



**UNDER
STAND
ING
MY PARENTS**

TUNDE ONAKOYA

UNDERSTANDING MY PARENTS

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CONTENTS

CONTENT	00
DEDICATION	00
RECOGNITION	00
CHAPTER ONE: Your Source	00
CHAPTER TWO: Reality Check	00
CHAPTER THREE: The Don'ts	00
CHAPTER FOUR: Dealing with hurts	00
CHAPTER FIVE: Help Tips	00
CHAPTER SIX: Parting Shots	00

DEDICATION

I DEDICATE THIS WORK POSTHUMOSTLY
IN MEMORY OF MY BELOVED FATHER
OLUWASEGUNFUNMI ONAKOYA ESQ
(LIFE BENCHER) 1940 – 2015
AND
TO MY BELOVED MOTHER
OLADUNNI DEBORAH SOYINGBE

THANK YOU BOTH FOR BEING MY PARENTS

RECOGNITIONS

It has taken almost five years to put this work together from the last time I wrote my first book, “Parenting God's Blessings.” It would seem I almost could not gather my thoughts even though all I wanted to write was buzzing within me. In the course of that journey I faced the dreaded loss of my father. It has therefore been quite a challenging time.

But through it all, God remains my unbreakable anchor line, and as always, I owe Him a debt of gratitude for helping me gather my thoughts and strengthening me enough to be able to once again put pen on paper or as modern language would have me say: “strike the keynotes of my laptop.”

As the popular saying goes, “no man is an island,” just as “a tree on its own cannot make a forest.” It is in realisation of these age-old truths that I cannot lay absolute claim to the thoughts expressed in this book. A few recognitions are therefore expedient in the circumstance.

My immediate family remains at the centre of my source of comfort and inspiration and for that reason alone I thank God Almighty for my wife and children.

I continue to enjoy the privilege of various platforms, to share the thoughts God has graciously bestowed upon me, some of

which have been expressed in this book. I thank in this wise: Pastor Remi Morgan, Pastor Ituah Ighodalo, Pastor Gbenga Folayan, Evangelist Ayodele Osibanjo, Bishop Ayodele Awosoga, and Richard and Kemi Oyin-Adeniji.

The journey of youth ministry has been made challenging but worthwhile by the many teenagers and youths I have had the privilege to work with over the years. That includes their parents who have had to sit down and listen to my counsel even when they did not have to. I appreciate you all for the opportunity given me to be part of your lives.

Finally, I want to specially recognise and appreciate my many offspring from my local assembly and my charity Organization: Harvest House, Power House, Mindful of Youths Initiative and the wonderful team that provides me with the invaluable support. I must with respect acknowledge the untiring counsel and input of Kemi Onakoya, Dayo Badejo, Dimeji Joseph, Yemi Adeosun Mrs Taiwo Ajai Lycett, Demola Adeoye-Oluyole, Tola Odumosu, Taiye Tunkarimu, Dapo Olowo, Alaba Adenekan and Toluwalase Eniola.

Tunde Onakoya Esq.
21st March 2017

CHAPTER ONE

YOUR SOURCE

*“Love your parents. We are so busy
growing up; we often forget they are
also growing old.”*

Many years ago, when I contemplated the idea of writing a book, my primary focus was to help young people understand how they can better relate with their parents without the usual tension and apprehension that characterises relationships between parents and their children and more importantly without the child having to keep up appearances whenever daddy shows up.

In the course of putting that quest together, and while I was still on the field as it were, I found out that, the first hurdle I had to cross, was not so much as the belligerent attitude of young people or their indifference or even their insensitive and selfish attitude towards life, but a more worrisome plague, which silently festered underground, was the way parents actually handled and brought up their children.

And so the more I journeyed deep in my earlier quest, the more it became so glaring to me that, to attempt to counsel young people without also helping their parents, would in the end be an exercise in futility. Many times, I would counsel a child who may have done one thing or the other. I would spend many long hours attempting to make this child see the wisdom of obedience, respect and responsible behaviour, and while responses to such counselling session are not always immediate, you can just about see or at least feel the mustard seed that begins to sprout from one or two promises and even

physical responses like a tearful eye, followed with a promise to take a positive baby step towards the parent.

Alas, when the child gets home, he is confronted by the parent with what is left over from the very thing the parent had asked me to counsel the child on in the first place. In less than a few hours after the child has returned home, I will often get a call, and hear the child on the phone.... The child that still has some dose of respect will say something like...**“Mum has started shouting again,”** while the child that has lost his temper, will say something like...**“Mum has started her madness”** and will end with something like...**“Uncle I'm sorry, I know I should not say things like that about my mum, but this woman wants to run me mad.”**

This trend of events continued unabated for a while, and at a point I found it to be a common denominator among many homes. Parents love their children, no doubt, but when it comes to disciplining them, they use the same old style that their parents used on them, if not worse, but which they themselves resented.

I therefore had to do a rethink of my quest, and as they say, re-strategize. That meant I had to put on hold my quest to write a book on how young people can best understand their parents and quickly come up with a useful, simple to read document on how to parent young people. The result of that quest gave birth to ***Parenting God's Blessings***.

Having now successfully navigated that journey, it is ripe and expedient to return to where all this first started: to write a book that young people can read to help them understand how best to relate with their parents and in that wise enjoy the beauty of that relationship devoid of the acrimony, tension and frequent fighting.

In the years that have gone by, I have since found out that there are many, many books on how to parent young people. Many better qualified writers on the subject have proffered various solutions to what parents must do to be able to gain the trust of their wards and retain their confidence and friendship. But the market is not so generous with what young people should do to understand how to respond to their parent's discipline especially a parent that is throwing tantrums and believe me there are many loose cannon parents out there.

In recent times, there have been many stories of young people taking up arms against their parents. There is the story of the young lad who a few years ago, cut his father into pieces during a disagreement in the course of a prayer meeting. What will drive a son to take up arms against the person who gave him breathe of life...HIS SOURCE?!

Children have become disillusioned about a lot of things. The world we are growing in today has become more of an individualistic one even though we also say the world is a global village. The reality in the end is SELF FIRST. The communal spirit that fostered the age long biblical principle of

love your neighbour as yourself has been eroded with the jungle principle of survival of the fittest.... What do I mean? One might ask.

Parents do their best to provide the best for their children at least in most cases. This often-demanding role keeps most parents away from the home and from their children. There is little bonding and intimacy. In the end, the child looks elsewhere for this emotional support and in time between the child and the parent, even though they live under the same roof, they are no more than flatmates at best.

The parent is trying to survive by ensuring that the family stays afloat. That may require long hours of working and little or no contact. The child meanwhile is growing up in a violent, complicated world and needs the parent to help navigate that journey. Unfortunately, the parent has more pressing matters to tend to like, school fees, house rent, and sometimes an over-bloated social life style that takes him out of the house on weekends, missing precious time the parent can spend to make up for lost time during the week.

The consequence of all this will in time manifest in the attitude of the child, in their responses, behaviours, dress sense and speech. While these responses are not unusual and not unexpected, it should equally be recognised that parents are not necessarily the bad persons here. And while **Parenting God's Blessings** has made a modest attempt at addressing how parents can turn the tide in many respect, the focus of

this book is to give young people some directions on how to respond to many of the challenges they face with their parents.

Parents are God's creation. As children, parents are your first mentors, guardian angels, providers, and of course your first line of defence. To be a parent must certainly rank as one of the highest form of fulfilment in life. A friend of mine recently took delivery of his first child. He had this much to say when I asked him how it felt to be a father for the first time:

“I love children generally and I always enjoy their company because it just gives me this feeling of calmness and appreciation of the beauty of God's creation, but to have a human being you can call yours...now, that is a feeling I could never have comprehended in a million years.”

I know how he feels, I felt that some years ago, and even now, it's a fresh feeling that renews itself every day.

As a child reading this, you may be wondering; so, what is my point? Well the point is simple. Your parents love you. That love is such that they will almost always do anything to keep and preserve you, and yes even stupid and inconsiderate things. As far as parents are concerned, it's the world against them.

If I were to delve into the mind of the modern-day parent, one can infer a litany of things. Some parents can be inconsiderate, over-protective, dramatic, overbearing and too much involved in your business. A few may even be insensitive and as much as I hate to admit it, some may be downright selfish.

When you are, a child confronted with this kind of parents, you definitely want to scream, run, or literally just wish they disappear (not permanently, but maybe till you reach adulthood). At other times, you need their support, their stability, their assurance, their shelter, their counsel, their love and oh yes, I almost forgot; you also need their money. If only you could have all these without all their drama and blackmail.

How do you as a child manage all this? How do you get along with dad and mum without all the heart/headaches? It may almost be an impossible task. How do you take the benefit of something and not want the burden that comes with it? Life ought to be less complicated, but can you want a puppy and not want to deal with cleaning up when it messes up the living room?

