Lord while a young child. He lived with his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois, who were believers in Christ, and who were a godly influence on him (2 Tim 1:5). From his childhood Timothy yielded himself up to the spirit and teachings of the scriptures and allowed his life to be shaped by them. Timothy must have been still only a boy when he surrendered his life to Christ, and began serving the Lord in the church, still only a youth when he was ordained to preach the Gospel (Lockyer 1970:213, 215).

From the above scriptural references we can see how children can be involved in the work of the kingdom of God. Patrick and Jeanne (1998:30)

say that parents and church leaders should encourage children to memorize verses of Scripture relating to evangelism, to develop good relationships with others and to pray for the lost. There is also a need to provide them with opportunities to minister to others in the church – whether in crusades, or children's church or through drama, music, testimony or sharing the word of God. Similarly, Clark (1986:456) suggests that children should be encouraged to be involved in mission activities appropriate to their age. Children can serve God in Sunday schools, children's church, family-night groups, weekday clubs, choir, and summer ministries.

Unfortunately some parents believe that ministry by children is impossible, for they see their children as little ones who only play and eat and are not ready to take on the responsibility of serving the Lord. The modern church often sees children as second class members and do not consider them able to be involved in any form of ministry. As a result, children who are believers have not been given the opportunity to develop their ministries (Black and Gregory 1993:15).

Parents and church leaders need to know and accept that God can use children to accomplish His purpose. Therefore, children need to be equipped beforehand, so that they may be fruitful in their life and ministry. What is expected of children is willingness: a willingness to serve, to receive guidance in order to develop their ministry gifts. They need to be taught to see themselves as servants of the Church of Jesus Christ and be given opportunities to serve, under the supervision of church leaders who are able to recognize the spiritual and emotional maturity, the abilities and the talents of the children and young people in their care (Black and Gregory 1993:18-19).

2.2. Social

Social life is the best way in which children can be taught the law or the good news, especially in their relationship with parents and the believing community

(Gacece 2006:1220). In this section children's relationship with unbelievers will be included.

2.2.1. Children's relationship with their parents

In the Jewish society, the home and family were the primary social structure where children gained their identity (Evans 2000:199). The key social rule which dominated children's perspective was the Law "honor your father and your mother" (Ex 20:12), and this is similar with the New Testament (Eph 6:1). Loving parents help children develop normally in all areas of their life. Knowing that the Bible clearly teaches about children's relationship with their parents, children have to obey and honor their parents in everything, for it pleases the Lord (Col 3:20).

2.2.2. Children's relationship with the believing community

There were no records of institutions or schools established in the Old Testament Law for the nurture of children. Because it was assumed that children will grow up as participating or socializing members of the sacred assemblies called by God (Ex 12:25-27, Deut 11:19-20, Joshua 4:5-7, Ps 78:5-7). Both the Old and New Testaments nurturing systems rely on involving children with adults in the life of the faith community (Lockyer, 1970:201).

All the Gospels, the book of Acts and the Epistles says something about children and related issues. The Gospels portray Jesus as a lover of children (Mt 19:14, Mk 19:13) and children were used as models teachable spirit (Mt 11:25-26), on conversion (Mt 18:3, Luke 22:32) and on simplicity (Mt 18:4-5). Jesus' sayings about children in the above verses clearly indicate that God views them as significant members of His kingdom.

In Matthew's record (Mt 15:38) of the multitude fed by Jesus, children were considered to be part of the community who listened to what Jesus was teaching. We also see the assumed presence and participation of children in the Christian faith (Acts 2:39; Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:20-21) and early Christian

gatherings (Evans 2000:200). The record of the growth of Christianity in the book of Acts includes households (Acts 11:14; 16:15, 31, 34; 18:8).

The early church does not exclude children from the Christian community (Acts 2:39). For instance, though there are few specific references to the role of children, Acts 2:39 gives us theological justification for their inclusion in the church, while Acts 21:5 documents their presence and involvement. In general, children were assumed to be part of the household of faith. The most significant references to children are contained in the so called household codes found in several places in the Bible (1 Pet 2:18-3:7; Phil 4:2-3), (Martin 1997:1117).

When the apostle Paul was traveling with his companions to Jerusalem, on the way they landed at Tyre and stayed there for seven days. Then Luke says *"But when our time was up, we left and continued our way. All the disciples and their wives and children accompanied us out of the city …."* (Acts 21:5-6). This shows that even children were involved in the social activities of the Christian community.

Two aspects that dominated the life of children in the early church are: Firstly, they continued to live within the cultural patriarchy and the general social structure of the household. Secondly, they were accepted as part of the Christian community (Evans 2000:200). Instructions regarding children found in the teachings of Jesus and in the Epistles were of particular relevance to the household codes. Furthermore, the promise we see in Acts 2:39 clearly refers to God's special place for children in His kingdom. Moreover, nowhere in either the Old or the New Testaments is there any suggestion that children are prohibited from socializing with the faith community.

2.2.3. Children's relationship with the unbelievers

Children were socializing with the faith community, which was helpful to them in knowing the value system they should have as God's people. It also helped them to develop a good relationship with others and grow in their spiritual knowledge and life. As seen in the life of Daniel and his three friends, we see

that they related with the heathen leaders in wisdom and understanding, without neglecting the Jewish value system that honors the Lord (Dan 1:6-17). It seems that such faithful lives may have resulted from the teaching of their parents (Deut 4:9-10, 22:6).

Children's social relationships with others must be guided by their parents. The Bible clearly teaches us that parents have to teach their children to be friends of those who fear God and help them to distance themselves from the wicked (Pr, 12:15, 13:20, 28:7, Ps 119:63). Otherwise, evil companions may lead them to be ungodly children and live a life that dishonors God (Pr 1:8-19).

Parents also have to teach them the Christian value system, that is that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge"(Pr 1:7, 9:10), which is mentioned frequently throughout the book of Proverbs. The fear of God in this context does not mean the terror of His wrath or the dread of the mysterious; rather it means reverence and humble submission to the revealed will of God (Datiri 2006:749). Furthermore, children have to be taught to observe the word of God and also to keep their hearts from temptations (Pr 3:21, 2:12-19, 22:6).

Chapter Three

Survey result of children's ministry in the EFGBC

This chapter gives details about the aim of the survey, the methods used, the results and how they can be interpreted. Relevant graphs are shown.

3.1. Aim of the survey

By organizing a carefully structured survey, the intention is to discover the main problems of children's ministry in the EFGBC and to present suggested strategies, to resolve the problems based on the survey findings.

3.2. Strategy surrounding the survey

Selected representatives from the target group were asked 9 questions which the researcher considers to be relevant to the survey aims and objectives. 80 of the 90 distributed questionnaires were returned.

An attempt was made to survey both urban and rural churches of the same denomination. Ninety churches were involved in the survey, eighty of them responded. Both genders, male and female, participated and out of the eighty respondents 60 were male and 20 female.

3.3. Data interpreted

In this section the important findings of the survey are recorded, analyzed and interpreted.

To identify the problems in children's ministry in the EFGBC, the researcher has gathered data through interviews. The researcher first approached the interviewees with questions related to personal data such as age, sex,

educational level, conversion year, present ministry and responsibility in their church.

3.3.1. Quantity of EFGBC local Churches and their locations

The total number of EFGBC churches according to a report presented in August, 2007 was 850. The Churches are distributed in every area of the Country in five major zones as:

NZEFGBC – 35 churches.

SZEFGBC – 220 churches.

EZEFGBC – 45 churches.

WZEFGBC - 520 churches.

CZEFGBC – 30 churches.

The above data can be tabulated as follows:
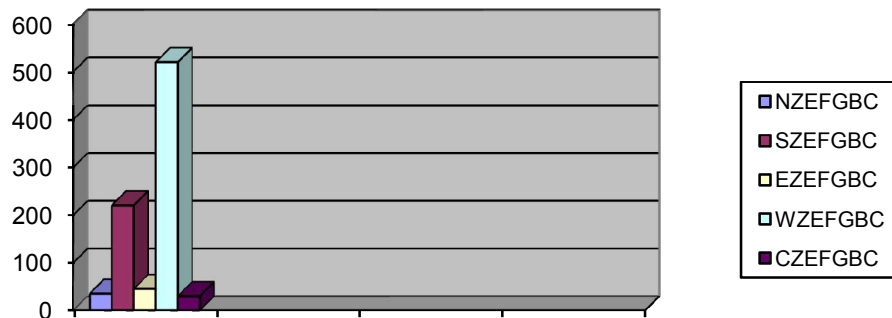
Figure1. Quantity and locations of EFGBC local Churches

3.3.2. The Quantity and place of interviewees

For the reason that most of South and West zone churches are in close proximity with each other, the researcher has interviewed selectively in the ratio of 1:11. In the other three zones, North, East and Central, churches are situated in scattered areas so he has used in the ratio of 1:5. By doing this the researcher has tried to present a balanced representation of the church in each zone.

The place or location of the interviewees is as follows:

NZEFGBC – 7

SZEFGBC – 20

EZEFGBC – 9

WZEFGBC – 48

CZEFGBC – 6

The above data can be tabulated as follows:

Figure2. Quantity and location of interviewees

3.3.3. The age groups of the respondents with their number

To get genuine and mature information, more focus is given to leaders, full time ministers and other church ministry group members.

18-30 years of age (26%)

31-40 years of age (50%)

41-55 years of age (24%)

The above data can be tabulated as follows:
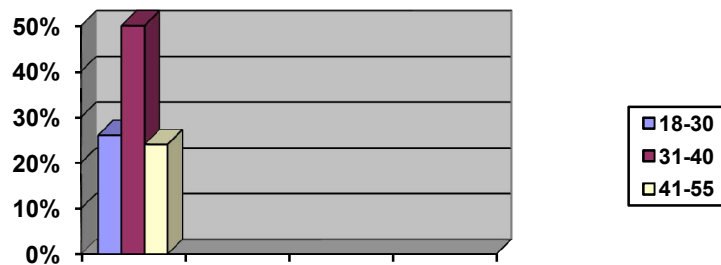
Figure3. Percentage of respondents by age

3.3.4. Sixty males (75%) and twenty females (25%) completed the survey

The above data can be tabulated as follows:
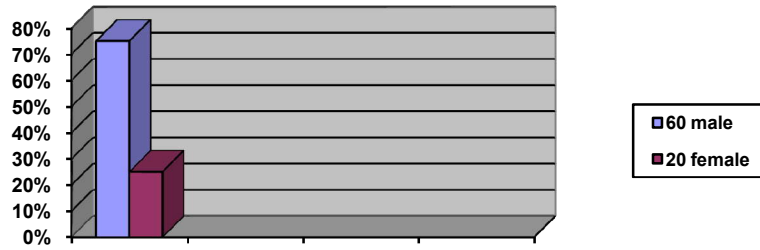
Figure 4. Respondents by gender

3.3.5. Responsibility of the respondents in their churches

From among the total of respondents 24 (30%) were pastors or leaders, 40 (50%) were from other ministry groups with in the church, and 16 (or 20 %) were evangelists[2].

The above data can be tabulated as follows:

Figure 5. Respondent's responsibility in the church

3.3.6. Respondents conversion year

15 (31%) of the respondents - 1970-1985

40 (50%) of the respondents - 1986-1995

25 (19%) of the respondents - 1991-2005

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[2] The name evangelist according to EFGBC was traditionally given to all full timer ministers, both ordained and the not yet ordained. It was also considered as a bridge to be a pastor, i.e. if some one's gift is a pastor; first of all he has to be ordained as an evangelist, otherwise no one of the churches can accept him as a pastor. But now the church has started to use the name evangelist based on the five offices we find in Ephesians 4:11 and consider it as one of the leadership team in the church. In fact, it does not seem that all the local churches of the EFGBC are practically applying this idea, for some of the churches do not want to leave their traditional understanding.

