

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DECLINE AMONG CHRISTIAN YOUTHS: A CAREFULL APPROACH OF ELI'S FAMILY.

By
Philemon Solomon

Dynamic Theological Seminary, Kwale, Delta State, Nigeria
Affiliated to Harvest Bible University, USA
Email: Pcomfort1995@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Parental upbringing is very critical and crucial to success in today's society. It is very obvious that those who have attained the peak of success have made great sacrifices of time, resources and intelligence. Eli as a priest of God who had served God faithfully in Shiloh had failed to replicate and command respect and discipline in his family. He had failed as a father and also a leader. Such failure had affected his final phase of ministry. It is demanding to invest a costly attention on children for the sake of positive and productive outcome in life. Our present system has been adulterated and abused while youths become objects of shame and disgrace to parents, church and society. Terrible effects associated with negligence of parents and leaders will give birth to unwanted results to the future generations. As deliberate efforts of this research will carefully explore on this work nitty-gritty so as to give knowledge to utilise time, resources and intelligence for the sake of our children who were endowed with potential of greatness and honor.

Keywords: Youths, Church, Discipline, Morality and Decadence

INTRODUCTION

It has been observed today that morality and spirituality is diminishing gradually, while moral decay in simultaneous increase everyday. Ethics as a way of living which propagates ideal communal life and human relationship is speedily waning off. There is concern in several quarters that at the high rate immorality is making waves in the society; the likely tendency is that there might be serious breakdown of law and order which might lead to anarchy. It is said that a lawless and immoral society is prone to chaotic situation and anarchy. An ideal society is that which is devoid of violence, civil disorder, with minimal rate of crime and immoral practices and unethical standards. **Internet** (2023). Consequently, morals sound; ethical standard and spiritual growth have been the concern Christian bodies and man's social institutions in recent years have become depreciated. Hence, many campaigns in the society and churches today are geared towards curbing immorality which is the physical manifestation of Spiritual decline. The church has been taking one of the leading roles in the campaign against immorality. Moreover, a number of Christian Youths are openly involved in immoral practices, and this is as the result of the spiritual decay. They attend church regularly (the youth), but have amorous affairs fairly openly. They do not seem to understand that this weakens their moral and spiritual fiber. Some youth feel it is not easy to remain morally and spiritually pure until they marry, some consider the process of

getting married an expensive venture. The impact of peer pressure in schools and social places cause some of them to lose their moral purity and sanity. **Internet** (2023).

The pressure that Youths feel when they leave home to go to boarding schools is so immense that it makes some lose grip on their moral purity and sound biblical teachings. The change of localities from pre-urban to urban areas brings on pressure among the Youths for them to remain faithful to moral standards and spiritually soundness. Those in higher institutions of learning find it difficult to abstain from sexual activities. Cohabiting is alien to the traditional Nigerian culture and an immoral behavior in Christianity, yet in the youth culture of the twenty-first century it is happening. **Internet** (2023)

The issue of moral decadence in our society is a thing that is needed to be looked into. Many things have gone wrong, since no one sees the reason to be upright in action at all times, in all places and in all circumstances. The continuing degeneration of personal virtue among the world's societies seems to be emerging as the single-most urgent issue of our time. Until recent years, churches had since deferred from their original roles in morality, and the Spiritual Life of the church is dying day after day, though many outside the church continued to mount political pressure to move churches either towards or away from a value oriented or change from God's perspective.

So, this paper, consider moral and Spiritual decline among the Christian Youths in the 21st century, considering the ministerial call, duty and family discipline/training of Eli the chief priest as recorded in the Bible in the book of 1 Samuel 2-4. To do justice to the study we'll also view the courses of Moral and Spiritual decline among the Christian Youth of the 21st century. In addition, the paper will consider the rate of Moral and Spiritual decline among the Christian Youth and its implications on the church and the society at large.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Morality: seems to be a set of code of conducts put forward by any group, society or nation that is acceptable by members of the group. (Encyclopedia, 2012).

Spirituality: it involves the recognition of a feeling or sense or belief that there is something greater than myself, something more to being human than sensory experience, and that the greater whole of which we are part is cosmic or divine in nature. Internet (2023)

Christianity: is a body of religious belief that focused on the life and ministry (work) of Jesus Christ. The life and teachings of Jesus Christ are told in the sacred book called the Bible. Internet (2023)

Youth: is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence.

Decline: can be defined as the process of depreciating in quality, strength and value

or a state when something becomes less important and valuable.

