

IDENTITY CRISIS OF CHRISTIANS TODAY, AND KNOWING WHAT MUST MATTER TO YOU AS A CHRISTIAN

Spiritual Life



**CHILOTA ELOCHUKWU, MAAMA,
DDL**

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©Chilota Elochukwu, Maama,
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Dedication

This book is dedicated to a Christian, and to all Christians, who are not afraid to live the character of God, that is, His Love, His Mercy, and His Compassion.

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Foreword

It gives me great delight, holding this book in my hands, to read and to listen for a change, to wisdom writings, transcending time and space. It is a privilege to read these inspirational thoughts around the art of virtuous living and of learning the joys of a fulfilled and fulfilling life as a Christian from someone endowed and blessed.

It is my honour to be invited to write the FOREWORD to this new book authored by Mother Maria Chilota Elochukwu, DDL.

This religious sister, ever reflective and active, teacher and mentor of many, servant-leader, and two-time mother General of the DDL congregation, remains one of our best.

Her life, works, services, writings and generous sacrifice to the Foundation of the Daughters of Divine Love Religious Association is a continued joy in ministry. The DDL community, begun by Bishop Godfrey Mary PauL Okoye of blessed Memory in 1969, at the height of a brutal fratricidal war between Biafra and Nigeria, (that left over two million people dead with devastations beyond comprehension) teaches still that even after the ashes of war are over, Divine Love and Reconciliation are possible.

In Africa's richest and most populated country, with large numbers of Christians, several contradictions abound, as the book points out, yet hope is not exhausted. The author has therefore chosen to address a book to CHRISTIANS specifically, and to share thought around topics that are globally relevant, namely: "THE CRISIS OF CHRISTIANS TODAY AND KNOWING WHAT MATTERS MOST TO YOU AS A

CHRISTIAN".

Frankly speaking, this is a topic of vast significance, for it focuses on the primary questions of life that essentially address the ultimate meaning and purpose of human life and our destiny after death. What is the meaning of it all? Why are humans here on earth in the first place? What is Life all about? How can a better life be achieved? And what does the Christian message offer to believers to make them stay focused on the path of faith, hope and charity, necessary for salvation?

Knowing that humanity at this time has erred and is on the brink of disaster, pursuing material wealth, power, glamour, money and other secular and mundane things, the author wonders, and rightly so, on why happiness and joy has become ever more absent in peoples lives, despite all material and secular acquisitions and pursuits.

Due to the inability of many to rightly balance what scientifically and naturally people describe as the human being, made up of body, mind and soul, there seems to be a disconnect leading to observable crisis, and noticed in the unfulfilled lives of many people, including Christians. The phenomenon is noticeable in emptiness in the purpose of life, anxiety, false priorities, all described as CRISIS.

When essentials are left out and ephemerals pursued as goals, the human being continues to search for the "Sumum bonum" - the highest Good, often in so called "false priorities and things" that "just only happen" - within short-lived time, but not bringing lasting joy and content. Crisis comes when meaningful life values are absent. This is to say, that "the unexamined life is not worth living".

In the words and teachings of Jesus Christ, lasting joy can only be obtained through balanced spiritual lifestyles that bring harmony to mental health, body care and deep spiritual-living founded on the grace of God.

These are the styles applied by the ancients, the great martyrs, saints and models lined up throughout Christian history.

Such lifestyles are indeed sustainable, because truth stays and true Love never dies.

I have read the 23 chapters of this book of practical wisdom. I can confirm that Sr Chilota has once again very courageously "hit the nail at the head", by giving orientation and honest guidelines to any reader on what works in life.

The great reflections in this book help the reader discover that wisdom gained through spiritual insight is anchored on the unity of faith and life, the balance of thought and action, theory and practice and the healthy linkage between body, mind and soul.

It is a work written in simple style and flow of communication in English language, witty with proverbial expressions, and obtained through an experience of age and life in the field. Sr Chilota is a missionary grounded in indigenous African and global Christian witnessing.

The style used in the expressions are simple and understandable, making the points convincing for a reader.

One does not need much of philosophical reasoning or logical argumentation to concur to the conclusions. Once a chapter ends, a new one opens in a seamless flow of inspirational thoughts and spiritual expressions, biblically grounded, historically evidenced and touching the lives of many holy and happy people in the past and present.

This book is indeed compelling in its call to faith, prayer, essential virtues and a focus on the last things which includes Death and Judgment before a merciful and just God.

She discusses the life of charity, character and ethics, the formation of a disciplined life, focus on what matters most, and the knowledge that here on earth, all things shall pass away.

With such awakening and reflective message, how would any reader, Christian or otherwise, not accept to make more effort at seeing material things as tools only for the service of higher spiritual goals that does not hinder growth in the spirit.

It is my hope that this book will find its way into as many hands as possible- clergy

religious and laity- for the betterment of Christian commitment.

May this book by Sr Maria Chilota Elochukwu inspire other religious, laity and clergy to reflect and write more, so that spiritual stimulation may grow among our people and the Christian faith may be nourished everywhere.

Msgr Obiora Ike

**IDENTITY CRISIS OF CHRISTIANS TODAY,
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Spiritual Life



**CHILOTA ELOCHUKWU, MAAMA,
DDL**

Preface

This book is totally about Christians and Identity Crisis they undergo in the society today. It is about how Christians should maintain that Orthodoxy of their Christian beliefs and their code of conducts.

The book is like what philosophy calls Ontology. Ontology in Philosophy is that part of Philosophy that studies the meaning of existence, that is, what it means to exist. Taking this meaning of existence further, it seems that the people of the world are tired of long talks and unending grammars without seeing a lived Christian life that inspires.

People of the world are only interested in experiencing virtuous lives of persons, the Christians.

Introduction

The title of this book emerged from my daily observation of God's people living and working in the world. It is a title that sprang from the experiences I gained from interacting with people at various sectors and environments, and from my firm observations of everyday life in the Globe, as we live and move in the world.

It is obvious that the Creator as we know creates and places each person accordingly, and everything works perfectly well. But within this Creator's placements arise various choices from the created. Each makes his or her own choice according to what matters to him or her. This is to say that as a person grows and develops, that Creator's arrangements and placements in him or her begin to show branches that move to personal choices. In other words, the individual will stand to make choices according to what seem important to him or her. This choice will continue to stagger until it stops and dwells longer on what the person thinks that is of supper essential to him or her in life.

The choice a person makes may not be what will lead him or her to a meaningful life. This means that a person can determine to choose to live a life that does not depict what he or she believes and professes. But social media has done more harm than good, but all the blames

cannot be meted only on the social media alone, because much has also been received and gained by the social media. A Christian has to move toward a Christian code of conduct. A committed Christian must remember always that he or she is called to go out to bear fruit (John 15: 11-17). No Christian is called to remain where he or she is. No, it means to move out to bear fruit as a follower of Christ.

As it is said earlier in this introductory part of the book, that the Creator, God, creates and places each person accordingly. And we are aware that many books and articles have been written on human being, such as works on its well-being, on its possibility of establishing a good relationship with one another in the world, etc. But when all is said and done, people continue to crave different things, holding on to what seems to matter to them. This book is totally about Christians, it is about their maintaining the orthodoxy of their Christian beliefs and their code of conducts. This work is in a way a kind of what philosophy calls ontology, which is the part of philosophy that studies what it means to exist. In this sense, the book seeks to find what it takes to be a Christian.

It is important to note that the Identity Crisis that is described here concerns Christians in general, but within this global identity crisis I am trying to explain, I would like to single out how individual Christian fits into this identity crisis by his or her actions.

Going straight to the point, it seems that the people of the world are tired of long grammar without living a life that inspires by a Christian. That is, boasting as Christians, the followers of Jesus Christ, without any valued supporting actions. People in the world are only interested in experiencing virtuous lives of persons, the Christians. Therefore, in the chapters that follow, I will devote time to outlining, describing, giving examples, using stories, and other ways, and means through which Identity Crisis of Christians manifest itself.

Chapter One

EXPLANATION OF THE LEADING WORDS: IDENTITY, IDENTITY CRISIS, AND CHRISTIAN

This Chapter One which is based on the understanding of the leading words: identity, identity crisis, and Christian, will reflect briefly on the meaning of the terms identity, identity crisis, and Christian. And we will see how the understanding of these terms will help to lead us to a way-out of the identity crisis of Christians.

Identity:

I think it is very alright to discuss a little bit about what the word identity is before talking about its crisis. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary Eighth Edition defines identity as who or what somebody or something is. But identity has its own problem of misconstruction. For many people the word identity triggers different understandings and feelings. People struggle to know their identity, but not many arrive at it. This is because identity is a world away from what people think it is.

Misconstruction of Identity

There is a story told of Ijee, a beautiful young woman of twenty-five years old. Ijee used to sit at the Tanko field almost all day staring at people as they drove and walked past. She would talk to no one, and her face would be beaming with worries.

Because Ijee sat almost all day at this square, neighbours felt that it had past being just a leisurely holiday, and began to question why a young woman like Ijee would spend such long hours in Tanko Field.

One day two women in the neighbourhood, Kara and Bota, plucked up courage and approached Ijee:

Kara and Bota: “Hello, young woman! We've seen you for almost two weeks now in this Tanko Field, at this particular corner, are you all right?”

Ijee: “Oh! Thanks for your observation and interest. Oh, yes, you see, I have a worry. I feel I've lost my identity in life and in society. I lost my high-paid job, and since I lost it, I haven't got a meaningful job. I'm fed up with life, and worse still, my husband is due for promotion, but there is no sign of that, and life is passing me by. It's hard on me. It's like I'm ashamed of myself as a person, worthless.”

Ijee was in tears as she told her story. For Ijee identity means getting a well-paid job in society. Her identity is just having a meaningful job, and having promotion and other things she feels make her who she is. And because these things were no longer available, she feels that she has failed in life.

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Certainly, some people feel like Ijee. For such people identity is found in just physical advantages, a good and well-paid job, good education, academic qualification at highest levels, etc. when these things are no longer there, they collapse. They feel that their identity is no more, that they are worthless.

What identity is

The real Identity means growth towards becoming what one is called to be. But for such a growth to take place in anyone the person needs what psychologists and counselors call the process of individuation, Corey (1996). Process of individuation is an inner movement towards the development of the mind. It is a highly complex and articulated inner journey with a definite goal, and that definite goal is **God**. Human person, a Christian discovers his or her person only by reuniting himself or herself with God, because it is impossible to deny the inner loneliness that only God can take away. St. Augustine of Hippo experienced this inner loneliness when he echoed that a human soul is restless until it finds its rest in God: “thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee” (Augustine, Confessions, 1, 1-2-2.5,5, CSEL33, 1-5).

The quest for identity is to enter into the journey of the meaning of one's life; it is like what philosophy call ontology. To talk about identity is to talk about maturing. Identity is a process of “becoming.” A Christian lives in becoming until he or she becomes what God has destined for him or her.

Identity according to St. Paul

St Paul in his letter to the Philippians, proudly talked about his identity. Paul talked about his disposition towards external things, about physical qualifications, how he regarded them all as nothing - “all as filth”- since his attachment to them, might rob him of his Christian identity, which was his decision for Christ: “For him I have accepted the loss of all other things, and look on them all as filth if only I can gain Christ... that I may come to know him and the power of his resurrection” (Philippians 3:3-12). It is worthwhile to imitate St. Paul in his decision for Jesus Christ. And his decision for Christ, should be the decision of a serious minded Christian also.

Crisis:

Meaning of crisis in general

The answer to the question will follow a quick analysis of the term. It is important for this study that we talk briefly about the word crisis. The word crisis, etymologically, came from Greek “Krisis”, meaning “decision” or “judgment,” which emphasises its association with a moment of decisive change.

From the Oxford Languages – Oxford Dictionary, crisis means catastrophe, calamity, emergency, disaster, etc. In describing the meaning of crisis, one would say that when anything or any situation reaches a stage when it is referred to as crisis, then it has reached a time of great danger, a calamity, a disordered stage, a catastrophe, a time where important decision must be taken.

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Simply put, crisis means a difficult or dangerous situation that requires urgent attention and a decisive turning point. The term crisis refers to a time of great danger or uncertainty, a period of instability.

Christian:

The term Christian refers to the new status of a person after receiving Baptism. The person gains a new identity in Christ, the person belonged to Christ and follows the code of conduct of Christians called the commandments.

Identity Crisis of Christians:

This is when Christians are not sure of whom they are, or their place in the society. Identity crisis of Christians today refers to a situation where Christians are unsure of what they should be doing as Christians in the community, in the society, and in the world.

I have tried to give brief meanings of the three words identity, crisis, and Christians. The next job is to put the three words, together and gradually trace their meanings, which will lead to further understanding of the title of the book.

Identity Crisis of Christians today means a state where Christians are unable to reflect distinctively, who they are through their words, actions and life in the society. It is a situation when a Christian starts to chase shadows. When he or she becomes unsure where he or she belongs, when he or she begins to compromise issues, trying to match with the social media push, it is when a Christian starts to impress the daily

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social media demands – when a Christian stops holding to what he or she believes in. When a Christian forgets what he or she should be doing in the society as a Christian.

Chapter Two

FALSIFICATION OF HISTORY

Is it possible that Christian persons can deliberately involve themselves in distortion of history?

1. What does Distortion mean?

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, distortion means the ability to change facts, ideal, so that they are no longer correct or true.

Going further, distortion means to twist, change, or misrepresent something so that it is no longer true, accurate, or shift it out of its natural form. This is often done by exaggeration, omitting, or twisting facts. It means lying about events. It implies altering reality.

2. What does it mean to Distort History?

Distortion of history means deliberately distorting, altering, omitting, or fabricating historical facts and events to serve

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manipulator's purpose. It involves creating a false narrative that promotes the manipulator's viewpoint. This means the omission or leaving out significant events, contributions of some persons in a group. It means creating entirely false stories.

3. History, written for Posterity

To say that History is written for posterity means that all records, all narratives, all documents, all write-ups about the beginnings of foundations, beginnings of projects, and documents of past events are created specifically to be preserved for future generations. This suggests that History is not written just for immediate use only. It is the records of past events, their beginnings, reached decisions, beginnings of foundations, beginnings of projects, and all involved in its beginnings, etc, all are intentionally gathered, preserved for the benefit, and instruction of future generations. It is the act of documenting the present to ensure that the legacy, lessons, beginnings, and stories of today are not lost to time.

Writing for posterity ensures that the stories, traditions, and achievements of the present are passed down to descendants. This could be described as an effort to immortalise events, individuals, beginnings of foundations and projects, so that they remain in memory long after they have passed.

Writing for posterity serves as a way to explain “how we got there” to those who come later, providing context for the organisation that future generation will inherit.

This means documenting and sharing the historical, ethical, operational rationale behind an organisation's current structure, decisions, and culture.

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4. What results come up, when History is distorted?

When History is distorted, whether through intentional manipulation of facts, by omission of events, or by fabrication of narratives, the result often includes fueling of conflicts, and unending quarrels. Once a history is reshaped to suit the agenda of the manipulator or manipulators, the distorted history becomes a tool for division and litigation, because persons who knew the true story will begin to raise eye-brows. They will begin to ask questions that the falsifier of the fact of the history may not be able to answer. This will raise unnecessary conflicts, tensions and divisions.

5. Examples of Distorted History

Here, I am to talk about only two examples of deliberately falsified history facts, among others. The two examples are a foundation and a school project.

I have read about, and witnessed situations where the history of the beginnings of a foundation and a school project were horribly manipulated, and distorted:

A. Falsification of a Foundation's History

At a carefully prepared forum that warranted that the recalling of the beginnings of the Foundation and the persons who gave the go-ahead of the starting of the foundation, and those who helped to move the foundation on.

When the history of the Foundation's write-ups eventually appeared in a special brochure and copies were distributed to people present. From that moment of the distribution of the brochure, unceasing murmuring among the people sitting at the

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back, while those in front were busy showing to each other the pages of the brochure containing the history of the foundation. Those reactions occurred because these people knew the history of the foundation. Others who were unsure of the History of the Foundation were silent, but they were fast cross-checking the dates written in the History part of the Brochure prepared for the function.

What Happened?

It happened that the person or persons assigned to prepare the History of the Foundation only spent time eulogising persons who contributed absolutely nothing to the establishment of the foundation. These falsifiers of History, carefully omitted person, and persons that gave the Foundation the beginning and survival signal, and moved it forward.