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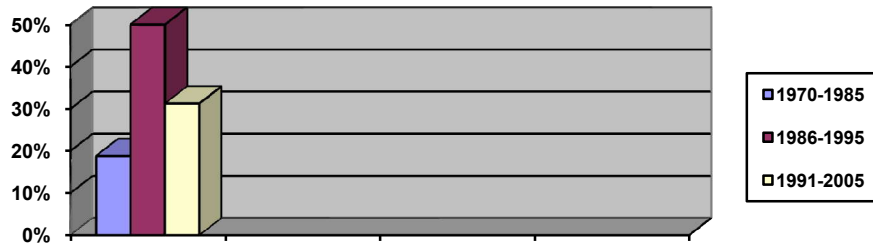
Figure 6. Respondent's conversion year

3.3.7. Educational Level of the respondents

Degree - 12 people (15 %)

Diploma - 30 people (37.5%)

Certificate – 18 people (22.5%)

12th grade - 16 people (20 %)

Under 12th grade – 4 people (5%)

The above data can be tabulated as follows:
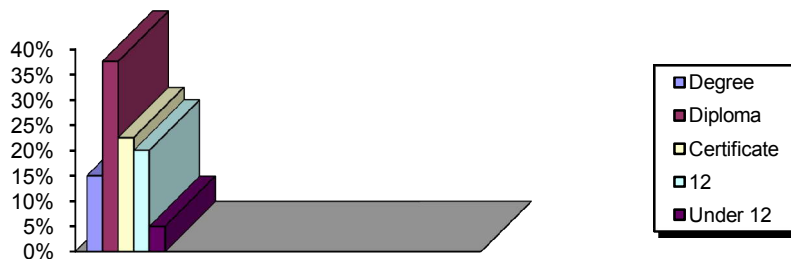
Figure 7. Respondent's educational level

3.3.8. Of the 80 respondents, 32 (40%) reported that most of the churches do not have a children's ministry 40 (50%) suggested that there is a children's ministry in most of the churches though it is not that strong and 8 (10%) were uncertain. Out of the 40 who said that there is a children's ministry in the church, 38 reported that there is no evangelism, 2 of them claimed that there is evangelism but it is not strong, and all the 40 suggested that spiritual nurture such as teaching and caring is inadequate. In addition to this, more than 44 (55%) of the respondents suggested that many servants of the Lord

do not believe in child evangelism, because they do not accept children as sinners who need to be saved.

The above data can be tabulated as follows:
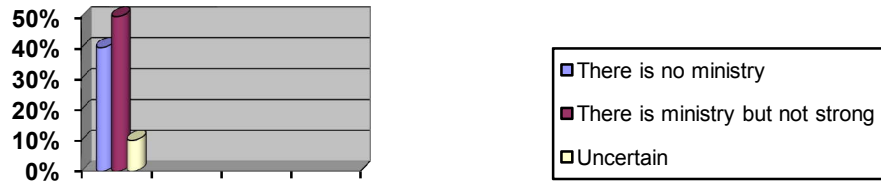
Figure 8. Children's ministry in the church
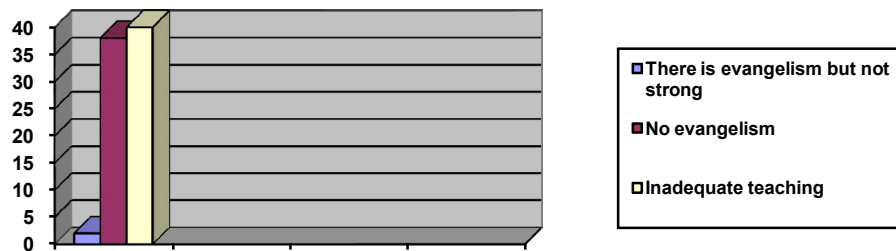
Figure 9. Evangelism and teaching in the church

3.3.9. Of the 40 respondents, who reported that there is children's ministry in the churches, 17 said that all the children are gathered in one place and are taught the Bible. 20 said that the children are divided into two groups, and 3 reported children are divided in three groups. 30 of the respondents believed that children are gathered together and taught solely so that they do not disturb the Sunday worship program of the adults. Only 10 said that children are gathered together for the purpose of spiritual nurture, such as teaching and caring.

The above data can be tabulated as follows:
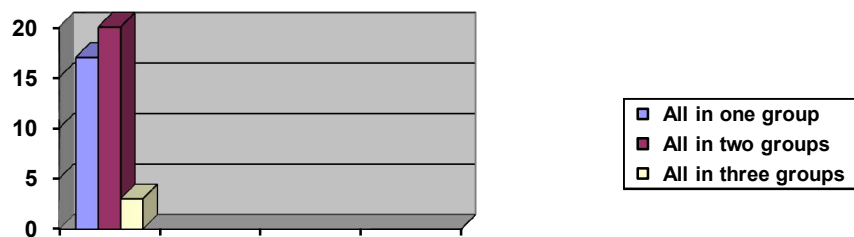
Figure 10.How children are grouped in Sunday school

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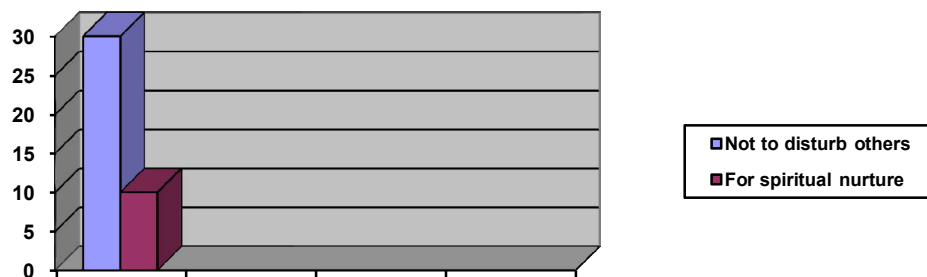
Figure 11. Reasons for Children's being gathering in Sunday school

3.3.10. 60 of the 80 respondents suggested that 35-40 percent of the church members' are children though not considered to be members of the church, 8 claimed 50 percent, 5 suggested 65 percent and 7 are uncertain.

The above data can be tabulated as follows:

Figure 12. Number of children in the church

3.3.11. Mentors' age, sex, spiritual maturity which is measured in relation to their prayer life, knowledge of the word of God and practical life and educational level.

Based on the responses of the 80 respondents, male mentors are 39 percent and female mentors are 61 percent of the total. 30 percent are new converts and are not spiritually mature, 45 percent are moderately spiritually mature and 25 percent are spiritually mature. The educational level of mentors is 5 percent degree graduates, 18.8 percent diploma graduates, 52.7 percent 12th complete and 23.6 percent under 12th grade. Only 8.3 percent of all the mentors are trained as kindergarten mentors and 2.4 percent have a sound theological background, some of them having undertaken theological study at EFGTC and others at the Evangelical Theological College.

The above data can be tabulated as follows:

Figure 13. Mentors by gender
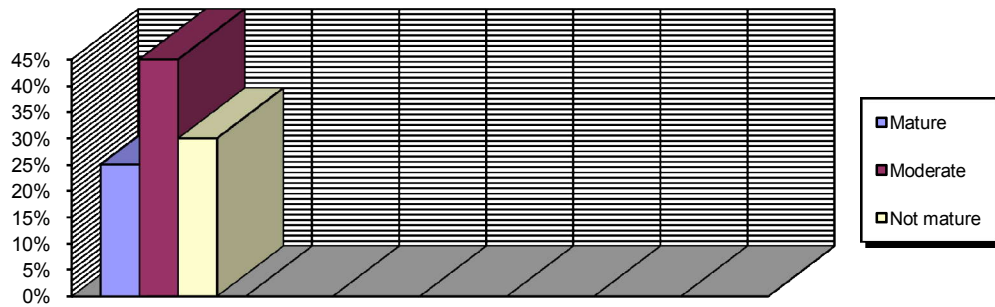
Figure 14. Mentors spiritual maturity
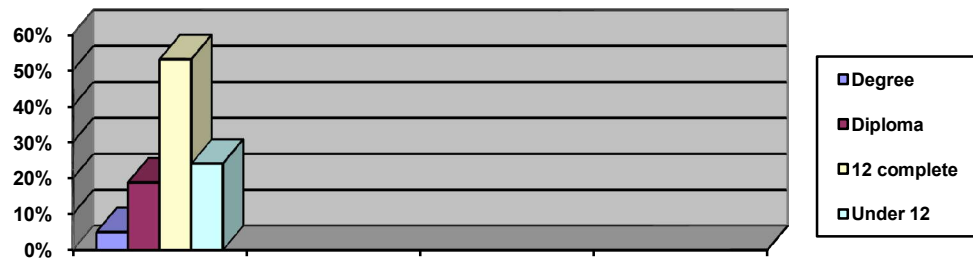
Figure 15. Mentors Educational level
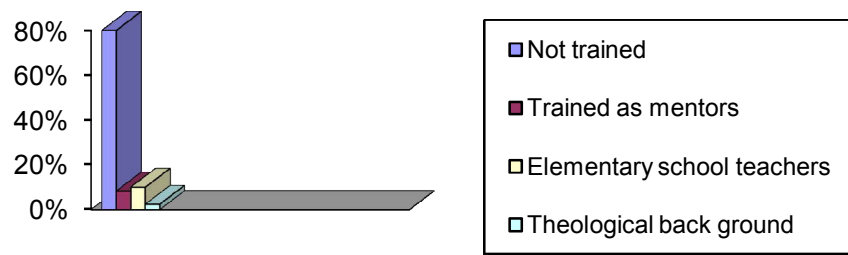
Figure 16. Training back ground of mentors

3.3.12. 64 (80%) of the respondents said that parents, church leaders, the believing community and the mentors do not have sufficient awareness and understanding about children's ministry. As a result, children are neglected and not considered as part of the believing community but rather as an obstacle.16 (20%) claimed that parents, church leaders and believers have some awareness about children's ministry but agreed that it is little.

The above data can be tabulated as follows:
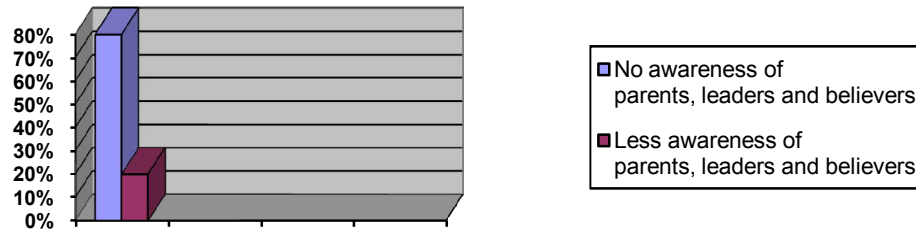
Figure 17. Awareness of parents, leaders and believers about children's ministry

3.3.13. Of the 80 respondents 35 (43.8%) pointed out that the spiritual life of children in the believing community is not good, especially in their relationship with opposite sex, disobedience, and worldliness. 27(33.75%) reported moderate levels of spirituality, meaning that though not good in their prayer life, church involvement and knowledge of the word of God, they are not in a bad spiritual condition. Furthermore, 8 (10%) indicated that their children's spiritual life is good and 10 (12.5 %) are uncertain. Of the 35 respondents who reported that children's spiritual condition is not good, 25 (31%) claimed that many children of the believing parents are not born-again Christians.

The above data can be tabulated as follows:
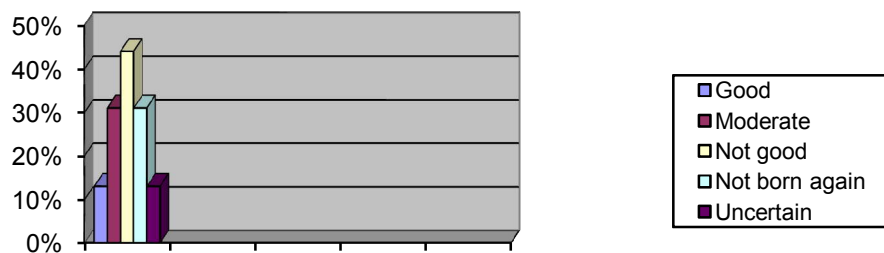
Figure 18. Children's spiritual condition

3.3.14. In relation to the attitude of children towards the church, 55 percent of the respondents said that children's attitude is not good. The respondents added that children think that no one is concerned about them and that the church does not belong to them. As a result they start~~ed~~ to dislike having fellowship with the Christian community. They would rather stay at home or go somewhere outside of the church to play with other children, because no one has shown them love, forgiveness, and encouragement in order to encourage them to be interested in coming to church, have fellowship with other believers and worship God. 38 percent claimed that children's attitude is moderate. The rest of the respondents (7%) suggested that children's attitude is good.

