

THE FIRSTFRUIT

The Youth & the Church

[Download \[pdf 223kB\]](#)

The youth are an integral part of our society whose contribution to the church cannot be ignored. Most recent studies analyzing the demographic structure of the global population, have reported an increased upsurge in the percentage of youth per adult. Such surveys have increasingly continued to emphasize on the need to tap the input of the youth in all the socio-economic fabric of the society. Likewise, there is a growing disquietness within the church arising from the fear that the youth have not been fully integrated in the day-to-day business of the Lord. It is actually believed that the reason the promised revival in the House of the Lord has not seen the light of day, is because the youth church has been mostly neglected. This rampant neglect of the youth church has as a matter of fact created a vacuum in the hearts of the young believers thereby causing them to look for other means of satisfying their void. This is the living testimony that lack of Wisdom still largely persists in the church, the congregation of the Lord. Most of what goes on in the youth churches today demonstrates a complete departure from spiritual understanding, knowledge and wisdom. That is the reason sexual sin, rap music, reggae music, rock music, ndombolo, drug addiction, alcoholism, pornography, immorality, dirty language, slutty dressing, filthy dancing, name it, can persist among the christian youth. It is also a reflection of the fall and misinformation that prevails among their Pastors. What todays youth Pastors have not known, is that there is a vast difference between spiritual wisdom and the knowledge that they are imparting into the youth. For example, knowledge describes the accumulation of facts and information, old and latest. Such knowledge as is being downloaded on the youth church today include the excesses of this world portrayed in the social internet network that have now become a youth fad in the church. Also the aping of any form of new age dancing that seems to establish in the youth church today, among others. While wisdom on the other hand, describes why things work the way they do and evaluate what things are most important. Knowledge is known for being mostly quantitative while wisdom is qualitative. Todays youth need to understand that they may have knowledge about many things that actually have little bearing on spiritual life. Yet wisdom is largely concerned above all with the key issues of a spiritual christian life. The bible, the Word of God, can make us spiritually wise because while it contains most information about creation, its primary emphasis is on understanding and knowing the nature of our Creator. What the youth church has not grasped today, is that it is the knowledge of the nature of our Creator that will navigate us towards His requirements upon our lives. Moreover, while the bible gives us some insight into life in the ancient world, its main purpose is to prepare us for eternal life with God Almighty. No wonder, the scripture says, "all these things happened to them as examples for us. And they were written down to warn us who live at the time when this age is drawing to a close." (1 Corinthians 10:11-12). The mistake that most youth churches, Pastors and sheep alike make, is to merely master the facts of the bible including scriptures. And yet God requires that His Word may make itself at home in our hearts by becoming part of all what we think, all we say, and all we do. When Gods Word becomes fully inter-woven into the very fabric of the lives of todays christian youth, that is when their lives will become transformed and revival set in. Absurdly, a closer look at the youth church today reveals a conspicuous absence of the Word of God and His corresponding wisdom, in what the youth think, say and do. It is for this reason that the Holy Spirit is now pleading with the youth church to awaken that they may not be left behind in this mighty endtime revival.

The stagnation that is manifesting today in the spiritual lives of our christian youth across denominations is a clear sign that they are not being fed on the rightful spiritual food. Spiritual growth that is so much longed-for in todays youth churches can only come about by the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will always put the youth church on a strict and lean spiritual diet of righteousness and holiness, as these are the only attributes that matter to God. Ultimately God has a good future planned for the youth, the reason for which His Word says that the young men and women should learn to be self-controlled; and sound in faith; and in endurance; and purity. When well taught and embraced these admirable spiritual character traits will definitely yield spiritual growth and transformation in the youth church. Nevertheless, the christian youth ought to know that spiritual growth comes when we turn our attention from our own desires and invest our lives in Gods priorities. The bible consistently reminds us that the human heart is constantly tempted to replace the worshipping of God Almighty with idolatry, namely the worshipping of things. The advent of post-modernism that has encroached into the adult church has also hyped up these forms of idolatry even among the christian youth. An erroneous concept is right now being circulated in the church of Christ world-over, that the acquisition of more money, things and wealth is a symbol of not only approval from God but also His anointed. This form of idolatry has for long plagued the church into spiritual doldrums. While all this goes on in the youth church, we are also warned by the Word of God that the love of money is at the root of all forms of evil. However, the greatest moment of breakthrough that can ever take place in the youth church is the day when our young men and women will live the scripture that instructs them to flee from the evil desires of their youth and pursue righteousness. One of the most important impediments to spiritual growth in the youth church today is the peer pressure that sets in early in life, causing most of them to go in one direction whether wrong or not. In view of this, the christian youth should understand

that our outlook on life depends very much on our inlook. The reason why today's youth have fallen prey to fears, pressures, anxiety, anger and even depression, is because their general outlook is mostly shaped by the world around them than the Word of God. Whereas for those remnant Christian youth who meditate on God's Word and allow it to take root in their hearts experience peace and the goodness of God Almighty's favour over all aspects of their lives.

This is because, when well taught to the youth church, the Word of God teaches what is true, rebukes sin, straightens the believer through correction and teaches them to do what is right.

DISENGAGING OUR YOUTH FROM PEER PRESSURE

Nevertheless, it is very important to teach the youth how to occasionally withdraw from the peer groups and pressures and spend sometime in prayer. This can often be done with the parents as they teach their youth the biblical basis of the day-to-day living. It offers a very critical and optimal moment to begin in-building into the youth biblical values in such institutions like marriage and relationships. Maintaining such a spiritually healthy rhythm of withdrawal and engagement with the public, will most obviously rear the youth into the footpath that Jesus Himself followed. More often than not, it is what the youth are taught that they will always stick to even into adulthood. The treasure here comes out of the fact that there is a profound link between solitude, spiritual growth and power. This actually is why Jesus led a life on earth that seemed to follow an alternating rhythm of involvement and withdrawal from the very onset of His ministry to the time of His death. The baptism of Jesus, typically hailed as the inauguration of His ministry, was immediately followed by a lengthy period of solitude in the Judean desert. During that time of prayer and fasting, Jesus was then able to offer His Firstfruit unto God His Father in heaven even as the Lord ministered to him in the wilderness. The Word of God says that upon being baptized, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness (Luke 4:1). Even most importantly, upon His victory following temptation during that time, the Lord returned from the wilderness filled with the Power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:14).

Withdrawal and Engaging

It is noteworthy that, the Greek word for power, *dunamis*, from which we get the word dynamite is the same term applied to the Holy Spirit power as described in the book of Romans chapter 1 verse 16. And that is the reason why training the youth to develop a healthy and regular rhythm of withdrawing and engaging with peers, will always offer God the ample opportunity to minister to them and empower them for ministry. It is equally vital to recognize that when Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer, He was able to more clearly identify evil influences, to clarify His priorities and motives and to reflect on God's Word and His requirements. Now, this becomes the time of soul-care that will bring strength and spiritual refreshment to the youth so that they can serve God and even those around them. Moreover, it is no doubt that in this kind of rhythm, the time the youth spend with others will usually help direct their prayers in solitude. However, this principle endures for all believers, young and old, Pastors and sheep, alike. This is because even the disciples of Jesus had to wait in solitude in the upper room until the Spirit came at Pentecost and empowered them for ministry. Withdrawal from public engagement surely becomes a very critical principle since it causes both the youth and adults to wait on the Lord. This is the true meaning of spending quality time with the Holy Spirit. Well, one may say that the ease of the youth adapting to this rhythm of solitude and engagement will most obviously depend on their inherent individual personalities. It is true that some people may tend more towards involvements with others, while others towards withdrawal. But regardless of their preferences it is always important to maintain a balance of involvement and withdrawal. Even a diurnal rhythm of one building time in solitude and reflection into their day, what it has been, and what they went through, may prove very crucial in helping them improve their next day. Teaching the youth these fundamental principles in Christian walk will surely impart on them a life-long foundation of Christian living. This is especially vital because many things in life can be lost but the disciplines that these practices bring into the lives of the youth, are of eternal benefit. Here, I am more concerned about the disciplined and attentive believer that the Holy Spirit will mould out of the youth who cherish this pathway. Mark you, attentiveness to this type of life-changing Word will always fill the mind of the youth with the timeless truth of God that never passes away. This particularly teaches the youth to disconnect from the unscrupulous materialism that has today corrupted the young generation. The treasure unveiled by this truth to the youth, is for them to eventually learn that in life no matter how much loss of material they may encounter, the endless Word of God will always be their pillar of support, restoration, and revival for moving on. In all this, emphasis should be laid to the youth that service unto the Lord will always bring them great treasures in heaven, "where they will never be eaten by moths or rust and where they will be safe from the thieves" (Matthew 6:19-20). Maintaining the healthy rhythm of spiritual solitude greatly will help the youth to get right at the feet of Jesus, because at that place they become teachable and intractable. This most vividly brings to mind Mary whose attentive presence at the feet of Jesus turned out to be a most important act of worship, about which even Jesus himself said, "that she would be remembered throughout the world wherever the gospel will be preached."