The worst thing that followed was that those who knew the History of the Foundation, that were supposed to say something, said nothing. They were dumb! They were afraid to say No to the conspiracy.

B. Falsification of School Project History

At the beginning of a school Project, a person, and persons planned the project and set it up. This person and persons purchased the land, planned the contents of the school project, got an architect to put the thought contents into architectural drawings of the phases, paid the architect for his work, paid and got the government's approval of the drawings, paid and got the approval to build on the land purchased.

This person and persons started the practical building of the school project. They cleared the site, did the pigging, excavated

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the area needed, and constantly bought and supplied materials for the building, etc. And eventually the planned area of the school project was completed, and the compound was landscaped and roads constructed and tarred, and the school project took off on the appointed date.

What Happened?

It happened that at the forum where the History of the beginnings of this school project needed to be written, at a function regarding it, the brochure prepared for the function emerged, with the History of the project occupying at least two pages of the brochure. And guess what?

The head, or persons who were appointed to prepare and write the History of the school project, wrote and included everything they wanted to include, they manipulated and reconstructed the History of the school project, in order to include a person or persons who has no hand neither in its plan nor in its establishment, but deliberately omitted the mention of the names of the person or persons, who planned the school project, build it, and delivered it for use. And this distortion of the History of the school project displayed in the brochure caused a great stir at the function that day.

The same attitude of dumbness continued to occur, in the sense that those who knew the history of the beginnings of this school project, and should say something against the falsification, said nothing. They were unable to reject the manipulation of true history. They were afraid to say no, not true, it contains falsehood!

Distortion of History and unbecoming attitude of a follower of Christ-a Christian

General advice to writers of History: If you do not know the history of the establishment where you are working, you will do well to ask those who know the History to help you put the history correctly, instead of falsifying facts. You will gain absolutely nothing before God, by any kind of distortion of History.

Do not exclude someone that should be included in the History of your person, and in the History of your work place. Remember, History is written for posterity. One does not write a History for himself or herself. Avoid writing a History that contains falsehood, just because you want to make someone happy. Creating untrue History does not befit a Christian. A Christian should be moving daily toward the imitation of the life of Christ, the life of perfection of Love – the Divine Love. It is a pity, if the distortion of History prevails in the life of a Christian.

Chapter Three

CAN CHRISTIAN GOVERNANCE, BE ONLY BY REASON AND LAW?



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1. Concept of Christian Governance:

Christian Governance means a leader leading with biblical principles like justice, integrity, and servant leadership, seeing leadership as stewards accountable to God, and aiming for the good of community, group, and society.

2. Can Governance in Christian Leadership be only by reason and law?

The answer is No; governance in Christian leadership cannot be only by reason and law. This is because while reason and established laws are important components, Christian leadership fundamentally integrates additional principles rooted in faith, divine guidance and spiritual character.

3. Major additional Principles of Christian Governance

Christian governance extends beyond secular models of reason and law by incorporating some core biblical principles.

- **Divine guidance and the Holy Spirit**

Christian leaders are expected to rely heavily on the Holy Spirit of God for wisdom, discernment, and direction, not depending on solely human understanding. This practice involves regular prayer and reflection in order to align decisions with God's will.

- **Servant Leadership**

A leadership modeled after Jesus, the leader emphasises leading by serving others and putting their needs first, this is in contrast to worldly leadership that often focuses on power and authority.

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- **Love and Compassion**

The Christian faith is centred on love for God and others. Authentic governance should be driven by this love, ensuring that decisions are made with empathy and concern for the well-being of the people, especially the vulnerable.

- **Character and Integrity**

Leader's personal character is paramount. Qualities of a Christian leader such as humility, honesty, justice, and self-control are considered essential for building trust and for reaching an effective leadership.

- **Biblical Principles and Moral Standards**

The Holy Bible serves as the ultimate source of authority for Christian governance, providing the ethical framework and moral compass for decision-making. Human laws and reasons are expected to be in harmony with these higher standards.

- **Accountability**

Christians are required to be accountable not only to the people they lead but, more importantly, to God. This accountability to God influences the conduct and decision-making processes of a Christian leader.

In concluding, reason and law can provide structure and order, but Christian leadership, must be guided by faith, the Holy Spirit of God, and commitment to Christ-like character and service.

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Any Christian leadership that fails to correspond to the points mentioned above ceases to be a Christian leadership that must be based on Christ's character

Chapter Four

BEING IN A FOREVER REVENGE MISSION

Have you as a person ever seen someone who engages all his or her life in a revengeful state, in a vindictive state?

1. What does it mean to be on a forever revenge Mission?

A person being on forever revenge, means someone who dedicate his or her life to retaliating for a past wrong done to her or to him. It means a person who becomes ever consumed by bitterness and resentment. It means living with an all-consuming, relentless drive to retaliate for a past wrong; this often leads a person to destructive cycle where his or her entire identity, actions, and future are consumed by bitterness, a desire for vengeance, and a refusal to move on. This is a horrible situaion, trapping a person in a hoop of conflict rather than achieving peace or healing.

2. Character of a revenge mission

Revenge mission has its own character

- **Obsession:**

In such a person, past grievance becomes the person's, primary focus, over shaping all other aspects of life. This type of person finds it impossible to see any reason to forgive wrong.

- **Moral imbalance:**

This believe has a deep-seated belief that harm must be met with equal or greater harm to restore a sense of justice.

- **Perpetual Conflict:**

A person with revengeful spirit lives in perpetual conflict. Revenge often escalates, rather than resolves, and he or she lives in creating cycles of retaliation and more plans to move on creating more, retaliation scheme.

- **Example of a Christian on Revenge Mission**



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There is a town called Utah. This Utah town has ten densely populated villages. In this Utah town, there is a live and fresh story told about a woman called Iwele. In Utah town, there is a powerful **Married Women Organisation** involving all married women in the ten villages of Utah, both Christians and non-Christians.

Iwele is a Christian. But she takes full delight in taking a revenge of every little wrong done to her, and she follows this revengeful attitude with keeping of malice. This behaviour earned her a name, and the name is “Darkness”. One day, Iwele walked pass at Utah town square, where some grown up children were playing football and they screamed to one another “Look! Look! Look! Look at “Darkness, Darkness is passing”.

Iwele must have some business to do daily at one area of local Utah village market or at the big Utah village market and this means that she must have to quarrel with at least 20 or more persons daily. This is because to ask Iwele, how much she sells cast oil paste, will be followed with every abusive word she can remember. She will say that you did not shape your mouth well, in asking for the prize, she will retaliate with terrible wounding words, upon all these, she will be the first to stop talking to you.

Emergency Meeting of all Utah Married Women Organisation

All-Utah married women organisation had an urgent meeting with Iwele. On the appointed day, all married women of Utah village gathered. According to their method of handling cases, all those involved in any case, should be called out by the leader and she should stand at the centre of the crowd gathered.

In this formal set up, Iwele was called to step out by the leader of

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the women, and she did. Then, the leader continued, she asked Iwele whether she is aware that she is called “Darkness” by almost everyone living in their Utah town of fifteen villages. Iwele did not reply to this question. But the leader continued, and repeated the question to her. And this time she responded by saying that she heard that name “Darkness” once, but she is not sure whom the name is referring to. At this stages, the leader told Iwele that the name “Darkness” was referring to her, that the name is given to her (Iwele) by the married women organisation of Utah town of fifteen villages.

The leader explains to her why the name “Darkness”, was given by the married women of the town. The leader told Iwele that the name was given to her because of her bad conduct: The leader then told her that since she got married to Mr. Ukaaka and was brought to the town of fifteen villages, it has been a series of troubles, quarreling, causing, unfounded shouting at people, children are beaten indiscriminately, sometimes Iwele initiates a violent fight with some married women of the organisation, and she gives them a very serious beating, because Iwele is naturally a strong woman.

The leader of the group after enumerating all Iwele's faults and offences, the leader added “Iwele why do you commit all these, have you forgotten our code of conduct as Married Women of Utah town of fifteen villages?”

Iwele stood looking straight with wide open fierce eyes, and offering no apology.

After waiting for more than sixty seconds for Iwele to say something, she kept mute and stood her firm. At her behaviour the emergency meeting of the married women organisation of Utah, convoked to help Iwele resolve or solve the problem of

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her bad name across the fifteen villages of Utah town was adjoined indefinitely.

Everyone has seen how Iwele, the Christian woman lived and lives out her Christian life. The follower of Christ, who supposed to be the “light” wherever she finds herself, ended up being” Darkness”, instead. She proved too proud to offer any type of apology to the group for her bad conduct. Therefore, not ready for any amendment, and not ready to resign from her revenge mission.

What a pity! Iwele forgot what God said about revenge. A Christian person, who engages in a perpetual revenge mission, earns for herself or himself the name Darkness. Revenge is not a language of a believer; revenge is not the language of a Christian.

Chapter Five

SYNCRETICISM IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN

It is important that before we go into the full discussion of the theme of the Chapter that we go through the words that are employed. And these words are Etymology of the word Syncretism, and meaning of the word Syncretism.

1. Etymological Origin of the Word Syncretism

The term Syncretism stems from the Ancient Greek word Synkretismos, meaning “federation of Cretan Cities”. The historian Plutarch (1st Century AD) used the word Syncretism to describe how the argumentative citizens of Crete would put aside their differences and unite to fight against a common enemy.

2. Meaning of Syncretism in different Contexts

Syncretism refers to creation of something new through the combination of multiple, sometimes, incompatible influences. Syncretism is the blending of diverse religious beliefs and practices to form a new, unique foreign elements into an exiting

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faith.

3. Religious Syncretism

This means the blending of doctrines, rituals, or deities from different faiths. It involves the absorption of Canaanite religious practices into the religion of Yahweh. It is necessary that we dwell longer on this religious Syncretism, because this is where our interest is at the moment.

4. Syncretic attitude of a Christian

Christian person submits to Syncretism. How does a Christian do this submission? Ways through which a Christian can submit to Syncretism. Before we continue to search how a Christian submits to Syncretism, we will first of all see what the Old Testament says about Syncretism.

5. Brief review of Syncretism in the Old Testament

It is good that before we continue with the Syncretism display of a Christian, we will look back to see what the Old Testament refers to as Syncretism.

Some examples of Syncretism in the Old Testament

(a) The Worship of Golden Calf (Exodus 32)

As long as Israel was a pilgrim people in the desert under the early leadership of the judges, she was a people of God only because of her consciousness of the covenant. But with the gradual settling shown of this people of Israel in Canaan, the all-parading consciousness that held them together as God's people

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was threatened. The passage from the charismatic leadership into the dangers of an established worldly kingdom sets in. Israel would like to be like other nations.

In discussing the unfaithfulness of Israelites, it is good to recall briefly what God did for Israel: God chose Israel, and preferred her over the whole nations of the world. God delivered Israelites from slavery in Egypt. And the Israelites were happy to be saved. They entered the covenant with Yahweh at Sinai.

The first unfaithfulness of Israel: At Mount Sinai, which is also called Mount Horeb, the Israelites camped there and stayed for a while. As the Israelites waited below, Moses climbed the mountain. Up on the Mountain, Yahweh told Moses that He would want the Israelites to obey Him and to become His special people. When Moses came down, he told the Israelites what God said. And the people said that they would obey God, because they wanted to be His people.

Yahweh now did strange thing. He made the top of the mountain to smoke, and cause loud thunder. God also spoke to the people: “I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of Egypt.” Then God commanded: “You must not worship any other gods except me.”

Later God told Moses: “come to me in the mountain. I will give you two flat stones on which I have written the laws that I want the people to keep.” So Moses again went up to the mountain. For 40 days and nights he stayed on the mountain. Moses wrote those laws down. God also gave Moses two flat stones. On these flat stones God Himself had written the 10 laws that He spoke to all the people. These laws are called the Ten Commandments; you see these in Exodus 19:1-25; 20:1-21; 24:12-18; 31:18).

When Moses stayed longer time on the mountain, the people

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said: “we do not know what has happened to Moses. So let us make a god to lead us out of this land.” Aaron agreed, and told the people the following: “Take off your gold earrings, and bring them to me.” When the people did that, Aaron melted the ear rings down and made a golden calf. And the people said: “This is our God who led us out of Egypt.” That is the worship of the golden calf. Then the Israelites had a big party, and worship the golden calf (Exodus. 31:24). This is the beginning of the Unfaithfulness of Israel.

(b) Israel's Worship of Canaanite gods

After settling in Canaanite, Israel adopted the worship of local gods like Baal and Asherah. Israel's worship of Baal and Asherah, began when King Omri of Israel (885-874 BCE) had sought to strengthen Israel's ties with the Phoenicians, then he married for his son, and successor Ahab, Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Chief of Phoenician cities of Sidon and Tyre.

Jezebel was a worshiper of Baal, the Canaanite god of fertility. When Ahab became king, he not only allowed Jezebel to continue to worship Baal, but he also institutionalised the worship of Baal in Israel by building temples, and altars to Baal, and by maintaining a large body of Baalist Prophets.

In 1 Kings 18, Jezebel brought hundreds of Prophets of Baal into the royal court, while the Prophets of Yahweh were being executed at Jezebel's command. The strength and success of Baalism during King Ahab's reign in Israel, implies that many Israelites were worshipping Baal, instead of Yahweh. This means the worshipping of Yahweh and Baal. And this is called **Syncretism**; a practice which is not allowed by Yahweh. It is a contradiction to the covenant Israel made with God.

(c) King Solomon in a Syncretic Worship

King Solomon, during his reign as king in Israel, married many foreign women as wives. They were wives from Egypt, Moabites, Edonites, Sidonians, and Hittites, etc. These his many hundreds of wives, brought into Israel Astartes, the goddess of the Sidonians, and of Milcom, the Ammonite abomination.

Each of these wives brought along with her, the gods they worshipped; eventually these wives swayed and shifted King Solomon's heart to other gods. And Solomon ceased to be a whole hearted follower of Yahweh. He built a high places and shrines, where his foreign wives offer incense and sacrifice to their gods.

This was how the praised wisdom seeker, King Solomon, ended up being unfaithful to Yahweh. King Solomon ranged from being a very fervent follower of Yahweh, to being a weak and indifferent worshiper of Yahweh.

(d) King Jeroboam of Israel and Syncretism (Golden Calves (1 Kings 12:20-33))

When King Jeroboam of Israel stopped Israel from going up to the Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem to offer sacrifices, he made two golden calves, and said to the people of Israel: "Here is your God, Israel, who brought you out of Egypt!"

King Jeroboam, then, set one calf up at Bethel and another one at Dan, and the people of Israel went in procession to worship and offer sacrifices to the golden calves. The king set up shrines on high places, and appointed priests, who were not of levitical descent to take charge and minister. Jeroboam offered sacrifices on the altar which he had made at Bethel. He also instituted a

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feast for the Israelites, and went up himself to the altar to burn sacrifice.

In this way, King Jeroboam of Israel instituted and established the worship of golden calves at Bethel and Dan, thereby merging Yahweh's worship with the worship of pagan symbols.

(e) A contest at Mount Carmel, Israel to choose between Yahweh and Baal (I Kings 18:21)

During this contest at Mount Carmel, the Prophet Elijah challenged Israel to choose between Yahweh and Baal. (I King 18:21).

The Prophets like Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah, constantly warned Israel against this blending of worship, syncretism because they viewed it as spiritual adultery (Hosea 2:8).

6. Syncretic behaviour of a Christian

This caption refers to a Christian who blends or combines core Christian beliefs and practices with elements from other religious practices or beliefs. It means the worship of God mixed with a strong belief in idol worship.

(a) How does a Christian submit to syncretism?

Syncretism has characteristics; this means that there are countless examples of syncretic behaviours seen in the life of Christians in different countries and societies in the world, our own country and society inclusive.

(b) Some characteristics of Syncretic behaviour in a Christian

A Christian submits to Syncretism by using a clever way of blending biblical truth with non-Christian beliefs. This is to say that Syncretism is not always a clear formal merging of religions, but it often occurs as a gradual assimilation of worldly ideas into Christian life and doctrine.

(c) Mixing beliefs by a Christian

Mixing of beliefs happens, when a Christian accepts all religious practices as one.

(d) Simultaneous practice of Syncretism

This involves practicing alongside other traditions, such as consulting a traditional healer (diviner) for protection or to avoid misfortune. Some diviners give their Christian followers or clients something in form of juju to wear in his or her neck, or around his or her waist. A Christian acting, shocking!!