The above data can be tabulated as follows:
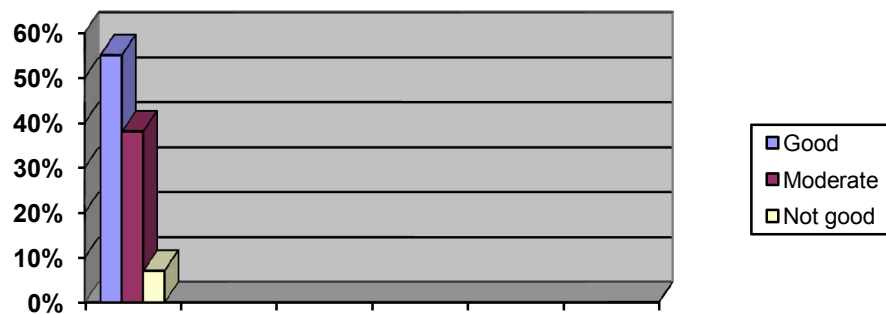
Figure 19. Children's attitude towards the church

3.3.15. 72 (90%) of the respondents claimed that the main problems ~~of~~ faced by children are spiritual and financial. The spiritual problems include lack of evangelism, teaching, caring, exemplary living in their parents and the believing community, improper discipline and well trained mentors. Financial problems lie in the fact that there are no assigned budgets for children's ministry to buy teaching materials. There are also no rooms reserved for children to study the Bible, worship, or even playing different games.

47 (58.75%) suggested that the main problem is social. In relation to the social problem the indicators identified by respondents include children's relationships with their parents and the believing and the unbelieving

community and in their value system when they relate to various situations. 8 (10%) of the 80 respondents are uncertain.

Of the 72 (90%) who suggested finance as a problem, 20 claimed that the church does not have enough money to afford children's ministry expenses, and 52 reported that the problem is lack of awareness of the importance of children's ministry, as a result of which there is no budget assigned to children's ministry.

The above data can be tabulated as follows:
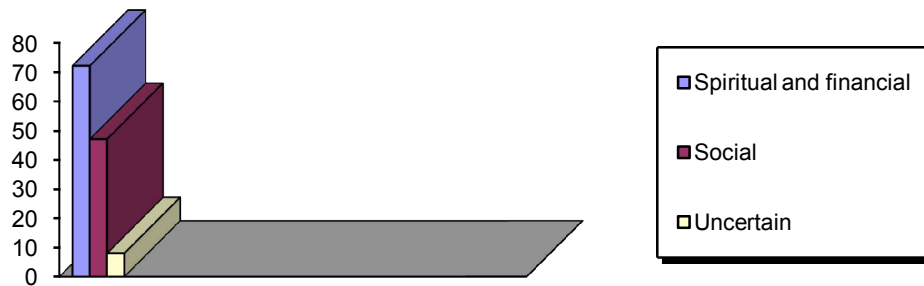
Figure 20 , Main problems of children's ministry
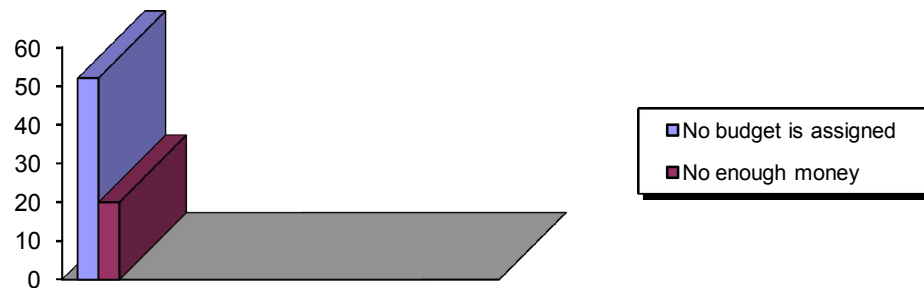
Figure 21. Financial condition of the church

3.3.16. Suggested solutions

Ideas suggested in answer to the question "what do you suggest as a solution for the current problems of children ministry in EFGBC, for parents, leaders of the church, the church community as a whole and the mentors?"

50 of the respondents said that the best solution for the problems of children's ministry is, first, to raise the awareness about children's ministry to church leaders, parents, and mentors by teaching biblical truths about children's ministry. Second, teaching and training parents and mentors, so that they may live exemplary lives and be motivated to evangelize, teach and nurture children.

30 believe that the church needs financial strength to be able to solve the spiritual and social problems by providing teaching materials, preparing seminars to train parents and mentors, and by providing places for teaching and playing games. Sport materials can also be bought for entertainment, which enables outreach to children. In addition to this, 78 of the respondents suggested that prayer is the answer, for it helps the leaders, parents and the believing community to have vision and to see God's provision for children's ministry.

The above data can be tabulated as follows:
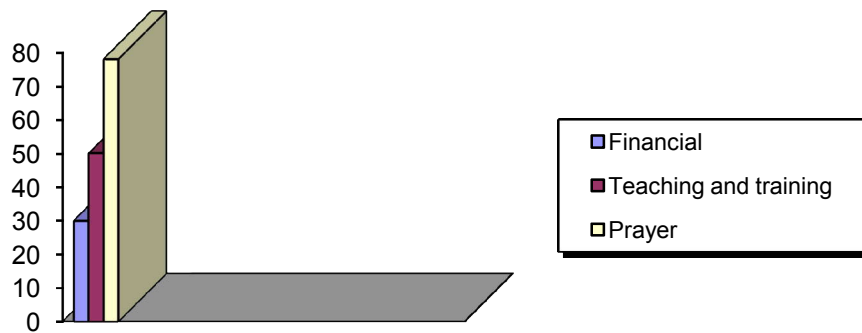
Figure 22. Suggested solutions

Chapter Four

Current Problems Based on the Research Findings

The interview conducted so far could easily identify the major areas of problems in children's ministry as reflected upon by 90 ministers, leaders, and other from the believing community. Based on the research findings the main problems of children's ministry in the EFGBC are spiritual, social and financial. Let us see the problems in detail, based on the discussed data.

4.1. Spiritual Problems

50 percent of the interviewees suggested that most of the Christian parents do not work hard to bring their unbelieving children to Jesus and to nurture the spiritual life of their converted children. A child's spiritual life is built up through observing what parents are doing and on how they relate to each other. Similarly, the church does not give special attention to nurture children's spiritual life, though children are the leaders of the coming generation.

The main spiritual problems mentioned by the respondents include: little attention given to the evangelism of children, spiritual nurture, and equipping of children for ministry. They also reported the seriousness of social and financial problems.

4.1.1. Evangelism

4.1.1.1. In the Family

Of the 40 respondents who hinted at the presence of children's ministry in the church, 38 or 95 percent of them reported that there is no evangelism. They also said that few parents do not evangelize their children and also never encourage them to evangelize their friends and neighbors.

Parents do not show their children the way to salvation and encourage them to accept Jesus as their personal savior. This is because of lack of knowledge. Most parents in EFGBC believe that children will enter heaven without any precondition, even repentance. As a result, there is no evangelism to children in the family.

4.1.1.2. In the Church

Of the 80 respondents 60 of them claimed that churches view children as being unable to respond correctly to the good news, or to give mature answers when questioned. Some people believe that children under 12 have not yet reached the mental, emotional and spiritual maturity to exercise genuine repentance, while others maintain that children are able to understand the importance of Christ's death and receive salvation.

44 (55%) of the respondents reported that many servants of the Lord do not believe in children's evangelism. Because they do not believe that children are capable of repentance or of receiving Jesus as their personal Savior, therefore they do not believe that children are capable of inheriting the Kingdom of God. They also complained that church leaders, ministers and believers fail to see that children have inherited a sinful nature, and need to accept Jesus as their personal savior in order to be redeemed. As a result, they omit the work of evangelism to children totally from their mind.

4.1.2. Spiritual Nurture

Children's spiritual life is nurtured by their parents and in the church. Nurture includes teaching, caring and discipline.

Of the 40 who made reference to children's ministry in the church, almost all reported that in their opinion the spiritual nurture, teaching and the pastoral care of children by the church is inadequate.

4.1.2.1. Teaching

Teaching can be exercised through sharing the word of God and living an exemplary life. Parents have the primary responsibility for rearing their

children both through their words and by living an exemplary life. Equally the church has a responsibility for teaching children, who will be the leaders of the Church in the coming generation (Lockyer 1970:67).

a. In the Family

➢ *Family devotion*

Of the 80 respondents, 36 (45%) said that parents do not take time with their children in prayer and Bible study, and yet at the same time they expect godly character in their children's life. This has happened either because the parents are too busy at work, or because of their own spiritual weakness, or through carelessness, or because of a lack of knowledge on how to nurture their children. As a result, children have grown up without knowledge of the word of God, without a prayer life and without being aware of the blessings of the fellowship of the Church. Because no one has taught them the truth of the Bible and given them guidance on how they can enrich their spiritual life and grow in the likeness of Christ, many have gone astray from the real Christian life.

The family devotion plays a critical part in the healthy spiritual development of children, it would seem from our research that almost 90 percent of parents do not have a family devotion time where they pray and read the Bible together with their children.

➢ *Parents' relationship to each other and with others*

"A child's spiritual life is built up through observing what parents are doing and on how they relate to each other". Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them (Henrichsen 1984:85).

Of the 80 respondents 47 suggested that many parents are not living an exemplary life in their daily activities, in words and deeds and in their relationship with each other. As a result, the spiritual life of their children is affected negatively leading them to act as their parents act, for they think that is the right life to please God. In addition, their children start to misunderstand

the biblical principles for marriage and live as they please, and consequently it becomes difficult to bring the unconverted children of the believing parents to Christ.

b. In the Church

➢ *Teaching ministry*

32 of the 80 respondents claimed that the Full Gospel Believers' Churches does not give attention to children's ministry for they are insufficiently aware of ~~on~~ the value of nurturing, discipling and equipping children. Children are not considered important. They are seen rather as a distraction and interruption and are not seen as having any right to speak, decide, suggest, or answer for themselves.

Of my respondents, 48 indicated that there was ministry for children in some of the churches, but this only in a handful of urban churches. The rest seem to completely ignore this vital area of ministry. In addition to this, 20 reported that all the children in their church are grouped together in one place and taught the Bible without any thought being given to the different needs of the different age groups. 25 suggested children are divided into two, and 3 claimed that children are divided into three groups. 33 of the 48 respondents made it clear that the main purpose is to take the children away from the main body of the church in order not to disturb the Sunday worship program of the adults. Only 15 reported that children are gathered for the purpose of spiritual nurture. It is clear from these replies that in general churches do not have well structured children's ministry with good teaching techniques geared to children's different age groups. Lack of trained mentors and teaching materials are part of the problem.

➢ *Lack of well-trained mentors*

More than 50 percent of the respondents suggested that 80 percent of the mentors involved in the children's ministry are not well trained. In fact, 10 percent are elementary school teachers, 2 percent have a theological background, having studied at a theological college and 8 percent are trained as kindergarten mentors. However, their training as kindergarten mentors

does not make them effective in ministering to the spiritual needs of children, though it may help a little bit. The rest of the mentors are full time ministers or people involved in other ministry departments of the Church, who have an interest in teaching children, though not having received any specific training for children's ministry. As a result, most of them teach from their experiences and the Bible, and use exactly the same methods that they would use in teaching adult believers.