The discipline of this nature therefore gives the youth the ambitious task and privilege of always focusing their

time and energy on things that will yield eternal reward. Deliberate effort has to always be made to train the youth to continually strive to be Spirit-filled and walk in wisdom. The youth church should be carefully instructed that walking in wisdom involves being able to recognize that God Almighty will hold them to account for their every action, including the so-called white lies that have been tolerated among believers today (Ecclesiastes 11:9). Gods judgement of Ananiah and Sapphirah offers a unique platform and even in the history of the church, while its message remains universal. The fact that God Almighty punished their sin with immediate death, helps to bring out and highlight the gravity of lying. It also carries with it a unique universal message that would help in reminding the youth that they cannot pretend to be totally devoted to God and yet get away with it. God desires that we willingly surrender all our lives to him. And He knows the extent of our hearts true devotion unto Him. This becomes a key lesson to the youth church because it articulates that trying to lie to God and yet appearing more spiritual than we actually are, may cost us our lives, like it did Ananiah and Sapphirah. There is no better time to teach this lesson to the youth church than now in this dispensation of the greatest falsehood. Even most important is to teach our young people the attitude of repentance and confession of sin to others and God whenever they error. That Peter confronted Ananiah and Sapphirah head on, upon lying surely validates both the youth and their Pastors on the fact that God has zero tolerance towards any sin whatsoever. Emphasis is hereby laid on taking responsibility to call sin as sin, and not a spade, a big spoon. This kind of honesty is as necessary today, as it was in the first church. Sad though, that by letting the youth get away with lies, most Pastors have inadvertently helped create pathological liars in this crooked, corrupt and depraved generation.

Now, regarding the act of service, it is imperative to clarify to the youth that there will always be two kinds of people on this earth; Guests and Hosts. Guests are those who will always expect to be served while Hosts are those that will perpetually serve others. The Guests are those that expect to be taken care of and served while Hosts are those that expect to care for others. The discipline of christian service builds on the premise that we as Christs followers, are always Gods Hosts in this world. The Apostles built forth a group of Hosts who could serve the practical needs of the community while being full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:3). It is so critical to teach the youth that regardless of whether it is serving food or proclaiming Gods Word they should always strive to be Gods Hosts while showing love to the Guests. No matter what our task is, we should hence always sit before the Holy Spirit with wisdom, as we go about our work of serving others. Then, the others will hear and see the love of Christ in our lives in a practical way. This is what has not been taught to the youth over the ages thus making the church today entirely a population of Guests. Todays believers are always waiting to be served hence remaining perpetually irresponsible infants who cannot take authority and grow. As in any other spiritual practise, if we simply go through the motions, we will not only waste time and effort but we will also dishonour God and harm those around us. The Lord desires our total devotion to Him that we may grow from infancy to maturity in christian walk. Israel too had made the same mistake by merely performing ritual pascal services that were empty before the Lord. For that matter, God warned Israel about the dangers of empty asceticism. He called them to fast from self concern in order to care for others. The same thing we see in the church today, whereby the majority of christians expect to be served and cared for without taking responsibility of concern to the world around them. We see in the book of Isaiah, God calling for a fast in which we say no to ourselves in order to say yes to acts of service that are accompanied by mercy and compassion to others. Compassion and mercy most importantly involves pin-pointing out the sin that has plagued others. In that way, the lives of the youth can act as a mirror of the light of God that others can emulate.

Majority of the youth tend to be very intent and full of energy. It is the duty of the church today to tap on this vigour of the youth in order that when they serve the Lord, they would do it with all their hearts and accomplish outstanding feats for Christ. Such a character though can be intimidating to the dark world because it would literally send the youth evangelizing Christ into every corner of the society.

Treasured Spiritual Principles to the Youth

However, in order to guard the youth against the persecution that the world levies on evangelism, there are certain important spiritual disciplines that they would have to adhere to. Such spiritual disciplines can strengthen the youth church as they walk with God, while reminding them of their total dependence on Him. Firstly, solitude that has been discussed above becomes very critical for withdrawal to refresh, recharge and re-energize. For example, Paul withdrew in the Arabian desert for a time. That extended retreat was marked by solitude in which he meditated very intensely on Gods Word and spent much of his time in prayer. Evidently, this was exactly when he received his gospel message by a direct revelation from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:12; Exodus 3). This time away equipped him for a lifetime of involvement in service that changed the world even to this very day. That teaches us as christians, and especially the youth, that lasting work requires extensive preparation. The second spiritual discipline that the youth need to be taught, is the discipline of prayer. When we deliberately pray regularly, God is compelled to act on our behalf. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus deliberately prayed three times (Matthew 26). Likewise, when confronted with what he referred to as the "Thorn in his flesh" Paul prayed regularly three times a day until the Lord delivered him. Prayer will normally give us strength and reassurance in times of need (Genesis 8). The third spiritual principle is service. God requires that all people serve Him committedly to preach the Good News where the Name of Jesus has never been heard (Romans 15:20). And this

at the same time may involve making countless sacrifices for the sake of the gospel. Furthermore, the youth need to be taught the noble spiritual principle of stewardship. In that way, they would be very careful not to waste any of the Lords resources including money and time. In the bible, we see an example of this kind when Paul was very prudent not to waste the Lords money and refused to receive payment for preaching the Word to the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 9:1-18). In turn, Paul encouraged all the churches in Corinth to participate in helping the church in Jerusalem that was devastated by famine and poverty. In that way, he thoroughly taught them the importance of observing a strict culture of discipline in good stewardship with the Lords resources that includes the Word. The other very important spiritual discipline that the church needs to engage the youth on, is that of regular bible study. The youth must always be taught to become students of Gods Word. But in so doing, they should be warned not to simply study as a matter of academic curiosity but as an act of worship. The Lord is vastly wealthy in knowledge, understanding and wisdom. He is absolutely capable of enhancing our comprehension of His mighty Word. This is the foundation of evangelism as directed by the Holy Spirit. But, beyond these treasured principles, it is important to clearly lay to bare unto the youth that even extraordinary people become totally incapable of living holy lives apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. Regardless of how well implemented these principles are, they will never achieve their desired end except that they be placed under the constant pulse of Gods power working in and through the youth. Therefore, as the young people begin to undertake Gods high calling in their lives they need to be constantly reminded to pay heed to the biblical admonition when the Lord said "After starting your christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to attain your goal and become perfect by human effort?" (Galatians 3:3). At the same time, the youth have to be constantly taken back to the fact that they can employ these treasured spiritual disciplines as a means of helping them look to God Almighty. That can only mean that responding to the call of God will always prompt us of our constant dependence on the Holy Spirit as it helps form channels through which the Spirit can work. The best gift then, that the youth can ever give the Lord, is to allow themselves be these channels through which God can work. To become vessels of honour purified, made holy and separated for His noble purposes (2 Timothy 2:19-21). When the youth church will carefully follow the above mentioned spiritual principles, in conjunction with fasting and worship, then the vessel that the Holy Spirit creates in them will essentially have been separated from the world. We are being evoked here about the lives of the Hebrew boys, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. In their youthful age, Daniel resolved to live a life of separation from the world by refusing to defile himself with the royal food and wine. As a consequence, he asked the chief official permission not to defile himself in that way. Daniel then kindly requested the Chief official to give them nothing to eat except vegetables and water to drink. The fact that after ten days the Hebrew young men looked healthier and better, greatly underscores the gravity of the youth observing a separated life from the world. Notice must be taken here that when God said healthier and better, He meant it in the spiritual context. This becomes a key spiritual milestone that if grasped by the youth, would explode the biggest revival in the history of the church. It is because the worldliness that has menaced todays church will have essentially been defeated. That defeat will only come from a deliberate rejection of the world by the youth with its corresponding post-modernism in the church. Joy unspeakable must have animated in Gods heart when He looked at Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, on the tenth day and appraised them as being spiritually healthier and better. Green vegetation was not only a command given to Moses as a food the Israelite should eat, but also represents health and healing. It is incredible to see how the youth of today are being scourged by the ugly syndrome of obesity, both in the spiritual and physical realm. There is so much junk spiritual food that the youth are being fed on today in church. And these involve ndombolo, rap, reggae, rock, the so-called youth nights, sheng, sagging trousers, so-called modern slutty dressing and immoral dancing, DJs into the church, social holiday camps and social networking on the internet etc. These have led to such a tremendous unhealthy spiritual obesity in the church of Christ. The spiritual lives of our youth today are consequently unhealthy and stunted. The irony though is that the same has perfectly replayed itself in the physical. The church ought to teach the youth on the importance of a total spiritual separation from the world, however unpopular. Because the truth always hurts, most believers often try to protect themselves from it. Confronting the truth is as important today in the church as it was in Israel. At one point in the history of Israel, they lived a life characterized by hiding away from the truth. One such case was when the Lord sent Isaiah the Prophet, to the people of Judah to tell them the truth about their sins. They then refused to admit that they had failed and chose to defiantly go on with their lives. Unfortunately in doing so, they also refused their deliverance and healing that the Lord had intended for them. This becomes a key lesson to the church today, the youth inclusive, that our spiritual revival will only proceed to the degree that we open our hearts to the truth regardless of how painful that may be. This, the youth need to be taught, that they may always open their hearts to the truth of God that rebukes sin. Most of the youth churches today have nurtured and condoned sin, causing a generalized state of spiritual numbness to evil. But God is calling the youth church to come out of sin by following the right role models in their lives.