In almost twenty years of counselling parents and children of diverse ages, I have found a recycling common denominator among the two groups. Parents want the child to shut up, sit down and obey, and the child wants the parent to butt out and mind their business. It's that simple. Now between shutting up and butting out is a long list of what each party expects from one another, but in the end, it all comes down to one thing: LOVE!

Love makes parents do crazy things. Screaming, slamming doors, mood swings, blackmail, crying, abusing the other parent through the child, keeping malice with the child, bribing and the list goes on and on. Yes! I know they are supposed to be the adult, yet sometimes they behave like the child. That should give you your first clue: **“Your parents are human,”** and the second clue **“Your parents are not perfect”** and the third clue **“Your parents don't know everything.”**

This book is my humble attempt to help as many young people as possible, and I dare say even older folks, have a better understanding of how to relate and bond with their parents. It is by no means an exhaustive document, but I am hopeful that it will serve as a useful guide in helping you chart a new and better engagement with the people I call 'your source.'

To have the full impact of this book, it is however important that you approach the contents with an open mind, objectivity, without preconceived ideas and prejudices, otherwise it will be a mere story book and no more. I invite you to journey with me and explore the possibility, no matter how dim, of repairing the bridge that once connected you to your parents, and if that bridge is as strong as ever, then there will be no harm done in using this book to reinforce that relationship. Relationships are not always easy to repair or to maintain, but I assure you in the end, it will be a rewarding journey.

Just a few pointers before we get started. Any reference to parents in this book, is used in its general parlance to mean; biological parent, step-parent, guardian, god-parent, and of course spiritual parent. Let me quickly state in clear and in unequivocal terms that this book does not contemplate the very sad and emerging trend of homosexual parents. Since the inspiration of this book is largely drawn from the Great book (The Holy Bible), it will smack at insulting the Almighty Himself, to begin to dignify such reprehensible conduct.

That said, let's now begin. A good place to start is to try to first have some understanding of who exactly are our parents. I call it “the reality check” - here we go!

CHAPTER TWO

REALITY CHECK

*“But persistent name calling? that prolongs hurt.
It stretches out. Each nasty word stretches the rubber band
further away until finally, one day, it snaps back at you with
maximum impact.”*

— Randa Abdel-Fattah,

Who in reality are our parents? Beyond the obvious fact that they are these two human beings that you call mum and dad, or on the other hand, are people who take care of you: feed, clothe, shelter, educate and discipline you, or in another respect, people you defer to when you need some counsel on life issues.

Many children don't see their parents beyond the above descriptions. Seldom do children think of their parents as people who have feelings, who have needs and emotions. Okay, maybe you do, but in reality, you will rather they keep those feelings to themselves because quite frankly, you are the child and they are the parents. After all they have had their time of throwing tantrums, it's now your turn, and they should quit encroaching on your time.

I wish life was that simple, but it's not. As a child, always keep in view that, as you grow older, you are heading straight to the Parent portal, and eventually, what goes around comes around. To be a parent is a very privileged and unique status to assume but equally it requires a lot more than you as a child can conceptualise. That is why one of the best ways to bond easily with your parents is to invest in understanding them. By so doing you will appreciate when in challenging situations, they throw tantrums as it were, you will in the least show some empathy and not go banners or speak rudely or find

their action or inaction vicious. Let us now consider some of those realities that characterise the essence of who your parents are.

YOUR PARENTS ARE HUMANS

I know this may sound patronising but it is not meant to be. At times children unconsciously treat their parents as if they are from mars and should be able to withstand anything including their excesses. Well, they are not. As I said earlier, parents have feelings and they are emotional beings. They are susceptible to the frailty of being human. That means they are not perfect and they are going to make mistakes. So, when you speak rudely to them, when you ignore their advice, when you treat them like a door mat, guess what? They feel the pain. Don't mind their bravado and maybe sometimes their shouting or hard-line posture. Beneath all that there is a human being crying and saying, "You hurt my feelings."

YOUR PARENTS ARE WIRED DIFFERENTLY

In most cases, the age gap between you and your parents will be nothing less than twenty years. That is a lot of years. It therefore goes without saying that your perception about a lot of things is going to be different compared to that of your parents. This often leads to conflicts and if not well managed can lead to a life of resentment between you and your folks.

Think of it this way. Your parents have had at least twenty years of perfecting a particular form of behaviour, and then suddenly, because you found some friends in school or some

wisdom on the internet, you then think, you know more than them. Okay maybe, just maybe you do know a bit more than them, but cut them a slack, don't be arrogant about it. Your parents may just need time getting used to this new trend. Even if they are conscious of their ignorance, they are human too, and nobody enjoys the indignity of being belittled especially when that person is your own child.

Recognise also that parents have certain values which they cherish and are not ready to shake off. There is a way of talking to people especially elders that your parents have been taught and hopefully they will teach you. There is a way you greet, a way you stand before elders, a way you behave when you go out and so on and so forth. Just because you are a modern "WhatsApp age" child, does not mean you throw those values in their face. Appreciate them and respect those values, it makes you no less who you are when you pattern your life in that direction.

YOUR PARENTS DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING

In your tender years, you probably are one of those kids that thought that your dad or mum or both of them are the alpha and omega. As you grew older, some things just did not feel right. Alas you found out, they are not all you thought they were. So, what?

I'm not the greatest fan of the subject called Mathematics, so you can guess what happened when many years ago, my daughter asked me to help her solve a problem. I stared at the

notebook for a long time, trying to figure out the beginning from the end or was it the end from the beginning? Finally, I mustered up as much humility as I could gather and in a very inaudible tone said: "Let's ask uncle next door." Thank God for my neighbour. I got free on that occasion.

Your parents are still learning, every human being is, as long as you are on the face of the earth. The day you stop learning, you begin to die, figuratively speaking. I know some parents put up a front and give the impression that they are the all-knowing and all everything. That unique characteristic belongs to our maker. In fact, sometimes it's just safer not to drag that matter with them. That argument often leads to a dead end. At the same time, don't demand that they must admit their ignorance to you, they don't owe you that explanation, not if they don't want to anyway.

When you come to the understanding that your parents don't know everything, not only will you be able to come to terms with some of their shortfalls, there may equally be times when you will be able to step in to some situations and help them cushion the effect of a bad judgement call, the consequence of which may be devastating not just to your parents but also to the entire family. I make bold to say that a positive intervention in that wise can only elevate your profile in the eyes of your parents.

YOUR PARENTS ARE AFRAID

Without a shadow of doubt, your parents have seen a lot in their lifetime. Indeed, they may have made some very bad decisions, some of which they are living with the consequences even till today. With the knowledge of that at the back of their mind, it stands to reason that they will necessarily guide the path of you their child, away from those booby traps they had the misfortune of falling into.

Children as we have repeatedly learnt are products of their background. That background is both physical and spiritual. Any wise parent will not only devote their time to cleansing their children spiritually but must devote as much energy in ensuring that their children live the faith they profess physically.

So, when I say they are afraid, yes, they are afraid because the world is a violent place. They are afraid of you smoking your lungs out. They are afraid you will drink your kidney dry. They are afraid you will pick up the car keys and drive under the influence. They are afraid you will spoil the family name. They are afraid you will get yourself pregnant or impregnate someone or get some STD. They are afraid that you will think everybody that smiles at you is your friend. They are afraid that you will eat where you are not supposed to. They are afraid you will speak out of turn to someone and either get the beating of your life or inherit a curse that your generation will nurse till Jesus comes, or both. Believe me, they are afraid of everything.

So, what do they do with this fear? Yes, your guess is as good as mine. They police you; they literally sit on your head, some with reasonableness, others without mercy. And then the conflict starts.

YOUR PARENTS CANNOT GIVE YOU EVERYTHING

If only wishes were horses, then even beggars will ride. If only our parents could give us all the things we ask for. If only we could go to the best schools in the world, and travel the world whenever we want, wear the best clothes money can buy; if only, if only. Well, time to wake up.

Life happens and in reality, since your parents are not God, they cannot give you all you want. Even the richest man in the world cannot. He can only buy just about the best money can buy, but that's where it ends. If money could buy all that you need as a child, then rich people and their kids have no justification in being suicidal.

Even if your parents are comfortable, keep in mind that life goes in circles and as much as we pray for God's continuous sustenance, in life, there are sometimes lean or dry seasons, when the mother cow's milk will not always flow as we want. In those times, dad may be grumpy, perhaps because he lost a contract, or his salary is being delayed, or maybe he even lost his job. At such times, the family will need to do some belt tightening.

Sadly, most parents will feel a sense of anger during such times,

followed by depression. Few are able to engage the whole family by bringing them to understand that there may be a few changes to be made. Only a very discerning sensitive child will be able to key in to the reality of the new family situation. Regardless however, as a child, recognise that your parents cannot give you all that you want, even when some of those wants are essentials of life.