(e) Desire for Relevance

Submitting to Syncretism in order to be relevant occurs, when a Christian person wishes to appear relevant or accommodating to the modern culture; and even to be relevant to a friend, or in order to maintain that friendship. This means that in the mind of a Syncretic Christian, it is better to compromise the truth, than to lose a friend or a relationship.

In this way a Christian person submits himself or herself to Syncretism by dissipation of himself or herself, by moving from one diviner to the next jumping from one juju healer, to the next,

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carrying a big bag for collection; collecting from social media the addresses and locations of native diviners and juju healers. And as he or she goes to consult these diviners, and juju healers or doctors, he or she will be collecting as well, their method and conduct of worship; and with all these methods he or she has collected, the Christian, will be merging them with the Christian practices of worship of God.

Concluding:

In the Syncretic lifestyle of a Christian person, the Christian is like saying to God in His face: “God you are not capable, I will merge you with other gods and idol, to be sure.” This is a clear language of a frustrated Christian person.

Ultimately, a Christian person submits to Syncretism, when she or he allows the world's values, ideas, or practices to shape his or her faith and lifestyle, rather than allowing the word of God and the Holy Spirit to God to sanctify and transform (Roman 12:2).

A Christian must know that doing the will of God is disturbing, but doing it is rewarding!

Chapter Six

CHRISTIANS MUST LIVE LOVE, MERCY, AND COMPASSION OF GOD

1. Significance of the Caption of Living Love, Mercy, and Compassion of God

The caption of living Love, Mercy, and Compassion of God, signifies a call of Christians to move beyond a mere feeling of sympathy to standing up actively to wear and live God's character by showing concrete Love, Mercy, and the Compassion in their lives. The caption is the central theme in Christian life, which must focus on reflecting the divine nature, which is characterised as loving, merciful, compassionate, gracious, and showing delay to anger.

2. In what ways does a Christian live the compassion of God?

It is unfortunate that many Christians abhor hearing the language of compassion and mercy, and when I listened to some of these Christians share their reason for their hatred of the two words: **Mercy and Compassion**, I said to myself Haah! “What a misconstruction of the power of the two words”: the general

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reason of those Christians' non-acceptance of the two magic words is that the two words make people, or persons, who receive them, to be underdeveloped, they make people to lack growth and wisdom in their lives.

That is to say that if you, a Christian, show mercy and compassion to people, you are making those people to experience a stunted growth in their lives. For anyone to say that showing mercy and compassion to people will make those people to live as babies perpetually, is a misconstruction of the word Mercy and Compassion.

Those Christians that look down on compassion and mercy, do not know nor understand the meaning of these two powerful words. Christians, in the real sense, must know the character of God.

What are the key characters of God?

We have to gradually go through the character of God. A person's character is what makes that person unique. It means how that person acts, how he feels, how he or she thinks, etc. God's character helps us to understand who God is, and we can find these His character in the Bible. Scripture teaches us God's character and His attributes. And the central descriptions of God's character include:

God is Love (John 3:16, (1 John 4:8), (Ephesians 2:4-7)
God is Mercy (Exodus 34:6-7)
God is Compassion (Nehemiah 9:31)

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1. God is Love:

In Genesis 1:26-27, God created humanity: “Let us make man in our own image”. God's love for humanity is demonstrated through sacrificial acts. This include: compassion for the suffering, involving selfless service, by God sending Jesus to die for humanity (John 3:16). This sacrificial death of Jesus Christ is highlighted in Romans 5:8 “So it is proof of God's own love for us; that Christ died for us while we were still sinners”. This quote demonstrates God's own love for us, showing His unconditional love even when people were undeserving. This act of love across the gospels and epistles, proves God's willingness to provide salvation and eternal life as a free gift, not something earned (cf. John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10).

2. God is Merciful

The God we worship demonstrates His mercy to humanity throughout the Bible, vividly noticed through His enduring compassion for Israel (Nehemiah 9:31), His promise to be gracious ((Isaiah 30:18), His choice to show compassion (Romans 9:15), and most significantly, through the ultimate act of mercy sending His son, Jesus Christ, to redeem humanity from sin, as seen in John 3:16 and Ephesians 2:4-5, offering salvation by grace and not by works.

In the Parable of the Prodigal son (Luke 3:4-7), Jesus tells this story to illustrate God's welcoming, forgiving, and compassionate nature, the father runs out to embrace his repentant, wayward son.

Mercy is the attribute of God in His **ad extra** action in relation to His people who are afflicted with physical and particularly moral evil, with the desire to offer them assistance which uplifts

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and librates them from evil and misery, and particularly sin.

Mercy spurred God right from the beginning to create and to provide for what he created (Genesis 1:27; Wisdom 4:3; 17:2; Psalm 104:30; Wisdom 11:12. This mercy led God not to condemn those he created when they rebelled against Him; instead He sent His son, Jesus Christ to teach them mercy. Therefore, Christ, the Incarnate Word, whose external example can be seen and imitated, was sent to make the Father's mercy visible for his people, and to demonstrate for them the way to this mercy. No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made Him known (John 1, 18).

John Paul II called attention to mercy when he wrote: confirmation has to be given once and for all of the fact that “God who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ” (Ep. 24:5). This mercy means that God the Father, in Jesus Christ, is close to people, loving and saving them through the mercy given through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus makes known and brings close to people the attributes of God in a most perfect way. God who is rich in mercy becomes visible in Christ in a special way:

Through his lifestyle and through his actions Jesus revealed that love is present in the world in which we live- an effective love, a love that addresses itself to man and embraces everything that makes up his humanity. This love makes itself particularly noticed in contact with suffering, injustice and poverty- in contact with the whole historical “human condition”, which in

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various ways manifests man's limitation and frailty, both physical and moral. This love is called mercy (Pope John Paul II, *DM*, n. 3).

Jesus, the Incarnate Word, makes God present as mercy. The merciful acts of God, taking pity on human weakness, are revealed in the history of salvation and particularly in the merciful actions and lifestyle of Jesus. This meant that Christ, by his way of life and actions, personifies mercy and en-fleshes it in the situations of everyday life, thereby becoming a model of mercy for others. He points out to people how they are called to mercy, and the part the Church and humanity are to follow. This revelation of mercy culminates in the Paschal Mystery of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ, with the sending of the Holy Spirit to keep mercy alive and to perpetuate it in the mind and heart of people.

3. God is Compassion

The God we worship demonstrates compassion throughout the Bible, especially in the Old Testament by describing Him as merciful and slow to anger (Exodus 34:6-7), Psalm 86:15) and the New Testament through Jesus actions, such as feeding the hungry (Matthew 15:32) and the sick (Matthew 9:36) culminating in the ultimate act of sending Jesus as savior, in which God show profound love and mercy for humanity.

Describing His nature, God said “God declares Himself merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in goodness and truth, giving mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.

God said: “Yahweh, Yahweh, God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in faithful love and constancy,

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maintaining his faithful love to thousands forgiving fault, crime and sin”. (Exodus 34:6-7).

4. Our Findings:

Our research on Love, Mercy and Compassion of God, has led us to discover and know much about Love, Mercy and Compassion of God. What we have discovered within the research on the character of God, will offer a great help for those Christians, who look down on the Christians' mandate of living and showing mercy and compassion to people. Our findings will serve as a great help for understanding what a real Christian should be living as a lifestyle.

5. Why is it compulsory that a Christian must spend his or her life living Love, Mercy and Compassion of God?

For a Christian, living a life of Love, Mercy and Compassion, is a fundamental non-negotiable part of faith. Living these three core virtues serve as the principal way to emulate Jesus Christ and reflect God's character to communities, societies, nations, peoples, and to the whole world.

The living of these virtues is a command from Scripture; the Prophet Micah, outlines what God requires: “To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus directly commands: “Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate” (Luke 6:36). In the letter of Paul to the Colossians, the believers are instructed” “You are to be clothed in heartfelt compassion, in generosity and humility, gentleness and patience” (Colossians 3:12).

Living the character of God by a Christian is fundamental to his

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or her identity as a follower of Christ, and a necessary response to the grace he or she has received.

Scripture identifies God as “merciful, compassionate, and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. As children of God, every Christian is called to emulate this character in his or her daily life.

In the Gospel of Matthew chapter 14:14, Jesus was met by a large crowd of people in need, we read that Jesus had compassion on them and heal their sick. Being compassionate means seeing the suffering of others and care about it, and taking action to help. In other words, compassion is mercy in action. When other people may keep their distance on beholding people suffering, compassion inspires a Christian to act on behalf of those suffering.

This is exactly what Jesus did for us on the cross. Knowing that we would suffer forever because of sin, he stepped in to take our place. In your own case – a Christian, you know that people suffer in so many different ways today. This experience can be categorised into hardships, physical pain, mental pain, etc.

In this sense, it could be a family facing the problem of lack of money to pay school fees for their children, or facing the problem of inability to afford basic need like food, clothing, proper housing or suffering from a serious illness by one of the members of the family.

It could be a problem of someone, who is in a situation which is like being in a bondage suffering in that situation year after year, etc. In these two cases, what would you do as a Christian, who is capable of helping the situation? Would you be there, as chief executive in any form, doing nothing and saying nothing? And

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those you could help will be there, suffering and languishing. **A sad Christian witness!**

6. Two Christians who lived the character of God recently

We have seen and witnessed recently, within our century, the Christians, who made Love, Mercy and Compassion seen, lived and practiced in their lives. And these persons were, Mother Teresa of Calcutta (now saint, and Pope John Paul II (now, saint).

(a) Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997)



Mother Teresa was a Roman Catholic nun who founded the missionaries of Charity in 1950, a religious congregation dedicated to serving “the poorest of the poor”.

Work:

Mother Teresa's work focused on providing compassionate

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care, dignity, and, in her words, wholehearted free service to those unwanted, unloved, and uncared for by society.

Opening Hospice:

Mother Teresa opened a hospice a home for the dying; she opened this hospice in an abandoned Hindu temple, allowing terminally ill people to die with dignity, cared for according to their own faith.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta:

Mother Teresa described herself as dedicated to serving “the poorest of the poor”. This is exactly what Mother Teresa did because she said that we do not serve, because we do not love; and if we learn to love, then we will learn to serve:

What have we to learn? To be meek and humble; if we are meek and humble we will learn to pray. If we learn to pray, we will belong to Jesus. If we belong to Jesus we will learn to believe, and if we believe we will learn to love, and if we love we will learn to serve

(Mother Teresa of Calcutta: *A Life for God*, p. 205).

Mother Teresa was indeed; outstanding in giving dignity to “the poorest of the poor” she served. She shared her experience when she was once walking down a street in London; she shared:

One day I was walking down the street in London.
And I saw a tall, thin man on the corner, all huddled up
looking most miserable.

I went up to him, shook his hand, and asked him how he was. Then he looked up at me and said, “Oh! After such a long, long, long time I feel the warmth of a

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human hand!” And he sat up.

There was such a beautiful smile on his face, because somebody was kind to him. Just shaking his hand had made him feel like somebody.

For me, he was Jesus in a distressing disguise. I gave him the joy of being loved, the feeling of being loved by somebody. Somebody loves us, too – God himself. (Mother Teresa of Calcutta: *A Life for God*, p. 64).

Mother Teresa knew where she was going. She followed Jesus Christ closely in the way she provided unconditional love and dignity to the unwanted and unloved.

2. Pope John Paul II (1920-2005)



Pope John Paul II experienced Love, Mercy and Compassion in a multitude of events throughout his life and later reflected on

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mercy in his Encyclical, in which he addressed God in Latin words, as *Dives in Misericordia* (God who is rich in mercy).

John Paul II allowed himself to be formed by this Truth (Mercy). This allows him to state that anybody attempting to understand him and his actions has to start from “inside”.

The world and, indeed, many Catholics had understand John Paul II from the outside: They understood him as a dynamic statesman, a media superstar, a resolute defender of human rights, a compelling public intellectual, a voice for the voiceless, a man of dialogue. All of which he was. But understanding Pope John Paul II from the outside – through his public roles-never really got you to the core of the man.

John Paul II himself, after seeing many articles, books, and biographies written about him and their emphasis on his role as a statesman remarked: “They try to understand me from outside. But I can only be understood from inside.” The above quotation contains some of the views that led John Paul II to assert that he needed to be understood “from inside.” In other words, we are called to recognise that the truth that drove John Paul II's life and action has to be grasped from inside and not from the exterior.

Pope John Paul II, Saint, with his strong statement on how he would want to be understood, was hinting that it was the character of God, that he was trying to emulate, that it was the spirituality of the character of God that he was trying to put into practice.

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7. Major aspects of Living Love, Mercy and Compassion of God:

- **Action not just emotion**

Here, we mean that living Love, Mercy and Compassion of God, requires that a Christian does not stop on only emotion, he or she has to take action to alleviate the suffering of others.

- **Reflecting Divine Nature**

This means that a Christian is to function as God's representative, that a Christian has to behave as God's “ambassador” on earth, allowing the Holy Spirit of God to flow through him or her to meet the physical and emotional needs of people.

- **Emulation of Jesus**

A Christian person living the Love, Mercy and Compassion of God, is to focus on the model set by Jesus.

This is a question of cultivating what is called a “habit of heart” that is being moved by the suffering of others, such compassion that moved Jesus to heal the sick and to feed the hungry.

- **Forgiving over insisting on having it your own way**

For a Christian to live Love, Mercy and Compassion of God, it requires that such a Christian must be ready to be forgiving and releasing person and persons from offences that keep him, her, or them, from communicating with, and belonging to where each one of them should belong.

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In all, what I am trying to harmer on, essentially, is that living the Love, Mercy and Compassion of God, is a call of a Christian, and Christians, to be the “hands and feet” of Jesus, transforming lives by showing unconditional, self-giving love in a world that is full of social ills.

Helping others in need is a key part of living the Christian faith. True compassion is more than sympathy and emotion. Genuine compassion moves a Christian to offer support when others face hardship: “our love must be not just words or mere talk, but something active and genuine” (1 John 3:18).

Scripture makes it clear that if we do not have compassion or love for each other, then we do not know God: “whoever fails to love does not know God, because God is love” (1 John 4:8). Living compassion is like shifting from focus from self to others, seeing them as God sees them.

When a Christian starts to live the Love, Mercy and Compassion of God, the weak Christians neighbours, and those around will regard him or her as incomplete, insane abnormal, a weakling, crazy.

It is obvious that when a Christian becomes afraid of living the Love, Mercy and Compassion of God in his or her daily life, then the obvious has arrived, God's character has stopped to be alive in him or her. Then a big problem has set in, the real crisis of identity has begun in him or her.

Chapter Seven

SPIRITUAL RETREAT FOR A CHRISTIAN PERSON



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Spiritual Retreat is an important exercise in the life of a Christian and non-Christian as well. It is essential in human life because, it is like a retirement for self-examination. For a Christian, Spiritual Retreat is once again, a retirement for religious self-examination before God, and indeed, that is what generally takes place during retreat.

1. Spiritual Things

In the understanding of this book, spiritual things are set aside places, areas, homes, where people can go at any planned moment, to pray, reflect, plan to love and live better as a human person, as human persons, and as Christians.

2. Etymology of the Word Retreat

The word “Retreat” comes from the Latin “Retrahere” meaning “to pull back.” In other words, what people should be doing during retreat is pulling back. It means pulling back from daily lives, what must have been governing them, pulling them down, and preventing them from attaining authentic spiritual growth.

3. Concept of the term Spiritual Retreat

Retreat is a spiritual and guided exercise that helps a person, family, children, group to step away from everyday distractions and be with his, her, and their inner self/selves, and with their God. This exercise may sometimes involve inviting a retreat Director or Directress, to assist the retreatant or retreatants as he, she, or they, listen to the Holy Spirit of God during the retreat.

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4. Biblical view of Retreat

In the Bible, Jesus taught His disciples to retreat, and He actually invited them to retreat. When the Apostles came back from their apostolic experience, they narrated to Jesus all they had done and taught. They ministered and attended to so many people coming and going that there was no time for them even to eat. And Jesus noticing that they were tired and stressed up, said to them: “come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while” (Mark 6:31).