The majority of the christian youth today seem to face the same danger of following leaders who are ungodly as role models. It reminds us of when Israel was faced with terrible destruction and Gods truth was their only real pathway to their deliverance. They were surrounded by false prophets who claimed that the people had nothing to worry about. People were only too glad to believe those kinds of messages of falsehood because false prophets offered the people an easy way out when actually the way did not exist. Todays youth have fallen into the same trap of following the wrong role models. There are many behaviours that have crept into the church as a result of

this. Such conduct involve the rampant drug addition that is almost sweeping away an entire generation of youth. Our young people often begin using drugs by just a simple experimentation from their seniors. This has then gradually developed into the horrendous monster of uncontrollable drug addiction. Pathetically, the adversary has now managed to catch the youth from a very tender age of high school when they are absolutely innocent and experimental. So it is with alcohol consumption among the youth. All these are significant problems that have claimed the lives of our youth today hence refusing to see the truth and address them will only make things worse. The truth is that the youth have for a long time sustained an empty void in their hearts, a void that the church has not filled with the true Word of God. As they attend church services, it is absolutely clear that they see Pastors who are their role models engaged in the vanity of pursuing earthly things and wealth. Not only do they observe that vanity, but also hear the Pastors directly confessing of living to self. This has become a very serious problem within the youth congregations as they have no one to turn to for godly counsel. And it is grossly unwise to proclaim peace when actually there is no peace. When such problems exists, we need to admit and respond with appropriate action. Many of the church leaders and parents today tend to look the other way pretending that everything is alright in the youth church. That will only lead us into deeper slavery and the eventual destruction of the church because so goes the saying, "to destroy a forest, you only need to damage the young trees." The other vices like HIV/AIDS, homosexuality, pornography, and even devil worship have too infiltrated into the lives of our youth today. The tragedy though is that the church leadership have responded with psychological counselling and therapy which has drawn a serious lamentation from the Lord. They have turned to Egypt for deliverance instead of seeking the help of the Holy Spirit as their solution. But, if God could take unruly Israel from Egyptian slavery and strengthen her to become one of the greatest nations of the ancient world, then what can stop the Lord from revamping this terrible lawlessness that is being practised by the Pastors in the house of the Lord. And one can only imagine the level of grief that our Lord Jesus goes through when He sees his Bride, the church, whom He purchased at such a high cost and made a covenant with, drifting away into self-afflicted destruction. I believe that there can still be hope, since here we are reminded of how Jehovah God also made a covenant with Israel, similar in many respect with a marriage covenant. But rather than being devoted to her as her provider, the wife (Israel) became far more interested in prostituting herself to others. Still in all that, Jehovah sent His Word to Israel promising to restore her from the slavery of diaspora, only and only if she turns away from sin and returns to him. We must also realize as a church that our relationship to God is key to spiritual vitality and renewal only in so far as our heart will be repentant.

Preparing Our Youth For The Rapture

The youth need to admit their helplessness before God can intervene on their behalf. First, they need to recognize that their spiritual resources have been plagued with sin and iniquity. Secondly, the youth Pastors need to come out clear that they are spiritually destitute and cannot find God through todays standard methods of worship in presenting sacrifices. Thirdly, the youth church needs to recognize that she cannot rely on courage and self defence because her iniquity is too great a foe to overcome. This is because most youth churches have turned out to be sexual sin clubs at which sexual sin is committed in the parking lots and church compounds during night vigil prayers. Equally, Pastors have chosen for themselves some girls in the youth church for sexual sin, lust and defilement. Pornography is likewise too great a sin inside todays youth church. Even at university level, the christian union that ought to be the example of Christ in that community do routinely observe Friday night movie sessions in which sexual sin is the agenda. Hence, once the youth church admits that she cannot do anything to save herself, then our young people can now turn to God to mercifully rescue them from the sin that has encroached into todays church.

Probably the initial question that runs through the mind of todays youth as they begin to walk right with the Lord, is "When will I attain the full stature of Christ Jesus?" As it is in the physical reality when the young people try to imitate the dressing, talking, walking and behaviour of their parents, so it is in the spiritual realm when they cannot wait to be like Jesus. Such a novel longing can only come from an imprint that the Lord must have embedded into their spirits to let them know that, it is not yet done until the church be like Christ. To be like Christ is to be rapture-ready. In the proceeding segment I examine on a step by step basis some of the important keys that the youth can engage, in order to revamp the corruption that has plagued their generation, and prepare for the Coming of the Lord.

SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Youthfulness is known to be a phase of great treasure in ones life. It is the exponential phase when they are full of energy and unmatched enthusiasm. It is also at this stage of their lives, that the young people begin to sketch out what they think and hope their future adult life will look like. But, if not well managed, the youthful phase can actually be the most dangerous junction at which the lives of our young people can be totally destroyed. That is the reason why it is so crucial for the church to prominently step in at this stage in order to give a clear spiritual direction. This is also the stage at which most people begin to imagine what they would love to have in their future adult lives. That is exactly when the idolatry of materialism starts to gain entry into their lives by making serious in-roads into their hearts. Left to go without restraint, this results into an utter robbery of the hearts of our

young people. Talking of spiritual tragedies, this becomes the greatest in the church since the only thing that Jesus died for on the Cross, is our heart. It is for this reason that every attempt must be made to redirect their efforts, strength, energy and worship towards the Lord. The church leadership must at this point come out very conspicuously lucid and articulate to the youth on the greater need to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness as a means of worship. In the youth church, there must then be a deliberate effort to pacify the anxieties of life by reassuring them of Gods promise to those who seek Him first. God Almighty in His timeless Word promises that all these things required in life will be added as a bonus to those who seek His Kingdom and its righteousness first. As one does this, within the backdrop is the teaching and strengthening of the faith of our youth. Their faith will be greatly enhanced in the Lord who never lies. And once their faith has been strengthened in that way, the youth can then learn to solely and fully rely on God Almighty as their only provider. Apart from the reassuring promise in seeking the Kingdom of God first, this life-changing Word of God also helps the youth to get rid of their worries and anxieties about what tomorrow may bring (Matthew 6:32-33). In His infinite mercies, God has demonstrated over and over again, that He is faithful to those that will seek Him first with their lives. We see that when Israel was still young, having just been released from Egyptian slavery, she exhibited disobedient behaviour that caused God to vow to her that if she would seek the Lord, her God with all her heart, she would find Him (Deut 4:29; 1 Chr 28:9; 1 Cor 2:6-16; Luke 12:31). Even for the youth to be able to recognize that they ought to seek God first with all their hearts, it becomes a big revelation since the bible says, such wisdom is hidden and only revealed to the elect. The amazement though, is that God Himself has said that such hidden wisdom is not even for this age but for the age to come. That talks about the secret eternal reward that is concealed to the world and only revealed to those believers who will only seek the things of the Spirit and shun evil. Such wisdom can only help to re-orientate the hearts and minds of our youths today away from the world, and strictly towards the Kingdom of God in heaven. Failure to captivate the hearts of our young people with a genuine kind of worship of this nature, is what has given way to the worldliness that has corrupted the youth church. It gets very sad to see young ladies in the universities and colleges going into sexual sin in an attempt to secure a future. Today it is common to see married people driving into universities and colleges to pick up young ladies and defiling them into sexual sin even to the point of death with HIV/AIDS. A decay of this nature has only set in because no one ever bothered to teach them to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness first. As God himself has promised, He will provide the daily bread for His elect and satisfactorily take care of their future. Anxiety tends to arise among the youth due to fears of unemployment upon graduation, where and how to get a spouse, shelter, the fear of humiliation among the peers, etc. Predictions about the future is something the youth should never have been preoccupied with given Gods promise. If the young people could only be taught to focus on serving the Lord in holiness first, then they would give God the opportunity of providing for them since they would then be His.

LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, SOUL, MIND AND STRENGTH

Jesus Himself promised those who love Him, that if they would obey His command, He would ask God the Father in heaven to send them another Counsellor, to be with them forever. The Counsellor that the Lord was speaking about is the Most Precious and Mighty Holy Spirit of God Almighty. Although this statement may have been taken lightly by todays church, it brings to the fore front the most important secret to receiving the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Here, the Lord was pleading with the church to love Him that the gates of heaven may be open to her. What a novel principle to teach the youth of this dispensation? In order to veer back on course, our youth church desperately needs a mighty Holy Spirit visitation.

Only the Spirit of the Lord can generate the momentum that would sustain a youth revival as they turn away from the life of defilement that currently characterizes their living. While they may talk of loneliness, the youth must be awakened to the fact that the Holy Spirit of God is their Counsellor and Comforter. He is also their Present Help. We cannot afford to lose sight of that critical moment when Israel was allowed by the Lord to move in and possess the Promised Land. At that time, the Lord promised them a great increase and that all would go well with them, only and only, if they would love the Lord their God with all their hearts, and with all their souls, and with all their strength. Considering that Jehovah God was hereby promising Precious Israel, a land flowing with milk and honey (unlimited provision), a great increase (productivity), and that all other things would equally go well; then it beats the mind why the church has not presented this with clarity to the youth. The youth today are grappling with issues of provision, productivity and everything else is going wrong. Conceivably, the greatest message that from this day on be resonated into the youth church, is that God now commands the youth to love him with all their hearts, souls, minds, and youthful strength (Deut 6:1-9; John 14:15-21). Instead of giving all their heart, and spending all their mind and strength on todays internet technology, and browsing the social networks, if the youth church would devote her entire effort to serving the Lord their God, what an awesome revival that could have animated in the church of Christ? And what has never ceased to amaze is the extent at which the adversary has engaged the youth in the worldly things, to the point that they are willing to give their lives for the sake of sin. We are constantly reminded of how Paul became devoted to preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, to the point of being willing to lose his life. Paul was then able to do great exploits for the Kingdom

of God. If you did not know, Paul wrote almost two thirds of the New Testament of our Lord Jesus that has continued to transform lives today. The youth church too can devote her entire life, heart, soul, mind, and strength to serving our Lord Jesus.

In Kenya for example, it is incredible how the youth can dedicate themselves to worshipping and serving Mungiki to the point of willing to giving their lives to such demonic practices. Then how much more should the Kenyan youth give their lives to Jesus who died for them on the Cross? In other countries too including the western developed, the youth have given themselves fully to football to the point of willing to commit suicide when their teams lose; then how much more should those youths give themselves as living sacrifice to He that died for them on the Cross? In all this, the shocking irony though, is that the youth are as a matter of fact willing to offer their lives as living sacrifices to Christ Jesus. Only that they have not been appropriately reached with the true life-transforming gospel of our Lord Jesus. All they see is Pastors adoring money, preaching money, exalting earthly wealth, etc; hence leaving them with no choice but to also turn to the empty world for solutions. To call a spade a spade, today's youth church has actually turned to Egypt for deliverance. If the spiritual putrefaction among our young people is that evident, then why would the Pastors play blind? The time to act is now to redeem the youth church.

GIVE THE LORD YOUR GOD YOUR FIRSTFRUIT

When our youth will reach the day of admitting their sin of failing to give the Lord their Firstfruit, that is the day He will take away their disgrace and replace it with His blessing. Accepting this reality and considering God first in our lives by presenting Him with our Firstfruit, the youth will essentially have acknowledged responsibility for their lives and surrendered their hearts to God. It is this kind of phenomenon surrender right from the very fibres of our hearts that will cause the believers to always present their Firstfruit unto the Lord. By His mercies, God Almighty will then free the youth church from the bondage of sin and grant her unmatched grace. The parched barren areas in the lives of the youth are the result of failure to put God first and present Him with their firstfruit. On the contrary, most Christian youth have as a matter of fact, presented their firstfruit (effort) to the adversary called Satan. Consequently, he has reigned over their lives ruthlessly and led to many even dying prematurely from drug addiction, HIV/AIDS, alcoholism and car accidents, knife stabs, name it. However, it will take a one-step-process of repentance for these parched barren areas in the lives to flourish and bring glory to God again. The Bible extensively elaborates on the jealous nature of the Lord our God when He commanded Israel that the firstfruit belongs to Him, and Him alone. Jehovah instructed Israel to ensure that the first offspring of every womb belonged to Him, including all the firstborn male of their livestock, whether from herd or flock. The Lord also demanded of the firstborn donkey, by requiring Israel to redeem those firstborn donkeys with a lamb. The Lord even went further to elaborate that if the first born donkey was not redeemed, its neck be broken. It would appear as though the Lord was saying that if not redeemed and presented to Him first, then Israel could not use that donkey. He even required that all the firstborn sons of the Israelites be redeemed and that nobody appear before Him empty-handed (Exodus 34:19-22). As Israel drifted away from observing this command, so did the blessings of the covenant that had been promised to them. The temptations of life that caused Israel to neglect God's command within the Promised Land, serve as a vivid illustration to today's church on how proper standards and boundaries can be tragically forgotten. Like was Israel, today's church has been equally warned about the tendency to make a good clean start by receiving the Lord, and yet compromise the values and goals of her salvation. It is this kind of compromise in the adult church that has been aped by the youth church causing them to neglect the Lord when it comes to their Firstfruit. Israel at that time, had been warned not to make treaties with the people of the land but to push them out, replacing them with communities of their own. So has the church been perpetually cautioned from compromising with the world and the gods of this dark dispensation. On this course though, little has the church known that when the youth give their firstfruit (efforts) to the adversary through first falling in sin at adolescence, they have essentially covenanted with the devil. One of the best ways for us to see ourselves as we actually are, is to gain a clear view of God and His glorious jealous nature. The fact that God gave instructions concerning the Firstfruit to be presented unto Himself, helps to highlight the extreme jealous nature of the God we serve. And it will take such understanding of His nature for the church to realize that the Firstfruit unto the Lord is a command and not a request. The youth must also be taught to protect the spiritual gains that come with obedience to this command. This is because it is easy to make a good start by presenting the Firstfruit unto the Lord, but then compromise by allowing certain "little" practices to go unchecked in the youth church. In the end these "little" things will spell disaster, eroding the new lives they will have started to build. The fruit the Lord is asking the youth church to present to Him is that fruit of repentance. As we now know, the fruit of repentance is righteousness in holy living. Because it is the Holy Spirit who is our helper even as we shine the light of Christ unto this dark world, then the Firstfruit presented before the Lord will have to be the fruit of the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that fuels the Lamp of God in the hearts of the believers. By the youth Pastors teaching this to our young people, then the church will practically have hearkened unto the anointing of the Holy Spirit as their present help. What is most pleasant about this, is that the Holy Spirit always leads the church to Christ Jesus by establishing holiness among believers. Since people do not pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles, then it can only be right to say that by observing the fruit of the youth church, one is able to recognize them (Matthew 7:16-20). In order to be the light of the world, our youth today must be able to produce the fruit

of righteousness. That is the only way they can be recognized as belonging to the Lord, given that no bad tree can bear good fruit. The reason this spiritual principle on bearing and presenting good fruit before the Lord becomes critical, is because God commands that every tree that does not bear good fruit be cut down and thrown into the fire.

In like manner, God warns the church, be it youth or adult, to ensure that they have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness. Comprehension of the true quality of Firstfruit that our youth should present before the Lord will require understanding the kind of Firstfruit Jesus gave to the Father when He overcame the sinful world and resurrected into heaven by the power of the Holy Spirit. It should thence be clear enough that the only way the youth church of today can be restored back to producing fruit of the kind Jesus did, is definitely going to come from connecting them to He that is the True Vine, and keeping them in contact with Him (John 15:1-2). By observing our young people today oscillating from being born-again christians in the youth church, to finally turning to new age and meditation yoga, one cant help but wonder whether these are the ones the Lord has pruned out from the True Vine. Indeed, if they dont repent and return to Jesus they will have been pruned out and thrown into the unquenchable eternal fire.