YOUR PARENTS ARE NOT ENTIRELY RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS TO YOU

In today's contemporary society, the rate at which children assume physical and mental maturity is both mind bugging and quite alarming. The global village that the world has assumed makes it even more so. As a child, many things you know before your single digit age, are things your parents are still grappling with even in their adult life. Yet your parents remain responsible for you for as long as you are under their roof, some might even say under their authority. In truth, parenting you never really ends. The reality of that bears its fangs even when you have settled in your own home. You will often find yourself, deferring to them even for simple things, if only just to secure the comfort of their confidence and assurance that all indeed will be well with the task you are about to embark upon.

Make no mistake however that at some point in your life some decisions and the consequences of those decisions are yours and yours alone. It is true, some decisions or actions your parents may have taken in the past, may be finding expression

in your own life, negatively or positively. But at some point, in your life, you must snap out of the blame game or self-pity and take charge of your life.

As children, we do things away from the knowledge of our parents. I have had the singular privilege to counsel many young people and the confidence and friendship I gained through that interaction allows them to open up some revelations that many a times leaves my mouth wide open. As a child, the consequences of many of those indiscretions are yours to bear and not that of your parents, much as you may want to add to their litany of faults.

There is a point where the consequences of your indiscretions will be visited on you and you alone. So, when you smoke your lungs dry, guess who is playing with lung cancer? When you keep the company of fools as friends, guess who may end up in jail? As the saying goes, a sheep that moves in the company of dogs will eventually eat faeces.

YOUR PARENTS LOVE YOU BUT NEED LOVE TOO

Besides your parents loving God, and loving each other, the next person they obviously, love is their children. It won't be stretching it too far if I say that at times, even to the exclusion of God Almighty or even each other, parents make children the centre of their world.

The love any parent has for their child, must however be disciplined, otherwise, that love will kill that child. It is sometimes called "tough love". That love will sometimes

require them to take some hard decisions which may not be to your liking. At other times, the show of their love may be in a “No” rather than in the “Yes” you were expecting to hear. You may need to get beyond the sting of their words and listen to the truth in their message. You must get to a matured point in your life where you understand that the champions of the course of your life, indeed your greatest and loudest fans (Yes, your parents) have only one thing in mind for you, that is, their desire that you get to the pinnacle of whatever your life aspirations are.

Many children can be deliberately or sometimes unconsciously self-involved and not realise that even parents also need some measure of their love, in fact a great measure. Don't dwell in the false belief that because they are parents, they really are the ones to give the love and not you. They may not openly demand it but will it kill you once in a while if not every time to show your parents some measure of the love you have enjoyed from them.

In the next chapter, we shall be looking at things you as a child should not even do at all to your parents, You may call them taboos. If you really and sincerely want to enjoy your relationship with your parents, if you want to cultivate their respect for you, then there are things you must NEVER do. I call them “THE DON'TS “.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DON'TS

*A child who is allowed to be disrespectful
to his parents will not have true respect for anyone.*

The closer we get to people, the more likely we are going to get in their face. The same is true between parents and their children. As a child, consciously or otherwise, you are going to face situations when your parents will get on your nerves and you will either be tempted to react or you may actually react internally or externally.

An internal reaction may reflect in you throwing tantrums, having mood swings, keeping to yourself, cursing or mumbling some derogatory remarks under your breath or just keeping quiet. An external reaction may reflect in you practically employing your mouth and unleashing what some might call verbal diarrhoea. At other times, you may become physically violent, not necessarily towards your parents, although it is not unknown to have happened, for example: slamming doors, punching the wall and breaking things.

Of course, you are human, and when you are angered by anyone, let alone your parents, you are bound to respond or react. As a child, it is important that you react sensibly and proportionately. Now I know that is easier said than done, but regardless, you must be determined not to say or do anything that will damage permanently the relationship with your parents, even when the issue at hand can be attributed to their indiscretion. Hurtful or rude words when let loose are like breaking a fine china plate. Even when you attempt to glue the

pieces back together, the point of joining will always give away the fact that, at some distant past, something dreadful happened to the plate.

With this understanding, you will do well to avoid some common pitfalls that some children fall into. Except you have very matured, civil and God-fearing parents, a negative pronouncement from your parents, can set you back a few years if you are lucky and a lifetime if you don't quickly retrace your steps and ask for their forgiveness. Here are some of those "Don'ts";

DON'T DISHONOUR YOUR PARENTS

In an ideal setting, your parents should really be your best friends, but I know we don't live in an ideal world. Nevertheless, your parents deserve the highest level of respect from you. That means in speech and in conduct, whether they are there for you or not. You don't talk back at them, especially rudely. You don't shout at them, not even behind them. No respect with eye-service. This cuts across every sphere of human life, whether they are right or wrong, you respect them. Yes, I hear you scream, "It's not fair!" Maybe it's not, but God never gave us the luxury of an option, and in any case, are you going to question God? I hope not. This is what God said:

“Honour your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land the Lord God is giving you.” (EXODUS 20:12)

“Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right, honour your father and mother, this is the first commandment with a promise, that it may be well with you and that you may live long in the land.” (EPHESIANS 6: 1-2)

Now I know it may seem that God has given parents an unfettered licence to unleash terror and pain on their children, while you the child have to keep honouring them. But God has done nothing of such. In fact, God demands that parents too must not provoke their children. God indeed recognised that some parents can be high-handed and children can react if pushed to the wall. Here is what the Bible has to say:

***“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, instead, bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”
(Ephesians 6:4)***

Not minding this admonition to parents, the best path that you can walk as a child is to rise above the provocation and prayerfully ask God to help you weather the storm. After all, He created your parents, and if there is anyone who can best get them on your side, it surely must be God. But first make sure you are on the path of righteousness, because if you are not, God will not dignify your disobedience by winning your parents to your corner. That will certainly make Him a bundle of contradiction, and God does not contradict Himself.

Another way you may deliberately or otherwise dishonour your parents is by belittling them and or by being condescending to them. Some children do this often when they have achieved some level of dependence and become too big for their own shoes. It is indeed a sad day in the life of any parent when their child shuts them up just because that child no longer lives under their roof. Younger children are also guilty of this, especially when they are with their peers. They want to show off and portray a level of maturity in front of their peers. At other times, where the parents are not economically buoyant, they out rightly don't want to be seen with them in public.

In a way, though, it is an indication of a deficiency in manners and home training which may sometimes be traced to lack of good parenting in the first place. Regardless though, it is no excuse for children to treat their parents so shabbily.

The danger in you not honouring your parents can be fatal. God Himself spells it very clearly, if you do not honour them, the chances of you living long or getting on well in life is very slim. Your best bet is to do your part and let God take care of your parents. Always remember, in the scheme of things, God did not put the cane of chastising your parents in your hands, but he certainly put yours in their hands; just as he will someday put the cane of chastising your own children in your hands and not in theirs.

DON'T PERFECT YOUR PARENTS SHORT COMINGS

I had mentioned earlier that your parents are not perfect. That means there are some behaviours that they will exhibit that you should have the sense not to copy. Ordinarily, parents are supposed to be role models for their children. But sometimes, even parents don't behave responsibly. Now as a child, it is possible you are able to pick this lapse up very quickly, but what you do with it can go a long way to shape your own life.

Your parents are a function of their own background. They were brought up under a different era. In that era, to abuse a child as a way of correcting that child may be the norm and well accepted. It may also be an era when to talk down to mum is acceptable, or for mum to be seen but not heard is the order of the day. It equally can be a time that even though the parent is wrong, it's the child that has to still apologise. Now when you have parents who were brought up in those times and who consider all this acceptable forms of behaviour, except they deliberately and consciously go out of their way to challenge that status quo, it will be very hard, if not impossible, to expect a contrary form of behaviour from what they have learnt and lived for over twenty or thirty odd years.

As a child, you will unconsciously learn the habits and behaviours of your parents. Now, where those habits and behaviours are virtues, like love, kindness, charity, patience, friendliness, warmth, godliness etc. of course you must cultivate them. But where they are vices like having a foul mouth, abusive, arrogant, intrusive, selfish, dirty, lazy, pride, covetous, physically abusive, etc. then clearly you must run

very far away from these and you must deliberately and consciously do so.

It is very possible that if you spend too much energy (which I call wasted emotion), chastising and criticising your parents on any of these vices, without taking time to attend to it not finding expression in your own life, sooner than later, you might just find yourself repeating the same cycle. Keep in view that you have your own life ahead of you, so quit being judgemental or do you know what mistakes lies ahead of you?