In this passage of Scripture, Jesus invited the apostles, on their return from their great apostolic work, to come along with Him to a secluded place, to have some rest. This is another way of telling us what spiritual retreat consist of. Spiritual Retreat, therefore, carries a beautiful basket, containing: **Retreat, Rest, and Renewal.**

5. Importance of Retreat and way forward

As we come close to the conclusion of this Chapter, I have some suggestions to make for a Christian, Christians, and even for non-Christians: For a Christian, for Christians and even, for non-Christians: if you are among those, who never ever thought-of reserving one day, two days, three days, or even one week in your life, for a spiritual reflection and renewal, then, it is time for you to begin.

A Christian, in fact, can be talking about spiritual life, but in reality, he or she does not care about spirituality and spiritual life in a set up. In essence, he or she might be a destroyer of any spiritual progress opportunities.

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How then does a Christian person prevent spiritual growth in an environment?

A Christian in question, may not come out openly, and declare that he or she is out to destroy spiritual growth opportunities in an environment. But his or her actions speak louder.

A Christian person might be destroying the progress of spiritual exercise opportunities, in an environment by unnecessary additions, probably, intended for economic reasons, but pretending to be bringing in a brilliant care and innovation, which end up in ruining and stifling spiritual life.

What a pity!

Chapter Eight

SEEKING PEOPLE'S OPINION OF YOU TO YOUR DETRIMENT

A Christian person seeking People's opinion to her detriment. Some persons, Christians, indeed, spend their time seeking for peoples' approval in their lives.

There is a story told about a woman called Madam Udapa, who wanted to know her standing with the people in their village. In other words, Udapa is anxious to discover how the people rate her as a person in the neighbourhood. To find out this fact, Madam Udapa called three persons she trusted in that village, and told each of them to interview people, and get their opinions of her. And she would want a feedback from each of the three interviewers.

1. Interview Process

The interviewers began their work. The three trusted persons – the interviewers, commenced their tasking exercise. Each interviewer interviewed 15 persons in the village.

2. Feedback Forum for Madam Udapa

At the conclusion of the interview by the three trusted persons, then, the time came to report their findings:

- **The First Interviewer**

The first of the three trusted persons gave Udapa her own feedback. She told Udapa that almost all those she interviewed, said that Madam Udapa yells too much at people indiscriminately, at any little misunderstanding. That Udapa is a chronic complainer, a fault-finder, and a bitter critic.

- **The Second Interviewer**

The second interviewer said to Madam Udapa, that those he interviewed were almost unanimous in their response. They told Udapa that she is very proud, and looks down on people especially the poor; and that she avoids any type of association with them.

- **The Third Interviewer**

The third interviewer was blunt in delivering her findings to Madam Udapa. She told Udapa that the people she interviewed said that she is inadequate in her mode of dressing. She went on, and told Udapa that those she interviewed agreed and said that her dressing is always too elaborate, dressing with excessive jewelry, excessive makeup, and with very ornate clothing when simplicity is expected.

You see what Madam Udapa has done to herself and she is still doing to herself. Madam Udapa is chasing shadows, going after peoples' opinion of her, seeking for unfounded

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identity. As she is busy craving for all these things, she misses out on what should matter to her in life as a Christian.

Chapter Nine

SHOCK PEOPLE WITH YOUR GOODNESS!

1. Significance of Goodness

Goodness is the fruit of the Spirit; the internal goodness is the quality of being morally good and virtuous. It means the quality of being warmhearted, considerate, humane, sympathetic, helpful, and generous. It involves a harmonious blend of moral principles, virtuous character, and commitment to helping others. Goodness in a person means compassion empathy and kindness.

2. Goodness in Action

You can never be so joyful as a person and as a Christian in your life, until your goodness gives “life” to a person, who is struggling to survive hunger, someone who lacks opportunity for formal education, and suffers homelessness; until you lift up someone, who is totally down with serious illness, and could not go to hospital, for lack of funds to pay hospital bills; until you help to reconcile and integrate someone, who is suffering unfounded hateful attitudes, and marginalisation from Christians around him or her.

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Your goodness, that magic virtue shown to someone, acts like a cooling balm, it acts like a calm soft consoling voice, it acts and depicts, like a liberating gate, it acts like a joyful life situation, and it also acts like a proper enabling environment. Goodness showed to others acts like a brilliant light that brightens the darkness.

3. Triumph of Goodness

There was a story told recently by the vice chancellor of Godfrey Okoye University, Rev. Fr. Professor, Dr. Christian Anieke, during the Midday Prayer and Students' Christmas Party, 2025.

This is a story of what happened in Austria, where at a school a Turkish boy, called Arder, was discriminated against by classmates. In the class they avoided Arder like a leper and because of this unbecoming attitude and behaviour by the follow classmates, the boy, Arder, the victim, responded to the ill-treatment, by being supper aggressive, because he viewed every student in that class as an enemy, since all avoided him.

One day in the class, one of the students called Simon approached Arder, and calmly said to him: “Arder, can you be my friend?” Arder looked directly at Simon and was shocked with the question; and after about ten seconds said “Yea” to Simon-meaning “Yes”, you can be my friend.

As soon as the proposed friendship by Simon, was accepted, a new look and a new phase appeared in the classroom. From that day, and from that moment, Arder ceased to be aggressive to anyone, and there and then, calm and friendly atmosphere began to exist in the classroom.

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In your own life situation, in your own Christian life, could you ask yourself these likely questions: How can I be a Simon to someone? How can I be a “redeemer” to someone? Is it possible for someone to say, it is since he or she knew you that things have started to change for good for him or her?

Chapter Ten

A CHRISTIAN TO TREAT PEOPLE AS HUMAN BEINGS WHILE SEEKING OUT THE “LOST SHEEP”



1. Concept of treating people as human beings while seeking the lost sheep

Treating people as human beings rather than as a “stick” means to recognise their inherent worth and dignity. It means valuing their emotions, rights, and personhood, rather than seeing them as objects to be manipulated, or discarded. In total essence, treating people as human beings while seeking out the “lost sheep” is about approaching every human person with the understanding that every person has a value and deserves to be treated ethically and fairly.

Treating someone as a human being means showing kindness, respect, and empathy for them.

The phrase seeking for “lost sheep” is a kind of metaphor for the Christians' duty to treat all people with dignity, respect, kindness, and compassion, especially those who are marginalised, and considered lost.

We know that the “lost sheep” analogy originates from the New Testament parables in Matthew Chapter 18, and in Luke Chapter 15, where Jesus speaks of a shepherd, who leaves his ninety-nine sheep to go in search for the one that has strayed. Jesus invites the Christians to join Him to seek the children of His, who are suffering maltreatment, who are languishing looking for rescue and integration.

2. A Christian person goes in search of the lost sheep

For a person, a Christian indeed, who determines to seek for the lost sheep, has to carry with him or her, a basket full of empathy, compassion, forgiveness, reconciliation and kindness.

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Going in search for the “lost sheep” means acting like the “Good Shepherd”, who seeks out, and welcomes His strayed child, and children with open hands.

3. Active search and reaching out for the “lost sheep”

A Christian, who is out to treat a person as human being, while seeking for the lost sheep, has to employ what is called active outreach. By active outreach, I mean that the found lost sheep is not to be expected to come back on his or her own, but that a leader, the in-charge, who sought him or her out, should offer him or her help, and directs him or her to a part of integration into the fold, into the community, or into the group.

The approach of a Christian in search of a “lost sheep” is compassion and kindness over condemnation. The method the Christian is to apply in treating people as human beings while seeking the lost sheep, should be that of understanding, love, kindness, and support, rather than judgement or condemnation; because the goal is redemption and restoration, and not punishment.

The above strategies mentioned are what should be present, when a Christian treats a person as human beings rather than leaving a “lost sheep” to perish.

A Christian person does not abandon his or her sheep to languish in anguish and to live in isolation day in day out, year after year. It is urgent to learn from the Lord – God the Creator!

Chapter Eleven

CHRISTIAN FORMATION AND FORMATORS

To understand the caption of this Chapter 11, it will be appropriate that we search for the meaning of the term Christian formation, because we know that there are many types of formation:

- Scientific formation
- Football formation
- Food formation, etc,
- Then, we have human person formation, but our focus in this chapter 11 is on Christian formation.

The first of the formation of human person comes under education meaning the formation of school children and students of different age and stages and this education of school children and students, at different age, stages, and levels, come under formation. But in this chapter eleven of this work, we are specially focusing on Christian formation.

1. Concept of Christian Formation

Christian formation is something that unfolds perpetually. It is a lifelong process. Therefore, it is not a journey of a one-time

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event but it is a continuous process of growth that runs all through stages of life. And the propeller and the builder of this Christian formation, is the Holy Spirit of God. Christian formation, simply, is the movement of a Christian, aided by the Holy Spirit to become like Jesus Christ in His character - meaning in His love, and in His action. It involves transforming a believer to reflect God's image.

Christian formation is an internal renewal empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit of God. This means that the ultimate goal of Christian formation is to embody, to put on, and to live the qualities of Jesus –becoming loving, compassionate, merciful, humble and sacrificial.

2. What does the term Christian Formator signify?

A Christian formator is a person chosen and appointed by the community's leader to be responsible for accompanying others in their process of spiritual, pastoral and personal growth with the ultimate goal of helping them to become more like Christ in their daily living as Christians.

3. Some Functions of Christian Formator:

Functions of Christian formator abound:

(a) Accompanying and Guidance

In the first place, a Christian formator, serves as a mentor, a guide, and a companion to formatees, in which he or she also shares. The formator is to offer support to the formatees, she or he has to listen to them, help them in discernment of their vocation, take them through prayer and worship, and assist

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them as people placed in his or her care.

(b) A Modeling Person

Here, what is meant is that a Christian formator is to teach the formatees not only through words, teaching, but primarily through their own example and life, the life worthy of imitation. This is because the world is tired of listening to high quality talks, and lectures from brilliant and eloquent speakers. In other words, the function of the Christian formator is not to fill the whole environment of formation with invitations to wonderful lecturers, and great formators to teach and deliver lectures to the formatees, but to allow his or her exemplary life to influence and teach the formatees.

It is sad to notice a formator who says, talks, and teaches lovely things to formatees, but his or her life says the opposite. What a hypocritical life!

4. Type of Preparation a Christian Formator should have:

(a) Human Formation

A Christian formator should have an all-round or holistic preparation which will span human, spiritual, intellectual, and even pastoral dimensions, concentrating on personal maturity, deep faith, and acquired skills in order to effectively guide others on their journey of faith and vocation.

The most critical aspect of preparation is the formator's own personal and spiritual life, which serves as a primary example.

A formator should be balanced, and has to be an authentic

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human person who knows and accepts his or her strengths and weaknesses. He or she should be a person strong in emotional maturity, who is self-disciplined, and a person of sound judgment.

A Christian formator, has to be someone who has the ability to listen attentively to the formatees. Someone who has the capacity to dialogue, ready to show empathy, has the disposition for patience, and a capacity to show kindness to the formatees. He or she should be approachable.

(b) Profound Spiritual Preparation

A Christian formator should be outstanding in his or her life of personal and community prayer. He or she should be regular in reception of sacraments like the Eucharist and reconciliation, and must be familiar with scriptures through constant study and meditation.

(c) Joy and compassionate Spirit.

A Christian formator is not to be a “Sourpuss” or unhappy person. He or she should not be a harsh judge, but a person who embodies joy, kindness, mercy, and patience, as he or she walks with those who are weak or wounded.

(d) Ability to Live in Community

A Christian formator should be able to live and work well in a community, fostering mutual understanding trust, and healthy relationships.

(e) Knowledge of Relevant Disciplines

For the preparation of the work of a Christian person as Christian formator, it is necessary that he or she should have a solid grasp of scriptures, systematic theology, moral theology, and spiritual theology.

(f) Skills in Human Sciences

A Christian getting ready for the work of Christian formator will benefit from being trained in Psychology, human development, counseling, and spiritual direction, in order to understand the dynamics of human growth, and recognise signs of psychological stress.

5. whom would you as a Leader, appoint as Christian director or directress of formation?

The answer to this question sounds like an uphill task, a difficult response to find, indeed. It is hard to give a straight forward answer. This is because a Christian person you might appoint as director or directress of Christian formation, with the hope that he or she will deliver, sometimes end up being a total disappointment; and sometimes a person a leader appoints trembling, turns to being a star in Christian formation. Therefore, it is not easy to be sure of whom to choose, because human beings are mysteries.

6. Characters to avoid while selecting directors and directresses of Christian formation

Leaders of communities and groups are to desist from appointing the following characters as directors and directresses of Christian formation, these characters to be

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avoided include:

1. An insensitive formator
2. A selfish formator
3. A hard-hearted formator
4. A community prayer dodger formator
5. An untidy and unkempt formator
6. A nonchalant formator
7. An inconsiderate formator
8. A malice-keeping formator
9. An unforgiving formator
10. A rash judgment formator
11. A lazy formator
12. A nagging formator

These characters listed, are my brain-child list, meaning that they are not lifted from any book or article. What stands out clearly is that a Christian should be moving toward the imitation of the character and life of Jesus.

Chapter Twelve

DISCIPLINE IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN

1. Full Concept of the Term Discipline

The full meaning of discipline involves self-control, it involves training, it involves rules, it involves fields of study, and it carries the ability to follow rules, exhibiting correct behaviour, it means developing skills through practice, it means maintaining order, it does not mean mere punishment because it stems from teaching and growth. Discipline is a character trait which enables focus, achievement of goal, and structured living.

In essence, discipline, is the ability to train oneself to concentrate on doing things that should be done and desist from doing things that should be avoided.

2. Qualities of a Disciplined Person

Here, we will first of all talk about a disciplined person before moving to a disciplined Christian. In general, a disciplined person shows self-control, strong focus, and consistent action. He or she is often organised, reliable, and possesses the ability to adhere to his or her principles and commitments, transforming

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intentions into results through structured effort. He or she sets clear goals, and breaks them down into achievable, steps. He or she actively seeks knowledge and skills to achieve goals.

- **Commitment and Perseverance:**

A disciplined person stays dedicated to set goals and duties, works hard, and does not give up easily when he or she faces obstacles. He or she learns continuously, seeking steps to success, not failures.

3. Qualities of a Disciplined Christian

A disciplined Christian exhibits self-control. He or she lives a life of dedication, and lives a consistent spiritual habit like prayer, motivated by love for God, and a desire to follow Jesus character and example. He or she focuses on purity, on serving others.

A disciplined Christian reflects Christ in actions, not just words. He or she finds strength through biblical training for righteousness. He or she exercises restraint in the desires, thoughts, and actions.

A disciplined Christian demonstrates sacrificial love for neighbours and service to others, mirroring Jesus compassion. He or she is outstanding in prayer and devotion to God. He or she controls his or her tongue, using it for encouragement, rather than for gossip, for negativity.

4. Discipline in Action in the Life of a Christian

A Christian disciplined in action involves spiritual habits, which includes: prayer, bible study, worship, and practical virtues such

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as self-control, sacrificial love, integrity, and accountability, all these aim at growing in godliness and in reflecting Christ lifestyle.



Discipline is the quality of a person, a Christian who is in control of his or her behaviour. A disciplined Christian is one who shows ability to control his or her whole being. It means a Christian who is well-behaved, and has a good training of mind and character.

(a) Signs of a Disciplined Christian

A disciplined Christian is considerate in all he or she does. A disciplined Christian does not fight or run for a best place and seat at a function. He or she is considerate at eating places. A disciplined Christian behaves himself or herself in the refectory; he or she does not run to take food first and to get the best parts of food, meat, and drink, etc. In other words, a disciplined Christian does not push to get the best part of anything and leaves the wretched parts for others. Wanting to be first in order to get the best of part, be it at one's home, be it at eating place during celebrations, or be it of anything one has to share with others; it is better to allow others first before you.

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Rushing to get the best part of anything are signs of indiscipline and lack of self-control? Generally, a disciplined Christian does not struggle to get the best before others. He or she considers others first. A Christian, a child of God is considerate at all levels. A disciplined Christian is a person of integrity, he or she lives by a strong and personal principles. He or she stays humble, and does not allow success to lead him or her to arrogance.

Chapter Thirteen

UNCRITICAL SECULARITY IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN

It is always important to touch on the meaning of the leading words in any topic for research. Therefore, we will be searching for the meaning of uncritical and secularity.

1. Concept of Uncritical

This is an adjective, meaning a situation which does not express criticism or a situation where a person does not use his or her critical faculties. It means careless, easily pleased, imperceptive, imprecise, imprudent, inaccurate, indiscriminative, superficial, undiscerning, indiscriminating, uninformed, unselective, unthinking.