> ➤ *Lack of good teaching materials*

Of the 80 respondents, 20 are involved in the children's ministry of their church. All of these 20 people said that they are required to fulfill this ministry without having any books specifically designed for children's ministry. One reason for this is a lack of available material, but there is also a lack of awareness on the part of the Church of the need to spend money on material suitable for their children. The books that are available are not easy to understand, or easy to use in teaching children and are also bulky. The mentors themselves have seldom been trained in the use of the books that area available. As a result, mentors teach children in exactly the same way that they teach the adults and teach exactly the same subjects from their own experience such as religion, history of the patriarchs and so on.

Author Richards (1983:48), quotes John Westerhoff III, a contemporary Christian educator, who argues on ministry of children as follows:

> The ministry of children practiced in most churches today is designed to teach religion. But our task in ministry is not to teach Christianity or religion rather to communicate Christian faith.

72 of the 80 respondents said that there were no good books which are easily understandable for children under 14 years of age. In fact there are a number of suitable books published by either different churches or privately by Christian authors, as well as books translated from English to Amharic. One of these is the book prepared by Meseretskristos church as a mentor's guide, with the title "Yelij wolaj" meaning "the children's parent", and its focus is on the Christian family and children in the Bible.

I am also aware of two books published by SIM (Sudan Interior Mission) on behalf of the Kalehiwot Church as guide for mentors.   These are entitled: "Yemisrach qal I and II" literally "The Good News I and II". Their focus is on creation, law, Jesus' death and resurrection, separation from the world and living for Jesus. There is also "The Lion Children's Bible" by Pat Alexander (1981) translated by Sahle Tilahun (1999) with the title "Ylijoch mtsehaf qidus" meaning "Children's Bible". This would be an excellent book to use in teaching children about the history of God's people in the Bible.

Though all these and other books are available, most of them ~~miss~~ fail to include the main teachings of the Bible on subjects like Prayer, Fellowship, Living a Holy life and Love. They focus on the history of God's dealings with His people and thereby miss the basic teachings of the Bible.

4.1.2.2. Caring

More than 50 percent of the respondents suggested that there are parents who do not give special attention to their children. They do not ask where their children have been, what they have heard, or done or felt, or take any interest in the problems they have faced. This is true whether the children have spent all day in school or have been somewhere else. Other parents also leave their children at home when they go to church on Sundays or on any other day of the week. They leave their children alone at home to watch TV, films or play games. Those children who do not have access to electronic devices play with the children of unbelieving neighbors. As a result their value systems get confused and are not able to live a godly life that honors the Lord. What is true of parents is also true of the Church which does not always see children as an integral part of the Christian community who are also called to worship, honor and serve God.

The result of all this is that children brought up in Christian homes are more exposed to the world's value systems, than they are to those of God. They therefore learn to value the things of this world more than the things of God. The consequence is that they are powerless in their spiritual life.

4.1.2.3. Improper Discipline

Discipline as defined in Chapter 2 of this thesis is to instruct and to correct, to produce obedience to the rules of the word of God and Christ -likeness in the life of the child. The term "Discipline" can be used in a variety of different contexts such as: self discipline (Mt 5:17- 48, 1 Cor 7:29), church discipline (Mt 18:15-18) and parental discipline (Due 6:7). But my focus here will be on parental discipline.

a. In the Family

90 percent of the respondents indicated that children of believing parents are mistreated in that the punishment they receive is not in proportion to the offence committed. Christian parents do not seem to consider their children are capable of thinking for themselves, recognizing their own mistakes, repenting when they commit sin and correcting their own behavior. This causes them to use excessive physical punishment in the discipline of their children. We agree that discipline is necessary and of great value when applied in the correct way, but when misused can cause more harm than good.

Author Richards (1983:36), quotes William Glasser, the father of reality therapy, who makes the distinction between discipline and punishment as follows:

> Discipline is directed at the objectional behavior and the child will accept its consequence with out resentment. But punishment is a response that is directed at the individual. It represents a desire of one person to hurt another which is an expression of hostility rather than corrective love.

James Anthrop, assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of South California, stated recently that "many children, under 5 years of age, are killed by their own parents and estimated that 60,000 children are beaten to death annually in USA" (in Dobson 1992:45). Similarly, in Ethiopia in the mass media especially on the Police TV program, it is clearly seen that among the unbelieving community, many parents punish their children to discipline them

and hurt them in the process to the degree that some are deformed and others killed.

30 of the respondents reported that even Christian parents punish their children harshly. This may because of the cultural background from which the parents in question have come. They punish their children in order not to be blamed by others. If a child commits any mistake in the society, the people automatically say such child is from an undisciplined family and start blaming the parents of the child. Consequently, children become psychologically and emotionally damaged and this causes bitterness, frustration and an inability to express their ideas freely and confidently. Even children who are ready to accept the discipline meted out by their parents can be led to believe that they are unworthy to worship God in the way that their parents do. They come to believe that it is God's will that they are as they are.

b. In the Church

Improper discipline of children is not only seen in the family but also in the church. One of the respondents, who did not want to disclose his pastor's name, said that a pastor of one of the Full Gospel Churches in Addis Ababa, said to a young minister of his church that; "If any of the children moves during Sunday worship hit them with a rod for they have to be silent and disciplined". The young minister started beating children who were moving around in the church and hurt some of them. When they started crying, one father began to wonder whether he was perhaps wrong to bring his children to church with him.

25 of the respondents mentioned similar situations and suggested that beating and using harsh words to make children godly might have come from Ethiopian forefathers' belief, that "good parents are those who punish their children with a rod harshly". As a result, many children are discouraged from getting involved in church worship and activities; some have even started to dislike going to church because of the psychological and emotional suffering which they experience in church. Furthermore, some Christian parents prefer

to leave their children at home because of the mistreatment that the see children receiving in church.

An evangelist from south west Ethiopia reported that last year in his church there was a group of children who were constantly being beaten by one of the deacons, who did this to try to keep them quiet. Finally, in desperation that children began to pray: "God please bind the spirit of hatred who is in the deacon, for we are hindered not to worship you, in Jesus' name, Amen!".

4.1.2.4. Equipping for Ministry

a. In the Family

40 of the 80 respondents pointed out that, though the family and the church can play a vital role in preparing children for ministry, parents are the primary ones to equip them. But in our church parents do not encourage and create a good atmosphere for their children to serve the Lord in different areas of ministry such as, worship leading, praying, singing, and evangelizing. As a result many children lose interest and fail to get involved for they have been led to believe that ministry is something special which is only allowed for a few privileged adults.

b. In the Church

Of the 80 respondents 40 claimed that parents and the church are responsible for equipping children for ministry. But children's ministry is not treated in the same way as ministry to youth and adults when it comes to planning, budgeting, evangelizing, discipling and equipping them to serve the Lord. This is so because the church has not a clear vision for the future, especially in having godly leaders of the church who will be able to reach their generation with the good news of salvation. 32 reported that there is no ministry for children except the children's choir group that serves on the Christian holy days once or twice a year, especially at Christmas and Easter. Furthermore, there is no ministry that concentrates on equipping children for service because no focus is given to evangelize, teach, and equip children for the work of ministry.

4.2. Social Problems

No one can live long in isolation and every child's natural potential is shaped by the culture or environment it is living in. Socializing is achieved through family ties, established school bonds, and peer group relationships. Through social interaction children learn language, gain the skills necessary to relate to others in society and adopt the beliefs and values of the culture (Richards 1983:96).

Social problems in relation to children can be caused by their family and/or the church.

4.2.1. In the Family

Children's social life starts to develop within their family. Parents are responsible for teaching their children the Christian value system and showing the right relationship they should have with every one (Dobson 1992:18).

45 of the 80 respondents claimed that parents do not teach their children how to relate to believers and non believers. They fail to give attention to teaching their children the value system which underlines the Christian faith. In fact, most of the parents do not live an exemplary life in line with their value system. Many Christian parents relate to each other without love, blaming each other, exchanging unconstructive words in front of their children and sometimes continue for many days without forgiving each other. As a result children assume that a normal Christian life is one without love and that it is normal to speak negatively to one another. They learn to pray without forgiving others, and their whole experience of family relationships colors their future relationships both with believers and with unbelievers.

As a result, the value system of many children in the Christian community becomes like that of the unbelievers, who give more value to the earthly things than to the spiritual and eternal. Their relationship with others is also the same as the unbelievers for they say what they say and do what they do and even live with out forgiving others as their parents do. 45 of the 80 respondents claimed that worldliness is also becoming a challenge to them; in

fact most of the Christian family children are not genuine believers though they go to church and participate in other spiritual programs.

4.2.2. In the Church

55 percent of the respondents reported that most members of the Christian community, including the ministers, do not treat children in love and encouragement as they treat the adults. In Sunday morning and other worship program days, when adults enter the church to worship, many people say: "Please! Take those children away from here for they can disturb us", with out considering their right as children of God to worship the Lord equally with the adults. In addition to this, they treat children as an obstacle because they do not consider them as the coming leaders of the church for they lack a clear and mature understanding of children and their ministry. That is why some times children are forced to keep quiet and accept what ever they are told by their families and other younger or older people in the community.

Ten of the respondents quoted common Amharic sayings in relation to children. The most common quoted was: "Lelij fit atistew; klij gar atchawet Yiwegahal beenchet" which implies that adults should not give any chance to a child and play with him for he can pierce with a sharp wood". The second was "Quslhn lezinb atasay endihum fitehn lelij" an equivalent meaning for this saying is "do not show your wound to a fly and a loving face or freedom to a child for he can irritate you." All ten respondents claimed that these and other words hurt the emotions of the children and caused mental distress, fear, lack of confidence, inferiority complex, bitterness and loneliness. Dobson said that (1992:26) self esteem is the most fragile attribute in human nature, because it can be damaged by many minor incidents and its reconstruction is often difficult to engineer.

4.3. Financial Problems

Of the 80 respondents 72 claimed that lack of finance is one of the main problems in relation to children's ministry. As a result things such as teaching materials, places for teaching and sports materials are not bought for children.

4.3.1. Insufficient Finances

Of the 72 respondents 20 suggested that the church does not have enough money to afford children's ministry expenses, because it does not have an adequate source of income. It is even becoming difficult to cover the salary of the fulltime ministers who serve the Lord in leading, teaching and preaching.

4.3.2. No Budget Assigned

52 of the 72 respondents suggested that the problem seems to be lack of awareness and vision of leaders for children's ministry. As a result, though there is enough money, no budget is assigned to children's ministry as it is assigned to other ministry groups of the church. For instance, money is assigned to evangelize adults, for conferences, training believers and ministers, guest preachers, monthly budget for all ministry departments of the church, such as youth, women, choir, deacons, and for buildings. But for children's ministry, the church does not assign any budget.

Chapter Five

Suggested Strategies for Parents and Leaders

Children are the most needy members of society. Children aged fifteen and younger comprise one third of our world's six billion people and in many developing countries children make up nearly half of the population. Brewster says that children are strategic because they are at a formative stage. Our brains are 90 percent formed before the age of three and most of our adult personalities are formed by the time we reach six years of age (ENEC, 2006:3).

In Ethiopia, about 50 percent of the population is children and most of them face serious challenges. Estimates based on a 1996 UNICEF study suggest that orphaned children in Ethiopia are about 4,885,000 and there could be at least 200,000 children living in the street and their average age is 10 years (UNICEF, 1996:4). So the church should be aware of this reality to reach those children.

This part of the research will focus on practical suggestions, based on the data findings. Finally look at ways in which parents and church leaders can work to help solve the many problems faced by children in the Christian community. Furthermore, we will see how children's ministry can be established and if it is already established how it can be strengthened and developed into a more fruitful ministry.

5.1. Spiritual

5.1.1. Evangelism

Children are the future hope of mankind because it is they who will be leaders of the next generation church.

Reaching children is one of the best ways in which we can reach the world with the good news and have a godly generation and strong leaders of the church in the future.