MORAL DECLINE AMONG CHRISTIAN YOUTHS

The society we live in is morally blind, deteriorated and dead. The issue of moral decadence has become very controversial as the society has lost sense of morals. The issue of moral decadence as it affects Christian Youths, which includes the exhibition of such attributes that associates with moral decadence such as prostitution, cultism, disobedience, robbery, cheating in the examination and other social vices.

However, the level of porosity and erosion of morality among the Christian Youths and our immediate society is quite disheartening and unfortunate. Worse still, the youths are the most hit of this evil.

Moral decadence among youths is at an alarming rate, moral decadence leads to social vices such as indecent dressing. **Fallack** (2019) says; let people see part of your character or morals through your dressing, for your dressing influenced by your character. This is threatening the peace and security of the large society and the world. The causes of Moral decline as it applies to spiritual decline among Christian Youths include inadequate home training, emphasis on material things, moral laxity, and decline in religious training, influence of peer groups, broken homes and mass media. Other curses of Moral decline among youth are, poverty, ignorance and lack of Moral values. Internet (2023)

Odeh (2013) asserted that moral decadence is the failure to uphold sound morality in our society. **Muraino** and **Ugwumba** (2014) in the same vein asserted that moral decadence is the process of behaving in a way that shows low moral standards and credibility. It means gross reduction in the moral values in a particular society. Thus, moral decadence appears to be a fall in the moral standard of the society. It seems to be deterioration or a collapse in upholding our societal values, beliefs, norms and ethical standards.

SPIRITUAL DECLINE AMONG CHRISTIANS

Bayo (2020) a teacher and preacher of the word has something to say in this regards; “Nowadays, we are experiencing an enormous structural change in the church that gives a false outlook of the invisible church which Christ has left for the apostles and the subsequent generations”. This change is promised to be greater than the industrial revolution and greater than the rise and demise of communism.

Laith (1992) it’s happening so quickly that barely can keep track of what is happening, much less figure out how to respond.

From his pastoral calling, Bayo (2020) speaks succinctly;

It may sound ridiculous, but it is true that the church has been deprived and make bankrupt of her full manifestation and has fallen from a height of her spiritual stamina. The spiritual decline in the 21st

century Church most especially among the Christian Youths is actually baffling, after seeing the track record of the Apostolic Father's efforts towards advancing the work of Jesus Christ in this world. The church is being denied the biblical practices the Lord Jesus lived and taught his disciples. the statement above May be "argued by some people in certain quarters, the very fact that we have neglected, compromised, and rejected the word of God in practice and are behaving as if Christ is no longer watching us; but owing to the reality of the matter, history has proved it and reality has confirmed that there's a clear sign that discipleship has truly been relegated or ruled out of its relevance to the church.

This is the same case as that of Eli's family. He had failed to disciple his children to take up the mantle from him. And because they were not disciplined and trained, his children had abused the exercise of priestly sacred ordinances that led to colossal shame, dead and defeat of the nation of Israel. Lack of discipline can deprive our blessings and breakthrough in life.

We are in a state of spiritual decline when the Christian life becomes dull and dry. We are in a state of decline when we have lost our zeal and devotion to the Lord. Prayer seems to be cold and unanswered and little more than the repetition of stock phrases. In fact, the youth nowadays don't value prayer or know the efficacy

of prayer in many quarters because they were not taught or see their parents praying. The parents now value their work more than anything. There is little interest in the study of the Word and little desire to speak of the truths of God's Word and of the blessings of salvation with others. The Christian in such a state finds the commandments of the Lord grievous and burdensome. He does not seriously and earnestly apply himself any longer to keeping the commandments of the Lord. Slowly at first he begins to make small compromises in his life. What he once condemned on the basis of God's Word he now justifies. (Internet, 2023)

He loses the consciousness of the seriousness of sin. He murmurs and complains about the hardships and trials in his life, unable to discern the hand of God and the goodness of God in them. He no longer enjoys the fellowship of God's people. He cannot bear with the weaknesses of his fellow saints, and he becomes critical and judgmental of their every fault. Internet (2023).

COURSES OF MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DECLINE AMONG CHRISTIAN YOUTHS.

It is amazing to find out that the youths of these days are morally bankrupt. Our society has witnessed a tremendous deterioration in its moral, social and educational values, especially among the youths.

Chima, I.M (2010) However, the issue of moral decadence in our society has become very controversial issue because the society seemed not to know the

disparity between what is morally right or wrong.