DON'T BE A TOOL OF DISCORD IN THE HANDS OF YOUR PARENTS

Do parents have favourites? Of course, they do. Should they have favourites among their children? In reality, they should not. But they are human, so they gravitate towards the child that seemingly shows them care and love, gets good grades, does not get into trouble and generally just behaves responsibly. That is the frailty of their humanity.

Parents, I agree, are unique sets of wonderful people and as much as they should normally show leadership, maturity and responsible behaviour, in truth, they can sometimes use their children as a ping pong game. Some parents can be subtle in doing this while others can be downright crude and indifferent in showing to the whole world that among their children this one is my favourite, and for all they care, the rest can go jump in the river.

Any child that gets the undivided and exclusive attention of their parents in this way, most often, will relish the privilege and the pecks that comes with it, and perhaps rightly so, come to think of it, who wouldn't. However, if you happen to be one, it's a dangerous path to thread. Incidentally, some parents exchange the preferred child as day turns to night and vice versa. This depends on the situation of things at a particular time. In effect, you may find yourself being daddy's boy today because you brought home good grades and the next minute if you take sides with mum on a particular matter, daddy begins to gravitate towards your other siblings, if only to prove to you that you are in the enemy's camp.

As tempting as those pecks may be, any child that finds himself in this cycle must as much as possible avoid being used by the "attention seeking parent." Children must stay out of the quibbles between their parents. Don't become a ping pong in their hands. Your early days of resistance in this regard may initially not go down well with the parent but if you stick to your position, over time, your stand of independence and objectivity will stand you in good stead and eventually your message will be taken in good faith without any backlash.

In the same vein, don't help your parents to dishonour God. When you allow your parents to use you as a weapon to fight each other, you are driving a wedge through a covenant union that God himself had sealed with the blood of Jesus in the first place. Before now, you may not have this in-depth knowledge but now you do, and you really don't want to incur the wrath

of the Almighty.

DON'T REST YOUR OARS ON THEIR WEALTH NOR LET THEIR MEAGRE STATUS DEFINE YOU

Somehow as we are growing up, we always think that the grass is greener on the other side. When we see families that seemingly have it all, we wish that was our family. Then you have this family that has it all but has eyes on this other family that though does not have as much wealth, yet has all the warmth and love that money cannot buy. I call it the irony of life.

No family really truly has it all, and what you consider to be on your wish list, is to others what they consider their nemesis. It is interesting what really goes on in families when the doors are shut. But I digress!

If you happen to be born into a rich or at least a comfortable family, I congratulate you and pray that you will not only appreciate the hard work your parents had put into easing your journey in life (presuming of course that their source of wealth is blood-free, because if it is not, sadly, they have just inflicted a generational burden on you). It is also my hope that you will in the fullness of time, and as you step up to manage that wealth, not only multiply it, but will at some point, pause and consider the plight of those who are not so blessed as you are, and in so doing lend a helping hand.

The worst thing you can however do, is to revel and bask in that wealth and not lift a finger other than to just squander it. There is something about wealth that was never worked for, or appreciated, in time it often develops wings and flies away. So, don't rest your entire life on waiting for the wealth of your parents to be turned over to you. When it does come into your hands, in that manner, you will not have a clue what to do with it.

I know many parents want to provide a good life for their children, away from the challenges and hard background they are coming from, but if not wisely done, it may become your downfall as a child. I tend to align myself with the wise words of John Maxwell when he said:

'If you do everything for your children, what will they do for themselves? By the time they finish university education, we have slaved and built houses for them, put car keys in their hands, bank roll their wedding when they are getting married. People, what will they do for themselves? In the course of doing these for them, some people develop hypertension, all sorts of illnesses. Some slump and die because "A rich man leaves an inheritance for his children's children." Some even steal to achieve these for their children. I submit to you all that, that inheritance goes beyond material things. Give them the right values, strong character and a

revelatory knowledge of the power they carry as an extension of God, they will create water to sell in the desert and sell sand to the Arabs to build mansions for themselves. Do something for your children to make them have a softer take off, do not take over their lives. Think on These Things'

And then there is the child that thinks life has dealt a heavy blow to his destiny. Why was I born into poverty or into not so wealthy a family? It's a good question to ask, as long as it propels you to let that humble background challenge you and springboard you into a better life. Don't ever dwell in self-pity or condemnation. It really is an old out-dated line. The world is replete with many nobodies who have become somebodies. Who is the father of Bill Gates, (once the richest man in the world) or Aliko Dangote (the richest black man in Africa)? I believe my point is made! Do not let your poor start in life determine how far you go. Your parents limit should be your starting point.

DON'T PUT YOUR PARENTS IN A TIGHT CORNER

There are some children who are very good in the art of blackmail. Sadly, there are also parents gullible enough to succumb to that blackmail. Incidentally, this has nothing to do with economic status. Rich or poor, the child literally has the parent in his pocket.

As a child, don't put your parents in a tight corner. Don't demand from them what you know they cannot afford. It is excusable when you are a toddler and you really don't know much. But as you grow older, the reality of the family you are born into should be clear to you together with the capacity of your parents. Don't throw tantrums by having unending wants even when your parents can afford it. And yes, sometimes they will say "No" even when they can afford it.

A teenager many years ago, came to me with a long-drawn face. When I asked him what the matter was, his reply almost made me lose my balance. He said something along these lines: "**...My dad said, he needs to do a bit of belt tightening in the family budget, so instead of us going on our yearly London vacation, we will be going to an African country.**"

Believe me, I felt my fore hand in its fist state ought to connect with his mouth at least three times, if only to wash out the verbal diarrhoea that he just excreted from his mouth. But I restrained myself and reluctantly tried to guide his brain to seeing the other side of life. It took a considerable long time for him to understand that travelling for summer every year to London, was a privilege, not a right, for which he ought to be grateful.

One other way you can put your parents in a tight corner, is by comparing them with other parents. I have personally experienced a teenager asking me rhetorically: "**I don't know why my parents did not give birth to me in the western world.**" Comparing your parents to other parents, is not only

belittling and unfair, it gives an indication of your lack of respect for them.

DON'T NEGLECT YOUR PARENTS

I have said repeatedly in this book that parents are not perfect. That means in your interactions with them as children, there will be hurts here and there. As a child, try as much as possible not to carry the load of malice and bitterness down the years. In the end, it serves no useful purpose.

Some children have had a very interesting fun-filled childhood, and if it were possible, they would love to experience it over and over again. If that was your experience, then it's possible you are among the minority, at least going by the many young adults I have had interactions with. A lot of children, and I mean a lot, don't seem to want the pleasure of having to recall let alone relive their childhood. I attribute this to one of two things. First, is the obvious reason that they might in truth have experienced a very challenging and difficult childhood brought on by the cruelty of their parents. The second reason I found is because of the child's own self over-bloated expectation of what dad or mum or both should or should not have done to ease his passage in life. As a result of any of these reasons, you may consciously or unconsciously resent your parents. That resentment is followed with a desire to want to leave home at the earliest opportunity, far away from your parents, with a promise never to look back.

The hurt you feel as a child is inside of you and not attached to proximity with those that you may feel have hurt you. Yes, your constant sighting of your parents may provoke your resentment, but running away from them does not heal you either and worst still, the longer it lingers the more difficult it is to move on.

What some children do after is to psychologically punish their parents by first refusing to be part of their life, and then they keep the grandchildren away from them or even worst they don't even acknowledge their existence. However, families with a destructive cycle of sin are very dangerous, and children who break free need to find safety in the family of God, which is every Christian's true family (See Matthew 10:35-38).

Dysfunctional families are fraught with addiction, violence, and an absence of safe boundaries. These traits will be like a millstone around the neck, dragging the child towards the same sinful patterns. It is much like overcoming addiction; when a person desires sobriety, he cannot associate with people who abuse drugs (See Proverbs 13:20).

As a child you are entitled to feel hurt. But as a Christian you will do yourself a whole lot of good if you snap out of it very early. Resenting your parents for the rest of your life and depriving them of your company and care in their old age can surely not be God's definition of love. Granted they may have hurt you, don't descend to that level too; the attitude of an eye for an eye only makes everybody go blind.

God expects you to be a better person than your parents and not repay evil for evil. God expects us not only to love our neighbours as ourselves, He also enjoins us even to pray for our enemies. If He expects us to pray for our enemies, I bet He expects much more when it comes to our parents. In fact, God puts it clearly like this:

“If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much.” (Matthew 5:46)

In 1st Timothy 5:8, the Bible went further:

“But those who won't care for their relatives, especially those in their own household, have denied the true faith. Such people are worse than unbelievers.”