50 percent of the interviewees pointed out that most of the believers in their church had come from other religious backgrounds, such as Orthodox and Catholics. These churches believe that evangelism of children is not needed because their children are saved through and are automatically different from members of other religions. They also believe that children are not sinners in the same way that adults are sinners, and that their automatic destiny is heaven, since they are incapable of exercising genuine repentance or any kind of spiritual maturity. It is good to be kind and compassionate to children. Therefore, let us tell them the way of salvation so that they may accept Jesus Christ as their personal savior.

There are conflicting theories about the age of accountability in children. For instance Shaw (1995:54) says that children below the age of five can easily believe what they are told about God and children aged 4 and 5 are perfectly capable of committing their lives to Christ. On the other hand Black and Gregory (1993:261) contend that children under 12 years old have not yet reached the mental, emotional, and spiritual maturity to exercise a genuine repentance. Lockyer (1970:172) also says that "child psychologists generally agree that a child begins to manifest personal understanding and responsibility, and is able to distinguish between right and wrong between the age of five and seven, though some children are born with unusual gifts.

What Shaw and Lockyer informed that some missiologists pointed out, the percentage of people who give their life to Christ as follows: about 1 percent are under 4 years old, 85 percent between the age of 4 and 14, 10 percent between the age of 15-30 and 4 percent above 30 years old (Kilbourn 1996:4).

The Bible is also clear when it teaches us that children are sinners as is every human being (Rom 3:23), though the period of accountability differs from place to place and from child to child. Because they can differentiate between right and wrong, as the Bible clearly tells us that "a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right" (Pro 20:11), and the Gospel is to all, without exception (Mk 16:15). Even the apostle Peter confirmed this in his preaching, to the Israelites and other people from different areas of the world, in the day of Pentecost, saying that "the promised baptism of the Holy Spirit that took place after salvation is for you and for your children and for all who are far off…" (Acts 2:39).

The necessity of evangelism and the conversion of children is based on the reality of mankind's inheritance of sinful nature (Rom 5:12, Eph 2:3). If children are able to sin and able to understand the consequence of that sin such as guilt and shame, there is no doubt they can respond to the good news and believe in Jesus Christ. Naturally children are open, able to listen, love, obey their parents, accordingly they can also believe, love and follow their heavenly father (Black and Gregory 1993:35). In addition to this they are receptive to the Gospel and humility is the natural part of their life which is an essential quality in the kingdom of God (Mt 18:6).

We shall now consider the subject of the evangelism of children in the context of the family and of the church.

5.1.1.1.   In the Family

The primary responsibility for preaching the good news and the word of God to children lies with the family. Parents have to know that children are created in God's image and are capable of understanding the things of God (Deut 31:12). They therefore have to evangelize their children in the same way that they would evangelize adults, because children have inherited a sinful nature and are just as much sinners as everyone else in the world. This can be done by showing them the right way to salvation and encouraging them to participate in family devotion and church worship programs. There will come

a time when parents will need to ask their children if they have clearly understood and recognize their own need to repent. Then if the answer is positive, persuade them to accept Christ as their personal Savior. Otherwise Satan can use them as an instrument to do evil and be an obstacle to the Gospel.

Being born into a Christian family or participating in various church worship programs does not make a person a Christian. A child cannot inherit faith; it is not genetic. In fact it is passed from generation to generation through parents introducing the faith to their children and to their children's children (Deut 4:9-10; 2 Tim 1:5). Hence there must be a conversion and a conversion is always related to personal trust in Jesus as personal Savior (John 3:16).

If children are born again, parents have to encourage them to evangelize their friends and neighbors, for it helps them to share in the service of the kingdom of God and at the same time to grow in their spiritual life.

5.1.1.2. In the Church

The church has to recognize that taking the Gospel to children is the most realistic way of building the church and reaching out to the coming generation in an effective way. Evangelism to children is a more fruitful ministry than evangelism for people of any other age because it is very natural for children to trust the Lord and be committed to Him (Richards 1983:372).

The church has to make the maximum effort to reach out to children with the good news, using various methods and techniques. Some preferred ways of evangelizing children are as follows:

a. Form a witnessing group

The pastor or church leader forms a witnessing group, as part of the children's ministry. The group should include the young and converted children. This witnessing group would then need to be trained in how to present the good news with simple facts allowing children to accept the Lord Jesus Christ. This

can be easily applicable in urban and rural churches for it can be started with a prayer group, whose members have a burden for children's ministry (Ronaldson 1999:3-4, 18).

b. Opening schools

In the USA, until 1966, secular schools taught the Bible to their pupils. Gradually however, the Bible has been removed from their curriculum. As a result, American society has become more corrupt and there has been a significant increase in murder, adultery and pornography. Similarly in Ethiopia, up until 1968 when the government and the church were separated and decided not to work together the Bible was taught as a subject with prayer in every secular school. Once schools stopped teaching the Bible we have seen consequences similar to those in the USA, though not to the same degree (Meseretekiristos 2007:71).

The church could open Kindergarten schools and if possible higher level educational centers and use the Bible as part of the curriculum and win many souls to Christ. Such schools would also help believers to mature in their spiritual life and be able to evangelize others. There are many schools in Addis Ababa-which have been established either by churches or by individual believers. The Lutheran School and El Bethel School are just two examples. These Schools teach children through songs, meditating on verses of Scripture and praying daily for about 5-10 minutes before the school starts. The problem is these schools is that they do not place emphasis on the need for salvation because most of their students are Muslims and Ethiopian Orthodox Church followers.

One task of the pastor and of the other leaders of the Church is to encourage the Christian community to help such projects. If individual Christians are able to do this without support from their church, then is good, but it would be far better if they were receiving help and encouragement from the Church leadership. In the context of Ethiopia this is only possible for those who teach in private schools, as the law does not allow the teaching of religious things in

governmental schools. The Ethiopian Full Gospel Theological College trains pastors and evangelists on how to reach children and establish children's ministry in their local churches[3]. It would be good therefore for pastors and Church leaders to take advantage of this valuable resource.

c. Training

Training people for evangelism is helpful in reaching children with the good news. Training can be to different age groups, for instance:

➢ Training Young Children

If we believe that God can use a weak and powerless old man to extend His kingdom, it is not difficult to believe that God could also use a weak and powerless child, who has come to faith and understands the mystery of salvation. The pastor or someone with knowledge and experience of children's evangelism needs to train converted children on how to reach other children and encourage them to do it wisely, boldly and diligently.

The focus of the training which is needed is: wisdom in approaching other children with the Gospel; and how, at the end of the conversation, to invite someone to receive Jesus as personal Savior. The teaching would also need to focus on very important points in relation to witnessing the good news, such as: The love of God to mankind (Jn 3:16), all human beings are sinners (Rom

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[3] The only schools who can teach spiritual things are private schools; especially schools opened by denominations such as Bethel school, Mekaneyesus church and Lutheran school. Individual believers have also opened schools such as Bethlehem and Winner schools, and are doing a work similar to that of the denominational schools. The government never allows the private schools to preach the good news though they know that it happens. The advice given by the Government of Ethiopia is that schools are not to use any form of force to persuade people to change their religion. Evangelism should be done in Church, rather than in school. At the same time the teaching of Bible-based moral and ethical standards is encouraged, as the Government recognizes that this is what produces faithful citizens In Government schools, however, any form of preaching is illegal, whether by Christians or Muslims, and teachers who do so risk being arrested. EFGTC is planning to prepare teaching materials for training pastors and church leaders though these have not yet been produced. One of the problems is that none of the privately run Christians school in Ethiopia are being run under the aegis of the EFGBC, and therefore any material produced by EFGTC may be seen as propagating Pentecostalism. There is a certain amount of suspicion of Pentecostalism by the other Evangelical Churches. Hopefully in the near future EFGTC will start training church leaders. The main problem however is one of lack of finance.

3:23), the wages of sin (Rom 6:23), Christ's death for the sinners (1 Cor 15:3-4, Gal 1:3-4), and the gift of eternal life through faith (Jn 1:12, Eph 2:8-9).

Children can start evangelizing within their family group, and among friends, neighbors and so on.

> *Training parents*

The pastor, or someone invited by him, needs to train parents in different aspects of children's ministry and encourage them to reach their own children and others, because if he wants to change the children, he has to first change the parents. He can also counsel them on how to motivate their children in order to help them to participate in children's ministry and be able to reach their friends and neighbors (Maxwell 1996:122).

> *Training the Christian community*

The Christian community's social life is where children can learn to enjoy being members of God's family. The pastor therefore needs to create awareness in the Christian community of the importance of children's evangelism as an effective way of reaching the coming generation. He then needs to train them on how to reach children compassionately and diligently.

d. *Children's worship programs*

The church can draw up a children's worship program, especially during holidays or weekends, and encourage parents to send their children. Converted children can be encouraged to invite their friends and neighbors to the program.

The worship program should include preaching from the word of God, drama, and songs. To make the program interesting the church leaders should encourage children to be involved in the delivery of the program including the prayer time (Ronaldson 1999:22)

e. Spiritual Films

Children are extremely interested in watching films, so the church needs to provide spiritual films that can lead children to understand the work of the cross and get saved. At this time the pastor needs to encourage parents to send their children to the program and needs to encourage the children to invite their friends and neighbors.

A person can learn more through seeing and hearing, and films include both. Therefore, knowing that children can also learn more from films, the leader should assign an adult to stay with them till they finish watching the film. After they finish watching the film, he can ask them questions in relation to what they saw and heard and answer their questions. If it is done this way children can learn about 90 percent of what they saw and heard (Meseretekristos 2007:26).

f. Sports Ministry

Many people over the years have said that there are two universal languages in the world, music and sports (Sports Friends, 2007:28). Sports ministry is one of the best tools, simple but very powerful, to evangelize children. An overview of Global sports ministry shows that, God uses sports ministry for the expansion of His kingdom.

Sports ministry was first used in the West, in 1904 when an English cricket team went to India to present the Gospel. The YMCA (Young men Christian Association) was established around the world to share the Gospel, using sport as a means of evangelism and in 1950's, and in 1960s, other associations were founded. In those associations, basketball was initially used as a way to share the Christian faith; as a result, many people were saved. Over 30 countries in Africa are involved in sports outreach and Ethiopia is now part of a worldwide movement in sports ministry (Sports Friends, 2007:10).

Sports Friends Ethiopia is a ministry group in Ethiopia that works in collaboration with churches and other Christian organizations in evangelism through sport. This ministry group is evangelizing in many areas of the country in cooperation with the Evangelical Churches' Fellowship. They have recently entered into an agreement to work with EFGTC to train pastors and evangelists, with a three hour accredited course, entitled "Sports Ministry Leadership Training". Therefore, EFGBC pastors and evangelists can be trained to establish sports ministries in their churches to reach children and young people.

However, training pastors and evangelists at a college is not enough in itself to reach children through sports ministry. Church leaders have to start church based sports ministry in cooperation with the trained pastors and evangelists, to reach the children of their area.

As proposed by Sports Friends Ethiopia, helpful steps to enabling the church to start sports ministry are (Sports Friends, 2007:18):

- Identify and train the sports minister or coach.
- Develop support and common vision among the leaders and the whole community in your church.
- Build a trained ministry team that has a kingdom perspective.
- Develop a detailed sports ministry plan.
- Organize and develop strategies such as prayer, evangelism, and discipleship strategies.
- Develop a financial plan for the ministry.
- Identify Christian Leaders of the sports ministry
- Emphasize the ministry rather than the sport, sport is being used as a means for evangelism.
- Buy sport materials and prepare a field or place for the games

In addition to above helpful steps, sport-based ministry can be started easily with kids' games and group games. Because any one can participate in playing these games with out being well qualified or trained in sport.

Few examples of games from Sports Friends Ethiopia training material (Sports Friends, 2007, 51), are:
-   Kids' games – Balloon soccer, Valley ball, Numbered soccer ball, Pass it on, and Crab soccer.
-   Group games – Passing balls in a circle, Leaning game, Chicken fight, Mingle-mingle, Chasing game, Calling command number, Group run, stealing the bacon

Furthermore, games such as tennis table and chess can be helpful as means of engaging children in order to evangelize them.