For anyone to describe a person or his or her behaviour as uncritical, it means that the person does not judge whether something is good or bad, or right or wrong, before he or she supports or believes them.

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2. Secularity

Secularity is a noun, which originates from Latin “Saeculum” – meaning “Worldly, secularity is a neutral term that refers to what is the opposite of what is religious.

Secularity is a state or condition of being secular, which means separate from religion, or devoted to worldly rather than spiritual things. Secularity describes the quality of being secular, worldly, on unrelated to religious matters.

3. Concept of Uncritical Secularity

Since we have briefly gone through the concepts of the two words, uncritical and secularity, we will move to search for the meaning of uncritical secularity.

Uncritical secularity refers to an unexamined, take-for-granted, or rigid adoption of secular worldview. Uncritical secularity is a form of secularism that actively rejects reflection on its cultural, or religious biases. This concept operates under the belief that a secular, non-religious approval is superior or more progressive than any faith-based approach. Uncritical secularity simply means the condition of being non-religious.

4. Uncritical Secularity in the Life of a Christian

The uncritical Secularity in the life of a Christian refers to the adoption of a worldly mindset, values, and behaviours without measuring them against biblical truth, the teachings of Jesus, and of the Church.

This is a state, where a Christian lives in the here and now, while consciously ignoring God's commands in his or her daily decisions, which results in leading a Christian to divide his or

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her life into a private religious part, and a public secular part.

5. Signs and Characteristics of Uncritical Secularity in the life of a Christian

When a Christian enters into the domain of uncritical secularity, it means that he or she has begun to love the world more than God. And this often results that such a Christian compromise his or her Christian convictions and beliefs in order to gain popularity or to fit into modern way of life or culture. And this attitude includes:

(a) Exclusion of God in daily Life:

As soon as a Christian decides for uncritical secularity type of life, God will begin to be no more important, he or she will begin to exclude God from his or her major life decisions, such as career moves, marriage, financial investments, or where to live, the choices and decisions on all these are based on personal gain, comfort or worldly wisdom, rather than on prayer and on biblical principles.

(b) A Christian in Deep love with Worldly Values:

Acceptance of uncritical secularity, leads a Christian who accepts them, to adopt what society defines as success, what society defines as pleasure, and what society defines as morality.

6. A Christian breathing in secular way of Life

Breathing in all aspects of secular way of life, by a Christian, is a conscious process where a Christian adopts the prevailing, non-Christian culture as “the air” he or she breathes, thereby lacking the sense of divine in his or her everyday life.

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Let us take example of a Christian, who stands and boldly, and shamelessly, gathers into his or her bag and life, every horrible thing that the secular world calls great; ranging from copying verbatim all uncritical and unanalysed lifestyle that the social media presents daily, to living the indecent and the horrible lifestyle himself or herself.

A Christian has a mandate to modesty. But a Christian is seen today going half-naked as a lifestyle and fashion. And this Christian habitually wears immodest, revealing, and indecent exposure type of clothing, which is viewed as a violation of biblical standards of holiness and a failure to treat the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:15-20). This lifestyle and this behaviour is interpreted as a method of demonic evangelism that provokes weak souls to careless behaviour, and signals a rebellion against God's commandment to cover shame, as He covered Adam and Eve's nakedness in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:20-24).

When a Christian, demonstrates a lifestyle by wearing clothing that exposes areas considered privates, example wearing short shirts, low-cut tops, and very tight clothing, what does he or she wants to achieve?

- **A Christian becoming a stumbling block to others**

An immodest dressing by a Christian reduces the Christian to being **“an agent of devil”** the Christian becomes agent of destruction of God's people. The indecent dressing lifestyle of a Christian in this form, is seen as a demonic evangelism as an open invitation for the devil to control the life of the Christian person, as he or she brings shame to the Church.

Every human person created by God, is called to dress

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appropriately and modestly. Because the beauty of every woman, every girl, every boy; and every man, is noticed, admired, and appreciated when he or she dresses appropriately and modestly because beauty is admired in modesty! It is sad to behold a healthy human person, a Christian person, in half-naked clothing walking the street in the world, and looking for those to destroy.

- **An additional indecent decoration of the body by a Christian**

The above caption or phrase refers to a Christian who imitates secular culture or secular way of life, by wearing a strong and offensive perfume on his or her body. Wearing this highly offensive fragrance, results that whenever such Christian walks past, people around will close their eyes, close their nose, close their mouth, and close their ear, because of the horrible and dense smell of the perfume, causing people around him or her to stay in an uncomfortable corner, until a function or a meeting is over.

A Christian should be mild in applying perfume on his or her body. This means that he or she should wear mild fragrance, and spray on his or her body once, not spraying it all over his or her body. Moreover, perfume is dangerous to human body and health, and should be avoided or used sparingly, if it must be used.

Chapter Fourteen

GREED AND QUEST FOR POWER BY A CHRISTIAN

We will begin by searching for the meaning of the words employed: Greed, and Quest for Power.

1. Concept of the Term Greed

Greed is an intense and selfish desire for something, especially wealth, power, or food. It is a selfish and excessive desire for more of something than is needed e.g. money.

Simply put, Greed is the disordered love of riches. We are commanded to love God above all things, but we can begin to love money more than God. And remember that Greed is among the vices which their practice by a Christian lead to spiritual death or separation from God's kingdom (Proverbs 6:16-19, Galatians 5:19-21).

2. Quest for Power

Quest for Power means the strong, relentless, pursuit of authority, influence, and control over people, resources, or systems, to achieve goals, and gain personal advantage. It

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means a personal ambition. It is a fundamental human drive to shape circumstances, and to dominate.

Quest for Power can be seen as corrupting, especially when it involves violence, and lacks accountability, showcasing or showing a tension between achieving goals and moral conduct. To have a quest for power invariable means a quest to be an authority. Quest for Power is the ability or strength that allows someone to control the course of events.

3. Effects of Greed and Quest for Power on the Life of a Christian

The scriptures teach that greed and quest for power are profoundly destructive forces in a Christian's life. Because they are considered forms of idolatry, as they place worldly possession and influence above God.

Outstanding effects of these practices on a Christian come under the following:

1. Spiritual Decay:

Greed and quest for power cause a Christian to worship material things rather than God, leading him or her toward the breaking of the first commandment of God.

2. Chokes the Word of God:

The daily anxiety and deceitfulness found in riches can choke the word of God in a Christian's life, making them to be unfruitful.

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3. Never Satisfied:

A greedy and quest for power Christian remains always unsatisfied, he or she creates a cycle of constant craving and unhappiness.

4. Stifles Peace

A greedy and quest for power found in a Christian, lives him or her in anxiety, in stress, and in fear, because he or she relies on herself rather than relying on God.

5. Self-Dependence:

Greed and quest for power normally cause a Christian to trust in money or power for security rather depending on God's provision.

6. Loss of Proper Name:

The greed for money and power cause a Christian to lose his or her good name. For it is an accepted fact that good name is more desirable than wealth.

7. Empty Promises:

Greed and quest for power direct a Christian to invest in treasures on earth, which will eventually rust, decay, burn, and be lost, rather than storing up his or her treasures in heaven.

4. Violent Actions of a Christian who is Greedy and Quests for Power

It is very clear that a Christian, who is greedy and quests for

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power, is a very selfish person. A Christian, who is hungry for money and for power, is ready to do anything to get that power. He or she is ready to kill, ready to cheat, ready to steal, ready to destroy, ready to calumniate, and ready to fight in order to get that power.

Actions very unchristian!

Chapter Fifteen

A CHRISTIAN LIVING IN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IN PRAYER



1. Etymological Origins of Prayer

The word prayer comes from the Latin Roots Precari, meaning to ask, to beg, to entreat – this highlights prayer's fundamental function as a request, a plea.

Prayer gradually evolves from praying for survival to devotion. Early prayers focused on physical needs e.g. for sustenance, and for protection, but eventually developed into complex expressions of gratitude, repentance, praise, and spiritual longing within organised religions.

Prayer has diverse form. Prayer is manifested as silent contemplation, as formal liturgy, mantras, chants, and personal supplication. The first time prayer is mentioned in the Bible is in Genesis 4:26, from that time people began to call on the name of the Lord. Before this passage, all dialogues with God were initiated by Him (God).

2. What is the Meaning of Prayer?

Prayer is most of the time associate with rote recitation of prayer, and performance of duty. Prayer is broadly understood as a two-way, intimate, and relational communication with God, rather than just a formal repetitive, or one-way ritual. True prayer means cultivating a personal friendship with God. It involves moving away from seeing prayer as a machine for personal requests.

Prayer is a religious service especially a regular one, at which people gather in order to pray together. Prayer is not just speaking; it includes silent reflection and listening, making it a dialogue rather a monologue.

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Prayer is a lifestyle, meaning that it is an ongoing, unceasing conversation with God that can happen anywhere: it can happen in the mind, in the Church, in the chapel, in a group, in the community, in the family, at work place, in the car, it can happen while walking, in fact, unceasingly. The primary purpose of prayer is not to change circumstances; but the major purpose of prayer is to change us! However the chief objective of prayer is to glorify God in any, and in every situation.

3. Benefits of Prayer in the Life of a Christian

Here, when I talk about prayer, I am talking about a relationship that exists between a Christian and God. I am talking about when a Christian is ready and willingly decides to look at God who is already looking at him or her.

When I talk about prayer, I am not talking about a **Fake**, and an **Acting** type of prayer. That is where a Christian pretends to be a prayerful person, while he or she behaves like a Prayingmantis to people.



The insect Prayingmantis is always in stillness, but once it sees a prey, within its striking distance of target, it breaks its stillness with a lightning fast strike and grabs the prey. This is one

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examples of what a fake prayerful Christian does with those living with him or her, and those around him or her.

A Christian living a fake prayer life behaves similarly to a Prayingmantis – which appears to be in posture of holy reverence, but it is actually a deadly, patient predator. A Christian in fake prayer life, is like this insect, Prayingmantis that holds its legs in a way that looks like it is praying, the Christian that fakes prayer life presents a “holier-than-thou” image to the people. He or she puts on a show of intense prayer life in public, while he or she has no secret prayer life at all.

The insect Prayingmantis is a camouflaged, patient predator that waits for prey to come near for it to strike. Similarly, a Christian that fakes prayer life, acts patients and calm (a “sheep in wolf's clothing”), but waiting for the moment to strike, to attack aggressively, to bark, and to destroy. He or she also waits patiently for the opportunity to use others for his or her own personal gain.

What a tragedy!

Now, let us continue our search for the benefits of prayer in the life of a Christian.

Prayer benefits a Christian, because it acts like lubricating oil, which soaks and loosens. Prayer life offers many benefits to a Christian. For instance, prayer strengthens the relationship of a Christian with God. A Christian, who lives in prayer, finds peace, and alleviation of anxiety. Prayer life of a Christian allows him or her to gain guidance and wisdom for making decisions. It allows him or her to receive strength to resist temptation. It fosters humility and dependence on God. Prayer life of a Christian is a way that leads him or her to communicate

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with God, to praise Him, to confess and asks for His forgiveness, and it is also a way to present to God his or her needs to be met. Prayer is an opportunity for a Christian to invite the Holy Spirit of God into his or her life.

4. How does prayer life of a Christian, affects his or her whole being?

A consistent prayer life of a Christian affects him or her profoundly. Since prayer is the primary means of communication with God, a Christian in prayer life experiences deepening of this relationship with God. And this deepening includes:

- **Character Transformation:**

When a Christian spends time in prayer in God's presence, the Christian's character is sculpted to become more like Christ, for example, a Christian in real prayer life will notice that the more experience of prayer he or she has, the more he or she will find himself or herself seeking a way of expressing himself or herself more fully.

The Christian's feelings, moods, desires, gestures, attitudes, and his or her lifestyle will be affected and influenced: He or she will begin to see things differently, and things will begin to have different meanings for him or her. For instance, his or her interest, concerns, worries are influenced by what happens to him or her in his or her communicative prayer with God.

- **Cultivation of Spiritual Virtues:**

A Christian's regular prayer life fosters in him or her the fruits of the Spirit such as patience, compassion and love.

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In this communicative prayer, a Christian's vision broadens, and he or she will have a greater openness to change; he or she will find out that he or she will be more considerate and more compassionate. The Christian will tend to be more patient, more tolerant to other peoples' feelings, and shortcomings.

5. Effects of Living in constant Communicative Relationship with God in Prayer by a Christian

When a Christian lives in a constant communicative relationship with God in prayer, the results of this practice are obvious. The Christian begins to show a soothing relationship with people. He or she becomes more kind to people. He or she reflects, weighs, and considers every action with God, before he or she carries it out. He or she will begin to love, help, and appreciate people more. A Christian, he or she, should remember that every life of prayer, must be moving toward the imitation, putting on, and living the character of God.

6. Effects of lack of Communication with God in prayer by a Christian

Neglect of prayer life of a Christian, brings unending run from prayer. This run from prayer occurs as follows:

- **Neglecting prayer leads a Christian to profound spiritual, and practical consequences:**

In such a Christian, whenever prayer is mentioned, his or her whole continence will change, because he or she does not want to hear about prayer, nor ready to be happily present where it is said, whether in a family, in a community, at school, in a group, and even to go to church for worship will be an uphill task, a problem.

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- **Spiritual Weakness:**

Lack of a Christian's relationship with God in prayer reduces him or her to a spiritual weakness and an easy tool for sin.

Without prayer, a Christian will lack the spiritual fortitude to resist sin, making him or her to be available to devil's schemes.

- **Loss of Spiritual Power:**

Prayer is described like a process of charging one's batteries, in the same way, a prayerlessness life is “powerless”, and he or she operates in the natural rather than the supernatural.

- **Backsliding or Relapsing:**

A neglected prayer life is a direct path to spiritual decline, which leads to a cold and lukewarm faith.

- **Insensitivity to the Holy Spirit of God:**

Prayerlessness causes spiritual dullness, this makes it difficult for a Christian to hear God's voice or feel His presence.

- **God is reduced to compartmentalised Faith:**

The statement which says that God is reduced to compartmentalised faith means that a Christian and Christians, assign a low and small percentage of their lives to God, (like 1-2 hours on Sunday) rather than God being Lord of all areas, such as work, relationships, and entertainment, etc.

- **Materialism and Financial Mismanagement:**

his occurs when a Christian prioritises – and put wealth

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accumulation and luxury first over spiritual growth, and often these Christian and Christians live as if God does not exist.

- **A Christian of shallow spiritual life and spiritual indiscipline:**

A Christian degenerates into shallow spiritual life, and indiscipline, when he or she begins to neglect consistency in prayer, scripture study's, and fasting, lack of these practices, result in a superficial relationship with God.

A Christian life must be the one that edifies. This means that a Christian should focus on building up, on strengthening, and on encouraging other's in the faith, promoting spiritual growth and Christ-likeness, instead of tearing down.

Chapter Sixteen

A CHRISTIAN AS A MANAGER OF A PROJECT



Since we have already seen earlier in this work the meaning of a Christian, here, we will just focus on the two words, manager and project.

1. Meaning of the Word Manager

A manager is a person responsible for controlling or administering an organisation or group of staff.

The full managing of manager, says that a manager is a professional, who takes a leadership role in an organisation and manages a team of employees.

A manager is a person who is in charge of running a project. A manager whether the person has a managerial experience or learning on the job, must have had some preparations for the job. He or she is selected by the authorities of an institution or an organisation to plan, to organise, to lead staff, to develop and to control the project.

2. Significance of a Project in General

Project means an individual or collaborative enterprise that is carefully planned to achieve a particular aim.

It also means a set of tasks that must be completed within a defined timeline to accomplish a specific set of goals.

Project consists of diverse initiatives, ranging from large-scale humanitarian aid to normal project like, school, hospital, youth development, hospitality centre, etc.

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3. Concept of a Christian Manager

A Christian manager is a Christian leader who integrates biblical principles like stewardship, servant leadership, and faith into his or her professional role, seeing his or her position as a call to serve God by managing resources, like school, hospital, hospitality centre, companies, bank, ICT centre, etc, and responsibly and positively influencing his or her team with integrity, humility, and compassion, aiming for both business success and spiritual growth.

Christian manager sees himself or herself as a steward of God-given resources, responsible for developing them for good, and to lead by example, prioritising people and ethical conduct.