DON'T SEEK THE APPROVAL OF MAN BUT OF GOD

Memory will always continue to be a central part of our spiritual restoration and renewal. And yet spiritual amnesia can only leave us lost, powerless and in ruination. In christian walk, the memories of the past will constantly fuel our faith for the present. In this context, then ones vision of the current state of the church, begins to clear. With a sound memory of what Jesus did on the Cross at Calvary, including the horrendous price of rejection that He paid, there is absolutely no way that the church would have attained her present state of complete compromise with the world. As the saying goes, like father like son, so does the situation present between the adult church and the youth church. It is so astonishing to note that the church today has been so quick in abandoning Jesus in order to receive this defiling acceptance from the world including the eastern religions. When Jesus accepted to sacrifice His life on the Cross, as a choice offering unto God the Father, He did so by bitterly rejecting the world with its practices. In fact, throughout His life on the earth, Jesus of Nazareth always strove to please God the Father, and Him alone. This He did at the expense of a very bitter rejection from the sinful, dark world. But talking about short memory commonly known as amnesia, what better way would one describe the church today? If the adult church were to keep the memory of the passion of Christ alive in their spiritual faculties, then for sure believers would have always chosen to please Christ at all times. Now, the tragedy though is that the same sinful compromise with the world that the church has embraced, has faithfully replicated itself within our christian youth. The youth church seems to have escalated this compromise with the post-modern world to a new high by even claiming that walking holy as a believer is too out-dated for them. Holy dressing in the House of the Lord is now openly ridiculed without remorse or fear, by not only the youth but also the senior Pastors today. If one would like to well understand the significance of keeping good memory of what the Lord has done for the church, then one has no choice but to look at the commands that the Lord gave Israel to continually observe important feasts, from generation to generation. As an example worth raising to todays forgetful church, we can remember when the Lord liberated Israel from Egyptian slavery and how He commanded her to always observe the Feast of Passover. And to further emphasize the gravity of keeping their memory lines clear on what the Lord did on that night, Jehovah commanded that they teach their children from generation to generation to observe the Feast of Passover. It is so fearful to even realize that the Lord said to Israel that remembering to observe this Feast of Passover would act as a lasting ordinance between Himself and the House of Jacob. That definitely meant an Eternal Covenant, but only effective for as long as Israel continued to recall and observe the Feast of Passover. Jesus too, upon accomplishing the mission for which He came on earth, He sat down with the church (Apostles) at the table of the Last Supper, and took Bread, broke it and gave thanks, then took a glass of Wine, and gave it to them saying, "Do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor 11:17-33). It is this glass of Wine that I would like to focus on for now. That glass of Wine symbolized the Blood that Jesus shed on the Cross and thereby redeeming the church from the slavery of sin and death. In other words, the Lord was telling the church to never ever forget the Blood and the Cross that redeemed her. Rephrased, the Lord was telling the church to always bring to mind when and how He redeemed her from the gallows of death. What will shock even greater is the parallel that seems to occur between the lamb without defect that Israel had to offer at Passover, and the Perfect Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, that Jehovah offered on the Cross. If these are the rules of God in heaven that we must remember the Blood of the Covenant that purchased us, how then, does the church begin to seek the approval of men and the world at the expense of remembering the Blood (Gal 1:6-10)? And it is because the church has drifted so far away from the Lord by forgetting the Blood and the Cross, that now the Blood of Jesus does not seem to make sense to the church. Beginning today on, it is going to be important to restore the treasure of the Blood and the Cross in the youth church if genuine revival is to animate in the hearts of our young people. They must be taught not to forget the works of Jesus of the Cross and handle it with extreme fear and trembling (Heb 10:26-31; Phil 2:12-16). Asked of the way out, it is fitting to say that this is going to be the only way out for the church. Otherwise, the condition of the church today, can only remind one of how Israel shattered the second commandment of God by making the golden calf. The golden calf was pleasing to the eye and flesh (world) thereby causing Israel to seek to please man than God. God had clearly said, "Do not make idols of any

kind" (Ex 20:4-6). The weak-kneed Aaron tried to put a good face on this blasphemy but to no avail. We all know the tremendous rebuke of Jehovah God that followed Aarons compromise with the slavery-inclined Israel. Notice is hereby taken, on the fact that even today in the youth church, there are so many "weak-kneed" Aarons who have failed to sharply rebuke sin and lead our youth straight unto the holiness of the Lord. This condition is not exclusive to the youth church but cuts across Christians assembly on earth. It is this clamour to seek the approval of men and please the world, that has actually established the gospel of prosperity in the church. We all know that, that gospel has a serious shortfall on the holiness requirement of the Lord thereby making it tantamount to the return to Egypt for deliverance. No wonder, even our youth church have followed suit and just returned to Goshen where they are now thoroughly serving the devil by embracing immorality, post-modernism, lies, love of money, abortions, name it. Havent all these things happened in the House of the Lord? Who is it that still retains circumcised ears, that he may listen to Voice of the Lord on this day and age? To the majority of them, the wise counsel and Word of the Lord is today offensive to them and hence they find no pleasure at all in it. They turn to their own ways and they dont return. So have the youth "photocopied" this conduct in church. The only way out again is to get rid of this spiritual amnesia among the youth Pastors. This will cause our youth to once again be able to remember the Blood and the Cross at Calvary.

BE TOTALLY AVAILABLE TO THE LORD YOUR GOD

Setting our priorities right is key to aligning our christian lives with Gods will for us. We all ought to put God first in our thinking in order that His plan and blueprint for each of us may be fully matured. Being the temple of the Holy Spirit, all our thoughts and behaviour should reflect the character of the One who dwells within us. Many times, we fail to emphasize to our youth on the need to be totally and freely available to the Lord our God in the early stages of their life span. The youthful stage is the most energetic phase of life and one can only imagine the great exploits that the youth can do for the Kingdom of God if their energies were well directed. By encouraging our youth to become totally available to the Lord, we can greatly help to set up a very solid foundation of service into their lives. The youthful phase of life is the most prime spot in service to the Lord because that is when our young people have not yet become entangled with other responsibilities of life. Often after the youth phase, people begin to take up responsibilities such as marriage which come with a myriad of energy and time-consuming engagements. And yet as a youth, one can be totally available to serving the Lord without having to worry about taking their children to schools, to hospitals, looking for a job to sustain the family, etc. While the decision to serve God may be left to the youth themselves, it must be remembered that the parents play a greater role in directing the course of the lives of our young people.

Here, we are reminded of the life that Samuel, the Prophet of the Lord led, when from a youthful stage became totally available to the Lord. Nonetheless, the dedication of Samuel unto the Lord did not come overnight. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, had to spend countless hours in serious prayer for a son and even before he was born she vowed unto the Lord about Samuel. In that vow, Hannah took complete authority and promised the Lord God that her son would be totally available to His service. We cannot afford to be blind to the pain and heartache that Hannah went through as she vowed to the Lord. Her childlessness was a continued source of sadness especially because of the cruel taunting of her husbands second wife, Peninnah. Ironically, Hannahs pain was particularly more difficult to bear during the holidays when the entire family gathered at Shiloh for sacrifices and worship. There, surrounded by relatives and having no child of her own to hold, she was poignantly reminiscent of her loneliness. In her pain, Hannah did not turn away from God, but turned right back to Him. We are hereby taken back to Abraham and Sarah; and Jacob and Rachel. God blessed Hannah with a son at the peak of her pain. This should be a wake-up call to todays mothers most of whom have been blessed with a baby without going through Hannahs pain.