Ugwu (2010) described morality as "the astuteness of one's conduct and behavior which enhances good conduct and fair relationship. **Muraino** and **Ugwumba** (2014) asserted that Morality is collectively upholding of certain beliefs, ideas, values and behaviors, rules and regulations which are considered good, right and acceptable by the society and to which members of the society are bound. But it is unfortunate that even the elders don't adhere to the rules set as the standard of the society nor the spiritual rules or rules guiding Christian living and so, the youth inherited it.

In addition, **Afuye** (2015), stated the forms of moral decadence as; cultism, Rape, examination malpractice, Teenage pregnancy, students' prostitution, sexual harassment, sale of "Grade" students' demonstration, drug abuse, indecent dressing and so on are as the result of proper training and teaching both morally and spirituality. As said earlier, all the courses of moral decline are as a result of spiritual decline and vice versa.

In furtherance to this fact, the following are additional causes to Moral and spiritual decline among Christian Youths:

1. Inadequate home training,
2. Emphasis on material things
3. Moral laxity

4. Decline in religious training
5. Influence of peer groups
6. Broken homes
7. Mass media addiction.

Other causes of Moral and spiritual decline among youths are, poverty, ignorance and lack of Moral values, Social media/civilization, lack of sound biblical teaching, lack of counseling and training, ignorance etc. Moreover, in an attempt to evaluate the present Spiritual condition of the church and the way forward, the Pentecostals have created more problems, than solving them, in recent times, on this matter, most of which are characterized by scandals of different kinds.

Idensi (2010), stated that practical observations have shown that Christianity have identified phenomena like the influence of cultural background, poverty, western education, westernization and urbanization as contributing immensely to moral decadence.

Odeh, J.C (2013). further stated that the causes of moral decadence among youths can be categorized into (i) social factor, which includes peer pressure, unstable and home environments (ii) Economic factor; which has to do with poverty (iii) Cognitive factor which includes need for belonging among the youths driven by physical needs and psychological needs, (iv) Technological factor, which includes media and internet.

ELI'S FAMILY/GOD JUDGEMENT ON THE FAMILY

Eli was the high priest at the time recorded in the beginning of 1 Samuel. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, served as priests in the temple, but they were corrupt, stealing, embezzling, and committing acts of sexual immorality by abusing their positions of power with women who came to the Tabernacle to worship. As a result of their actions, not only was the Tabernacle profaned, but people avoided coming to worship because of the presence of these wicked priests. **Internet (2023)**

The reason for God's judgment on Eli is outlined in 1 Samuel 2:27-29, in which a prophet tells Eli that he is going to be judged for the sins of his sons because he did not do enough to stop them from doing these acts. In 1 Samuel 2:29, God states that Eli honored (love) his sons more than he honored God. The sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the Lord, 1 Samuel 2:12. Though Eli knew about their evil deed, he did not restrain them, 1 Samuel 3:13. And it is for these sins that Eli is being judged. Eli's responsibility is two-fold, since he was both their father and their boss. As high priest, Eli should have fired his sons or carried out some sort of disciplinary actions, and it is for this reasons, God allowed these things to take place. So, God judged Eli for the following mistakes.

THE FAILURE OF ELI AS A FATHER, AND A PRIEST.

We read in I Samuel 3:13 God saying this: "I have told him that I will judge

his house forever for the iniquity which he knew; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.” Eli, as a father, spoke – but he did not carry it out. He warned them, but he did not see to it. It was too painful for Eli to displease his sons. He honored his sons more than God. And his sons knew that Dad would not do anything about it. **Internet** (2023)

Eli failure leads to the following consequences;

- His Children made themselves vile and he didn't restrain them. 1 Samuel 3:13
- He loves his Children more than God. 1 Samuel 2:19
- They lack discipleship and training as priest serving on the altar of the Lord.
- They defiled the temple and the sacrifice offered to the Lord God and the place of worship.
- They lack both moral and Spiritual training
- They lack home training also. And all these can be tackled by Eli as a father and the chief priest.

It's the responsibility of every father to teach his Children to know the Lord, to be morally good and have moral values, to obey the rules and regulations guiding the community, to be ethically stable etc. And as a priest, Eli has even more reason to train and teach his Children to know God, to know their responsibility as priests. The role of a priest, the sanctity of a priest, the rules of serving in the temple, the rules guiding sacrifice, the does and the don'ts of a priest

of the Lord. Eli had failed in his responsibility first as a father and secondly as the high priest.