And so, you have the “Don'ts” I can just about fill into the limited space I have. There are many more that you can probably think of as you read this. I hope that you will have the courage and strength to rise above the hurts, the pains and the regrets. Yes, those hurts and pains, how do you deal with them, let's go on to the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEALING WITH HURTS

*You will know that forgiveness has begun when you
recall those who hurt you and feel the power to wish them well.
~Lewis B. Smedes*

Trying to understand your parents without dealing with past hurts may prove to be more daunting and in reality, is demanding too much from a person. At the same time, swimming in those past hurts and using them as an excuse to keep your parents at bay may do more damage to you than you may care to admit. Everyone has one pain or the other inflicted at some point by their parents. Some are mild while others have proved detrimental to a child's future growth and development. Human beings generally are a mixture of vices and virtue and unless you understand that, you may not be able to live with them successfully, your parents inclusive.

In whatever category, you find yourself, either as a young child still going through those hurts or maybe as a grown adult still having flash backs of those hurts, especially during periods when particular situations present themselves in your own life, not minding that you are now away from home, or even when situations require your attendance at family gatherings, you will do well to begin your healing process and I say better early than late.

This is even more so, when the said parent is either not aware of your present hurt or believes that the hurt was necessary to help you mature and be able to face the challenges of life. When you are faced with either of this scenario, it would seem

pointless to be angry with someone who cares less or is not even aware that you are hurting. In the end, it becomes more of a wasted emotion whose victim is one person, YOU!!!

Now, hurt in this context can be as simple as the cane on your backside over a long period of time, to tongue-lashing, some might call it verbal abuse, to neglect, to disownment, to sexual abuse and you can add your list to it. It goes without saying that the greater the hurt caused the more difficult it may prove to heal, but with the right approach, and holding on to the word of faith, “nothing shall be impossible.” Indeed, God can bring healing to your life.

I pause here and want to also mention that those that hurt from parental abuse are not just always young children but even grown adults. The hurt in grown adults can often be the result of their indifference to finding a healing path much earlier in life. It is for this reason that it is advisable to start your healing process much early in life so that it does not fester and become an unyielding Gibraltar rock

Dealing with hurts does not however mean having a memory lapse of what happened but simply allowing God to help you heal and free your parents from the anger, bitterness and pain that results every time you recollect whatever the hurt it is you are going through. It is strictly a spiritual journey, the kind that God Himself gave us in spite of our sinful state. Hear this:

When we were utterly helpless, Christ

came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. (ROMANS 5: 6 – 8)

It is not just spiritually right for you to forgive; it is physically expedient for you to do so. There are a million ways parents can hurt their children, and to attempt to explore all of them within the confines of this book will be foolhardy, nevertheless, we will explore a few common hurts that parents often recycle and which many children find difficult to shake off.

ABUSE

The worst kind of abuse is when parents don't actually believe that they are abusing their children, but believe that they are training them for the future. Abuse can be physical, emotional, verbal and yes sexual. None of these abuses is excusable or mild, although most people will agree that sexually abusing your own child must rank at the highest and gravest hurt any parent can inflict on their own flesh and blood.

Abuse can be relative, and is by and large a function of a number of things. The upbringing and background of the parent, the culture and environment they grew up in and of course the kind of parent they themselves had.

For example, what is considered abuse in a particular society may be seen as mere discipline in another. Using the cane on a belligerent child can be a normal way to correct the child in some homes or cultures, and many parents will even back it up with **Proverbs 23:13**, but in many western and developed societies, parents can lose custody of their children or in the worst, can even be sent to prison for verbally assaulting their own children not to talk of using the cane on them.

Abuse in the context of its consideration here is where parents consciously or unconsciously inflict some form of hurt in what one might call beyond the norm. A mild verbal chastisement without being condescending, abusive, derogatory or vindictive would be okay if its aim was to bring the erring child back to recognise the folly of his actions. Although even at that no one wants to be chastised no matter what.

As a child, you must recognise that your indiscretions will one way or the other receive an appropriate and hopefully a proportional response from your parents. When that response becomes overbearing then it will tend to abuse. When canning a child all over without being mindful of vital body organs, and in a rage, or anger, that bothers on abuse. Of course, when a parent is abusive and progresses to even curse the child, that is abuse. The list of what constitutes abuse is endless and suffice to say that any correction that tends to dehumanise anyone deliberately or not is in my respectful view an abuse, no matter how well intended the reason proffered.

SINGLE PARENT, ABANDONEMENT AND NEGLECT

The negative stigma of a child coming from a single parent household doesn't begin to dawn on the child until when certain situations call for the presence of both parents. Suddenly, the child realises he is in a different family set up compared to his peers. As a child from a single home, depending on the circumstances that led to the single parent having to raise you alone, there may arise resentment towards your mum or dad, or even third parties. That resentment, if not checked can eventually be the foundation of your single parenting journey not minding that you resented it in the first place.

To be abandoned by a parent must be a very terrible nightmare any child should have to wake up and find out. I have had a fair share of having to counsel children and in one or two cases grown adults who came to realise that the person they thought was their mum or dad was in actual fact their foster parent in the first place. That kind of discovery can be psychologically traumatising to anyone. How do you wake up from that reality? I say except you are God, or you have personally experienced it, it is better imagined than experienced.

Another side to abandonment is when the parent that walked away, is still alive and carrying on as if nothing happened or is now tending another family without recognising that the abandoned child exists or even when he does, he says point blank "I have nothing to offer you." How does a child heal from that kind of wound? What do you tell a child whose

parent deliberately abandons her; it really is a perplexing tongue-tying challenge, a verbal landmine, which has to be navigated with utmost tact and sensitivity.

Some children have also come to see boarding school as a way of being abandoned especially for children that suffered a whole lot of different kinds of abuse. The legitimacy of this claim can be given some credence when the child is seldom visited. Eventually when he comes home, he becomes a recluse, locking himself in his room and it's a matter of time before the gap between parent and child becomes wider beyond repair. However, it should be stated here that, boarding school inherently does not generally breed this kind of behaviour especially if the parent is responsible enough to be there for their children as and when the occasion demands. Yet there is the kind of indifference on the part of a parent that bothers on total neglect of the child, even though they live under the same roof. The parent or parents short of providing a roof over the child's head can care less whether the child eats, wears decent clothes, goes to school or behaves responsibly. But when the parent steps into the house, he becomes the Lord of the Manor, and anyone who dares to cross his path receives the brunt of his anger.

Abandonment creates a toxic shame which arises from the painful message of being abandoned namely: "You are a waste of space." "You are not of much value." When you feel this way, what can you do? How do you heal from this and more importantly how do you forgive the parent that abandoned you?

LACK AND POOR BACKGROUND

In my university days, while joking around with a few of my friends, a question popped up from one of my friends as if inspired; ***“Why did my father not go abroad in search of the proverbial golden fleece when his age mates were doing the same”?***

Now, for you to appreciate the import of this question, you need to have the background knowledge. The parents of my other friends including my parents studied in the United Kingdom, save for the parents of this my friend. Invariably, all of us except my friend had dual citizenship. So according to his own diagnosis, his parent's poor background (I say humble background) was tied to the failure of his parent to go abroad at the time many of his mates were jetting out. In consequence, he became afraid; his future aspirations were tied to his background. Thankfully, my friend's misguided judgement turned out to be misconceived.

Maybe you are like my friend, from a humble background, with not much to boast about economically, and you blame your parents for not having as much as the family next door. Yes, sometimes we all wish Bill Gates was our father, we ask what was daddy doing when his mates were making serious money. And for your parents not measuring up to par, you resent them, their company and all that reminds you of them. You are determined to make it in life, good for you, but with a caveat, they will never smell your wealth.

If you are saddled with this kind of mind-set, you seriously do need to heal and heal fast.

POLYGAMOUS OR BROKEN HOMES

If you are a child from a nuclear family, you are probably, most likely, going to be in the minority. Polygamous family settings are not strange to contemporary society. Many children have come to think of it as the norm, but the salient underground issues it brings are tactically not spoken of, but consciously or unconsciously are recycled in the child's life.

If you are from a polygamous home or broken home, broken in the sense that both daddy and mummy no longer stay together and or each of them have gone off to marry other people, then it won't be out of place to expect that you will harbour some resentment, pain, anger and hurt towards both or one of your parents. This may stem from the sense of not being loved, to the anguish of having to live with step-siblings whom you believe are competing with the love of your parents which ought to have been your exclusive preserve. The pain you suffered may be even more excruciating if the step parent was abusive.

The above are just a few ways children may have been hurt by their parents. To now ask such a child to begin to try to understand their parents without first helping them get past the hurts may be equal to fetching water in a basket...it will never get full. As a child, how do you get past these hurts and get on with your life and more importantly give your own children a better life than the one bequeathed to you by your parents?

HEALING FROM HURTS

There are no quick fix methods to get past the hurts inflicted on a child by parents. Any healing process must be gradual, although it works well if the process can start much earlier in the life of the child.