4. A Christian Manager and his or her Spirituality

The spirituality of a Christian manager is outstandingly defined by leading with Christ's example of servant-leadership, giving priority to integrity, faith, and God's will over personal ambition, and he or she is to guide the employees toward spiritual growth and to strive to think as God thinks, in building others up, as he or she plans to lead the project to a successful goal.

The spirituality of Christian manager is a holistic approach to management, which must be rooted in a deep, daily relationship with God, where work becomes a way to glorifies Him and serve people.

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Major principles of the spirituality of a Christian manager include:

- **Servant-Leadership:**

As a Christian who should follow Christ's model, a Christian manager serves others, putting their needs above his or her needs, rather than seeking power or control.

- **Holiness in Action:**

The spirituality of a Christian manager should be such that the manager should be thinking as God thinks and wills as God wills, and he or she is to make decision that reflects God's character and corresponds with His character.

- **Divine Guidance:**

The spirituality of Christian manager should lead him or her to continually seek and discern God's voice and timing, and not just following cultural trends or personal desires.

- **Building others Up:**

A Christian manager's spirituality, should lead him or her to invest in employees' spiritual and personal development, helping them to grow in their faith.

- **Humility:**

A Christian manager, basing on his or her spirituality is to remember that he or she is a **stand-in for Jesus**, the Good Shepherd, and he or she should direct people to Him, and not to himself or herself.

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5. A Christian Project manager needs creativity and skills

To say that a Christian project manager needs creativity and skills, means that he or she must go beyond routine tasks to generate innovative solutions, adapt challenges, and foster a collaborative environment for new ideas, balancing imaginative with practical goals.

This is about seeing problems and opportunities, he or she has to think beyond traditional methods, and inspiring things to find new, useful, and original ways to achieve project objectives.

As a manager, a lot depends on him or her to make the growth of the project possible. This means that out of his or her creativity, a Christian manager is expected to promote effective management, holding the main staff of the project and other workers in view; and keeping cordial relationships with them all.

6. Function of a Christian Project Manager

A manager of a project is seen as an embodiment of knowledge and skill. He or she knows the values, attitudes and expectations of the institution or the organisation that chose him or her, and even the expectations of the society.

The diverse areas where a Christian project manager should concentrate in his or her functions include:

- **Renovation of the Project:**

The Christian manager also is to maintain and renovate the project. In other words, an up and doing Christian project manager should have in view the project under him or her, providing constant maintenance and to know when there is a

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need for renovation.

- **Sensitive to cracking-walls:**

All I am trying to say or communicate is that a lively and a committed Christian project manager will not allow the project entrusted to him or her to degenerate into cracking-walls. This means that the manager of the project should be alert to notice when the walls of project are out of date.

- **Alert to Pot-hole floors:**

A Christian Project manager is to be on the watch, to see the pot-hole floors of any kind around the project he or she is managing. It is sad to be greeted by unplanned pot-hole in a project that should be first class.

- **Blown up Roofs:**

A Christian responsible project manager should notice this blown up roof and fix them before they become impossible to repair.

- **Window without Shutter:**

A Christian project manager should be so responsible as to notice this window without shutter and fix it immediately.

- **Worn-out paints on the Walls:**

Worn-out paints on the wall of a project are an eye sour. A Christian project manager should please avoid allowing the project under him or her, to degenerate into worn-out paint walls.

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- **Inadequate Seats and Desks:**

A project without adequate seats and desks are a clear knock on the door of a failure, because nobody would like to associate himself or herself with project without adequate infrastructure.

- **Unwelcome Reception:**

An up-to-date Christian project manager should know that the first place that says much about project is the **Reception** the **Entrance** and then, the warm reception of the manager and the team, all this put together, brightens a project without all-round welcome reception of a project, the project is moving to die a natural death.

- **Unkempt Environment**

A project with unkempt environment gives a project a signal for a decline. An unkempt environment drives people away from coming near of any type to the project; the project will fall into a disappointment and failure.

An up-to-date Christian project manager in his or her foresight has to anticipate problems of a project and continuously takes the necessary actions to solving them; developing the project and giving it a constant new look.

Chapter Seventeen

PEOPLE OF INTEGRITY

For those who are not familiar, integrity is very important. Integrity is an excellent virtue which every human person should desire to have.

It is sad to say, that people - Christians who have a strong sense of integrity are a rare breed. However, they are still some people left in this world with integrity, and Bishop Michael Ugwuja Eneja is, and was, among those who have that virtue.

I would like share some features of integrity that will help us to understand the virtue of integrity, and how it works in human person.

1. Concept of Integrity

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of current English, defines integrity as an adherence to strong moral and ethical principles. It means soundness of moral character, honesty. It is the state of being whole and entire. Integrity is the quality of being upright in character. It is the quality of being whole and undivided in character. It is regarded as the honesty and

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accuracy of one's actions.

In ethics, integrity is regarded as the honesty and earnestness of one's actions. A Christian person of integrity is one people can rely on. A person of integrity passes a correct judgment, and only involves himself or herself in righteous actions. Integrity is the quality of being honest and having a consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles and values.

2. Behaviour and Characteristics of a Christian who lives Integrity

The behaviour and characteristics of Christian who lives integrity include:

- **Giving credit where it due:**

This means that a Christian who lives integrity does not take credit for things he or she did not do. He or she will always give credit to those who deserve it.

- **He or she is authentic:**

A Christian who lives a life of integrity is an authentic person, because he or she always lives a life according to his or her values. This Christian of integrity is genuine in his or her interactions and does not put on a **fake** image of himself or herself.

- **He or she is always Honest:**

This means that a Christian of integrity is an honest person; he or she feels that there is no need to lie as it is important for him or

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her to get to where he or she needs to get in life honestly.

- **He or she is Trustworthy:**

A Christian of integrity is respectful, and responsible, he or she acts with humility-looking for greater good over personal gain, and builds deep trust through his or her actions.

- **A Christian of Integrity does not take advantage of other people:**

A Christian of integrity does not take advantage of other people. He or she does not manipulate for personal gain.

- **He or she possesses an intuition:**

The Christian of integrity is observant, and often senses when someone is upset or when someone is stress up.

- **He or she is dependable:**

The actions of a Christian of integrity match his or her words, making him or her highly reliable.

- **He or she aspires to do good when possible:**

A Christian of integrity desires to help others, and to make positive impact.

- **He or she has Moral Integrity:**

A Christian person of integrity does not speak negative of others. He or she does not take advantage of anyone.

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3. A Proof of an Example of a Life of Integrity by a Christian

(a) Context:

There is a story of a big Company, located not too far away, where the Chief Executive Officer of that company recognises and acknowledged that he had stayed long in that company as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and that he is now old in age. So, he said that as things stand, he would like to hand over his function as CEO, and that he will hand this function over to one of the senior officers in the company.

(b) The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) calls a meeting of twenty senior officers in the company:

The CEO, then called a meeting of the twenty senior officers, and his own son was among the twenty, incidentally the twenty officers are all Christians. He told them his decision to hand over his function as the CEO of the company, and repeated to them his reasons for his decision.

Process of Selection of CEO's replacement:

(a) A Seed-Plant Allocation:

One day the Chief Executive Officer called a meeting of the twenty senior officers and told them that he will give to each one them a seed-plant to plant, and that the person whom his seed-plant will be the most flourishing, will replace him as the new Chief Executive Officer of the company and he gave each of them a seed-plant to go and plant.

(b) Ungerminated Seed-Plant of Ukah:

As time goes by one of the officers, called Ukah, noticed that his own seed-plant did not germinate, but he waited in patience. After some more days Mr. Ukah, still observed that his seed-plant did not germinate.

Ukah then went to one of the officers to complain that his own seed-plant did not germinate, the officer responded with joy, telling Ukah that his own seed-plant germinated well and it is flourishing. Ukah made the same complaint to all the selected officers, and each of them confirmed that his own seed-plant germinated. Mr. Ukah also complained to his wife that his own seed-plant did not germinate. His wife suggested to him to buy another see-plant. But Ukah refused.

(c) The Mighty Day of Feed Backs:

On the appointed day, all the twenty senior officers gathered each carrying his blooming plant. The Chief Executive Officer called them one by one and each came in presenting his own flourishing plants. But there was one officer called Ukah whom his seed-plant did not germinate; and when the CEO asked him why he did not bring his own flourishing plant, he said that his own seed-plant did not germinate.

(d) CEO Finds a Replacement:

The Chief Executive Officer called twenty senior officers together and told them that he has found his replacement and the person is the officer that his seed-plant did not germinate. The CEO told the twenty officers that the twenty seed-plants given to each of them were kept in a condition that all of them will never ever germinate. **All were dumb-founded! A big**

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disappointment! A big surprise! A big shame!

This means that each of the nineteen officers bought another seed-plant other than the ones they were given.

Conclusion

It is only Ukah who proved his quality of being upright in character, a Christian of integrity. Ukah is a person of integrity. It takes integrity to behave the way Mr Ukah did. The Chief Executive Officer also displayed his worth. He proved his moral principles. We remember that his own son was among the contestants, but he by-passed every type of corruption, and chose to live integrity, a committed Christian, who does not chase shadows, but insisted on what matters to him in life as a Christian.

Chapter Eighteen

UNHAPPY CHRISTIAN HUNTS FOR AN ENEMY

Here, we will do well, to begin the explanation of the leading words, unhappy and enemy, as the explanation of these words will help us to understand better the theme of the chapter we are about to discuss

1. Meaning of Unhappy:

Unhappy is an adjective which means sad, miserable, cheerless, downcast, sorrowful, unfortunate, depressed, wretched; etc. This means that any alternative could be used to describe unhappy person. A person, who is unhappy, is someone who is sad, miserable, downcast, cheerless, sorrowful, depressed, wretched, etc.

2. Significations of an Enemy

An enemy is a person who is actively opposes or hostile to someone or something. The Latin word inimicus, meaning “hostile, unfriendly”, is the root of enemy, and it comes from the prefix.

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An enemy is not a friend. An enemy is anybody who resists a person, who contradicts a person, who crosses someone, who antagonises someone.

3. Concept of Unhappy Christian

An unhappy Christian is generally understood as a person who has placed his or her faith in Jesus Christ, but experiences a persistent lack of joy, peace and contentment. This Christian is often marked by a deep dissatisfaction, sad, or a sense of spiritual depression. The daily life of an unhappy Christian is characterised by “drabness” that is full of dullness and lifeless.

4. Actions and Behaviours of Unhappy Christian

An unhappy Christian displays the following actions and behaviours:

- **Chains of discontentment:**

An unhappy Christian, in his or her behaviours and actions, portrays a deep discontentment by either succumbing to a cycle of complaining and misery. He or she experiences spiritual stagnation, which leads him or her to become stuck in a circle of guilt, and depression, which destroys his or her sense of peace.

- **He or she tries to find satisfaction elsewhere:**

An unhappy Christian struggles to fill a spiritual emptiness in him or in her with material things, such as relationships, or social events, which results in his or in her continued dissatisfaction.

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- **Divided Loyalty:**

The divided loyalty of an unhappy Christian, stems from his or her not being fully committed to God, he or she attempts to live with one foot in both worlds, meaning that he or she serves God, while still chasing worldly pleasures.

- **Lack of Obedience to God:**

It is obvious that unhappiness can arise in a Christian's life because of being “out of the will of God”. This means that an unhappy Christian has actually stopped being active in obeying God's word and doing his will, a practice which is considered the source of true joy for a Christian.

- **Stingy Living:**

When a Christian stops giving, stops loving, or becomes selfish, he or she may feel miserable, because he or she is not acting as conduit-channel of God's love.

5. Meaning of Unhappy Christian hunts for an Enemy:

An unhappy Christian hunting for an enemy refers to a circle of dissatisfaction or misguided search for fulfillment in life, outside God. It also implies that a Christian, that feels unhappy or unfulfilled, is actively looking for happiness in worldly things rather than in his or her faith.

This behaviour and attitude of Utukpa towards a person he calls an enemy who, in reality, did not do anything wrong to come under the following headings:

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Misdirected Pursuit of Ukaa by Utukpa

Mr. Utukpa, the unhappy Christian, in his fabricated story to his group of friends against Ukaa, depicts a running after other gods, like money, status, or comfort. But when these gods were not readily available, Utukpa turns to look for an unreal enemy to pour his jealousy, his disappointment, his anger, his sorrow, and his unhappiness on. Mr. Utukpa is looking for satisfaction of his needs, which only an indomitable hard work and God can provide. Utukpa in his devilish plot hunted for an enemy in whom he would camouflage his emptiness and greed. And for him to achieve this plot, he targeted Mr. Ukaa.



6. Unhappy Christian, presents Utukpa to Groups of friends, as an enemy – A concrete actions of an unhappy Christian

There is a big town-village, called Uduku. This town-village Uduku is densely populated in terms of large number of

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inhabitants. And they have one hundred and ten settlements. In this town-village Uduku lives a Christian called Utukpa, who is in fact struggling with life, he is, indeed unlucky with many businesses he has tried; and these made him to be nervous and unhappy. In addition, Utukpa's daily interactions and relationship with people in his village are not good news to listen to and behold. To put it simply, Mr. Utukpa is feared in the whole village, he is a terror! In spite of this, he has a group of friends.

In the same town-village of Nduku, there also lives a man, a Christian, called Ukaa. Ukaa is a business man and moderately well-to-do. Mr. Utukpa has been eyeing and targeting Ukaa. One day, Utukpa called together his group of friends and presented and labeled Ukaa as his arch enemy; unfortunately, the group of friends of Utukpa joined him in hating Ukaa.

This is because according to Utukpa, Ukaa refused to sign a forged land document, meant for him (Utukpa), for this reason, Utukpa was terribly embittered and reported the case to the **Town-Union Executive** of his town-village of Uduku, after examining the case, the Town Union Executive sent them to meet the lawyers in-charge of Land Allocation and Housing. Mr. Utukpa, instead of going to the lawyers in-charge of land acquisition, he went and reported to the police the devilish plot of his fake Land document. The police came, but without proper investigation, forced Mr. Ukaa out of his home and out of his business and put him in prison.

In all this, the behaviour of Mr. Utukpa describes him as a Christian in a state of spiritual and material struggles, a Christian who is chasing temporary satisfaction, which eventually fails to provide lasting happiness to him, instead his destructive plot spread all over his village and neighborhood. It

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is unfortunate, if a Christian looks for happiness and satisfaction in destroying another Christian or another person.

Terrible, Terrible, Terrible, a life!

Chapter Nineteen

**EXAMPLE OF AN ELDER CHRISTIAN WHOSE WORK
ETHIC PORTRAYS A USEFUL TOOL FOR OTHER
CHRISTIANS' EMULATION**



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It is important that before we move into proper analysis of the theme of Chapter 19, we will first of all understand the meaning of work ethics.

Work ethics is a set of moral principles values, and attitudes that guide a person's behaviour toward his or her job, laying emphasis on diligence, dedication, and responsibility. Work ethic reflects the belief that hard work is valuable, good, and essential in strengthening character that leads to consistent performance, and reliability.

Characteristics of a strong Work Ethic include:

- **Reliability and Accountability**

In this book, the emphasis is focused on a Christian person. So, a Christian worker should be consistent-being constantly present and available at his or her work place. He or she should be at work, and working as someone, who must give an account.

- **Integrity and Discipline:**

A work ethic of a worker has to insist that a worker should be honest in delivering of his or her work. He or she has to maintain high standard, and gives a quality out look to whatever work he or she is to handle.

- **Dedication and Initiative:**

A work ethic of a person a worker must include a total commitment, and dedication to whatever job, he or she is entrusted to do. It is essential that work ethic, should lead a worker to go extra mile to achieve goals and produce results.

A strong work ethic is considered a major driver of career

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growth of any type, whether in government, in private and in church. Work ethic acts as the invisible force that motivates individuals to perform his or her work with sincerity.

2. Significance of Work Ethic for a Christian

Christian work ethics means seeing labour as a call to glorify God through diligence, honesty, and excellence, rather than merely working for human approval or for personal gain. It is rooted in serving Christ wholeheartedly, encompassing integrity, and stewardship of talent with a joyful servant-hearted attitude.

Principles of a Christian Work Ethic include:

- **Work as Worship:**

A Christian's work is seen as a way to honour God and reflect His Character. The Colossians 3:23-25, explains the attitude a Christian worker should put on as his or her garment: “Whatever your work is, put your heart into it as done for the Lord and not for human beings, knowing that the Lord will repay you by making you his heirs...”