After sports ministry is started, the sport minister or coach has to encourage the believing children to bring their friends and neighbors with them to play, so that they can share the good news wisely with them at the end of the games, and ask them to accept Christ as their personal savior.

g. Producing and distributing tracts

Producing and distributing tracts is one way of evangelizing people. The same is true of children. Therefore, the church has to produce and distribute tracts to reach children with the good news using the above mentioned areas (a-f) as a means for evangelism. Tracts for children should be prepared using very simple and clear words, so that the message of the good news may be easily understood by those to whom the tracts are given. If possible, tracts should be prepared according to the children's age level groups (Richards 1983:379).

According to Richards (1983:380), tracts for children evangelism can contain six points such as:
-   Only one way to heaven (John 14:6)
-   I have sinned (Rom 3:23)

- God loves me (John 3:16)
- Christ died for me (I Cor 15:3-4)
- God's wonderful gift (Eph 2:8)
- I receive the gift (John 1:12)

Richards' suggestions are not the only possible contents of a tract aimed at children. I would suggest that they could contain the following message: God's love, man's sinfulness, the way to salvation or reconciliation, the death of Christ for sinners and how the child can accept Christ as his/her personal savior expressed in different ways. This can be done by taking into account the context of the child's culture and level of understanding. Tracts for children would need to include pictures and stories to enable the child to fully understand the message of the tract.

5.1.2. Spiritual Nurture

Nurturing children has to be one of the main ministries of the church. If a child is nurtured with the word of God and given care, then the coming generation will be a godly generation that honors God (Gen 18:19). Nurturing starts at family level and continues in church compounds. In fact, both have to work hard in nurturing children. In the nurturing process showing love to children is the most important thing.

Parents have to take responsibility for their children's spiritual life and encourage them to go to church on Sunday and other program days. If parents do not take responsibility and leave their children to do whatever they like it will be difficult to handle them.

For instance, if they leave them at home when they go to church and do not guide their relationships, they can go astray and choose ungodly friends. They may start to watch unconstructive TV programs, films and play electronic games. Those who do not have the access to electronic devices play with their neighbors, imitating their lifestyle and potentially losing their Christian values.

Christian communities are also responsible for their children by considering them as part of the Community who can worship, honor and serve God. When parents and the Christian communities take responsibility for their children, then the children start to give more value to God's will and spiritual blessings than to worldly things.

5.1.2.1. Teaching and Caring in the family

Parents are responsible for teaching their children the Word of God (Deut 32:46-47, Isa 38:19) in words and deeds. God has given parents a responsibility to love, care for and train their children to the best of their ability. If parents do not root their children in the word of God, they can become like plants without root that cannot grow (Black and Gregory 1993 : 5).

Parents have to teach their children on different topics, because they have more influence on their children than any other person in their life. This can be done through repetition because repetition is an essential part of any effective method of teaching. Jesus used repetition as a teaching method in training His disciples on certain truths. Some of the needed topics for teaching children are basic doctrines, prayer, ethics, the Christian value system and sex (Dobbins 1992:22).

They also have to instruct and warn their children from an early age about what sex means, its use, how to guard oneself from it and the consequences. Parents can use the book of Proverbs to warn their children on the dangers of sexual immorality and that they should avoid it, for it costs much (6:20-7:27), showing the character of the immoral man/woman and the consequences. A woman whose lips drip honey and speak smooth words to trap, but "in the end she is bitter as wormwood and sharp as double edged sword and her feet go down to death" (5:2-5). Marital faithfulness and its benefits should also be taught to them (2:16-19; 5:15-23,), so that they can be saved from the adulterer and the adulteress (2:16).

In Ethiopia, teaching children about sex is considered taboo. Even in a national survey in the USA, only about 35 percent of children report having been able to talk openly with their parents about sex because it is considered as a forbidden topic in many homes. However it is important that parents teach their children about sex before they reach their teens, otherwise they will be taught by their friends or others and fall into confusion (Dobbins 1992:38).

5.1.2.2. Family devotion

Thirty five of the 80 respondents said that family devotion is needed in the nurturing process of children because this is the place where children can learn how to pray, to read the Bible, listen to God, identify the Christian value system, and start serving the Lord. Prayer and Bible study should be as natural as food and breathing in the way of life of the family.

In general, family devotion has to consider the age and spiritual maturity of the children, good materials for teaching and consistent prayer. Parents have to be aware that as well as knowledge and understanding of the word of God, experience and application is needed. In addition, daily devotional time for the family should be regular, interesting, and attended by all family members, because building a strong family life is always a priority in serving God (Sproul 1995:1870).

Stamps (1992:1854-55) has suggested some very important points on what parents should do to their children from an early age:
- Dedicate your children to God at the beginning of their lives (1 Sam 1:28;Lk 2:22)
- Teach your children to fear the Lord and turn away form evil, to love righteousness and to hate sin.
- Teach your children to obey you through biblical discipline (Pr 3:11-12; Heb 12:7).
- Make your children aware that God is always observing and evaluating what they do, think and say (Ps 139:1-12).

- Bring your children early in life to personal faith, repentance and water baptism in Christ (Mt 19:14).

- Encourage your children to remain separate from the world and to witness and work for God (2 Cor 6:14-7:1; Jas 4:4).

- Teach them that they are strangers and aliens on this earth (Heb 11:13-16), and their real home and citizenship is in heaven with Christ (Php 3:20; Col 3:1-3).

- Teach your children that God loves them and has a specific purpose for their lives (Lk 1:13-17; Rom 8:30; 1 Pet 1:3-9).

- Prepare your children to suffer and endure persecution because of righteousness (Mt 5:10-12; 2 Tim 3:12).

- Lift your children up to God by constant and earnest intercession (Eph 6:18; Jas 5:16-18).

5.1.2.3. Practical teaching

Seventy two of the 80 respondents suggested that children are best taught through modeling: they need to see their parents reading the Bible, attending church and showing kindness. They also need to see how happy their parents are as they serve the Lord. Parenting is not an easy task, it needs commitment, because when parents model the message of Christ it will be easier for the child to understand and accept it.

According to Lockyer (1970:55-56), some psychologists reported that, children apply what they observe in the following ways:

- If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn and be judgmental.
- If a child lives with hostility, he learns to be angry and fight.
- If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy and withdrawn.
- If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty.
- If a child lives with fear, he learns to be apprehensive.
- If a child lives with pity, he learns to feel sorry for himself.
- If a child lives with jealousy, he learns what envy is.
- If a child lives with sharing, he learns about generosity.
- If a child lives with honesty and fairness, he learns what truth and justice are.
- If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.

- If a child lives with encouragement, he learns confidence.
- If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate.
- If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice.
- If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith.
- If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself.
- If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns to find love in the world.

a. Teaching In the church

Teaching children is the main way to develop their spiritual growth and equip them for the work of ministry. The church is responsible, after the parents, for nurturing children, especially through teaching them the word of God. Teaching children should be according to their age groups (3-6, 7-10, and 11-14).

The Bible is the source of understanding about God, man, the world and the relationship between them. It is also powerful to change negative behaviors to positive and helps people to be responsible for themselves and others. It also contains reports of how the people of God have lived in harmony with, or out of harmony with, revealed reality.

Children should not be taught only on Sundays in the church; rather two to three times a week, otherwise they cannot get enough spiritual food to grow. If teaching them two to three times a week is not possible, the leader can encourage parents to teach their children for two to three days a week in addition to the Sunday's school (Richards 1983:125). The church has to do its best to teach children diligently and encourage the Christian community to do so because a loving community can help children develop normally in all areas of life. So the church has to build up this love with in the Christian community, for children need spiritual guidance, discipline and care (Datiri 2006:1240).

➢ Children's worship programs

Children's worship is one of the best tools to nurture children's spiritual life. It helps them to worship the Lord freely, to hear His word, pray and serve Him

for they are never too young to begin working for Him. So the church leader has to establish a children's worship program, where young children are involved (Nelson 1998:213).

Gruber (1998:31) has suggested a schedule of a balanced children's church service as follows: Songs, Prayer, offering, drama, scripture picture, Bible story, sermon, and prayer. If there is time reinforcing the object of the lesson is also needed. Similarly, Ed and Sonja (1998:36) suggest: singing, theme and introduction, memory verse, Bible story, offering, true life application, prayer and conclusion, and if there is any time remaining they can play games and then draw to a conclusion.

To avoid the main problems in the teaching process of children, the church has to prepare mentors and teaching materials.

➢ *Mentors*

Mentors play a vital role in the nurturing process of children, so the church has to do its best to have good mentors. Mentors should be those who have a burden to serve children and at the same time be prepared for effective ministry through training and developing good characteristics. The number of mentors has to be based on the age groups of children in our church (Ronaldson 1999:1). If possible parents have to be encouraged and given priority to serving the Lord in mentoring children in the church.

- *Training mentors*

Mentors have to be trained well, so that they can teach children in a very systematized and mature way and be fruitful in their ministry. The training can be given in a short course, seminars or in an institution. The quantity of mentors should be increased based on the number of children in the church. Children need well trained mentors because they are restless and easily hurt (Ronaldson 1999:1-3).

Even children's attention span is not the same as that of adults. Children's attention span is as follows: Children 3 - 6 years roughly 8 -11 minutes, 7- 9 years 12 -14 minutes and 10 -14 years 15 -18 minutes. If a mentor wants to stay with them for more time he has to use additional methods, such as story telling, asking questions and various teaching methods to maintain concentration. For instance, if such methods are used, the attention of children increases accordingly from 8-11 minutes to 15-20 minutes, 12 -14 minutes to 25-30 minutes and 15 -18 minutes to 20-45 minutes (Meseretekiristos 2007:10).

   - Characteristics of mentors

Mentors should be called or have a burden to teach children because it is a ministry done only through the grace of God. It is also better for all mentors to be Spirit filled, be faithful and committed in preparing the subject they teach and be punctual. Their attitude should be filled with and controlled by love and a good conscience. Teaching children necessitates patience, being sensitive and living an exemplary life, in love, holiness, words and actions. Furthermore, mentors need to pray for the children they teach and make the lesson fun, easy to understand and meaningful (Ronaldson 1999:1-3).

Patrick and Jeanne (1998:34) suggest how to be a good Sunday school mentor or teacher:

- Know the Lord Jesus as Savior.
- Be ready to commit yourself to serve the Lord.
- Read the Bible daily.
- Have a loving concern for the children.
- Prepare your lesson well beforehand.
- Prepare visual aids for your lesson.
- Arrive early to get everything ready for your class.
- Be flexible to meet the children's needs.
- Pray without ceasing.
- Express your faith through words and actions.
- Attend conferences and seminars.
- Love God, yourself and others.

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➢ *Teaching materials*

The church is the main organization responsible for ~~to~~ preparing Bible teaching materials for children, making them relevant to each age group. Preparing the Bible teaching materials can be done through translating English Bible teaching materials, but the materials should be contextualized and treated properly. The preparation of teaching materials can be done by the Principal of the EFGTC, the Instructors and graduates of the EFGTC and members of the church who have graduated from other theological colleges. Financial resourcing for preparing teaching materials will be dealt with at the end of this chapter, under the title fundraising.

The teaching materials should focus on the main stories of the Bible. The primary way in which Israelites were instructed to teach their children was through stories, because the stories of the Bible help children to understand who God is and what He does. In addition to the stories in the Bible, basic doctrines such as: Bible, God, man, sin, salvation, angels, end times, about ministry, ethics and baptism of the Holy Spirit are needed, especially to children above 6 years old (Yirga 2006:20). Similarly, Nelson (1998:213) suggested that the teaching materials can be prepared in the following subjects:

- Fundamental doctrines
- Prayer and spiritual warfare
- Evangelism
- Topical lessons such as: Choosing good friends, guarding your tongue, tithing, forgiveness, helping the poor.
- Church history
- Christian values
- Ethics

➢ *Methods of Teaching*

Some of the suggested methods of teaching are story telling, visual aids and object lessons. Story telling helps children to understand the message of the Bible. To make it interesting and easily understandable the mentor has to

know the story well and use facial expressions and voice changes. Objects such as an orange, apple, box, scissors or other materials can be used as teaching methods. Visual aids include pictures and puppets. Pictures can be prepared on paper or on the white/black board and finger, stick or glove puppets can be made. In addition to the above methods drama, practical activities, verbal activities and songs can also be used as teaching methods. Practical activities can be filling in missing words, a cross word puzzle and drawing a picture and verbal activities through memory verses and answering questions they are asked Songs, if possible with a musical instrument, and drama are also good teaching methods (Ronaldson 1999:26-36).