CHOICE

As a child, your healing process must start from a conscious decision made by you. Beyond whatever reasons I may proffer in this book, in the end, it is important that the decision to heal from your past hurts must be consciously deliberate. The reason for this is that, while the counsel of third parties is useful and can in many respects provide direction and justification for why you must heal from the hurt, if in the end, you face hiccups in the journey to healing, such as an unrepentant parent, you will feel doubly hurt when that happens and may descend into a more serious abyss, which you may never recover from. Unhealed hurts are after all open wounds and will continue to fester and can flare up unannounced if not attended to.

In making the choice to heal from your hurt, do not hinge your healing on the expectation that your parent will naturally be repentant. Your choice must be regardless of their showing any form of remorse. Of course, if they do show remorse, then it makes the healing process quicker and faster.

You must come to a settling in your mind that no matter what, you are going to put the hurt behind you. I must quickly say

here that this choice is more of a spiritual as against a physical decision. Human instincts will always tend towards protecting self and keeping at bay any intrusion that will compete with a man's wellbeing, especially from those who fostered it, hurt of any kind inclusive. Your faculty of consciousness and thought: your mind must be tuned to God's way to be able to walk this path of making this selfless choice.

FIND GOD

You would think that the first way to heal from any hurt is to find God. You will be right to think that way, except that, finding God is equally a choice and one that you again must make on your own. True, the knowledge of God may be presented to you by a third party: a friend, your colleague etc., nevertheless, for that decision to be real and enduring, it must in the end be a choice you have made on your own, albeit with the encouragement of third parties. The Bible in James 4: 8 has this much to say:

“Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world.”

Having decided within yourself to heal from your hurt, the next step should be to get the best help from the best person that can help you: God Almighty! It helps greatly to recognise that a spiritual background attends and in fact permeates most hurts. With that recognition, it is easier to receive healing

much more effectively.

This is because most hurts almost invariably arise from the work of the devil as he opposes the wholeness that God intends for you to enjoy. The personality of your parent inflicting that hurt is in the end a diversionary tactic of the devil, although I hastily say that, it still does excuse the reprehensible behaviour of such a parent. Every hurt invariably has a spiritual root, which only the power in the blood of Jesus can uproot. The Bible is clear about this in Ephesians 6:12:

“For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.”

When you appreciate that your hurt means looking beyond your parents, then you will be able to ask God to help you get pass the pain that obviously lurks in your mind. In walking this path look for a “spiritual guardian,” someone that can hold your hand, pray with you, teach you the basic ways of resisting the devil and holding up the shield of faith, whatever happens, don't try to walk the path of healing alone.

IDENTIFY THE HURT

A handful of times when I have had reason to ask young people what exactly has caused their relationship to disintegrate, there is this sense of being lost and unable to pin down what exactly caused their falling out in the first place. On further

prodding, the answer usually comes in a mumble of incoherent response, something along the lines of: “I’m not really sure,” “We just don’t get along,” and so on.

While there may truly be a genuine and legitimate reason for the distance between a child and the parents, more often than not, with the passage of time, it is not unusual not to be able to now pin down what exactly caused the hurt. If you can remember what caused the hurt, then that makes it easier.

Generally speaking, you cannot begin to heal from any hurt if you do not know what exactly the hurt is. That may sound strange, but some hurts may have over the years become lost in time and as a child, or a grown adult, as the case may be, you may just be riding on the fact that something happened in the past with your parents for which you decided to move on with your life to their exclusion. But whatever the case is, it is important to identify what exactly is the hurt that the parents caused.

There is a school of thought that believes that it serves no real purpose to dig up hurts that you have either forgotten about or that have self-buried themselves. While there may be some credence for that line of thought, there is however a danger that what we think is buried is actually incubating somewhere in the deep dark corner of your heart, which a certain event in the future will cause to explode. Therein lies the danger of not consciously and deliberately healing from past hurts.

It is needful therefore to try as much as possible to identify the hurts and make a list of them. When you do that, you have

started a journey to your healing and recovery, and with a little faith, you may just get to the place of closure, but first you need to get rid of the bug of unforgiveness.

UNFORGIVENESS

The word unforgiveness does not appear in many, if not all, dictionaries. Try typing it as I did even on MS word, the red underline will spring up. Maybe it's because God has forgiven too many times, lexicographers thought it in their wisdom to exclude the word from the dictionary. Linguists say it's not proper English. Nevertheless, English is not shaped or delimited by dictionaries, but by the people who use it every day. If we have been using the word unforgiveness as the antonym of the noun forgiveness and everybody understands its use in that context, then why should we bother with issues of grammatical correctness and conventional usage?

But again, I digress, let us focus on the essence of the word. When a child has been hurt, it logically follows that there will be some resentment towards the parent that hurt the child. Unforgiveness is a poison and it basically shuts God's door in our face. The position of God with regards to those who hurt us is clear. In Matthew 6:14-15, the Bible says:

“For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

In other words, if you want your prayers, your worship, and your offering to be acceptable to God, you must approach the altar of God with a forgiving spirit otherwise you will just be wasting your time.

Once you have God in place in your life, the Holy Spirit that resides in you enables you with ease to forgive. Hear what Jesus said in John 20: 22-23:

“And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

And immediately after that Jesus said:

“If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

I admit, to forgive a hurt is not the easiest thing to do, but it's a biblical injunction that you must strictly covet if ever you want your ways to please God. A twin sister of forgiveness is to forget. Now this has often been misinterpreted to mean to have a memory lapse of the hurt. Well if you are able to,

depending on what the hurt is, it may actually prove to be a good thing not to have it in remembrance. Truth be told, some hurts are so deep they are almost impossible to forget. However, to forget really just means to dispense with the anger, the pain, the resentment, the desire to want to take revenge and the refusal to want to give the person another chance.

Joseph the carpenter, the father of Jesus Christ, exuded the spirit of forgiveness. Having been told by Mary his wife that she was pregnant, and knowing fully-well that he had nothing to do with the pregnancy, the Bible in Matthew 1:19 records as follows:

“Joseph, her fiancé, was a good man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.”

Joseph did not even brood over the matter, the spirit of God in him, guided his thought pattern. He was more interested in not ridiculing Mary, this despite the pain and agony of betrayal he must have felt when Mary said she was pregnant. He could not understand why, yet he was ready to forgive and move on with his life.

The act of forgiveness is a choice, a conscious one at that. Choose to obey God; do not go with your feelings because all your feelings do is poison you with bitter thoughts of the hurt. Make a conscious decision to forgive your folks and watch God help you heal from your wounded emotions in due

season. That said, forgiving any hurt requires a rare virtue called humility.

HUMILITY

You cannot heal from your hurt if you don't make a conscious effort to forgive and you cannot forgive if you do not have a Christ-like meek and lowly heart. This much we can distil from the words of Jesus when he said in Matthew 11:29:

“Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

God gravitates towards those that are humble, not stupid but those with a lowliness of mind. We see that humility is a heart attitude, not merely an outward demeanour. Being born again does not automatically confer humility on you. It is a virtue that must be coveted and daily practised. I Chronicles 7:14, tells us how:

“Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.”

Humility requires absolute dependence and submission on God, it is that submission to His will (to forgive) that allows

God to deposit His Spirit in you and it is that Spirit that softens and makes your heart lowly and meek so much so that the pain and the agony of the hurt is taken away. However, always keep in mind that it is a walk of faith and not a walk by sight. Humility is best learnt when pride is at its peak. It is not in any way suggested that you think less of yourself, only that you think of yourself less. Humility is forgiving your parents whether they apologise or not.

Don't spend time justifying why you cannot walk the road of forgiveness and humility. The reason being you will find a lot of good reasons why, and ultimately you will remain in the pit of your hurt. It is only when you humble yourself that God will heal you.

Many times, even though the anger against parents may seem justified, it is dangerous to swim in that pool of self-righteousness. The hurt you are experiencing should be turned into a positive thing instead of allowing it to drown you. Shake off the spirit of pride that is the opposite of humility. That you are still standing even after the hurt you have suffered is by the grace of God, but if you dwell too long in self-pity or self-righteousness then that grace will eventually lead to your disgrace. Pride is about your glory, humility is about God's glory. Don't let pride take away God's grace over your life, remember it was pride that turned angels to demons, in the same way that humility turned a mere man to be a friend of God.

KEEP CONSEQUENCES IN VIEW

In all our daily endeavours in life, it is necessary to pause and always consider the consequences of not just our actions but also our inactions. The law of consequences has one simple truth, namely: actions and surprisingly even inactions always produce outcomes. That outcome may be negative or positive. When you decide to embrace this reality, and appreciate the depth of the consequences of holding your parents for the hurt they have caused, then the danger that that consequence may result in, can serve as a prompt to hasten your footsteps towards letting go.

Indeed, the consequences of holding your parents for the hurt they caused can be more detrimental to you than even to your parents. This can be more so, where your parents don't even know that you are holding such hurt against them or where they have tried to make amends but you have adamantly refused to accept the olive branch.