Moreover, in the ancient Hebrew tradition, when one set out to serve the Lord, he was required to live a separated life upto the age of fifty-five. After attaining the age of fifty-five they were released and allowed to go on to marry and live a normal life in the society. This involved taking some offering to the High Priest that they may be unseparated. However, for Samuel, the Prophet of the Lord, Hannah vowed unto the Lord that Samuel would be available for all the days of his life. It is that type of vow that caught the attention of the Lord causing Him to bring forth from Hannah such a mighty Prophet of God Almighty. As soon as Samuel was weaned from Hannah, who had otherwise wept before God for a child, she gave him back to God. It is this dedication by his mother that caused Samuel to learn the various duties of the Priesthood from Eli, Israels High Priest then. In addition, Hannah did not stop visiting Samuel every once a year with a new linen Ephod that she carefully stitched for him. She was practically involved in a hands-on approach in the life of Samuel even as he grew before the Lord. And the Bible says that, Samuel grew in stature and favour with God and man, at a time when there was corruption in the House of the Lord. He was a godly man who transformed the office of Judge from that of a crisis-military leader, to that of a stable honourable position of leadership. Samuel became a Prophet that stood with stature before the Lord right from his youth. Samuel was very sensitive to Gods Voice and hence became the last and greatest Judge in Israel. Samuel the Prophet, also commanded great respect from the people of Israel. No wonder, the bible says that as Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and everything Samuel said was wise and hopeful. All the people of Israel from one end of the land to the other knew that Samuel was raised and confirmed

as the Prophet of the Lord (1 Sam 3:19-20). But, it comes out vividly clear that his mother Hannah, was directly involved in charting the way for Samuel right before conception, before birth, after birth, and during his youthful years. This lays a direct burden on today's mothers to dedicate their sons and daughters to the Lord's service even before birth. God Almighty is not about to ask the church to do what He did not already do for her. Jehovah gave us The Jesus Christ of Nazareth who was totally and completely available to the service of the Lord. It is this complete availability that kept off the distractions of this world while allowing Himself to be fully saturated with the Holy Spirit. The phenomenal fragrance of worship that Jesus gave to the Father and atoned for all our sins, only came about as a result of His total commitment to the service of God Almighty. Today's youth must equally be made to understand that unwavering commitment to the Lord's service can only arise from their total availability to God. Such availability demands that we sacrifice our lives for the sake of the Kingdom of God. For God to have sent Jesus to die for us on the Cross, He greatly sacrificed His One and only begotten Son. The absence of Jesus from heaven during His mission on the earth, must have been very conspicuous to the extent that the Father and the entire heavens missed Him. Until today, we cannot yet fathom the gravity of God Almighty allowing the Darling of Heaven, the Messiah, to come down onto the earth and get terribly abused by man in order to redeem the same mankind. And if we are to teach our youth Christ-like service unto the Lord, then they too must learn to sacrifice their personal interests for the sake of serving God. By definition, sacrifice here means giving up of something valuable or denying oneself of something valuable or a loss incurred by giving away or selling something below its value. That means that when God in heaven sacrificed Jesus for us, He incurred a loss and presented Him for a value less than His true original worth for the sake of redeeming mankind.

And that is the reason why when talking about the rapture of the church, the bible categorically says, ". . . My mothers sons are angry with me and made me take care of the vineyards; my own vineyard I have neglected" (Songs of Solomon 1:6). In those words, the Lord is saying that being totally available to Him, means being completely sacrificial and hence absent from ourselves. We see the Lord's demands for us as being the complete focus on His vineyards and the total ignoring of our personal interests. Through a deliberate ignoring of His personal glory in heaven for our sake, our Lord Jesus practically taught us how to sacrifice our personal lives for the sake of serving God Almighty in heaven. Unfortunately today, most parents are too busy to mentor their youth hence leaving them in the hands of counsellors and psychologists who are always very quick to lead them into ruination. But God's Word still demands that the parents take complete authority and lead their children to God's service. When everything in life seems as if it is heading for disaster, there is one thing that we can count on, that God is Faithful and He will see us through. This is regardless of how grey our lives may be, or how dark our future may seem; but our loving and faithful God can restore our hope and redirect our course once again. If there is a message to our young people today, then this is it. That however defiled the youth church may seem today, with all the sinful afflictions it presents, there is still hope that if the young people will turn to God in genuine repentance, He is faithful enough to restore and revive the youth church. The God of Israel is a jealous God who does not intend to share His servants with another. He demands complete undivided attention in a sacrificial act of being totally available at His disposal. Nonetheless, as the youth grow in their spiritual lives, the high calling and exacting standards of God become more and more clear. Well aware that some of the most challenging mountains to climb do not look very imposing from a distance, it is only when one begins hiking up the mountain itself that they sense the steepness and difficulty of the ascent. Likewise, the steepness of God's calling through complete availability in holiness only becomes clearer as we embark on the ascent of faithfulness. It would do the Lord a great disservice if I did not mention this right at the onset of our youth becoming available to the Lord.

LEARN TO STAND ALONE EVEN IN CHURCH

Particularly more challenging to the youth, is how to handle and cope with today's intimidating peer pressure. There will always be people who think that they are opinion leaders and that they have all the answers to life's questions. Such eloquent and influential persons also exist among our youth. They tend to be the ones that chart out the behavioural path for all our young people within their influence. This is the basic essence of peer and group pressure. Regrettably, the majority of such opinion leaders within our youth are today largely inclined to immorality and evil. It is the cause for most of the youth turning to evil since their feeble respective identities cannot withstand the massive wave of the group influence. Sadly enough, a group act of this nature also exists in the church. Having said this, it is then possible to appreciate the significance of encouraging our young people to learn to be able to stand alone even within the church. Building a life of service to the Lord, almost invariably always involves the sacred act of separation. As we develop in the knowledge of the Lord, we will normally begin to hold each other accountable and there will emerge times when we must draw the lines with those who continue in sin without repentance. It is this drawing of the line that constitutes separation from the world. Similarly, the Lord commands His church not to team up with those who are unbelievers by questioning the spiritual logic of goodness partnering with wickedness; and light living with darkness; union between God's Temple and idols (2 Cor 6:14-18). The youth need to be well cautioned on the fact that sometimes the spiritual changes they may make can upset some of their previous friendships. Some of their old friends may be uncomfortable with them because they will feel guilty with their sins. Others may feel threatened by the changes one makes. The youth should also be taught that if they find a friend or an associate undermining their relationship with God, then they need to be careful with such friendship and disconnect. This is common even among the adults in the church.

because when people begin to live for the Lord and follow His plan for their lives, they will most certainly always find others typically reacting by maligning and dishonouring them. The Lord Jesus Himself was maligned and dishonoured by the world but He did not stop to love the lost souls. This then implies that even as we coach our youth onto this very vital matter of spiritual separation, we should be careful to not let it mean that they do not reach out to non-believers. It only means that they should not become too close to those who can lead them away from God. The terrible darkness that has covered the earth in these last days has literally caused the majority of the population to go in one direction towards evil. That is the reason worldly movies are popular, lies are common, murders and rapes are prevalent, abortions are rampant, alcoholism and drug addiction are now considered normal. Homosexuality, lesbianism and pornography have today established not only in the world, but also in the church. In the advent of this, the bible instructs that believers should separate out and live a separated life for the Lord, however unpopular. One even wonders why this has to be a new concept in christian walk. The Word of God clearly promised that the road leading to destruction and hell would be very large, popular and highly populated; while the path that leads to the Kingdom of God would turn out to be very narrow and greatly unpopular (Matt 7:13-14). If we were trying to impress others to bolster our self esteem, we would be terribly devastated if people react negatively to us upon separation. But, God Himself commands us to separate from the love of the world in order to become His own sons and daughters. A fruitful christian life can only be realized by fellowshiping with unselfish and godly people. For as long as we can train our young people to solely depend on Christ Jesus as the True Vine of their lives, they will always be fruitful and well supported even though they stand alone. Whenever the youth receive wisdom on the need to live a separated life, they must also be directed accordingly to ensure that they read the bible on a daily basis. This will ascertain their spiritual growth as they will be feeding from a different kind of food now, compared to what they had in the world. Standing alone for our youth will also give them the freedom to begin dressing modestly regardless of how those around them do. It is this Holy Spirit-driven independence and separation that will also empower them to shut down the dating that is currently sweeping across and defiling our youth. Of course, choosing friends wisely, observing a prayerful life, a life marked by regular worship and fasting are bonuses into this very novel spiritual isolation that we must teach the youth church. Jesus lived a separated life while on this planet causing Him to ultimately say, "I have overcome the world. . ." (John 16:33). If He that lives in us overcame, then surely our youth too can live a spiritually well celebrated life of separation from this sinful world.