In general, teaching children should include worship and testimony time, songs, sharing experience, memory verse, Bible story, questions, discussion and application. It is also important to encourage each child to have his/her own Bible and participate actively (Patrick and Jeanne 1998:65).

b. College Training

From an interview with the principal of the EFGTC, I have learned that in February 2007 Sports Friends Ethiopia Ministry began a training course for leaders in sports ministry. In the future there will be a children's ministry course to train parents on how to establish children's ministry, train mentors, and teach children. Finally, the principal informed me that EFGTC is planning to participate in preparing teaching materials and giving short trainings and seminars to ministers and leaders of the EFGBC in different areas of the country.

5.1.2.4. Discipline

Forty five of the respondents suggested that parents are the ones who are primarily responsible for meeting children's physical and emotional needs, especially when they discipline them. If parents and the Christian community punish their children too harshly when they have done wrong, they can suffer from physical, psychological and emotional problems. Corporal punishment should not be administered for minor and simple issues, such as when a child

does something unintentionally speaks freely, asks questions, or expresses emotions. Children should be free to say what they feel and ask the kind of questions which will enable them to understand their parents and teachers. Otherwise, they will be offended and hurt emotionally, and this could prevent them from being open to the good news, can cause them to lack confidence, and ultimately lead to rudeness of character.

Some of the present day educators of children and the young say "children must not be corrected, but given freedom to express themselves as they want" (Martin 1992:70). The Bible however, teaches differently and has a good deal to say about child correction, "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him" (Pro 22:15). In bringing up their children, parents should show no favoritism, encourage as well as correct, punish only intentional wrongdoing, and dedicate their lives in love with hearts of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Children should be disciplined for corrective purposes. Though discipline begins at home (Pro 22:6), the Christian community is also responsible for disciplining children. Parents, husband and wife, have to agree when they discipline their children otherwise their value system will be confused. In fact, priority should be given to rebuke with few words and then if the child continues, beating with a stick on the buttock may be needed. After discipline parents should give love and comfort to their children. In addition to this parents and the Christian community should not humiliate and belittle their children but rather use discipline to build them up. Parents should not expect perfection from their children, but should teach them the right way to handle their own mistakes and so grow spiritually. Complete transparency is needed between parents and children (Dobson 1992:22-25).

Henrichsen (1984:81-84) mentions a few important principles that may be helpful to parents and church leaders in disciplining children as follows:

- Keep the rules to a minimum of two or three. For example: discipline can be appropriate when a child disrespects others, disobeys an instruction or tells lies.
- When parents discipline their children they have to be careful not to punish them suddenly, because they can be hurt emotionally.
- Allow children the freedom to be honest.
- Be willing to admit when parents are wrong.
- Seek to solve the basic problem rather than attack symptoms.
- Never accuse and judge your child, rather always ask why?
- Make sure you and your spouse present a unified front in the value systems and when they apply the rules for do's and don'ts.
- Pray so that when your child does wrong he/she will get caught.

The purpose of discipline should be to help children to mature in their spiritual life, value system and character and this can be done in love and with compassionate heart. If parents instruct, model and discipline their children in love, those children are more likely to accept and keep their parents words. On the other hand, if discipline is too harsh, children can become bitter (Eph 6:4, Col 3:21) and suffer emotional damage which may result in an inferiority complex and feel hated by their parents. This is certainly not God's will for them.

Parents can influence the attitudes of their children using the two aspects of relationship: love and discipline. Punishment is a small part of the greater concept of discipline and is designed to eliminate undesirable behavior. The purpose of all discipline is to encourage desirable behavior. So both discipline and punishment should be balanced (Richards 1983:20).

In spanking, parents should select something that is thin, long and flexible. They should know exactly how much pain is caused by this instrument by trying it out on their own hand. When spanking, it is better to use words like "No! No!" so that the child learns to associate the physical and emotional pain. Harsh words are not needed to when correcting children for this can cause

them far more hurt than a spanking. When a child's behavior is only mildly annoying it is advisable to ignore it, for he/she can stop it gradually. A child develops internal control for his behavior when he is about five years old. This means his consciousness is formed and functioning, so parents can control him through rewards and penalties rather than spanking (Dobbins 1992:13,107,114).

5.1.2.5. Equipping for Ministry

a. In the Family

40 of the 80 respondents suggested that the family can play a vital role in preparing children for ministry, starting with family Bible study and prayer. It is good for parents to encourage their children to lead in prayer, or to start up a song, or even share the word of God. In agreement with this, Shaw (1995:54) says that parents should create the kind of atmosphere which will encourage their children to serve the Lord in different areas of ministry such as in worship leading, praying, and evangelizing.

b. In the Church

40 of the 80 respondents suggested that church leaders should work hard in equipping children for the ministry services and help them to be involved in serving the Lord. The church should have a clear vision for the future, do everything in its power to raise up a godly generation who will lead the church, defend biblical truths and be able boldly and powerfully to reach their own generation with the good news of salvation. In addition to forming a children's choir to serve once or twice a year on Christian holy days, children should be encouraged to be involved in many other forms of Christian ministry.

There are too many Christian parents and Church leaders in the modern church who believe that the only people capable of serving God are those who spiritually and emotionally more mature, which automatically excludes children. As a result church leaders see children as those who should be guided, not those who might be used by God to guide others; as those who

must learn not those who might have something to teach; as those who must watch not those who might do; as those who must be evangelized not those who evangelize (Black and Gregory 1993:15). The Bible, however, shows us that God uses children like Samuel (1 Sam 2:11, 3:1) to fulfill His purposes. Therefore parents and church leaders need to know that the Lord can work and desires to work through children, which means that they must help and encourage children to be involved in ministry activities.

5.2. Social

5.2.1. Parents relationship

5.2.1.1. Parents relationship with their children

Though children's social life is primarily developed in the family, school bonds and peer group relationships can also play a great role. This means that parents need to teach their children the Christian value system in words and in by themselves living an exemplary life. Parents' relationship with each other, with their children and others is also important. If parents do not show love, forgiveness and encouragement to one another and to others, their children will be getting a mixed message about Christian values and begin to live like the unbelieving community. Children can also become aggressive and rebellious because of bad examples that they see or experience within their own family, or from what they see on television or in films. It is therefore the responsibility of parents to deal with such problems and teach their children the Christian value system (Dobson 1992:18).

Parents have to guard their children from unnecessary relationships with ungodly children. When guests, relatives or friends come to their home, people who do not necessarily share the family's Christian values, it is the parents' responsibility to guard their children. Allowing children to socialize freely with anyone whose value systems the parents do not know is dangerous. The same applies if the persons with whom the children relate are known to be unbelievers. Children need to learn to respect everyone with whom they come into contact, be they family, friends, church leaders, members of the Christian community, or complete outsiders. At the same

time, discerning between those whose lifestyle is in accordance with Christian standards and those whose standards are different (Black and Gregory 1993:35).

Parents who work outside of their home need to be very careful about who they ask to look after their children, when they are not able to do so themselves. Children can be easily influenced by adults, films, internet websites and television, both for good which can help them to mature spiritually, but also for bad which can lead to corruption. Richards (Richards 1983:188) is correct when he says that parents must teach their children true Christian values so that they will begin to live by those standards, and learn:

- To love others
- To develop self discipline
- To develop a good self image and responsibility
- To make right choices and be obedient to the truth
- To resist temptation and overcome fear and anger
- To resist peer pressures
- To be respectful and to choose good friends

Similarly, Meseretekristos (2007:43) quotes the seven principles for good parenting, suggested by psychologist Lawrence Stemberg as follows:

- Spend time with them daily and find out how they are getting on
- Express love (show or give them love)
- Share in their crises and problems
- Be consistent in discipline and the application of the family's value system
- Give them freedom
- Make sure you know where they have been and what they have been doing
- Explain your decisions clearly
- Be a real father or mother

In addition to the above constructive suggestions, parents need to set their children a practical example of giving, sharing, praying for others and helping

the weak. The intimate relationship which parents have with one another and the way in which they show genuine care for others, will provide for their children an excellent role model as they develop into adulthood. The life which parents live affects the life of their children. The scripture says "the righteous man leads a blameless life; blessed are his children after him" (Pr 20:7).

Parents should know that, humiliating children makes them feel unloved, weird. It is important therefore that parents respect their children and provide them with the care which they need to grow into healthy adults. When parents respect their children, those children are more likely to accept their value system when they reach teen years (Dobson 1992:12). If children are mistreated or disrespected they can stand against the truth and become rebellious.

Parent's responsibility for their children is not only to teach and guide them but also to pray for them, because prayer strengthens their spiritual life and keeps them from evil deeds (Job 1:5).   Some prayer requests suggested by Ronaldson (1999:18-19) when we pray for children are:

- Pray for God to have mercy on them and save them and fill them with His Spirit.
- Ask for God's hand of protection over them shielding them from all physical, mental and spiritual harm.
- Ask God to open their spiritual eyes and ears to receive the things of God and to grow in Him.
- Ask God to guide them to renew their minds and develop the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.
- Pray about any other need that you know of, concerning each child.

5.2.1.2. Parents' relationship with leaders and mentors

a. Parents
A successful children's ministry depends in part on the relationship between parents and the church. Therefore all parents, church leaders and mentors

need to work hard to build good relationships with one another in order to accomplish the very objectives of this ministry.

Parents should encourage their children to participate in the Christian education program. Invite mentors, pray for them, talk with them about their children and express appreciation of what they are doing. If there are any problems discuss these with the leaders and mentors.

b. Church leaders and mentors

The church leaders and mentors should encourage parents, providing any support they might need to become good parents teaching them how to handle and nurture their children. They can also motivate them to participate in every part of the ministry and work diligently. In addition to this they can provide a discussion forum between parents and mentors for the advancement of the ministry.

Mentors should also build a good relationship with parents, encourage them, share the problems they face, ask questions if needed and pray with them. In addition to the suggested prayer request for parents, the mentor is encouraged to pray for the children and for his ministry (Ronaldson 1999:19).

5.2.2. Children's relationship

5.2.2.1. Children's relationship with their parents

35 of the 80 respondents pointed out that children's relationship with parents should be based on the Biblical principle: "honor your father and your mother" (Ex 20:12; Eph 6:1). They should listen to the godly instruction of their parents and not forget it (Pr 1:8; 5:1), but rather keep it in their hearts (3:1), accepting the warnings of their parents, against folly, adultery and the path of the wicked (Pr 5:7-10, 7:2). In addition to this, when they are disciplined they need to learn to accept the discipline as a sign of love and recognize that it is for their benefit (3:11-12).

5.2.2.2. Children's relationship with others

35 of the 80 respondents believed that Children's socializing with the faith community helps them to learn the Christian value system and to practice it in their life. It helps them to develop a godly relationship with others and to grow in their spiritual knowledge and life. This is why it is doubly important for Christian believers to live out their faith in practice, as they are setting an example to the children who are part of the faith community. Similarly, when children relate to unbelievers, whether they are consciously witnessing to them about Christ or simply playing with them, it is important that they are living in accordance with the Christian value system that honors God. As children grow up they need to learn the right way to relate to young people of the opposite sex. Therefore, parents need to encourage their children to develop good social relationships with friends who also fear God (Pr 13:20, 28:7).