When you don't keep in view the consequences of holding on to past hurts, you never really will be able to move forward, you are filled with bitterness, anger and even depression. Aside from that and in actual fact you turn your life over to the person who has hurt you without you intending to. And then you live a life of self-pity, which is a relative of low self-esteem.

The prime consequence of your holding on to past hurt is your total disregard of God's counsel when He says in Isaiah 43: 18 – 19:

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now

it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”

The import of not keeping the consequences that may result later in life, from the above passage, is to basically stay the hand of God in your life. God's admonition is that you forget the former things so that he can do a new thing. So simple logic, you refuse to forget those hurts, God refuses to do a new thing. I think Booker T. Washington's further words on marble nailed the coffin:

“I will permit no man to narrow and degrade my soul by making me hate him.”

This wise counsel should always be our watch word.

COUNSEL

It is interesting to observe that most people who have been hurt by their parents seldom speak about it especially as they grow into adulthood. The few that choose to speak about it do so with utmost hatred and vicious venom that has eaten deep into their soul.

The shame tag of having to admit that the very people who are supposed to love and care for you are the same people who have caused so much agony and pain is one that most people will prefer not to acknowledge.

But acknowledge you must, if healing must follow. One of the most effective ways to do that is to seek and obtain counsel,

preferably from a Christian counsellor. Talking to family members, a trusted friend may initially be a useful avenue to get some sense out of the hurt and pain, but after a while it may not feel helpful especially because some may take sides or say, “I told you so.” You may not want to upset others. You start to get less empathy as time goes by and wonder whether people get bored hearing of your predicament.

Your Pastor in church, a trusted confidant or a dear friend can be the counsellor you need to kick start your healing process. I hasten however to say here that be careful how and who you confide in. Some people are busybodies and you should never receive counsel from them, they are unproductive in speech, in thought and conduct. In fact, don't even discuss your problems with someone incapable of contributing to the solution. Not everyone has the right to speak into your life.

You will recall earlier in this chapter, I urged you to find God. When you do find God, part of the guidance God will provide is the choice of a confidant. When He presents you with the right person, the person will be someone who will pray with you, encourage, admonish, and be truthful, sensitive yet firm and objective. The person will journey with you and there will be a feeling of inner peace that you derive from their counselling.

The Bible in Romans 12:18, talks about the peace you should have with others, this peace allows you to flourish. Then it also talks about peace with yourself in Colossians 3:15, a rest of mind and soul that escapes most of us. And then there is the

ultimate kind of peace, the peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5: 1). It comes from knowing that you are in right standing with God. So, this is how it works, when you are at peace with God, you will be at peace with yourself and when you are at peace with yourself you will be at peace with your parents.

Above all, you will in time begin to see results. Anything short of this is an indication that you have pitched your tent with the wrong counsellor. Mending a broken heart, like so many painful things in life, takes time and there is no quick fix.

Having dealt with the hurts, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that as a child whether young or old, you still have to live out the rest of your life, and if you are one of the few that enjoy some reasonable level of relationship with your parents, then you either want to sustain it or make it better. That takes us to the next chapter, how can you help your parents.

CHAPTER FIVE

HELP TIPS

“Why isn't there a commandment to "honour thy children" or at least one to "not abuse thy children"? The notion that we must honour our parents causes many people to bury their real feelings and set aside their own needs in order to have a relationship with people they would otherwise not associate with.

Parents, like anyone else, need to earn respect and honour, and honouring parents who are negative and abusive is not only impossible but extremely self-abusive. Perhaps, as with anything else, honouring our parents starts with honouring ourselves. For many adult children, honouring themselves means not having anything to do with one or both of their parents.”

— Beverly Engel, Divorcing a Parent

The idea of a child helping a parent may sound somehow, especially if we are not talking of a parent who is physically or mentally challenged. After all, the parent is the one that should be doing all the helping while the child should just be the recipient, right? ermmm wrong !!!

Parents can sometimes be vulnerable, naïve and ignorant about some issues of life and trying to navigate their way out of these issues at times may prove quite a difficult task for them. True, many parents may present a front of being in charge, all knowing and on top of everything, but in actual fact they may not have a clue. The reality of that comes out when eventually that particular issue falls flat in their face.

For a parent that is quick to learn, it's easy to ask for help and retrace their steps, but for the "*I know what I'm doing parent*," it may not be that easy. Regardless of which side of the divide you find yourself, it's always good to remember as mentioned in the earlier chapter that our parents are not super humans, at least not in the manner of having the answer to everything, that unique right belongs to God Almighty.

What can you do to help your parent, how can that help be receptive and not thrown back in your face, when is the right time to stop a parent from self-destructing? I have had a handle

of children giggle silently at the prospect of a parent about to walk into a mine field, as it were. But that should not be a thing to delight in. Let us consider a few help tips you as a child can offer mum and dad.

GET INVOLVED

As a child, how much do you get involved in your family affairs? How relevant are you in the scheme of things in your house? What level of support do you give your parents at home? Are you an asset or a liability? There are a lot of children who are guest in their own homes. When they are home, they might as well not be there, because aside from eating and if one is lucky, appear once in a while in the living room, they just bury themselves in their rooms. They don't lift a finger to do any house chores and when they manage to lift a finger, it would have been the aftermath of world war three between mum and the child.

There are benefits, privileges and rights that come with being a child in a family setting. There are also responsibilities. As a child, you cannot take the benefit of being a son or being a daughter and not want to take the responsibilities that come with that status.

Helping your mum and dad to give you a good upbringing also means sometimes you need to support them in the running of the household. Some of that help will be laid on you as duties, but many others come with using your initiative and discretion. They can be as simple as checking that the lights in

the house are switched off at the appropriate time, your room is tidy, you wash your plate and yes that of others after meals, wash the family car, accompany them to family outings even when you find it boring (it's called commitment).

But it can also be a more thoughtful gesture like taking charge of the home in terms of say: cleaning your parents room, washing their clothes, even if it means putting it in the washing machine, buying them gifts just to say thank you once in a while, and I'm not talking of on their birthday. It can also mean being sensitive to the times and recognising when to make demands and when to refrain from making demands.

CONSEQUENCES IN VIEW

In this book, one reoccurring line of thought is the fact that what goes around will surely, ultimately come around. In other words, whatever it is you sow, eventually, sooner or later, you will reap the same. In Christendom, it's called the law of sowing and reaping while in general parlance it's called the law of karma. Whatever the nomenclature, it is important that you keep the consequences of your actions in view. In doing so, you will help to avert a dangerous curse on your life and your children.

Whenever a child is on the war path with the parents, justification is often found in the irresponsible or despicable behaviour of the parent. In truth, a careful objective assessment of the issue at hand may find in favour of the "victim child." But should the answer to the parents'

behaviour be a tooth for a tooth. Is that the mind of Christ? Two passages in the Bible tell me otherwise. Ephesians 6: 1-2 says:

“Honour your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”

The second Bible passage is found in Luke 6: 31-32, which says:

”Do to others as you would like them to do to you. If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them.”

The consequence of disobedience to your parents has been clearly and explicitly spelt out in Ephesians 6: 1-2, namely that if you want to live long and if you want life to go well with you, then honour them. The honour to your parents is not dependent on being nice to you; it is a commandment out of commitment not out of convenience. Keep this in view anytime you feel the need to take your pound of flesh against them.

The second arm of keeping the consequence of your actions in view has to do with your faith itself. Human nature gravitates towards being kind to people who are kind to us. But that is a

part of the story. The full story as enjoined in Luke 6:31-32, is that our kindness, our love and our charitable disposition should even be extended to people who have not shown us kindness. Parents inclusive! This in effect means help yourself by helping your parents and vice versa.

Generally speaking, it is important and helpful to always consider what the aftermath of the actions or inactions we take can result in. If we are blinded by our anger and hurt, we will eventually reap the consequence of that act. A few of such consequences can show up in the future as: loneliness, hatred, shame, unfulfilled dreams, recycled affliction of disobedience from your own children etc.

RELIABLE THRID PARTIES

There may come times in your relationship with your parents when trying to access them may prove a daunting task. It may even be a case in which you need one parent to help you access the other, for a wrong committed and to help appease the angry parent. As a child, you will do yourself a world of good to always have handy someone that you know can access your parents when this extreme situation occurs. Of course, it goes without saying that this person will be someone that your parents revere and hold in the highest esteem. But before you access this person, be sure that you have done everything within your power and indeed within your nuclear family setting to resolve the matter.