FELLOWSHIP WITH PEOPLE GOING IN SAME DIRECTION

As Gods people, since we have already been mightily redeemed by the Blood of Jesus, we ought to realize that we have been called to a particular way of life. We are called to a life of righteousness, honesty, integrity, and refusing to lie. It becomes very wise and greatly prudent for christians, and especially our youth, to be trained in processing their thoughts and feelings before acting. Because most believers today have acted purely based on impulse, they have hence accumulated for themselves the wrong company of friends. Such decisions are entirely responsible for making todays believers feel good at the moment while not being aware that wrong company can grossly undermine their long-term spiritual health and well-being. Since we become like the company we keep, it is essential to have friends whom we respect and who have surrendered their lives to the Lord. You have heard it said that he who walks with the wise grows wise but a companion of fools goes a long way to suffer harm (Pro 13:20). And if we are truly seeking after God then we will want to obey and honour Him by carefully choosing only the righteous friends. For that matter, it is helpful to fellowship with others who will help us persevere, and even increase our spiritual gains. As we seek to restore our damaged relationship with the Lord, it is highly pivotal to comprehend that bad company corrupts good morals. If we had taken time to teach our youth these basic principles of association and fellowship, the youth church would no doubt be in a better place today. And because many people often communicate with others for selfish reasons, it is of great consequence then, for us to educate the parents on the magnitude of keeping their thumbs on the heartbeat of the friendships that their youth get into. It is crucial to also allow our youth to engage in fellowships that can help criticize them for correction rather than destruction. For that reason therefore, iron sharpens iron (1 Cor 15:33; Pro 27:17). Part of fellowshiping with people who are going in the same direction involves praying for them that the association may remain godly. The blessing that comes from giving, especially applies in the area of prayer. The youth must be encouraged to sustain a regular prayer life. This is because God renews our Spirit as we pray for others. Our compassion, love and faith often will grow when we come before God on behalf of others. As the youth pray for them, God Almighty will through His Holy Spirit bring specific ideas into the minds of our young people to support and help them in prayer. The youth must be taught to pray for each other in several specific ways, especially after they have received the knowledge of the needs of their colleagues. But, they can also be encouraged to pray for certain things whether they know them or not. Even as they pray, our young people must be strengthened to understand that grace is the reason for our salvation and peace is its result. They must also pray for the peace of Jerusalem so that it may go well with them. All this is meant to remind the youth that as christians we are never an island unto ourselves but are part of a whole member of Christs body. If we are part of a loving community, then when others hurt we too hurt and we hurt, others hurt. We have the responsibility to pray for the body of Christ. This becomes a milestone in the spiritual growth of our youth as they learn to move beyond self-centred locus and learn to be available to others too. Most importantly then, is the lesson that they should learn to love one another in the unity of faith. It is such a group covenant relationship that existed between the five wise virgins; the church

that enters into the wedding of the Lamb of God. The beauty of all this is that as our young people connect to others they will inevitably develop a mutually accountable relationship that will help mature the entire body of Christ.

However, it is important to caution our young people that being a doorway through which other people can access the grace of God does not mean being a doormat. Caring for people in prayer should not be an excuse for them to download the mud on the devout believer. This is because too often humility has been misunderstood to be a negative and weakness trait. Our young people must be well informed that humility does not mean thinking less of oneself. But it is thinking more of God and others. In other words, humility is not about putting ourselves down but rather about glorifying God and affirming others. The church must continue to centralize Jesus Christ of Nazareth as the utmost example of humility to the youth. He left the place of honour in heaven in order to become Gods servant on earth. But in that process, He did not tear Himself down and began to deny that He had any value. But rather He did lift others up through His humility and showed His valuable spiritual friendship. Thus humility is not about being a doormat but its about being a doorway through which others may enter in the presence and power of God. As the youth learn to love others in prayer they help to fulfil the most important command that the Lord gave to the church, "Love your neighbour as you love yourself". Whereas being a doorway of humility through which people can access the presence and power of God Almighty, helps our youth accumulate spiritual credit from the Lord when they appear at the judgment seat of Christ. It is written, "And those who lead many into righteousness will shine like stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:1-3).

ALWAYS MAINTAIN AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

Maintaining an eternal perspective and value system that is based on setting our hearts on things above, is the biggest reward that any believer can ever give to our Lord Jesus. Upright training of the youth will most certainly require that we challenge them to interrogate every single thing they engage in by asking, "How does this help my eternity?" This can only yield a heavenly-focused generation of young people who do not store up for themselves treasures on earth where moths and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal (Matt 6:19-22). The contentedness that this kind of upward focus generates will normally cause the youth to know that they belong to God and cannot lose, no matter what their earthly situation may look like. At this place, the love for Christ is sufficient. Further, the novel peace that overtakes such youth will come from the knowledge that whether they live or die, they will win at the end. Although this truth is allowed to animate in the hearts of our godly young people, it is imperative that they understand the implication of preserving their faith in order to continuously make spiritual gains, even here on earth. For our thoughts, attitudes and actions to be more and more Christ-like, it is important that we as believers be sensitive to serving the poor in the society. The youth church must be highly encouraged to tend the elderly, widows, and even the sick in hospitals. Helping the destitutes and the disadvantaged in our communities is not something the youth should just do as a gesture of goodwill, but as a matter of life and death; for their own good that they may enter into the Kingdom of God (Matt 25:31-46). Our young people must be given the opportunity of serving in the worship and prayer teams within the church, as this can only draw them closer to the Lord. When Israel was in the wilderness, the Lord maintained the Cloud of His Glory in order to give them a sense of direction as to where they were headed to. As the Cloud moved, so did the Israelites. This can only mean that they had to stay alert watching each day for Gods guidance. It is an act that was essential for the people to trust God on a daily basis rather than their own earthly strength. This object lesson on obedience should actually be the description of our day-to-day lives as christians. Only this level of obedience enabled Israel to access the Promised Land. And if we can utilise this lasting example of maintaining an eternal perspective and value system by setting the hearts of our youth on things above, then a historic Holy Ghost revival will visit. The Holy Ghost who is delegated with reviving todays church thrives on obedience. Such impeccable obedience enabled Israel to access the extraneous source of strength from the Lord. Todays christian youth too can be able to reach the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit for overcoming the world. But, this will come about, only and only, when they demonstrate the level of obedience that Israel presented in the wilderness. Building such a new life involves entering uncharted territory where the focus is on Gods daily unfailing help. The motivation here is to completely disconnect from dependence on man but on God alone.

BE AN EXAMPLE OTHERS CAN FOLLOW

Everytime one is privileged to be an example for others to follow, a unique sense of responsibility immediately seems to take over their lives. It is as though they suddenly become completely accountable to the society on their every thought, talk and actions. The godly courtesy and affection requested by this kind of responsibility normally yields a life of transparency. It is such requests that invades the lives of our christian youth immediately they are championed as role models. God Almighty has by His own authority raised the christian youth to become the light of the world within their generation. He has delegated these young believers with the duty of being the spiritual and moral opinion leaders within their age group. The Lord vehemently bestowed this responsibility upon the youth church when He cautioned against letting anyone to think less of them because of their age. Jehovah

also kindly requested our young people to be an example to all believers regardless of age. This He intended that, it be reflected in what they teach, in the way they live, in their love, their faith, and most importantly their purity. That implies that the Lord admonished the youth to share the Good News of new life in Christ Jesus through both Word and deeds. We can hence keep spiritually fit only by staying close to God in prayer and seeking to act on what we know from His Word. There is no better way to become a godly example that others can follow; than to live a righteous and holy life before their very eyes. Part of being a role model in their generation requires that our christian youth stop recycling in sin but instead die to sin. Owing to the fact that God Himself forgave us of our sins, kindness and forgiveness should feature very prominently in the countenance of todays model youth church. One thing that our christian youth have not kept alive in their memory, is the truth that when they were baptized they died to sin and became one with Christ. Failure to remember such a crucial aspect of christian life is what has led to the rampant sexual sin among the christian youth. It is biblical truth that whatever one chooses to obey becomes their master. When one chooses sin which leads to death, it naturally becomes their master. Whereas choosing to obey God, can only bring His approval into the lives of our young people hence making the Holy Spirit their master (Romans 6:1-23). Celebrating the christian youth as an example for others to follow, therefore requires that we greatly enhance their understanding to the effect that they are considered free from sin and totally enslaved to righteousness. A holy youth church is like treasured jewels before the eyes of the Lord. The power of opinion leaders thrives on the momentum that when all the other youth observe the christian youth living in holiness, then they all will normally follow suit.

DILIGENTLY SERVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his Cross and follow me." (Matt 16:24-28). For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for the Lord Jesus will find it. What good then does it serve for a man to gain the whole world with its entire wealth therein, but lose his soul? This is the fine blueprint that defines diligently serving the Lord Almighty. Pastors must appraise the youth on the significance of losing personal interests in order to diligently serve the Lord. It is surely impossible to be neutral between our personal lives and Gods calling as we deal with the spiritual realm. In this context, it must come out clear to our young people that when we surrender our lives to God, we also affirm that God is our master. Though at first Gods way may look harder than the way of sin, but in time the youth will discover that Gods way is the only way to a joyful and meaningful life, in which the youth can be single but not lonely. The Apostles were able to achieve such a great feat with their service to the Lord because they maintained singleness and yet on no occasion did they ever feel alone. Such a glorious testimony can be greatly exploited to attain mileage in training the youth for the Lords service. In order to prepare them for an honourable service of diligence, emphasis must be laid on our young people to recognize that singleness gives them the advantage of maintaining their spiritual priorities right, as they serve the Lord. Rooted on the foundation that the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding, nothing can ever go wrong as they serve the Lord (Job 28:28). Assiduousness in serving the Lord in these last days now requires those who have wives to live as though they had none; those who mourn as if they did not; those who were happy to do so as if they were not; those who buy things as if they hadnt it to keep; those using the things of the world as though not engrossed in them, because this world in its present form is passing away (1 Cor 7:29-31). It signifies that the youth in their singleness would most definitely score an advantage in conscientiously serving the Lord. This is because they can afford to maintain a spiritual balance while resisting unhealthy attachments to people and todays institutions. Equally detrimental to meticulously serving God is the recurrent emergence of idolatry in todays marriages.