- **Diligence and Excellence:**

A Christian is called to work hard, avoiding laziness, and doing his or her best because he or she is representing Christ.

- **Integrity and Honest**

A Christian has to maintain high moral standards at work, being trustworthy, and acts with sincerity.

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- **Stewardship:**

This means that a Christian to treat his or her skills, his or her time, and his or her resources as gifts from God to be used responsibly.

- **Service to Others:**

A Christian has to use his or her work to serve coworkers and clients, rather than just pursuing self-interest.

- **Balance**

A Christian worker, should know that balance is the key, meaning that he or she should recognise the need for both diligent work and rest.

3. Concrete Example of an Elder Christian whose Work Ethic Portrays a useful tool for other Christians to Emulate

Beginnings: Two significant persons in the early beginnings and early formation of the Daughters of Divine Love Members: Mother Mary Charles Anyanwu and Mother Mary Patricia Alufuo

I would like to borrow the method of proceeding from the Jesuit Canadian, Bernard Lonergan. Professor Lonergan, in his book, "Method in theology" suggested steps theologians need to take in order to produce results. He mentioned among others, reference to those who have gone before in the field of theology, to see how they went about it.

In the same way as Professor Lonergan suggested, it is appropriate for the people of this age to make reference to those

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Christians who, had served earlier as novice directors and directresses to see how they went about it.

Significant Persons:

Mother Mary Charles Anyanwu and Mother Mary Patricia Alufuo

There were two significant persons who shouldered most of the weight of training of the members of the Daughters of Divine Love Congregation's foundation from aspirancy to postulancy, to novitiate, and to first profession.

These two persons were Mother Mary Charles Anyanwu, and Mother Mary Patricia Alufuo. Mother Mary Charles Anyanwu, now Mother Abbess of Paschal Monastery Amorji Nike, Enugu, Nigeria, and a Benedictine Nun whose Monastery, at the request of the Daughters of Divine Love Founder permitted her to direct the new foundation. Mother Charles, at that time, was in charge of both the aspirants and novices and her positive impact on them was outstanding.

At a stage, Mother Charles Anyanwu left the Daughters of Divine Love Congregation, to establish her new Monastic Community at Amorji Nike, Enugu.

Context:

Directress of DDL Novices 1976 Set: Mother Patricia Alufuo

When Mother Charles Anyanwu left to begin her new monastic community, Mother Patricia Alufuo took over. Mother Alufuo was also a Benedictine Nun, whose monastery at the request of the Daughters of Divine Love Founder permitted her to direct

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the new foundation.

Mother Patricia Alufuo, the novice directress, was fondly known and called by the novices of 1974-1976 the name “Sr. Patty.” Sr. Patty was a wonderful and a knowledgeable woman, from whom, the novices of 1976 set, learnt that novitiate life and religious community life are lived in joy, happiness, and in a neat environment.

Sr. Patty's Method:

Sr. Patty had her own method of directing the novices. She had consistent principles, and these worked for her: One of the principles, stood out conspicuously, Sr. Patty had the principle of leading people to be responsible.

The novices learnt from their novice directress, Sr. Patty, the need to be time conscious, but not to be driven by time. With Sr. Patty, the life in the Novitiate was so organised and so tension-free that the novices, were themselves, and they had enough time for their daily tasks, they had time for their community prayers and personal prayers. This made her function as novice directress easy for her because she was able to assess the 1976 set of novices, to know where they needed help, and helped them accordingly. She was their dictionary in the school of sanctity.

The novices can recall that when Sr. Patty, arrived in the novitiate, and had lived with them for about one month, she called all the novices and gave instruction that she would not want any novice to tell her “anything about another novice.” She went on to say that the grace of office she received from God would enable her to discover things herself. This principle worked for Sr. Patty. Her instruction to the novices must have

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stemmed from her experience of probably noticing that some novices must have begun to look for victims for her.

Sr. Patty's exemplary Life in the Novitiate

Sr. Patty did not talk much in the novitiate; this is because her daily life in the novitiate was a living example for the novices. Her life was a positive example from which the novices drew inspiration. Sr. Patty's exemplary life in the novitiate provided an excellent model for novices of 1976 set.

Sr. Patty was more than a novice directress, just directing the novices, she had interest in the well-being of all of them, and she was sensitive to their needs. In fact, it will not be too much to say that Sr. Patty's life in the novitiate was dedicated to serving the novices in the incredible way in which she cared for them.

She would discover when a novice was tired or ill and would give her an opportunity for rest. She knew what tiredness could cause to prayer life and community living, and she made sure that this did not happen in the novitiate during her time. In other words, she seemed to discover when the whole community needed rest, and time would be adjusted and an opportunity provided for such a rest. This rest helped to promote punctuality in prayer, punctuality in meals, punctuality in community prayer, punctuality in community exercises, punctuality in personal prayer, and so on.

Sr. Patty's Kindness and Generosity

Sr. Patty was a generous person, caring but did not compromise. She would call attention of the novices to what was not done well, and they would be encouraged to recognise it, and take the appropriate correction. She kept reminding them, the novices of

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the eventual “Capital M”, that is, a cantankerous miserable life in which any of the novices that would be irresponsible in her formation, would found herself. Sr. Patty's generosity and kindness also reached the neighbours living around the novitiate walls.

Sr. Patty showed the Novices of 1976 set the Road to farm work and Hard work

The novices of 1976 set, knew what farm work, and hard work mean, because Sr. Patty, their novices directress, had led them to the road of hard work and farm work of all type required at the time.

Instruction of Sr. Patty, and Hard work of Grace Ekwebalam

It will be good to remember that all the recorded tapes of Bishop Godfrey Mary Paul Okoye, the Founder of the Daughters of Divine Love Congregation, was played and the contents written down by one of the novices of 1976 set, called Grace Ekwebalam. Grace Ekwebalam, the novice, did her work of playing the tape and writing down its contents, as she was instructed to do by the novice directress, Sr. Patty Alufuo.

The novice Grace Ekwebalam did this hard work, by diligently playing each recorded tape, and listening attentively to the founder's loud voice, talking and instructing the novices of different stages in Daughters of Divine Love Congregation at the time. Grace, the novice would play and replay each tape until she got all the contents written down.

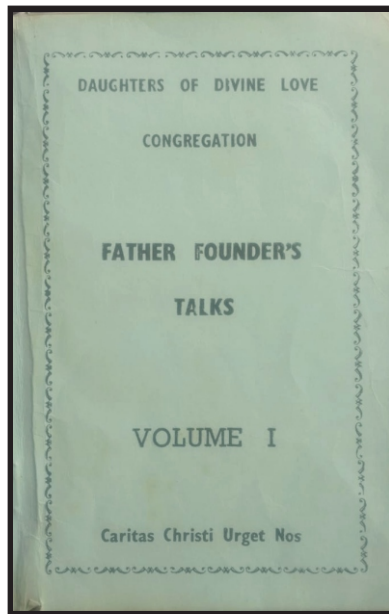
As the novices of 1976 set would be doing the farm work or manual labour, Grace Ekwebalam would be listening to each

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recorded tape and writing the contents down. In other words, listening to the tapes of Bishop Okoye's Talks and writing the contents down, was the manual labour of the novice Grace Ekwebalam. This means that when other novices of 1976 set, would be doing the farm work or manual labour, Grace Ekwebalam would be listening to the tape and writing the contents down.

The Hard work of Sr. Chigee Maduba

Later, this hand-written down of Bishop Godfrey Mary Paul Okoye's Talks English-Igbo, was put in typed form by Sr. Chigee Maduba, on the instruction of the Mother General at the time. This typed –written Talks by Sr. Chigee, resulted in the Printing of the First Volume of Bishop Okoye's Talks which was distributed in August, 1991, and eventually the printing of the Vol. II of the English-Igbo.



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The hard work and intuition of Sr. Patty, the novice directress of the 1976 set, brought about the verbatim hand written of founder's Talks – Vol. 1 English-Igbo, and the Vol. II of the English-Igbo.

Appreciation to Sr. Patty by 1976 set of Novices of DDL Congregation

The great, kind, generous, and a Christian novice directress, Sr. Patty, your 1976 novices, thank you for your all-time teachings and your life of integrity, that the novices of 1976, experienced. Thank you for the life shared together.

Rest in Peace. Amen!

Chapter Twenty

SPIRITUAL LIFE THE MOST IMPORTANT PROJECT TO EMBARK ON



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God's children living in the world, time has come for you and me to wake up from our deep slumber, to wake up from our insensitivity to God, from our ignorance of God, who created you and me. It is time to stop chasing shadows, this means that the unspiritual part of life that the world presents to us, is meant to manipulate and destroy us.

But how does a person tell herself or himself that the Almighty God should be more important for him or her in this world than anything else? There are many acting out of a fake spiritual life in the life of Christians, among others. As things stand, it will pay more if we look seriously for a way to understand the leading word, **Spiritual Life**. In other words, our focus right now will go to searching for the meaning of spiritual life.

1. Concept of Spiritual Life

Spiritual life means an existence focused on connecting with a higher power. It involves finding deep meaning outside the material world. It is the cultivation of one's soul, focusing on virtues, e.g. compassion.

- **Connection to Higher Power (God):**

This means nurturing one's relationship with God, particularly through faith, prayer, and obedience to scripture.

- **Inner Transformation:**

This means making effort toward developing an awareness of one's true self and showing corresponding actions with higher values rather than merely physical needs.

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- **Living with Purpose:**

Spiritual life is a journey of finding meaning; often this happens through mindfulness, meditation, and serving others.

- **Transcending the Self:**

Spiritual life is the movement towards inner peace, compassion, and seeing oneself and others in a higher light.

2. Significance of Spiritual Life for a Christian

For a Christian, spiritual life is a transformed existence lived in union with God through Jesus Christ, initiated by being “born again”, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. This is not a merely self-improvement, but a continuous process of sanctification – conforming to the likeness, of Christ which is characterised by faith, obedience, love, and growth in faith.

Major Aspects of Christian Spiritual Life

- **Union with God:**

Spiritual life for a Christian, is a daily, relational life with God, this life is often described as “remaining in Him and having Him abide in the believer.

- **Regeneration and New Life:**

This new life begins with the spiritual rebirth where the believer moves from spiritual death to life, receiving the Holy Spirit.

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- **Transformation (Sanctification):**

Spiritual life is an ongoing, lifelong journey where the believer is gradually transformed into likeness of Jesus Christ.

- **Fruit of the Spirit of God:**

Spiritual life is marked by godly character such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

- **Daily Practice:**

Spiritual life involves nurturing the relationship with God through prayer, reading the scripture, meditation on the words, and fellowship with other believers.

- **Freedom from Sin:**

Spiritual life for a Christian, means no longer being a slave to sin, but living for God and, at times, engaging in spiritual warfare against evil.

- **Sacredness of Daily Life:**

Spiritual life means making everyday actions and relationships sacred, recognizing life as belonging to God.

We have eventually seen through our research the full meaning of spiritual life. Next, we will turn and focus on searching and outlining various methods which have been employed in effort to arrive at an effective spiritual life.

3. Application of various Spiritual Methods, Skills, and Human Sciences in order to impact Spiritual Life

Here, I would like us to discuss the various methods, skills, that the spiritual writers and psychologists have suggested and exposed in their works, as methods and skills that should help to influence spiritual life, and set it in motion toward growth.

Spiritual life writers, apart from the Holy Bible, listed, some books that will help spiritual life to grow, and some of the books include:

1. The Holy Bible (the ultimate foundation)
2. Lectio Divina by Marco Masini
3. Imitation of Christ by Thomas a Kempis
4. An introduction to Devout life by Francis de Sales
5. Spiritual exercises of Saint Ignatius by St. Ignatius
6. Knowing God by J. I. Packer
7. The pursuit of God by A. W. Tozer
8. Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster
9. The cost of Discipleship by Dietrich Bonhoeffer etc.

4. Spiritual Direction as a Practice and a Process

This means that spiritual direction is that sustained ongoing structured spiritual practice often monthly, relational process where trained guide called **director** or **directress**, accompanies another person called **directee**, to notice God's presence and action in his or her life.

- **Spiritual direction involves skills:**

A spiritual director or directress does not just give advice; he or she is trained to use specific skills to facilitate the process. As an

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effective process which requires that the director or directress should have some skills especially that of active listening, that of discernment of the spirits, that of empathy, and that of the ability to ask open-ended questions that will help to provoke reflection in directee rather than offering solutions.

5. Spiritual Direction session and basic attitudes that should accompany it

Spiritual life writers emphasise that spiritual direction as a practice and as a process is to observe decorum that stands it out as a means that leads toward a growth in spiritual life.

The practice and process of spiritual direction involve the following:

Many spiritual life writers present in their various works, contributions, and insights that will help to facilitate and promote effective spiritual direction.

For spiritual direction to produce the desired result, the spiritual director or directress has to enter into a kind of agreement or working alliance with the directee provided that there is a foundation for this, that is, that the directee wants to relate more personally with God. Spiritual director or directress is to be a person who is able to keep confidentiality.

Spiritual director or directress is to ensure that privacy is maintained by making sure that the deep sharing of the directee and director is not overheard by others. We all know how difficult it is to disclose oneself to another. So, it can be a devastation to know later on that the story was overheard by another. In other words, the environment for sharing is to be appropriate. The spiritual director or directress is to make sure, through prior

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arrangements that the session is not to be interrupted by someone walking in, or knocking on the door, or even telephone calls.

Spiritual Direction as God's Work

There is a general understanding about spiritual direction that spiritual direction is all God's work. This means that no spiritual director or directress should pose as spiritual director or spiritual directress as the controller of spiritual direction. Therefore, the spiritual director or directress is only offering help to directee.

Spiritual Direction - a Responsibility of the Directee

Spiritual direction does not mean that a person being directed gives the responsibility for his or her life to someone else. That is to say, that the director or directress is to be aware that he or she remains a facilitator of the relationship. In other words, he or she is only giving help. He or she is in no way going to take the responsibility for the directee's life. The person who receives the spiritual direction retains the responsibility for his or her life.

When a person seeks spiritual direction, he or she has an aim. It implies that the person is going somewhere, and would want to talk to someone on the way, in an on one-on-one atmosphere about his or her aim. The talk will aim at helping the person to find his or her way. Spiritual direction then, does not suggest a forum where the director or directress gives a directee a detailed programme on how to live. As I said earlier, the person seeking spiritual direction is already going somewhere. So, the director or directress is only a helper towards focusing to where he or she is going`. Spiritual direction focuses on the process of a

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relationship with God. It involves helping another person to relate consciously with God, and to grow in that relationship.

6. Things Psychologists Outline as means that will help Spiritual Life to Improve

Psychologists, particularly those in positive and transpersonal psychology, present various evidence – based practices and mindset shifts to help spiritual life grow.

These methods are designed to foster a sense of connection, meaning, and purpose, often bridging the gap between mental health and spiritual development. Here are the key things psychologists present as ways to help spiritual life grow.

- **Mindfulness Meditation:**

This means practicing non-judgmental, moment-to-moment awareness helps to a quiet mental chatter and reduces stress, creating a foundation for inner peace.

- **Journaling and Reflection:**

Regular recording of thought and reflecting on personal experiences allow individuals to identify, connect with a larger purpose, and process emotions.

- **Daily Silent Time:**

Taking 5-10 minutes daily for silence or contemplation in a quiet environment can foster moments of transcendence.

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- **Gratitude:**

Actively practicing gratitude e.g., keeping a gratitude journal helps to shift focus toward positive experiences and connects the individual to something beyond himself or herself.

- **Awe and Wonder:**

Actively seeking out moments of awe, such as experiencing nature, art, or breath taking views and fosters a sense of being part of a larger whole.

- **Self-Compassion:**

Developing a non-judgmental, but kind attitude toward one's own shortcomings allow for emotional healing and spiritual growth.

- **Volunteering and Atruism:**

Engaging in service for others is a powerful way to reduce focus on the self (ego), foster community, and experience a sense of deeper purpose.

- **Forgiveness:**

Letting go of the desire for revenge or holding grudges frees up psychological and spiritual energy.

- **Developing a Growth Mindset**

This is when an individual or a Christian views challenges and suffering as opportunities for growth rather than just problems to be avoided.

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- **Reducing Ego-Centrism:**

This means shifting from focusing only on personal needs to relational spirituality which emphasises connections with others and environment.