A close relation of mine had the grace of me accidentally walk into a very volatile family situation many years ago. Everyone including the mother of the house found the father unusually

unapproachable. This had never happened before. I became the opportune guinea pig to use to resolve the impasse. The young lad by this time had been banished beyond the gatehouse, so even the security guard had an edge over the son of the house. I had never had cause to plead to the father; this was a new journey for me too. I began with the usual greeting and eventually broached the issue of the boy's indiscretion. I received a long lecture in which the father catalogued past forgiven escapades but this latest one was as far as he was concerned the last straw. He was resolute. A visit of a few minutes turned out to be one of no less than seven hours, that was the price I paid and of course a promise to mentor the lad from there on. Thereafter all was forgiven.

Every child must in my humble view, have someone who can stand in the gap for them when all fails with their parent. It's a traditional checking and family stabilising strategy that has worked for years. When it comes to seeing ourselves clearly, we all have blind spots. We need people not only to help us come to our senses, but to intercede on our behalf. But be sure it's someone who loves you enough not only to help you mend fences with your parents but to also be able to tell you the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. When they do that, do not dismiss them, you need to get beyond the sting of their counsel and listen to the truth in their message. This much was echoed in the book of Proverbs 27:6:

“Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy.”

If you ever find yourself resenting the very input you need to walk a clean path with your parents, then keep in view that a child who stubbornly refuses to accept criticisms will suddenly be destroyed beyond recovery (Proverbs 29:1).

BE DELIBRATE

On average most parents are older than their children by at least 20 years. That is two long decades. In our contemporary world, a lot changes so quickly before you can even blink an eye lid. Trying to catch up with a lot of the technological changes in our world can be quite challenging for many grownups, except for the inquisitive few that enjoy such challenges.

The changing world that we live in has brought with it many positives but equally it has brought some negatives. In typical family settings, some much cherished traditions no longer hold sway and this clearly has taken its toll on the depth and quality of family life. Many children prefer the company of their friends on Facebook and WhatsApp to the company of mummy and daddy at home. Personal engagements and interactions have been discarded.

As a child, except you take a deliberate and proactive step to spend quality time with your parents even if you don't feel like, you may never really truly get the full measure of the intimacy you should enjoy with them. I have found out in recent years that it is so easy to just always believe that our parents are not going anywhere and that no matter what; they will always

have our back. That may truly be so, but at what cost do we inflict such injury of selfishness and indifference on them.

Some parents are in the doldrums when it comes to many of these technological gadgets and social interactive platforms. You can smoothen and brighten your relationship with them by helping them to upgrade. That kind of engagement bonds and solidifies relationships. Stop looking at your parents as this old cargo that needs to be confined to some corner in the house. Remember, one day, even you will become a parent. Believe me, no parent wants to be so treated.

Be deliberate about your relationship with them. Sometimes it's not going to be convenient but any dutiful parent will eventually appreciate your sacrifice and will never regard you any less

STANDARD BEARER

There has always been this question about what a child should do if the parent sends the child on a "sinful errand." How does the child help the parent to help himself? The straightforward answer ought to be that the child should not honour a sinful instruction. But then you leave the child in a vulnerable situation especially if the child is fully dependent on the parent. But even where the child is not dependent on the parent, there is still the strong possibility that the relationship between parent and child will suffer some strain.

How can you as a child be a standard bearer, a role model, a beacon of what a child of God represents? How can you help

your parents to help you walk the path of righteousness?

One of my teens was confronted with this particular situation many years ago; the boy in question was a devoted member of our teens church. For a teenager, he exemplified the rare virtues of hard work, honesty, respect and a passion for Christ. Of course, these virtues endeared him to a lot of people and he was seen as a role model even among his peers. It therefore came to us as out of character when he came to church one Sunday morning very late. When probed, his answer took us aback. He had been delayed by his father who had told him to get him a bottle of beer just as the boy was on his way to church. He said he did not think twice, went straight and got the beer. His lateness among other things was due to the fact that not many shops will be open on a Sunday morning selling beer.

A number of questions rose through my mind amongst which were: should the boy have gone, or should he politely turn his dad down? If he did, would that not be encouraging him to disobey his father and what if the father sends him packing, who will take care of the child? Even if I could take care of the child, is that the best way to go?

My interaction with young people over the years has made me come to the conclusion that there are really no hard and fast rules about how to respond to this kind of situation especially if you are faced with a parent who is out to frustrate you in that journey with God. It will however be useful to say that as the child exhibits Christ-like behaviour in speech, in conduct at

home, and as this is seen by the parent, gradually the parent will begin to respect the child's faith even if they don't subscribe to it.

This particular scenario played out in my family many years ago. My father had objected to my siblings moving to my church which was a different denomination from the one we grew up in and he had voiced his objection loud and clear until one day when surprisingly he said something along the lines of: ***“As much as I don't agree with you changing churches, at least I can see some improvements in your lives.”***

The test of our faith will always come from outside but also from within, and especially sometimes from our loved ones. It is important that your first point of call in deciding how to respond must be God Almighty. Put your ears to the ground so you can hear God and as you trust in Him, He will surely direct your path (PROVERBS 3:5-7).

Be the standard bearer for Christ even if you stand alone. Many young people have through the lives they live in Christ, drawn their parents over to the Lord. There is nothing that says you too can't. Emphasize their strengths and virtues, surely and truly they must have something good going for them. Don't dwell too long on their shortfalls, why? Because just a little while from now, even you, in all your self-righteousness will be in need of grace and love.

CHAPTER SIX

PARTING SHOTS

*“Making the decision to have a child is momentous.
It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking
around outside your body.”*

Elizabeth Stone

As I begin to draw the curtains on what I hope has been a rewarding journey, it is my prayer that in at least one respect, you would have found insight and direction as to how to walk hand in hand with your parents. As I had earlier mentioned in the introductory part of this book, it is by no means an exhaustive document, but if it throws a bit of light in your path and helps you even to begin to think about how best to relate better and with civility with your parents, then I guess that will be a good start.

The greater wisdom in all these is not to run away with the fallacy that everything will fall in place immediately or in the short term. If it does, I am happy for you. However, as we have so often learnt in time past, relationship issues, whether between children and their parents or between spouses or even between friends, it is a thing of process. Give it time, and keep walking at it. Recognise that even in the course of trying to make things work, there may be set-backs. The trick is to have a positive mindset and run with that. Don't look at who has invested in the relationship the most, you choose to be the positive person regardless.

I have been awed and overwhelmed by the reconciliatory and tolerant spirit of a handful of people I have come across in life. It amazes me when even in the face of seeing the obvious lack of discretion and deliberate wickedness in people, such men

still always try to look out for that 1% good to work with and turn around. It's a virtue even I am still trying to perfect, but one which, on the few occasions I have applied, has blown my mind away. Pastor Ituah Ighodalo is one of such men. I am not even sure he is half aware of that impact in my life.

I commend this spirit to you. Please don't let the devil deceive you that it is a way to get you to be stupid and dense. That in itself, will be a lie from the pit of hell. At the same time, I must quickly add here that in all life's decisions there must be a balance and even as Christians we must always strive to strike that balance. I am therefore not suggesting that you engage your parents even at the risk of your life and wellbeing, but it will however suffice if even when faced with those kinds of folks, you are able to draw from the spring of the love that Christ exemplified or even Stephen, when at the point of death, they both echoed:

“Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34)

“...O Lord do not hold this sin against them.” (Acts 7:60)

Our parents as I have repeatedly and painstakingly stated remain a central and “must not ignore” entity in our lives. We must always strive to make sure our relationship with them is cordial, civil, respectful and Godly. I have also recognised in this book the existence of those I have termed ***“the impossible parents.”*** When you are saddled with those kinds of parents, and believe me there are many of them around,

please do yourself a great service by praying for them. I do not mean pray for them in the cliché way of saying pray for them, I really mean take time out to pray for them. It's an investment worth giving to the channel of your birth, even if that is all they did.

Help yourself to begin to heal. Don't spend time waiting for your parents to earn your forgiveness. Many parents don't even know that they have done anything wrong and the few that do are either too proud or indifferent about it. It is better you choose to rise above that and set a better tone for them and ultimately for your own children.

Having said this much, let me add a final word on getting third party involvement. A lot of children; and by children I include grown-ups, already married, parents, grandparents, add your list to it, are in pain and hurt badly from engagement or lack of engagement with their parents. The shame of having to acknowledge that to the rest of the world is sometimes embarrassing to this people. And so, they live with that pain and take it to their grave.

Some only realise it when the parent is gone. Their cycle of shame now turns into guilt and regret. If only they had mustered enough courage to make the first move and settle the matter once and for all. I thank God in so many ways I had the privilege to do that with my father, and so can you.

As mentioned earlier, get a third party to help you pave the way if you cannot do it on your own. But first rid yourself of the

U N D E R S T A N D I N G M Y P A R E N T S

spirit of pride or even self-pity, God works with the content of our heart and once he is certain your heart is in the right place and it is His desire for you to walk that path, He will surely make it happen.

Don't endure your parents, enjoy them!!!