Many times today, married couples find themselves debating between pleasing their partners and going to serve the Lord. We must also remember here that training the youth to serve the Lord diligently must involve teaching them to never do anything that would cause them to trade off their sonship with God. Esau, for example, traded his rights as the first born son for a bowl of stew to fill his empty stomach. He was indifferent to the things in life that were really most important. And his primary concern was his physical satisfaction with no thought at all for his future. The future, the youth must be told, always has everything to do with spirituality. He hadnt learnt how to wait. The lesson Esau needed to learn, is important for our youth too. That is, we all need to view things from a long term perspective. If the church will reach a place of picturing the positive results of life as God intends it to be, then she will be able to give up the momentary pleasures of sin that threaten to keep her from reaching that goal. This the youth must be told in order to keep them heavenly focused even when the pressure builds for them to compromise.

The Enemy of Anointing

Our young people today must be cautioned that upon totally yielding to the Lord, He will be faithful to anoint them with the Holy Spirit. But that anointing must be protected and preserved. First and foremost, the youth church must be clearly warned on the spiritual risks and dangers they may run into by doing things that would grieve the Holy Spirit. Grieving the Holy Spirit is the last of all things that anyone called to service could ever dream of " . . . And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). The Lord Himself promises to turn and fight against His own who dare grieve the Holy Spirit. At

one point in the life of Israel, they went ahead to grieve the Holy Spirit without considering the consequences thereafter. And the Word of God says, “. . . yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them” (Isaiah 63:10). That means that rebellion is one of the worst things that the youth who are in active service of the Lord should ever engage in. No matter what circumstances one finds themselves in, the bottom line is that they should never ever wilfully give the devil a foothold (Ephesians 4:27).

Samson & Delilah

Among the enemies of anointing, Delilah stands high and tops the list. The youth church must never forget what happened to Samson as a result of giving Delilah a foothold. First of all, the name Delilah means to dry up, be weak, feeble, languish. By failing to fully obey the command of the Lord in serving holy and righteous, Samson found himself in a very compromised state. The adversary had been vigorously pursuing him because of the heavy anointing of the Holy Spirit that was upon his life. The youth must be perpetually reminded of this, that everytime one is anointed by the Holy Spirit, the enemy will most certainly be in hot pursuit for them to bring them down. This is because true service of the Lord is in the Holy Spirit. And so, when Samson yielded to Delilah in sexual sin, he really grieved the Holy Spirit to the point of abandoning Samson. And that also implies that the first vessel that the devil will use to target any anointed servant, that vessel is sexual sin. But the youth must be reminded that Delilah is still alive today in the church. She is always watching for an avenue to enter and make you lose the anointing. Today's church has allowed Delilah to get in, and the church has fornicated, and committed adultery with her, and hence lost the glory and the anointing of the Lord. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires, but those who live according to the Spirit, have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The youth must always be taught to live according to the desires of the Holy Spirit. This is because the sinful mind is always hostile to God and it does not submit to God's law, nor does it have the capability of doing so. To serve God therefore, must call for the building of the youths character in order to befit the anointing. Samson had the anointing but lacked the character hence the devil swept down this mighty giant of the Lord. Samson's eyes were as a matter of fact gouged out after he was captured, in a symbolic act that God Almighty allowed in order to teach the lesson that; “. . . with these eyes you lusted at that woman, and these eyes I now remove that you may never lust at women again . . .”

JESUS THE PERFECT EXAMPLE OF SINGULAR FOCUS ON GOD THE FATHER

Our Lord Jesus came unto the earth to establish the Mechizedek Priesthood of God Almighty, that all people who enter into service may emulate that cadre. Jesus of Nazareth then becomes the perfect example of singular and total focus that is required of God the Father in heaven. He devoted His entire life in pleasing God the Father regardless of whatever was accruing around Him. Our Lord Jesus taught us to always depend on God the Father's help through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is for that reason He said that by Himself He can do nothing, and that judges only as He hears, and that His judgment is just for He seeks not to please Himself or any man, but Him that sent Him (John 5:30). This is the excellent example that must be laid down as a foundation to serving God Almighty, even as we train our youth to serve Him. Jesus gave Himself totally to the work of the Father to the extent that He and the Father were One. No wonder during His ministry on the earth here, Jesus once said that when the Son of Man will have been lifted up, then they would know that he does nothing on His own but speaks only what the Father has told Him. The relationship that Jesus maintained with God the Father in heaven is what we ought to celebrate in the lives of our youth as we teach them to entirely depend on God in Heaven. This connection that Jesus enjoyed with the Father enabled Him to say that even when he talked, He did not speak on His own accord, but that the Father who sent Him is the one that commanded Him on what to say and how to say it. It becomes a milestone relationship the church must borrow from, if they are to maintain the stature of Christ because we see that being connected to the Father also means speaking only as and how He commands. It rules out idle and evil talk that now seems to have gained great in-roads within our youth today. In the process our christian youth have today become perpetual and pathological liars. It is very easy for our christian youth to lie today and get away with it, without considering the eternal consequences of that. And yet the holy command of God that the youth church ought to hearken their lives to, leads to eternal life. In depending on the Father alone, Jesus was in no way lonely at all, neither was He isolated nor was His life idle. Hence the current fears that ramify through the hearts of our youth that when they choose to serve God, they run into the risk of losing their friends and peers, is totally unfounded and false. It is true that Jesus had such a humongous spiritual family, so large that till today there is no comparison that can ever be drawn against it. The youth too should be told that they belong to a much wider family, the spiritual family in which God is the Father. We remember too well how Jesus was able to travel and serve God in many locations without any reservation whatsoever. Therefore, our youth need to be encouraged that singleness as a matter of fact gives them freedom to travel and serve the Lord, anywhere at anytime. Even Apostle Paul had this privilege to serve God single causing him to do tremendous exploit for the Lord. Moral purity and the life of abstinence are both entirely possible when people are still in their youth because in that phase of life they are under no obligation at all to give in to the pressures of society. So it becomes very critical to train our youth to exploit their stage in life when it is possible to observe a life of high moral purity and abstinence. Furthermore, it is at the youthful stage that one

can serve the Lord with fewer distractions, devoting all their time, energy and resources unto the Lord. This is what Jesus did as the Perfect example of singular focus on serving God the Father in heaven. However, it is equally important to help the youth recognize their calling and how to slowly walk into the calling. ...But when God who set me apart from birth and called me by his Grace was pleased to reveal his son in me, so that I may preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were Apostle before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus . . . (Galatians 1:15-17). Such should be the language of our youth that have been called by the Lord, vowing to pledge no allegiance whatsoever to any man but to develop a single focus on He that has called them - God the Father. This inevitably implies that the Lord is calling upon the youth church world over, to offer their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God because that is supposed to be their spiritual act of worship. It is a kind of worship that overrules and overrides any conformity to patterns of this sinful world. The enemy has today used the minds of the youth over-time, but the Holy Spirit is now able to renew their minds so that they may be able to develop discernment as to the things of God.

Many times the youth become confused and lost in trying to discern when the Lord is calling them. At times they go to men for approval or for someone to send them. But, we must remember that when Barnabas and Saul were being called by the Lord, they were worshipping and fasting in the church at Antioch, when the Holy Spirit descended and said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Hence after they had fasted and prayed, hands were laid on them and they were sent off. The church today must learn to bring the youth into prayer and fasting because that is where the Lord still speaks even todate. Also we should beware of this unlawful sending off of the youth to the so-called service of the Lord. A kind of send off that has not the approval of the Lord. To lay a proper foundation of service into the lives of our youth today we must allow God the Father to call them and send them off to serve Jesus Christ of Nazareth. In the book of Galatians chapter 1 verses 6 through 10, the Lord categorically emphasizes on the quality of service we ought to present before Him. The Lord urges any one in His service to avoid this perennial act of pleasing men at the expense of pleasing God Almighty in heaven. And in fact, He stresses on the implication of serving while pleasing man, when he says that if one is to please men they cease to be the servant of Christ. Jesus Himself lived this out while on His ministry here on the earth, by striving at all times to please God the Father in heaven, the One who sent Him. The youth church too must be taught to always please God the Father in all they do.

Dr. Edward Owour