Because of lack of teaching, training, counseling and discipline (and these are the major causes of both moral and Spiritual decline in the church and society even in educational sectors) the children of Eli became vile (morally low, therefore, affecting their Spiritual service) and yet Eli didn't restrain, control or discipline them from the service according to 1 Samuel 3:13. This attitude had made the Lord to see that Eli loves his Children more than Him. He had pampered his Children as parents do nowadays. Instead of rebuking a child parents look away as is it doesn't matter. Deuteronomy 6:5 says, one must love God above all, with all strength, heart and soul, but Eli couldn't discipline his Children. This portrayed his love for either the children or the priesthood office to remain in his house.

Moreover, had Eli taught, trained, counseled and disciplined his children morally, ethically, spiritually, they wouldn't have become vile. Had Eli disciplined them when he had the evil report about them, they might have changed, or repented. Had he loved the Lord above all, he would be mindful about the sanctity of the place of worship and the sacrifice of the Lord above his Children or maintaining the priesthood office.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

The Moral and Spiritual decline among the Christian Youths today is as the result of inadequate teaching, training, counseling, discipline and controversy surrounding morality and Spirituality from parents, church and society. Moreover, moral and Spiritual decline is a carryover from our immediate society, parents and churches. Our immediate societies, parents and churches have failed to adhere to what is morally and spiritually sound, they don't have moral values, they have contradictory teachings and morals, values and norms. Even the Christian bodies contradict itself. The mainline Churches and the Pentecostals are at loggerhead as the result of teachings and doctrines. The church has diverted her attention towards teaching of prosperity, demonstration of power and false prophecies. It also seems the churches have different beliefs and practices and it looks as if the churches have different gods and different heavens (what is morally right and Spiritually perfect in one church is a matter of choice and condemned in another, the clergy men are after wealth and the church is only after healing and deliverance, not salvation message that will take people to heaven with Christ. These in conjunction with the influence of social media, lack of home training etc. The youth seem to be confused and don't know what is ethically, morally and spiritually perfect. The youths only know what is morally and spiritually good only for a certain church, house or society. These and many more have drained the Spirituality and Moral

soundness and the fear of God in the youths.

Therefore, the church, society and parents should take their responsibilities to love the Lord above all, and teach, train and disciple the upcoming ones towards sound morals, Spiritual, and biblical teachings in word, in conduct, in faith and in purity.

And to set our minds on whatever that are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy to meditate on these things. Philippians 4:8

References Books

Anderson, Laith (1992), *A church for the 21st century*. Minnesota: Bethany House Publication 1992.

C.I, Ugwu, (2010) *Folklore in Igbo Society: A Panacea to the Threat of Home Video*. African Journal of Local Societies Initiative.

Fallack, Victor S. (2019) *Pastoral ethics and code of conduct; a panacea for personal ministerial discipline*. Jalingo, Taraba Nigeria.

Gert, B (2012) Morality. The Standard Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

I.M, Chima, (2010) *Enhancing Morality in Nigerian Youth through Moral Education and Counseling for National Development*. Journal of Education and Management Sciences.

J.C, Odeh, (2013) *Moral decadence among Catholic Youths in Abakaliki Diocese*. Unpublished Thesis of EBSU

M.B Muraiwo, & Ugwumba, U.E (2014) *Moral Misconduct among Students of Higher Institutions in Nigeria: A case of Elected Higher Institutions in Imo State, Nigeria*. Owerri: Oasis Publishers

Mshelia, Bayo Tella (2020) *Spiritual decline in the 21st century Church*, Gedaliah Technologies, Bukuru: Print House

T.N Idensi, (2010) *Moral Decadence among Youths In Nigeria: Lessons from Apostle Paul*. African Journal of Local Societies Initiative.

Internet Sources

<https://nickcady.org/2021/02/05/reader-questions-why-was-eli-judged-for-the-sins-of-his-son>. Online accessed 20th May, 2023

<https://reformedwitnesshour.org/broadcast/elis-failure-as-a-father>. Online accessed 20th May, 2023

www.rcpsych.ac.uk what-is-spirituality-Maya-spencer online accessed 26th June, 2023.

<https://azresearchconsult.com/full-project-moral-decadence-among-christian-youth-a-challenge-to-youth-ministry>. Online accessed 3rd May, 2023.

<https://noudocs.com/view/moral-decadence-among-the-youth-the-way-forward-in-gwerwest-local-government-area-of-benue-state.html>. Online accessed 25th may, 2023.

<https://www.christianstudylibrary.org/article/spiritual-decline> online accessed 27th May, 2023.

A. Afuye, (2015) Moral Decadence in Tertiary Institution. Journal of Educational Studies.