- **Intentionality:**

This is when a person or a Christian decides to act with love, kindness, and respect in daily interactions, even in challenging situation.

7. Informal Helpers

Peoples in this world at a certain stage in their lives, will begin to need some kind of support. And these informal helpers stand in to provide that supports. Let us first of all understand the full meaning of the phrase informal helpers.

Concept of Informal Helpers

Informal helpers are unpaid individuals, such as family members, friends, neighbours, or colleagues, who provide voluntary support, care, or assistance to someone in need due to illness, disability, aging, or daily life challenges.

Unlike formal, professional services, these relationships are characterised by emotional closeness, spontaneity, and non-professional, voluntary support.

Some aspects of informal helpers:

- **Unpaid and Voluntary:**

These helpers do not receive any kind of payment, and do not have service contract.

- **Relationship-Based:**

The informal helpers support is rooted in personal relationships, which is characterised by love, friendships, or obligation.

- **Types of Support:**

These informal helpers provide instrumental assistance, example, cooking, shopping, emotional care, companionship, and reducing barriers, and offering personalised, step-by-step assistance to ensure access to necessary resources. It involves acting as a guide or coordinator to help people, like those with disabilities or in mental health services, find their way through various service providers.

Informal Helpers in Psychology

Informal helps in psychology are untrained individuals, such as friends, family members, neighbours or peers, who provide non-professional emotional support, advice, and practical assistance.

Unlike formal practitioners, Informal Helpers offer spontaneous, relationship-based help driven by companionship, proximity, and reciprocity, rather than structured therapeutic techniques.

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Major areas of Informal Helpers include:

- **Non-professional support:**

This means that these helpers lack formal, structured, or therapeutic training.

- **Characteristic of these:**

Informal help is often spontaneous, long-term and based on existing relationships, and it involves deep closeness.

- **Difference from Formal Care:**

While formal helpers such as (psychologists, therapists) focus on clinical intervention, informal helpers provide social network support.

9. Informal Helpers are Felt Need from Experience

From experience it is clear that at a certain moment of life, one tends to clamour to be with another, other than oneself, someone to tell his or her story to; someone to share intimately one's story. Over the years, there has been a conviction that apart from those who are directly involved in a variety of formal helping professions, like counselors, psychologists, ministers of religions, spiritual theologians, and social workers, there are other informal helpers who often help people through troubled times of crisis and distress.

Different Reasons for Seeking Informal Helper

According to Egan Gerald (1996), the world is filled with informal helpers (Egan, G.). People have various reasons why

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they look for help. Some look for help when they are in crisis, some people look for help when they are in trouble, some look for help when they are in difficulties, some look for help when they are in frustrations, some look for help when they have worries, some look for help when they are in doubts, and some look for help when they have important decisions to make about themselves, and about their relationship with God and people.

When anyone is wellled-up in these needs and looks for help, he or she has some expectations. He or she expects to be listened to. So, the basic attitude of the helper is to listen. Although you may not be aware that your problem may not have any clear cut solution, you would want to be listened to, as you tell your story. From experience, we know that listening is not an easy act to struggle with. It is hard to listen. However, listening is a very powerful communication skill. Those who have it have a great virtue, and those who have it are not many.

Reluctance in Behaviour of a Helper

Sometimes people seeking help experience a kind of reluctance in behaviour on the part of helper who might, non-verbally, be saying to the person seeking help: “I am not ready for you, I have no time for you now, I am terribly busy”. These expressions may not be said verbally, but they might be implied. These could be acted out further in different non-verbal gestures that will depict inattentiveness and lack of disposition on the part of the helper.

The quality of attention and involvement in any listening situation is normally conspicuous, and even the blind people know when the attention is paid to them. In other words, you will know when your story is being listened to. An effective listener listens with patient understanding and empathy. He or she is there with complete presence. Patient listening carries

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with it the real sense of understanding, and being with the person, without any abuse of trust or expectation, which may exist by forcing information out of the person seeking help.

A Person Seeking Help expects to be listened to

A person seeking to be listened to sometimes notices that his or her helper is not fully present, and if he or she enquires, an answer might come “Oh yes, I am listening to you. I heard all you said. I can repeat it”. Nobody goes to another to share his or her story in order to get the story wholesale back to him or her.

What people need is not someone who will repeat their story, but someone to listen to them and be with them. From every day experience, we know how comforting it is when you visit a friend who is in an awkward situation; you may notice that your presence makes a difference to him or her. Anyone seeking help is looking for someone to listen to him or her. There may be some suggestions from the helper, but that is secondary. The seeker of help wants first of all to be listened to. So, the basic attitude towards someone who comes to you seeking help is to listen to that person.

Now, after the application of all these methods and skills exposed and provided by the writers of spirituality, spiritual life, and psychologists, the spiritual life of most Christians remains stagnant, no movement, no change.

Causes of lack of improvement in the spiritual Life of Christians

We have come to ask questions on what must have been the reasons why spiritual life of Christians remains unproved, even after applying all possible methods and skills meant to help

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improve spiritual life.

The reasons for this stagnant spiritual life of Christians are not farfetched: The spiritual life of Christians must continue to stand still, remains stagnant, because there is a lot of **fake spiritual life**. Stagnancy in spiritual life of Christians occurs because Christians make much noise about prayer, but they are too far away from prayer. Every gesture of prayer is a **fake and hypocritical**. And the Lord Jesus Christ call these fake acting of prayer, **lip worship**:

This people honours me only with lip-service, while their hearts are far from me. Their reverence of me is worthless; the lessons they teach are nothing but human commandments (Matthew 15:8-9).

The spiritual life of Christians remains without improvement because the heart that is praying is very far away from God; the heart is a billion and billion times far away from God. There is no sincere effort by such a Christian, and Christians to live the character of God. These Christian and Christians parade themselves as peoples of prayer while the heart is very hard, untouched and stingy. The stagnancy in a Christian's spiritual life must continue to occur until he or she stops faking prayer life and spiritual life.

Chapter Twenty- One

**CHRISTIAN STUDENTS NOWADAYS ARE
GIANT IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY BUT DWARF
IN SPIRITUALITY**



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1. Context

Christian Religion used to have influence when it was valued by most countries in the world, Nigeria inclusive.

At that time when it was important, Christian Religion was widely regarded as one of the most important subjects in the world. It was evidenced that the study of Christian Religion plays a significant role in the moral development of individuals, children, and students in most Christian societies of the world.

In those days, Christian Religion was considered the most influential religion in all Christian countries in the world. But later, abnormal scenario emerged.

2. Significance of the phrase: Christian students nowadays are Giants in Science and Technology but Dwarf in Spirituality

The phrase simply describes the imbalance in the many young Christians today, where academic or technological skill or expertise is high, but personal spiritual maturity is low. This means that while students may excel in school, technology and career-related skills, their faith, prayer life, moral life, and understanding of biblical principles remain unattended to or irrelevant.

Let us gradually break down each phrase:

(a) Giants in Science and Technology

- **High intellectual competence:**

This means when students are often proficient running through

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the digital world, using technology, and mastering complex academic subjects.

- **Focus on Future Career:**

An intense focus is placed on achieving high grades. They are anxious about securing employment, and to develop tangible, measurable skills for success in a competitive, tech-driven world.

(b) Dwarfs in Spirituality

- **Lack of Spiritual Maturity:**

Although, Christian students are knowledgeable in technology, yet they are immature in their spiritual life, because they lack deep knowledge of scripture or experience into prayer.

- **Obedience and Compromise:**

Spiritual dwarfism is linked to living in ways that contradict biblical teachings, due to the influence of a secular world.

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- **Imbalance and Priorities:**

This means that while academic pursuits are treated with high priority, spiritual disciplines, like Bible, church attendance, or quiet time are neglected or treated as secondary.



Now, before we continue our discussion on the topic of this chapter, I would like to touch briefly on the phrase spiritual dwarfism.

3. Spiritual Dwarfism: Result of over Emphasis on Science and Technology

Spiritual dwarfism refers to someone who refuses to grow spiritually. In our case here, in this book, it means a Christian, who has overly chosen academic excellence over living his or her Christian beliefs. Spiritual dwarf, means a Christian student, who his or her faith is very small.

Christian Religion has always been part and parcel of Christian

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countries of world's pattern of living. Christian Religion has dealt with the questions that most Christians all over the world consider to be most important aspect of their lives. People in the Christian world conceive God as the Author of life which includes all that is found in the world. God is recognised as the Author, the Giver, and the Protector of the living. Of all those attributes of God, that of Creator is most prominent.

The result of over emphasis on sciences and technological subjects has begun to display its scores, it has proudly stood high ready. Following the shift in study of Christian Religion, motivation towards its study started dwindling, and interest in the subject dropped drastically, Christian Religion was no longer taken seriously as was in the time of its boom; and as was in the time of missionaries, that is when the missionaries had upper hands in teaching and propagating Christian Religion.

So, in this way, Christian Religion, began the gradual process of its movement towards natural death. And to support the assertion of natural death of Christian Religion, Ndarwa (2007) and Elochukwu (2019) said that students nowadays are groomed to be intellectual giants in Science and Technology with little or no interest in God, no interest in moral and spiritual growth, no interest in living in good relationship with peoples and neighbours, but they are excellent only in science and technology, and we call this “Spiritual Dwarfism”. This means that every interest of these Christians students is focused only on Sciences and Technological subjects.

SAD NEWS!

The most worrying part of this problem of over emphasis on science and technology is that Christian society of the world has begun a gradual process of De-Christianising the Christian

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world. I mean that most Christians of the world have entered a process of removing the idea of Christian Religion in the world.

For example, in the year 2015, I was in a particular country of the world, where ten Christian parents refused to pay their children's school fees and fees for registration of School Leaving Certificate. These parents refused the payments of the fees because they wanted their children to register only science subjects. But the ten students preferred to include Christian Religion among the science subjects they were to register. The ten Christians parents insisted on excluding the registration of Christian Religion. The insistence of the ten Christians parents indicated a very bold step of saying no to the Christian Religion in that country.

4. Causes of a Dwarf Mentality in a Christian Student

Causes of low Spiritual life Mentality in a Christian Student include:

- **Misplaced Priorities:**

A dwarf mentality develops when a Christian student focuses only on worldly success while ignoring his or her spiritual health.

- **The specialists without Spirituality:**

A Christian student without spiritual grounding, technical expertise leads him or her to alienation, and a loss of bigger picture, and this is equal to turning people into specialists without spiritual life. It is like a Christian student selling his or her Christian life, in order to buy giant in science and technology.

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All I am saying is that any country, any society, any state, any institution, or any organisation that plays down on the supremacy of God, by playing down on the Christian Religion, will pay the price with immorality of every kind, and with all sorts of social ills. If we open our eyes wide, we will see that most countries of the world are already paying the price of neglect of Christian Religion.

Chapter Twenty-Two

A CHRISTIAN'S FORGIVENESS MUST BE UNLIMITED



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1. Meaning of Forgiveness in General

Etymologically, the word forgiveness comes from the Greek verb *aphiemi*, which means “Let go”. To hold something against another is unforgiving; to let it go is to forgive. Out of His deep love for human beings, God lets our offences go. Just as the theologian Miroslav Volf says; “To forgive is to condemn the fault but to spare the doer”. Forgiveness is a noun which means the action or process of forgiving or being forgiven.

2. Significance of Forgiveness for a Christian

For a Christian forgiveness, is the intentional, grace-based decision to release resentment and cancel the “debt” of an offence, modeled on God's forgiveness of human sin, accomplished through Jesus Christ. It is an act of obedience that prioritizes mercy over vengeance. Forgiveness means letting go of the right to punish.

Aspects of biblical forgiveness include:

- **Reflection of God's Love:**

This arises from the understanding that God has already forgiven believers, calling them to extend the same forgiveness to others: “Be generous to one another, sympathetic, forgiving each other as readily as God forgave you in Christ” (Ephesians 4:32).

- **A Decision of the Will:**

Forgiveness by a Christian is a conscious choice to stop dwelling on punishing, or bringing up the offence, regardless whether the offender asks for it.

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- **Release from Bitterness:**

Here, forgiveness involves letting go of anger and vengeance essentially handing the situation over to God.

- **Not Condoning Sin:**

Forgiveness does not mean condoning sin. It does not mean that the sin was acceptable, or harmless, but that the offender is released from the penalty.

3. Biblical Example of true nature of Forgiveness: the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

For us to understand the true nature of forgiveness, we need to base our thoughts on the parable of the Prodigal son. Our task here therefore, is to re-visit the parable of the prodigal son and to trace briefly and follow gradually its significance in connection with our research on the meaning of forgiveness for a Christian. The parable says:

There was a man who had two sons. The young one said to his father, "Father, let me have the share of the estate that will come to me." So the Father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money (...). When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch; so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on the farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled himself with the husks the pigs were eating but no one would let him have them. Then he came to his senses and said. "How many of

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my father's hired men have all the food they want and more, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired men". So he left the place and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him ...

Destiny of Prodigal son and his way word Journey

We may ask here, what destiny awaited the prodigal son after he had travelled to a distant country and have squandered his property? We saw in the parable the painful consequences of separation and distance from the father. We saw the miserable condition into which the prodigal son descended. The prodigal son, having wasted the property he received from his father, deserved, after his return to earn his living by working in his father's house as an employee and possibly, little by little, to build up a certain material goods, though perhaps never as much as the amount he had squandered. This would be demanded by the order of justice, especially as the son had not only wasted the part of the inheritance belonging to him but had hurt and offended his father by his own conduct.

4. Beautiful act of prodigal son's Father

When the father in the parable saw his prodigal son returning, he was deeply moved, and he ran out to meet him and he was the first to clasp his son in his arms. By this action, the father forgave his son even before he could confess his sins. It was not important to the father what his son had to say. What mattered

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most to him was that the son had returned. The son did not have to ask for forgiveness because he had already been forgiven. The justice that the son's misconduct deserved had been overtaken by the father's forgiveness and mercy.

Can a Christian shock people living with him or her with such a prompt forgiveness? Is it possible for a Christian person to shock another Christian person with his or her forgiveness?

Chapter Twenty-Three

In concluding this journey on the Identity Crisis of Christians today and knowing what must matter to you as a Christian, means that we have come to the point where we need to recapitulate what we have gone through, in order to arrive at this stage we saw ourselves.

As I said earlier, when I was introducing the topic: Identity Crisis of Christians today and knowing what must matter to you as a Christian, I mentioned some routes that are needed to be traveled, and methods to be used in the searching journey, in order to outline what are to be classified as Crisis in the Identity of Christians today.

The journey on the Identity Crisis of Christians today has been made, and the process of searching completed. And the findings made it clear that Christians are in real Identity Crisis today, because the study on the Identity Crisis has revealed that Christian and Christians leave what must matter to them, and are continuously chasing shadows, avoiding what should be the core of their Christian lives and witnessing.

However, our discussion on the topic on the Identity Crisis of Christian today, followed the trend meant to create a saving

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awareness, that will help any Christian, and Christians, who is ready to move forward to conversion, and change for good.

This is another way of asserting that a Christian and Christians are called to emulate and to live the spirituality of living the character of God.

In other words, as the Christian life is generally understood as a daily ongoing walk of faith rather than a one-time event, a Christian must be constant and alert. Therefore, a Christian, and Christians must determine to choose to live a life that depicts what they believe and profess.

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Chilota Elochukwu (Sr)

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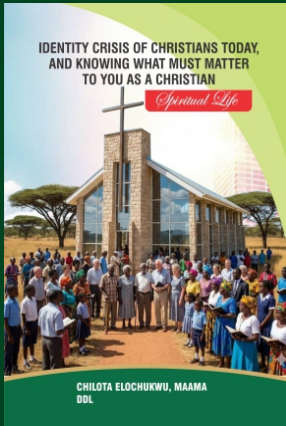
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Chilota With Nature

ABOUT THE BOOK



This is a book on Spiritual Life, which identifies Christian life today as in crisis of Identity. The book recognises that Christians are undergoing Identity Crisis today, because they are no more sure of where they belong.

The book has traveled to many roads, areas, and means, in order to discover where and how a Christian and Christians fail to live their lives as Christians. In other words, the author selected some significant topics, ideas, themes, stories, and information that showcase lack of authentic and convincing lives of a Christian and Christians today. At the same time, the book within the research process brought out paths and routes that are to lead a Christian person to live as a Christian, and as Christians.



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