5.2.2.3. Believer's relationship with children

Of the 80 respondents 60 spoke of the importance of the Christian community living an exemplary life before children. In specific terms they spoke of the need for adult members of the Christian community to be fully committed to a life of prayer and Bible study. Christian believers need to lead lives of holiness living in love with each other and with the unbelieving community, attending church worship programs regularly and in participating in church ministry groups. Children are imitators of what they see in their family and the community around them. So considering children as the next generation of ministers and church leaders, the believing community has to take care not to be a stumbling block for children.

Causing children to stumble is more sternly rebuked by Jesus than anything else (Mt 18:5-6). Lockyer (1970:55) suggested some of the ways in which the believing community causes children to stumble. We believe that similar things are happening in our country today:

- By teaching them to do evil things.
- By mocking at their early piety and childlike faith.

- By living inconsistently before them.

- By allowing them to read the wrong books and magazines.

- By failing to teach them to read the Bible.

- By taking them to places where holy things are ridiculed.

- By disregarding their childlike desire to pray.

- By never speaking to them simply and lovingly of their need of Jesus as savior.

5.3. Finance

Of the 72 (90%) who felt that finance was a problem, 20 said that the church did not have enough money to cover the expense of children's ministry because most of the members of the church are from the middle and lower class group in relation to their financial income. Churches in rural areas do not have enough money because members are farmers whose tithe is grain and domestic animals. These respondents therefore suggested that the church needs external support for this ministry.

Of the 80 respondents 52 felt that the church did have enough money deposited in the bank but was unwilling to spend it due to a lack of awareness and vision for children's ministry. Church leaders assign a budget for many different ministry departments of the church, such as: choir, prayer group, deacons, youth, women and guest preachers, but they do not assign any budget for children's ministry. The responsibility therefore lies with those church leaders who are responsible for the church's budget, to assign money for ministry to children.

5.3.1. Fundraising

20 of the 80 respondents suggested that where the church does not have sufficient funds to finance children's ministry, then a special fund-raising effort should be put in place. For instance, the pastor of that church or the committee of the children's ministry could teach the congregation biblical truths in relation to the purpose of children's ministry and ask them to give money specifically for the development of that ministry. Such fundraising could be done once every three or four months in Sunday's worship time or

on some other occasion when a special program was presented to which every member of the church was invited. The funds raised could then be used to provide such necessities as: teaching materials, materials helpful for sports and games and places for teaching and playing sports.

5.3.2. Searching for Sponsor

20 of the 80 respondents suggested that church leaders search for addresses and contact different aid organizations via email, and to look for people who might be sponsors for the children's ministry of the church. Church leaders could also contact the head office of EFGBC and ask them for help in searching for any person or organization that can assist their church's children's ministry.

In response to this suggestion I interviewed the person in EFGBC head office who is responsible for sports ministry. He informed me that they are planning to focus on children's ministry and have already started to work on children's ministry in cooperation with Sharon Children's Ministry, led by Efrem Yirga, though the fruit of this cooperation has not yet filtered through to the local church. In July 2007 EFGBC head office and Sharon Ministry held a three-day seminar in Debrezeit city which was attended by many ministers from different churches.

The sport ministry representative of EFGBC said that we need the churches to be active in organizing the youth and children, so that we can work together, though we do not have enough money to cover the needed expenses for children's ministry for every church. Thus, church leaders need to contact and ask the EFGBC head office for any help, financial or material, so that they can start children's ministry in their church.

5.4. Prayer

Of the 80 respondents 78 suggested that prayer is the answer for it helps leaders, parents and the believing community to have vision and to believe that God will provide what is needed for children's ministry. The New

Testament church frequently interceded on behalf of various individuals, and the purpose was for Christian growth (Ph 1:9-11; Col 1:10-11), for effective pastors (2 Tim 1:3-7), for effective mission work (Mt 9:38; Eph 6:19-20), and its result was good. Similarly the church leader needs to establish a prayer group for children's ministry before he starts anything, and even if the church already has children's ministry, prayer is essential of the church is to have God's guidance, and provisions for the needed expenses for the ministry.

If we wish to know someone and to know their wishes, it is essential that we communicate with that person. Equally we cannot love someone if we do not know that person. It is the same in matters of the Kingdom of God. It is by communicating with God in prayer that we will discover His will. So we need to hear from him and rely totally on His strength, wisdom, motivation, love, plan and inspiration to do His will. And prayer is needed to have all this (Ronaldson 1999:18).

The above findings and suggested strategies should be translated into action step by step. So children's spiritual and social problems may be solved in the near future. Furthermore, the church can establish children's ministry and move forth to evangelize and strengthen the converted children, enabling them to evangelize other children.

Chapter Six

Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusive summary

The study of children's ministry is a serious issue. However, even gathering information about it is difficult, and it is seldom easy to get the right information from people, especially in developing countries where documentation is not readily available. This by implication demands determination, patience and courage.

In this research, we have attempted to collect material from both primary and secondary sources in order to analyze the situation from the biblical point of view and current perspective. We have gathered data from a variety of different sources: literature review, interview, observation, testimonies and case studies. Based on the above methods, from the Ethiopian perspective, we are able to present crucial strategies for parents, pastors and the Christian believing community.

In the Old Testament children were considered as part of the covenant community and God commanded parents and leaders of the believing community to nurture the children of that community in order to produce a new generation of God-fearing men and women. The same holds true for the New Testament church.

Based on the data gathered, children's ministry is neglected in the EFGBC, even though 34 percent of the members of the church are children. So we can say that there is a need for establishing children's ministry in the church to nurture children spiritually and socially. This need exists within the church as an organization, but the church also needs to help Christian parents with the nurturing children in the home.

6.2. Recommendations

Some helpful recommendations to resolve Children's Ministry problems within the EFGBC are:-

6.2.1. Spiritual

The church has to get back to what the Bible says about the place of children in the Christian community and act accordingly. This means recognizing that children can be saved and that provided they are properly nurtured in their spiritual life, are capable of growing and developing into good Christian leaders in the coming generation. Today's world is led by yesterday's children, and tomorrow's world will be led by today's children. This means that the way we nurture out children today will affect the world which we are building for tomorrow. Therefore, the church has to establish Children's ministry for the following reasons:

a. To evangelize children and bring them to Christ in their early age.

b. To nurture their spiritual life so that they may grow in Christ. Knowing that the next generation leaders and ministers, who defend and teach the truth, are today's children; the church has to invest its man power, money and other necessary things to develop Children's Ministry. Furthermore, for effective ministry providing a good atmosphere of learning is helpful, such as: providing teaching materials and teach them according to their age group level (3-6, 7-10 and 11-14), preparing a place for learning and showing them love.

c. To help children to witness the good news of salvation for their friends and neighbors, so that the church may reach many children within few period of time.

The above mentioned basic reasons for establishing Children's Ministry can be effective if the church has decided to:

➢ Develop mentors skill on how to nurture children's spiritual life.

➢ Teach parents on how to handle their children's spiritual life by preparing workshops and time for discussions on issues related to Children's Ministry.

The involvement of the EFGBC head office is also crucial for the children's ministry, to be as fruitful as possible. Because this central body has an important role in preparing teaching materials, equipping mentors, providing financial aid and encouraging leaders to establish children's ministry in each local church. Where this ministry already exists in the local church, the head office can strengthen it.

It is also important to recognize that Christian parents have to work hard if they are to effectively nurture their children, helping them to grow spiritually and equipping them for the work of ministry. This can be done through teaching the word of God, prayer, living exemplary life. Furthermore, encouraging them to go to church and have fellowship with other believers in prayer and other spiritual activities.

6.2.2. Social

The church has to teach its congregation and parents on how to handle and nurture children in their social life. Knowing that children can easily be offended, the believing community has to give care for children through making the churches atmosphere good to them, so that they may love and be interested to go to church and worship God. Furthermore, the church has to teach children on how they should relate with unbelievers in their school and villages.

6.2.3. Financial

Church leaders need to work hard in establishing children's ministry in their local churches. They can start in a very simple way, even if they have only a small number of children, few mentors and few financial resources. Even if they lack anything other than the simplest of teaching materials, and have no room that they can set aside for teaching the children – they can still make a start. This can be done in cooperation with ministers of their local churches, who have a burden to mentor children. Then they may search for someone who can sponsor the ministry or ask the head office for additional help to strengthen the ministry. If they stay as they are, without starting the ministry, waiting until they have a large number of children, sufficient money, a very

nice building for teaching, special teaching materials, they may end up having no children's ministry in their church.

In fact the needed finance for Children's Ministry can be generated in various ways such as; through:

➢ Teaching the congregation to understand Children's Ministry and ask them to contribute as much as they can. Then, motivate the congregation to pay the money they decided for Children's Ministry, little by little within three to six months period of time. Fundraising can continue to be done every six months, so that the ministry can get the needed financial support and grow quickly.

➢ Asking for sponsorship from various aid organizations and individuals who are willing to help Children's Ministry.

➢ Asking the Head Office for financial help and to get information on how to get money for Children's Ministry.

In general, the practical suggestions which I have outlined in this study will enable parents and the leaders of the local churches to meet the needs of the children who are already in their churches, and also reach out to those children who are at present outside the church. The church will be able to preach the good news effectively to children, and nurture those who respond. The result will be a large body of godly leaders and strong witnesses in the church of the coming generation.

Based on the case studies from the Ethiopian perspective, we can assume that, if the church fails: to develop children's ministry, to train parents on how to nurture their children, to train mentors who have the burden for children's ministry the coming generation will be full of ungodly leaders and people who live an immoral life.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Thank you, for your kind willingness to fill the questionnaire.

The objective is, to know the main causes of the problems of children (ages 3-14) in the today's church, especially in the Full Gospel Church, and relates it with the biblical model for children. Finally, to present basic strategies for parents, pastors or leaders of the church, and the Christian community in relation to children's ministry and write a thesis for Masters Degree.

Your contribution plays a great role in benefiting God's people to think and act in preparing godly leaders and believes for the next generation.

The researcher would like to ask the following research questions as he undertakes this study. Tick on the right box you think.

1. First of all would you like to tell us your personal data such us age, sex, educational level, conversion year, present ministry and responsibility in the EFGBC?

    Age - 18-30 ☐   31-40 ☐   41-55 ☐

    Sex – Male ☐   Female ☐

    Educational level – Degree - ☐   Diploma ☐   Certificate ☐

    12th complete ☐   Under 12th grade ☐

    Conversion year – 1970 – 1985 - ☐   1986-1995 - ☐   1991-2005 - ☐

    Present ministry - _____

2. Is there a children ministry in your local church?

    If your answer is yes, what kind of ministry?

    Teaching - ☐   Evangelism - ☐   Children Service - ☐

    If other type of ministry is given mention - _____

3. How do they teach children from age three to fourteen? All in one place together? All children in two groups (3-7, 8-14)? Or all in three groups (3-6, 7-10, and 11-14)?

All in one ☐   All in two groups ☐   All In three groups ☐

4. How many children are in your church? Write it in percentage or number in contrast with adult members of your church.

5. Would you like to tell us the sex, age, conversion year, spiritual maturity (in their prayer life, knowledge of the word of God and practical life), and educational level of the mentors who teach in your church?

Age - 18-30 ☐   31-40 ☐   41-55 ☐

Sex – Male ☐   Female ☐

Educational level – Degree - ☐   Diploma - ☐   Certificate - ☐

12 th complete - ☐   Under 12 th grade - ☐

Spiritual maturity – Not matured - ☐   Matured - ☐   Moderate - ☐

Training – Trained - ☐   Not trained - ☐

If there is additional or other information _____

6. How do you explain the awareness of parents, church leaders, the Christian community and the mentors on children's ministry?

There is awareness - ☐   No awareness - ☐   Less awareness – ☐

7. How is the spiritual condition and value system of children in their family and Christian community, in your church in general?

Good ☐   Moderate ☐   Not good ☐   Uncertain ☐   Not born again ☐

8. How do you explain the main problems of children's ministry in your church, their family and the Christian community?

9. What do you suggest as a solution for the current problems of children ministry in EFGBC, for parents, leaders of the church, the church community as a whole and the mentors?